

harmony

JANUARY 2018 ₹ 40

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

DISCOVERY

Unknown palaces
of India

DIARY 100

Dr Balwant Ghatpande's
prescription for life

Subscriber Copy Not For Resale

NEW

Yoga to combat
chronic diseases

Sports column by
Raju Mukherji

**NAMITA
GOKHALE**
writefully yours



- Your investment guide for 2018
- Silver run at Tata Steel Kolkata 25K
- Spiritual guru Daaji on meditation with yogic transmission



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4 FRUIT INFUSIONS: Orange Spicer, Lemon & Lime Zest, Black Currant Bracer

5 ORGANIC HERBAL INFUSIONS: Pure Chamomile, Pure Peppermint

NEW
Pomegranate Ruby
Apple & Cinnamon
Twist

Be the change

*I'm starting with the man in the mirror
I'm asking him to change his ways...*

This Michael Jackson song is so much more than a catchy, soulful number—it has far deeper resonance, especially as we begin a new year, full of opportunities and challenges.

There's far too much to complain about with the state of the world as well as our own realities, the cards we feel we have been dealt. Often, we feel completely blindsided and impotent in the whirl of life, which seems to have a momentum of its own; mere cogs in a wheel that turns inexorably on. What we fail to realise, however, is that it is entirely up to us to break out, break free and be the change—as Mahatma Gandhi famously said—we wish to see.

To craft change around us, we must indeed begin with ourselves. That is the defining thought for me in 2018: to better myself physically, emotionally, spiritually; allow myself to shift gears when required; arrive at a greater understanding of my place in family, the workplace, society and the world; and strive to be a change-agent in whatever way I can.

Indeed, change, self-improvement and momentum can be crafted in myriad ways. One way is to celebrate the body, to focus on fitness as a key driver of life. And that's what close to 700 silvers did in the City of Joy in Harmony's first Senior Citizens' Run at the Tata Steel



Dabboo Ratnani

Kolkata 25K on 17 December. It was a one-of-a-kind experience for our team and I congratulate them for executing a flawless event despite the challenges of operating in a new city and frame of reference! My gratitude also goes out to Fortis Hospital, Kolkata, Procarn International, VLCC Wellness and Typhoo India for their support, and our special guests Raju Mukherji, Gurbux Singh, Alok Chattopadhyay, Kalyan Maitra, Ujjal Chakraborty, R K Agrawal and Avijit Mukerji for flagging off the run and cheering on our participants.

With this event, the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run is truly a pan-India event, spreading our message farther and extending our reach deeper. It was the perfect cap to 2017, a harbinger of promise for 2018. The next 12 months now unfurl before us, imbued with promise and hope. Embrace change and make them count.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Cover photograph: Srishti Jha

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HAPPY FEET

Manjula Ramaswamy and her troupe from Rama Nataka Niketan in Hyderabad are putting a spin on Bharatanatyam and winning awards

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

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column one

As the 11th edition of the 'greatest literary show on earth' gets ready to roll on 25 January, we are delighted to have the Jaipur Lit Fest's founder and co-director on our cover. It's even more special as we consider Namita Gokhale a friend of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*—she's written for us before. Through her own from-the-heart writing, her commitment to empower talent and her efforts to create a bridge between Indian writing in English and regional languages, this author-publisher has helped make literature in the country more accessible, relatable and inclusionary. "I have been very lucky in that so many of the things I set upon in a spirit of enthusiasm and genuine curiosity rather than ambition have succeeded at different levels," she shares. "I do strategise and think ahead, but life is so full of unexpected twists and turns that I have learned to go with the flow, carefully observing the terrain and the signs on the ground."

Our other headliner this month, spiritual guru Daaji, would approve! "Trust your instincts, your feelings, and follow your heart," he says, as he elaborates upon Heartfulness meditation, which is supported by 'yogic transmission'. Elsewhere, we toast *Harmony's* silvers at the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K; serve up sound financial advice for 2018; and, more whimsically, discover the magical stories behind some of India's lesser known palaces.

Finally, to put the 'New' in the Year, our beloved yoga acharya Shameem Akthar begins a series on tackling chronic diseases. And former cricketer and man of words Raju Mukherji kicks off a sports column—a first for us. We're ready to rock 2018!

—Arati Rajan Menon

Harmony-Celebrate Age is a great magazine for the biologically ageing but mentally young reader. Your November 2017 issue was a perfect package for fitness enthusiasts with motivating interviews of senior marathon runners, their stay-fit secrets and special fitness, yoga and nutrition advice. The interaction with Swami Sukhabodhananda ('Mystical Musings') was a huge spiritual treat. The gentle probing of the interviewer and the subtle humour of Swamiji will keep readers spellbound. And then, there was the "Making of the Big B" ('Etcetera: At Large') that unravelled the superstar's spectacular success.

Your magazine works on the mind, body and intellect of readers, helping them live a harmonious life. Thank you for bringing out such an effortlessly amazing and thought-provoking magazine. It is a beautiful gift to society.

Sheila Natarajan
Mumbai

In the November issue covering silver marathon runners, it was amazing to read about different people from different walks of life keeping active. I especially liked the article about a nutrient-rich and well-planned diet. Diet is extremely important and the proper balance of protein and carbohydrates is essential. Further, I loved the article, "To serve with love" in 'Orbit'; it was a thought-provoking concept with a powerful message to society: 'Take care of your elders—love them, respect them.'

Nisha Sutaria
Via email

Harmony-Celebrate Age is a wonderful magazine and the articles are worth reading. I really laud your effort in bringing out



the talent of a senior person to the readers. It surely encourages seniors to do much more as appreciation is an elixir for better performance. I would appreciate it if you could follow up, to an extent, the performance of people and bring it to the forefront now and then. I am thankful to you for boosting morale.

Suneetha Prasanna
Bengaluru

I write with reference to "Brain Power" in 'Orbit' in the November 2017 issue. To understand the mechanism of the brain and its workings requires a brain of that calibre! Those who use their brain effectively live longer. With modern education providing too many ready references—like computers, calculators, Internet, etc—the result is poor exercise of the brain. Now, people use calculators for even simple calculations, like 10 per cent of a figure! Those who are professionals always use (exercise) their brain more effectively. Politicians, too, use their brain very effectively—note that they are actively

HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in
December 2017 on

www.harmonyindia.org

1. Midnight's children:
Dr Lalji Singh
2. No finish line
3. Dear life...



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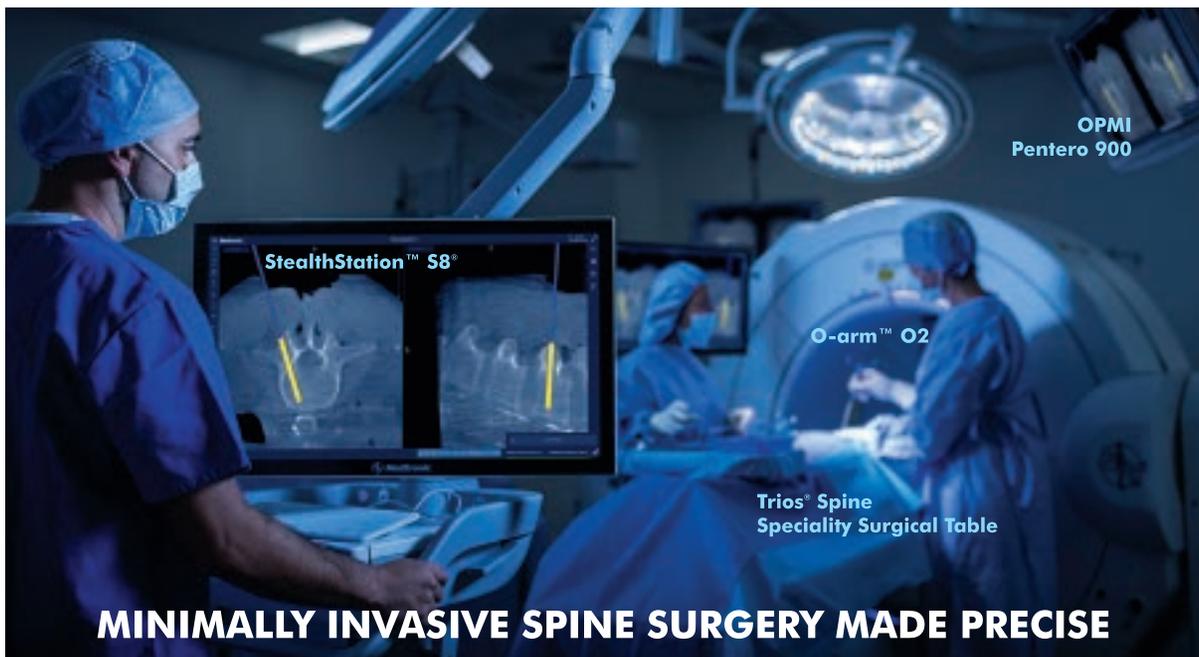
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The Times of India Survey, 2016/17
The Week-Nielsen Survey, 2016/17

involved in politics in their 70s, 80s and even 90s. It's a popular belief that the human brain is only used at 10 per cent of its capacity in one's life!

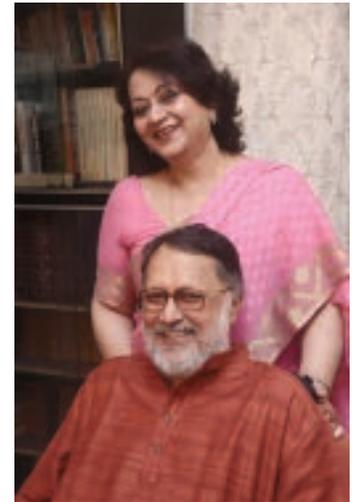
Mahesh Kapasi
Via email

I am 92 and have come across many cases of elder abuse, especially widows and widowers who are at the mercy of their children. It is extremely important to look after their safety and make them feel loved. Times have changed fast—from a joint family where elders were mostly looked after to this generation's nuclear families where children don't have time away from their jobs. We have moved away from our roots and started taking family values for granted. Elder-care homes are a good idea in this day and age, for they provide an interactive environment with other seniors who are in the same boat. Home care works best when elders have their own homes and are used to a certain environment and the comfort of camaraderie they share with their neighbours. That said, elders should also focus on developing their own interests, chasing their dreams and trying to fulfil them. It's better late than never.

Bansi Singh
Mumbai

CONTRIBUTOR

This month, former cricket player, coach, selector, talent scout, match referee and writer **Satyabrata 'Raju' Mukherji** goes to bat for us with a new sports column, 'Off the Cuff'. Here's a short bio, in his own words:



"Now at 67, I am still at sixes and sevens about my own identity. After crossing the Jesuit portals of St Xavier's, I completed my post-graduation in international relations. In the meantime, I was fortunate enough to wear numerous hats at cricket, beginning from kit-bag carrier to State player, captain, coach and selector. Then, BCCI roped me in as talent scout and match referee. Finally, when I thought my cricket career was done and dusted having crossed 60, arrived a unique international recognition: the first non-Test cricketer to be an ICC match referee!

Within the course of the journey, I got opportunities to write on the game from the 1980s as a freelancer for all the leading dailies and sports magazines of the country. My first book, *Cricket in India: Origin and Heroes*, earned unusual reviews with the doyen of sports journalism Rajan Bala mentioning, "I do not believe Raju's idea that cricket began in India, nor can I contradict his probing research." Thus complimented, my research led me to my next title, *Eden Gardens: Legend and Romance*, which highlighted the 150th anniversary of the iconic cricket ground. At present, after 30 years I am still enjoying my role as a cricket historian in television and radio programmes.

From mother's baby to wife's child, I am proud to be. *Ma* always claimed, 'Women are superior to men. Why should we wish to be their equal now?' From experience, I subscribe to this view. Thankfully, wife Seema, too, is a firm follower of the Mother Durga-Kali ideology. Seema, a postgraduate in history, gave up her job in public relations with the state government after 20 years of distinguished service, to look after her mother and mother-in-law. Today, she remains a grand influence on her husband. Amen."



AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

- You had an experience related to money
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
- You know about a senior citizens' organisation that is doing commendable work for a social cause or promoting active ageing through its activities... and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'

Mail us at *Harmony-Celebrate Age, Lower Basement - Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani*

Hospital, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W), Mumbai - 400 053. Or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

 HEALTH BYTES

Coffee calling

While a lot has been written about the goodness of tea, drinking coffee too has its perks. As it turns out, **coffee could make you live longer and healthier**, according to a recent study presented by the European Society of Cardiology Congress held in Barcelona, Spain. The study, conducted on 20,000 people aged an average of 37 years, followed its participants for 10 years. Its findings suggest that those who drank four cups of coffee a day were 64 per cent more likely to live longer. Interestingly, the pattern was more pronounced in people who were 45 years or older. And what's the coffee bean's secret? Studies show that coffee contains antioxidant compounds with neuro-protective and anti-inflammatory properties that reduce the risk of illnesses. The findings were published in journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.



4 CUPS OF COFFEE A DAY

leads to 64 per cent more chances to live longer

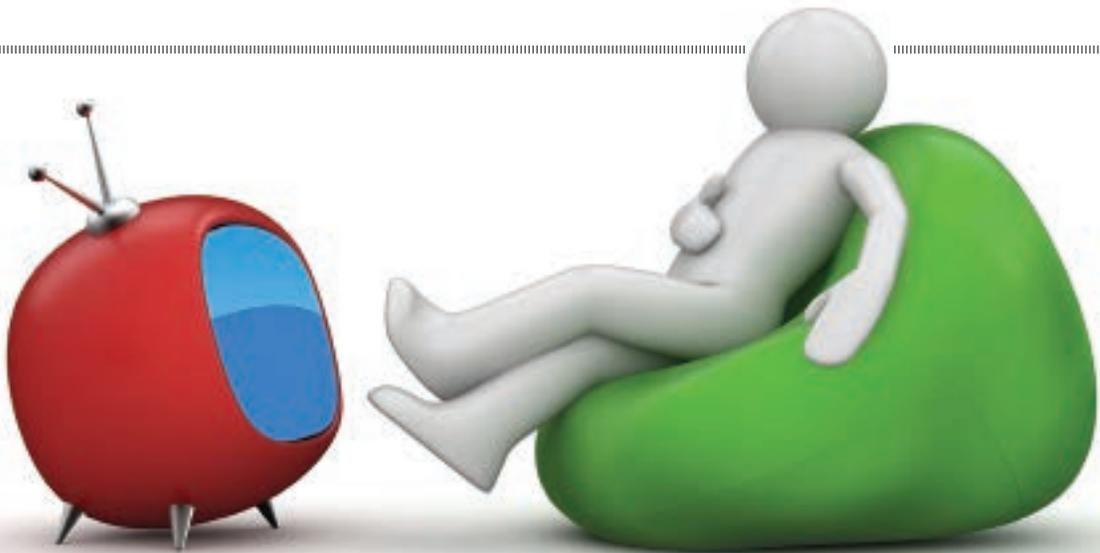


Eyeing a longer life

60%

lower risk of death in 41,735 women who had undergone cataract surgery

Cataract surgery is linked not only to improved vision but reduced risk of premature death. This startling finding, the result of a study by scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles, in the US, is based on data provided by the Women's Health Initiative, a long-term national health study in the US, which focused on strategies for preventing various types of disease in postmenopausal women. Published in *JAMA Ophthalmology*, the study analysed the health data of 74,044 post-menopausal women aged an average of 71, who had been diagnosed with cataract. It found that the 41,735 women who had undergone cataract surgery had a 60 per cent lower risk of death. While there is no causal link between cataract surgery and longevity, some point out that improved vision lowers the risk of falls and fractures; that after cataract surgery, individuals score higher on standardised cognitive assessment tests; and that those who underwent the surgery were from a higher socio-economic status, which implied better nutrition and healthcare. All these factors, in turn, were linked to longevity.



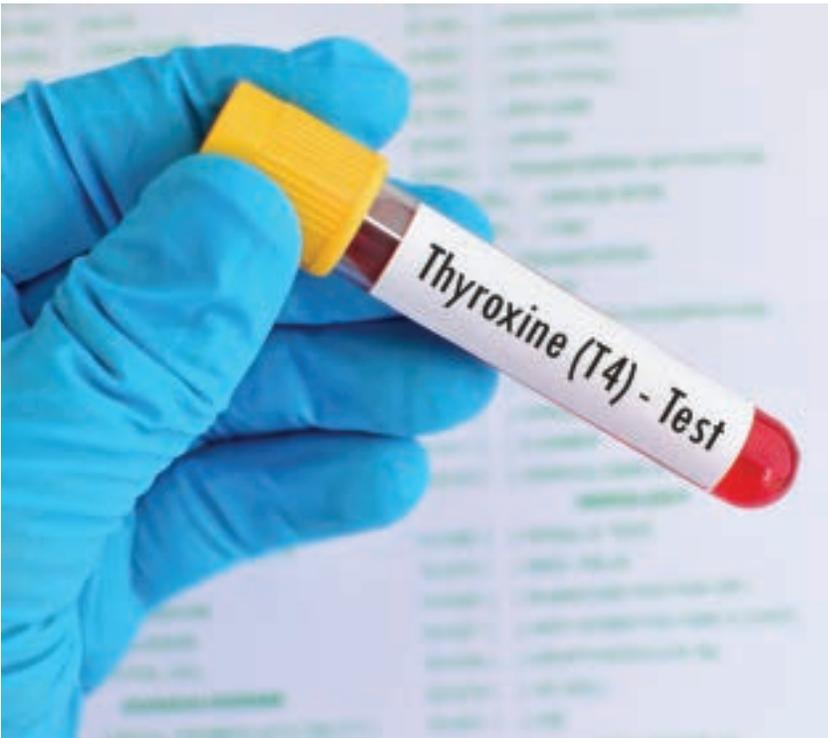
Photographs by 123RF.com

TOO MUCH TV

WE OFTEN USE the television as a substitute for human company and to while away the time. But too much TV could be our downfall, quite literally. Scientists at George Washington University, Washington, DC, have found **a strong link between a sedentary lifestyle, especially one that includes lots of TV watching, and walking disabilities.** The researchers used data from an NIH-AARP Diet Study conducted by the National

Those who watched more than five hours of TV a day were 65 per cent more susceptible to walking disabilities

Cancer Institute (NCI), which recorded the physical activity of 340,000 men and 226,000 women aged between 50 and 71, across 10 years. They found that almost 30 per cent of the participants had developed a walking disability by the end of the period. That is, those who watched more than five hours of TV a day were 65 per cent more susceptible to walking disabilities in later years. The findings were published in the *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*. Moral of the story: Get off the couch!



Blame it on thyroid

Advancing age and elevated levels of FT4, a thyroid hormone, can be a deadly combination. According to researchers at the Erasmus University in the Netherlands, **seniors with this condition are at twice the risk of coronary artery disease.** In some cases, it may also lead to atherosclerosis, a condition where the walls of the arteries grow thick and hard owing to fat deposits. These findings are based on data from 9,420 participants aged 65 years on average, analysed over nine years. The researchers discovered that the risk of cardiovascular disease and coronary heart disease increased by 87 per cent in seniors exhibiting a high level of FT4. Their study was published in journal *Circulation Research*.

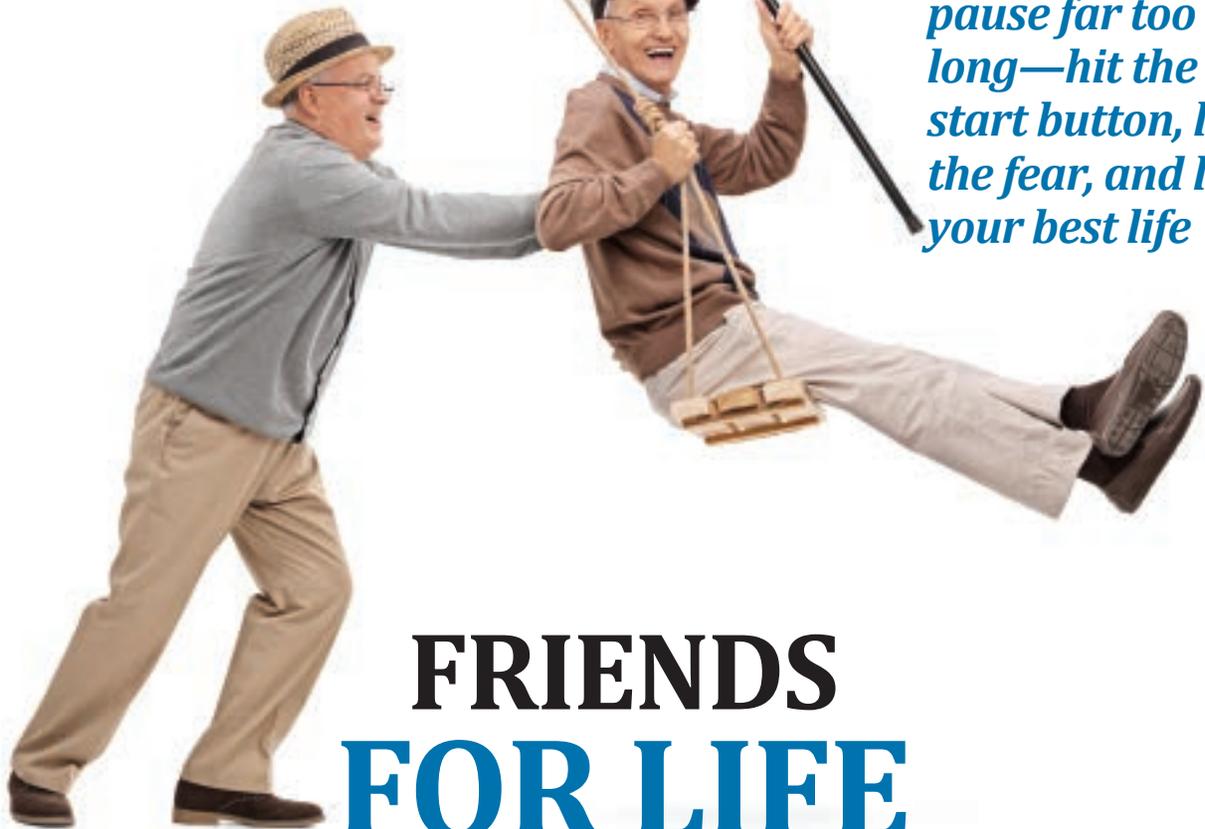
Did you know? A study conducted at the University of California - San Diego indicates that the risk of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) increases 12 times in the first-degree relatives (siblings or offspring) of patients suffering from liver cirrhosis. The study was published in *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, and trials are still being conducted to learn more about the cause, risk factors, screening and detection.



Sugar high

Here's some good and bad news for diabetics in the US. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, US, conducted a comparative study of diabetes cases over 26 years and found that **while the incidence of diabetes is on the rise**—from 5.5 per cent in 1988-1994 to 10.8 per cent in 2011-2014—**the number of undiagnosed cases had declined**, from 16.3 per cent over the same period. The result is owing to the application of more stringent criteria to the diagnosis of the illness, where the American Diabetes Association recommends that people with a positive fasting blood glucose test should have a second test to confirm a diagnosis. By eliminating false positives, the number of cases automatically falls, which means the incidence of the disease is less than imagined. This was recently revealed in journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Nobel Hygiene Presents



*You've been on
pause far too
long—hit the
start button, lose
the fear, and live
your best life*

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

**Incontinence need not be a life sentence that imprisons you
in your home. Adult diapers can be your ticket to freedom
and fun—if you let them**

Start now

Studies show that most people don't start using adult diapers until their incontinence becomes severe, thus missing out on years of active living. There's no time like today to break free and get a fresh lease on life.

Substitutes won't do

Many seniors use feminine hygiene products as an alternative to adult diapers. While this may seem more cost-effective in the short term, they just don't provide the absorbency of an adult diaper, nor will they protect you against leakage.

Designed to perform

If you think an adult diaper is like a simple sponge, think again. Here's how it actually works: The topmost layer, which forms the first breathable layer of comfort for the

user, is hydrophilic (allows water through); the acquisition and dispersal layer spreads liquids evenly throughout the diaper; wood pulp forms the soft, cottony part of the diaper, acting as a cushion and absorbent; super-absorbent polymer converts all the liquid into gel; the standing leg guard ensures a snug fit and prevents leakages; and the back sheet acts like a base and holds the entire diaper in place.

There's one for you

Adult diapers are available in a range of sizes and absorbencies, depending on your body shape, degree of incontinence and duration of use (eight hours, 10 hours or 16 hours/overnight). On average, two to three diapers will get you through the day.

Diapers are discreet

Today's adult diapers are designed to

work silently, not be seen or heard—they are well-cut and tailored to fit users well under their clothes. No telltale bulges, no awkward shifting or wedgies, no audible sounds from the plastic...just comfort and security all day, all the way.

Leak-free, rash-free

The latest material technology ensures that your diaper is snug, yet soft; absorbent, yet non-abrasive. No clamminess or bulkiness and, most important, no rashes!

We've got you covered

The verdict is in: adult diapers tick all the boxes, from wearability to absorbency, longevity to style! Whatever your size or shape, we've got your back. You've been on pause far too long—hit the start button, lose the fear, and live your best life.

Ensure that he sleeps like a baby.



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Urologists believe that irregular sleep due to incontinence leads to depression. The new Friends Overnight Adult Diaper offers up to 16 hours of protection, ensuring a peaceful night's rest. So you as a 'parent', have one less thing to worry about.

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Photographs by 123RF.com

ALL ACCESS!

This is the road to progress. Transport major Uber has partnered with IT services company Mphasis to launch uberACCESS and uberASSIST vehicles for silvers and people with accessibility needs in Bengaluru. uberACCESS offers 50 retrofitted vehicles with a heightened roof and hydraulic wheelchair lift on demand; four-point tie-down straps secure the wheelchair to the floor and all vehicles have a rear entry, allowing riders to face forward when they're travelling. Meanwhile, uberASSIST comprises a fleet of

500 vehicles that provide additional assistance to those who need it and can accommodate foldable wheelchairs. The drivers of these vehicles have all been trained and certified by Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC), a Bengaluru-based undertaking that provides consulting, research and training services to companies, educational institutions and the Government in creating an inclusive environment. "At Uber, we believe in creating transportation options that fit every rider's need," says Amit Jain, president, Uber India and South Asia, in a media release. "The launch of uberASSIST and uberACCESS furthers our efforts in this direction. We aim to make these services available in more cities across the country." We can't wait.

HOME IN BIHAR

The state government has announced that it will open four old-age homes in the towns of Bettiah, Begusarai, Samastipur and Sasaram. This takes the total number of old-age homes in Bihar to nine—at present, old-age homes are functioning in Patna, Muzaffarpur, Purnea, Gaya and Bhagalpur, which together house 127 silvers.



FREE COVER The Jammu & Kashmir government has announced that it will provide free insurance cover for all its state pensioners from the next fiscal year. Going forward, it will seek to extend this scheme to all silvers.

HEALTH FOR FREE

Over 2,000 doctors from the Meerut chapter of the Indian Medical Association have come together to set up a senior citizens' clinic that will operate two days a week. Silvers can come to the clinic for free consultation across disciplines, following which they can visit the district hospital for medicines or to take admission—whichever is necessary.

YOUR BANK COMES HOME

Last November, we told you in these pages that India's apex bank had expressed its concern about silvers getting marginalised in an increasingly digital banking scenario ("Silver counts"). And now, making good on its promise to put silver-friendly mechanisms in place, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has instructed banks to provide doorstep services to silvers (over 70) and the differently abled



by 31 December 2017. The services will include pickup and delivery of cash, issue of chequebooks, delivery of demand drafts, and submission of Know Your Customer (KYC)

documents and life certificates. Further, in addition to the facility of digital life certificate under the Jeevan Praman Scheme, pensioners can submit their physical life certificate form at any branch of the pension-paying bank. What's more, RBI has instructed banks that a fully KYC compliant account should automatically be converted into a 'Senior Citizen Account' based on the date of birth available in their records and that they should provide senior citizens and the differently abled persons Form 15G/H (related to tax deduction at source) once a year, preferably in April.

Elders' expo

Continuing with its mission of 'Happy Elderhood', Dr V S Natarajan Geriatric Foundation celebrated World Elders' Day on 30 September and 1 October by organising the Elders Fest & Expo 2017 in T Nagar, Chennai. Leading elder and home healthcare service providers participated in the expo, which offered silvers the opportunity to learn about various products and services available in the market. Eye and dental checkups and counselling for memory, fall prevention, nutrition in silvers and adult immunisation were part of the expo, which also hosted an alternative medicines pavilion.

Courtesy: Dr V S Natarajan



REC ROOM! Gurgaon is now home to the 'Senior Citizens Rejuvenation Centre', a joint venture of the DLF Foundation and Dignity Foundation. Open to all silvers, the centre will host a range of activities, such as Tai chi, yoga and aerobics classes, a laughter club, spiritual lectures, quizzes and games, birthday celebrations, panel discussions, hobbies and craft classes and festival celebrations. Located at DLF Community Centre, DLF Phase 2, the centre will be open five days a week for two hours every evening.



Photographs by Ramdas Mondal & Mukul Kundu

Oh! Kolkata

Kolkata's love for sports is legendary. And the city's silvers took their indomitable sporting spirit to the next level when they participated in the 2.5-km Senior Citizens' Run supported by Harmony at the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K on 17 December. For Harmony, too, it was a red-letter day as we debuted our Run in the City of Joy. Around 700 sprightly silvers participated in the Run donning their signature yellow shirts.

In an encouraging trend, more women hit the road than men with a ratio of 60:40.

The Run, sponsored by Typhoo India, VLCC Wellness and Fortis Hospital, Kolkata, was flagged off by guests of

honour Olympic hockey champion Gurbux Singh; former captain of the Bengal cricket team S Raju Mukherji; former assistant editor of Bengali newspaper *Aajkaal* Alok Chattopadhyay; National Award-winning film scholar and renowned visual artist Ujjal Chakraborty; special copy editor of *The Times of India* Kalyan Maitra; former chairman of Confederation of Indian Industry R K Agrawal; and regional managing partner (east) of PriceWaterhouseCoopers Avijit Mukerji.

Brimming with determination, our silvers geared up at the starting point at Red Road. It was a delight to watch them gleefully claiming the track as their own, testing their strength and endurance, even as onlookers cheered them on and captured the moments through their lenses.



For many participants, it was a dream run. “The Run has brought out the best in me. It feels good to know that age hasn’t robbed me of my vigour,” said an elated Shefali Sannal, 77, from Kharagpur. For Priyobrata Sirkar, 83, from Burdwan, age is just a number and fitness a way of life. “I never let my age make a dent in my running schedule. I’m an early riser. By 5 am, I finish my run of minimum six laps daily at a ground near my residence,” he shared. Then, there was 71 year-old Phanindra Nath Parui from Bhadreswar celebrating the adventure that comes with running. “Running is thrilling,” he said gleefully. For Shivshankar Chakraborty, 77, no distance is too great. “The moment I reached the marathon venue, I forgot my age,” he told us. “We want to live our lives to

the fullest. What we need is a boost to our morale and Harmony has provided us that,” mentioned Bipul Das, 87, while reaching the finish line. The highlight of the event was undoubtedly 63 year-old Jayanti Bannerjee, a cancer survivor who was felicitated for her participation. “This has given me a renewed zeal,” she shared, fraught with emotion.

After the Run, the celebrations and fun continued at the marquee. Silvers were served refreshments, followed by entertainment and a lucky dip. As the event came to a close, the participants bid goodbye with a promise to come back next year.

—Partha Mukherjee

TATA Mumbai Marathon 2018!

Procam International tells us how Maximum City is revved up to run

The cornerstone of Asia's distance running movement is celebrating its landmark 15th edition, with the world's leading business conglomerate, Tata Group, taking the baton as the title sponsor for the Mumbai Marathon. Now called the Tata Mumbai Marathon, the event will see in action world-class athletes, fitness enthusiasts and amateur runners take centre-stage at the \$ 405,000 prize money event on 21 January 2018.

Recognised among the top 10 marathons in the world, the journey across 14 years has been transformational. From starting a fitness revolution that has spawned over 700 road races in India to creating a springboard for Indian long-distance runners and representation at the Olympics, to being a beacon of humanity and compassion to the nation and the world, the Tata Mumbai Marathon stands for it all. The event has also firmly established itself as the largest charity fundraising platform for NGOs in India supporting myriad causes. Since inception, the event has raised more than ₹ 200 crore that has benefited 550 charities, with the funds being used to support causes ranging from arts, culture and sports to education,



environment, health and human rights, among others.

The Tata Mumbai Marathon has many race categories, including the Full Marathon (42.195 km), Half Marathon (21.097 km), Dream Run (6 km), Senior Citizens' Run (4.3 km), the Champions with Disability Run (2.4 km) and the newly introduced 10K, exclusively via charity. Set to international standards, the event provides runners with personalised bibs; prize money across different age categories for amateurs; pacers for all timing categories; and umpteen water and energy stations in addition to cooling tunnels throughout the course.

Set in the City of Dreams as Mumbai is often known, the Full Marathon route offers runners the exhilarating experience of running across the majestic Bandra-Worli Sealink in addition to other iconic sights and attractions of this magical city such as the Haji Ali mosque and the glorious Queen's Necklace, to name just a few.

Make no mistake; this is the Maximum City...come experience maximum running!

 To learn more, log on to tatamumbaimarathon.procamrunning.in





123RF.com

Green your life. Being surrounded by trees, gardens and plants may reduce depression, anxiety and other mental health issues among silvers. In fact, the Australian Catholic University's Institute of Health and Ageing has developed a greenery project to put this to the test among care homes in the country. "Research shows that visual exposure to greenery has assisted in recovery from stress and that garden use was associated with lower levels of agitation among those with dementia in residential care," project leader Professor Takemi Sugiyama tells website australianageingagenda.com.au. So, tend that garden—or make a mini one on your balcony!

Then: Newspaper Now: Diamond kite

Come Makar Sankranti, the sky will be dotted with the vibrant colours of kites. It's also time for the International Kite Flying Festival (Uttarayan). So why not gift your grandchild a beautiful kite! You need two thin wooden dowels or sticks, about the size of barbecue skewers; scissors; masking tape; string; ruler; and newspapers. Start by placing the two dowels in the form of a cross; the vertical dowel will act as the kite's spine while the horizontal one will be the spar. Remember to place one above the midpoint, so the diamond shape looks top-heavy. Use tape to secure the two dowels in place. Now, place a newspaper over the skeleton and use scissors to cut from spar to spine, leaving 1 inch of paper at the edges to be folded in onto the dowels for added strength. Paste a triangle cut-out of a newspaper to the bottom of the kite and add thin paper strips to the triangle; that will help keep the kite stable during flight. Stick the tape diagonally at the dowel intersection and place two neat holes on either side for the thread; do the same at the bottom half of the kite—in this case, just place the two holes on either side of the dowel. Invert the kite, so the dowels are now under. Unspool 2 ft of string and tie one end at the diagonal (top) holes and other end at the bottom holes, so the string runs across the spine, leaving some slack. Tie the bridle into a loop (overhand knot) from the middle. Attach your fly line (thread) to the loop and, voila, your kite is ready to fly!



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- Paper recycling fights global warming by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

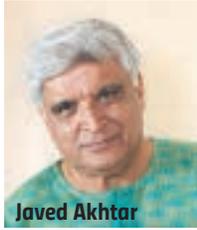
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2. USE NEWSPAPER PAGES TO COVER DIARIES AND NOTEPADS. THE CREATIVITY LIES IN WHAT SECTIONS OF THE NEWSPAPER YOU CUT.

Haresh Patel



Raghunath Mashelkar



Javed Akhtar

BIRTHDAYS

Eminent scientist **Raghunath Mashelkar** turns 75 on 1 January.

Australian actor and filmmaker **Mel Gibson** turns 62 on 3 January.

Former Indian cricket captain **Kapil Dev** turns 59 on 6 January.

Former actor **Reena Roy** turns 61 on 7 January.

Poet, lyricist and screenwriter **Javed Akhtar** turns 73 on 17 January.

Actor and social activist **Nafisa Ali** turns 61 on 18 January.

IN PASSING

Veteran Broadway actor **Earle Hyman** passed away on 17 November in New Jersey. He was 91.

Pop and jazz singer **Della Reese** passed away on 19 November. She was 86.

Folk singer **Kalachand Darbesh** passed away on 3 December in Siliguri. He was 84.

Legendary actor **Shashi Kapoor** passed away on 4 December after a kidney ailment. He was 79.

Rabindra Sangeet singer **Purabi Mukhopadhyay** passed away on 4 December owing to age-related health problems. She was 83.

British TV presenter and actor **Keith Chegwin** died on 11 December from a progressive lung condition. He was 60.

Actor, screenwriter and director **Neeraj Vora** died on 14 December following a stroke and cardiac arrest. He was 54.

MILESTONES

- Actor **Shabana Azmi**, 67, and poet-lyricist **Javed Akhtar**, 73, were felicitated by Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Razak as Asia's power couple for their exemplary contribution to art and entertainment, at a business leaders' conclave in Kuala Lumpur.
- Photography artist **O P Sharma** was conferred with the Chaayachitrasiri 2017 award by Alva's Education Foundation at Moodabidri in Karnataka for his works of art.



Photographs: Harmony Archives

OVERHEARD

“I’m enjoying my wings with all the fervour and passion of a teenager. I’m ready to try anything that appeals to me and even a few things that don’t. My lines are like reluctant friends... Of course, I wish they’d disappear. I do want my old skin back—the young one. I would love for my hair to cascade down my shoulders... My lips have lost their fullness, my eyes their sparkle. Yes, I feel the loss. But not in a way that emotionally scares me. I still feel good when I dress up to go out and receive compliments. I experiment with my wardrobe, accessories and makeup... I am far more liberated in my choice of outfits. Vanity gets redefined in strange ways at 70. I take pride in showing off my shoulder blades; at 30, I overlooked them totally.”

—Writer **Shobhaa Dé** in her book *Seventy...And To Hell With It* (Penguin Random House India)

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.

MUSIC & ME

I have had a very passionate relationship with music ever since I was a child. It has been a long and eventful journey with the craft, one that resulted in me acquiring a PhD in music in my 60s.

My love for music started to develop at the age of two. My great-grandfather in Meerut, where I was born, used to compose verses and songs and would have an almost emotional reaction to the notes! We had a gramophone at home and we listened to a lot of Carnatic music at home. By the time I was three, I began to identify some ragas and began to sing along. On my fourth birthday, an aunt gifted me a harmonium and my sister and I would play nursery rhymes on it. I attended my first music concert when I was four or five years old. Even our games were musical; we used to hum while playing!

My sister and I were formally trained in music by a tutor. Ten years later, I went to college but my training continued. The fact is, as Tamil Brahmins, women were not allowed to work and music was kept within the house. But I was part of a group in college that played the veena, sarod and violin and performed at college functions.

I married into an orthodox family and music was snuffed out of my life. I sold my tanpura and we were not even allowed to listen to music. My husband was a bureaucrat and, in 1955, we moved to Netaji Nagar in New Delhi, where the South Indian ladies had formed a Friday music group. They had the same story—their talent had been suppressed. We began to meet, sing and hold programmes. We sang exclusively for friends and family.

In 1975, we were transferred back to Chennai and I learnt the veena at a music academy there. My turning point came after we returned to Delhi, where, at a wedding, a lady told me about the Sangeet Shiromani class at Delhi University. This was my first really immersive experience with music and I felt elated.

I completed the two-year course in Carnatic music and thought I was done—that the diploma was enough. But, with support from my daughter and daughter-in-law, I pursued a master's degree. In 1982, my youngest son Sanjay and I were both conferred gold medals at the same convocation: he for economics and I for music!



Himanshu Kumar

Subrahmanyam completed her PhD in music at the age of 63

Then I did my MPhil and also enrolled for PhD studies. It was a very challenging time. For one, my husband was unwell and, two, my guide retired and moved to Chennai. We also moved to Cambridge in the UK for a year as my husband had been offered a position there as professor.

There were many times when I felt like giving up but I had the wholehearted support of my family; my daughter-in-law even helped me with notes and encouraged me to complete my thesis. My husband had bypass surgery and was in hospital when I got the call for my viva. The odds had definitely been stacked against me! However, I took the viva and, at the age of 63, I received my PhD degree.

I am 85 years old now and I spend a lot of time reading and listening to music. For many decades, something had been propelling me forward and I was consumed by music. Having fulfilled every goal I had been given, I now feel a sense of closure and enjoy music in a very different, more mellow way. And thus my journey with music continues.

—Sulochana Subrahmanyam, New Delhi



New year, new you

Make a fresh start of the year with a gentle detoxification diet that promises better health



Photographs by 123RF.com

After the New Year festivities, the season of weddings and the party indulgences you had to give in to, it's time to cleanse your body of all the toxins. The best way to do this is to undergo a detoxification process.

SO, WHAT IS DETOXIFICATION?

The food we eat includes white flour, white sugar, aerated drinks, processed foods and junk foods that are full of chemicals and do more harm than

good. Such foods are taxing on the digestive organs, owing to which the body's efficiency to eliminate toxins decreases. The liver is unable to cope with the overload and the excess toxins make the body sluggish, leading to mental, emotional and physical stress. Also, the cell reproduction of the body slows down as you age, making it harder to recuperate from stress and illnesses.

Detoxification is a harmless and effective natural strategy to remove toxins and regain your health, thus

aiding the body's organs to work efficiently. It is important to understand the Indian diet with a scientific viewpoint and know what foods help you detoxify and strengthen your immune system quickly. The best way to detoxify your body is to first detoxify your kitchen. Start by getting rid of the white flour, sugar-laden foods, packaged and comfort foods from your kitchen shelf and replacing them with organic meals. Organic foods are largely categorised as fruits, leafy greens and vegetables; ensure they are local and seasonal. Food grains

Detox recipes to stay healthy and active

BANANA AND STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE

Ingredients

- Bananas: 1 or 2
- Strawberries: 3-4
- Ice (or cold water): a little

Method

Peel the bananas and chop them. Cut the strawberries. Mix the fruits and blend with ice. Serve cold.

PRUNE AND FIG COMPOTE

Ingredients

- Prunes: 6
- Figs: 6
- Cinnamon sticks: 2; ¼-inch each
- Water: a little

Method

Chop the figs and prunes into four pieces each and soak in a bowl of water. Place both the cinnamon sticks on either side of the bowl. Let them remain soaked for at least 12 hours. Serve warm or chilled in a serving bowl.



SAFFRON TEA

Ingredients

- Water: 4 cups
- Saffron strands: 4
- Cinnamon stick: ½-inch piece
- Clove: 1
- Almond: 1; de-skinned and grated
- Organic honey: 1 tsp

Method

Add saffron strands, cinnamon stick and clove to water and boil for 10 minutes till the water reduces to half its quantity. Strain the water and add honey. Sprinkle grated almond on top and serve hot.

such as bajra, jowar, *nachni*, brown rice, sprouts, cold-pressed oils, rock salt and sea salt are organic in nature and easily available in the market. Consumption of organic foods helps reduce the intake of chemicals in your body, saves the environment, and boosts overall mental well-being.

Detoxification gives you positive direction and heightens your self-awareness. Spiritually and scientifically, it improves your self-discipline. Even the most basic changes, like drinking more water, adding fruits to your diet, increasing your greens, opting for organic foods and avoiding

processed foods, can greatly reduce toxicity in the body. The best time to detoxify your body is after the New Year festivities are over; you can also do it on a weekly basis throughout the year. Before that, understand the signs that tell you whether you need a detox.

HEED THE SIGNS

Do you...

- Feel tired when you wake up in the morning?
- Drink more than three cups of coffee a day?
- Rarely eat fresh fruits or vegetables?
- Suffer from bloating after meals?
- Eat fried and junk food?
- Skip meals, especially breakfast?
- Eat red meat more than twice a week?
- Have an alcoholic drink most days?
- Smoke or live with smokers?
- Have mood swings?
- Gain weight easily?
- Feel lethargic most of the time?
- Suffer from frequent colds, fever or allergies?
- Have irregular bowel movements?
- Have muscle or joint aches?



BEETROOT DIP

Ingredients

- Beetroot: 200 gm; boiled
- Lemon juice: ½ tbsp
- Garlic paste: ½ tsp
- Walnuts: 5 tsp; crushed
- Salt to taste

Method

Boil the beetroot; peel and mash well till you get a paste with no chunks. Add lemon juice, garlic paste, crushed walnuts and salt and mix well. Chill and serve with vegetable crudités.

METHI SALAD

Ingredients

- Fenugreek leaves (*methi*): 1 bunch
- Sesame seeds: 3 tsp
- Walnuts: 3-4; chopped
- Raisins: 5-6
- Olive oil: 1 tsp
- Mustard seeds: ½ tsp
- Asafoetida (*hing*): a pinch
- Honey: ¼ tsp
- Lemon to taste
- Salt to taste

Method

Wash the methi leaves and leave to dry. Heat oil in a pan and add mustard seeds. Once they crackle, add *hing* and switch off the flame to allow it to cool. Add salt, lemon and honey and mix well to prepare the salad dressing. Cool in the refrigerator. Add walnuts, raisins and sesame seeds to the methi leaves and then add the salad dressing. Mix well and serve.

If you suffer from five or more of these symptoms, you definitely need to go for a detox diet.

BENEFITS OF DETOX

- Boosts immunity
- Removes accumulated waste via sweat, faeces, gases and urine
- Helps in weight reduction
- Delays premature ageing and degeneration
- Regulates sleep pattern
- Improves emotional well-being
- Makes blood parameters better

PLANNING A DETOX DIET?

Keep a few pointers in mind before you start your detox plan. Have as much organic food as possible. Maintain a daily diary to ensure you are drinking enough water, eating more fruits and vegetables, cutting down on grains, alcohol and caffeine, and getting enough exercise and meditation. Ensure your cooked food is steamed or lightly sautéed. Consumption of sprouted and

cooked pulses is beneficial as they are high in vitamin content. Flavour your food with spices and condiments like cumin, turmeric, rock salt, ginger and herbs such as coriander and mint. This boosts nutrient content and makes it easier to digest, assimilate and eliminate the food.

For cooking, make use of use organic cold pressed oil or cow's ghee. Garnishing with freshly grated coconut is great for health. Fruits such as lemon, papaya, pumpkin and white gourd are good to eat during detox. Avoid dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, cheese and paneer along with eggs and animal products. Fried food, chocolates, sweets, white flour and white sugar foods are a strict no. Eat slowly, chew properly and concentrate on your food while eating; never skip your meals. Detoxification is like any normal diet and can be practised by all silvers, even those suffering from age-related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Just ensure you continue your medication even during your detox plan.

A SAMPLE DETOX PLAN

- Start your day with lemon water
- Follow it up with a fruit or fruit smoothie + herbal infusion or green tea
- Mid-morning, have a vegetable juice
- Lunch can consist of salad + seasonal vegetables + dal + roti
- Mid-evening, have a seasonal fruit + saffron tea
- Dinner can consist of vegetable soup + sweet potato or yam or vegetable *khichdi*
- For dessert, have prune and fig compote

Do this after for a week, once in three weeks, to rejuvenate your body.

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 for more details or write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org if you have any queries for her

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PARTHA MUKHERJEE**



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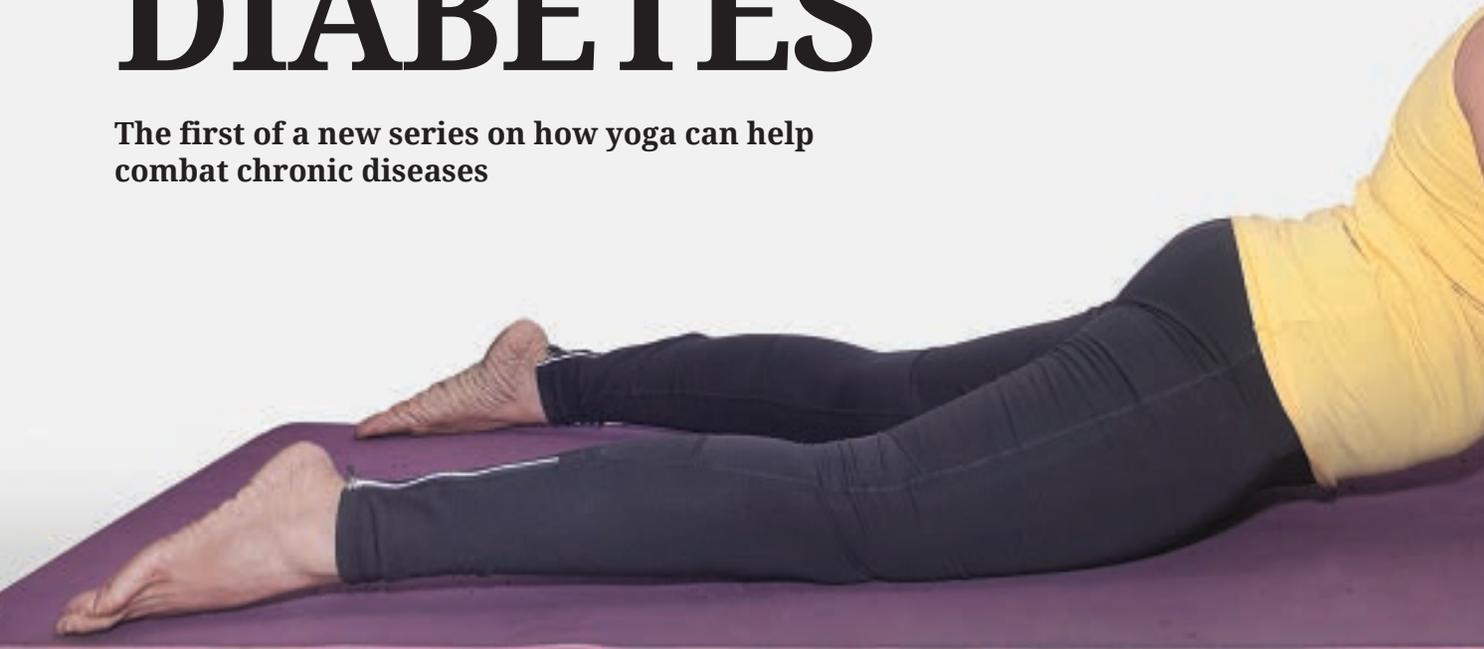
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YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Dealing with DIABETES

The first of a new series on how yoga can help combat chronic diseases



Diabetes is among the most common chronic ailments in India. Interestingly, the original biological intent of the body in keeping a high level of sugar in the blood was to prevent it from freezing in extremely cold climates. Somewhere along evolutionary history, this marvellous trick turned into a bane. So, today, a high level of sugar—which the body is unable to process well—is a trigger for a problem that constrains life by limiting your diet and activity and can set the foundation for other chronic problems like heart and circulatory issues, among others.

At a psychosomatic level, healers wonder if diabetes is triggered by a

mind that feels that its life is not sweet enough! This can be a distressing idea to assimilate. But it is an idea worth pondering. In yoga, it is believed that many of our problems are induced from the mind. This column examines adult-onset diabetes. Meditation can help us unravel these deep-rooted psychosomatic triggers. As much as diabetes has a dramatic presence—calculated by blood sugar levels—it is often seen as triggered by lifestyle issues, diet and propensity to stress. Leading a life fraught with stress sets off a need for glucose in the blood that is also believed to be causative.

Diabetes is a silent troublemaker. Most people believe it can be tackled only with medication. But it is essential to overhaul your life to introduce

changes that will eventually even help you control the dosage levels of your medicine. These include a daily exercise regimen, even a short brisk walk. Dietary restrictions, on the advice of an expert nutritionist, must be rigorously followed. And, most important, a regular practice of yoga asana and pranayama must be started.

No pose is contraindicated as such even though, physiologically, diabetes makes the body very stiff. However, owing to the stiffness, a gentle programme should be initiated; this can be subsequently tweaked to make the practice playful and rejuvenating. The practice may be gentle or vigorous, depending on the inclination of the practitioner. But some practices must be included such as alternate nostril



Photographs by Haresh Patel

◀ YOGIC MOVES

Twisting cobra pose (*trikaya bhujangasana*)

This pose combines a twist as well as abdominal pressure—two crucial movements and pressure points required to control diabetes. Lie on your stomach. Keep feet apart, toes tucked in, palms under shoulders. Inhale; raise chest up. Exhale; twist to the right side, looking over your shoulder to the left foot. Inhale; return your gaze back to the centre. Exhale; relax your chin/forehead back to the ground. Inhale; raise chest up. Exhaling, look over your left shoulder at the right foot. Inhale; return to centre. Exhale; relax back. This is one round. You may do up to three initially, and build up to five rounds over a few months. **Benefits:** This pose works on the pressure points at the pancreas and soothes the kidneys, which are also adversely affected by diabetes. It tones the urogenital system, which can adversely affect our moods when in trouble. It balances metabolism; boosts digestion; tones the whole spine; and builds physical stamina.

KNOW YOUR KRIYA

Jal neti

This is one of the most important *kriya* or cleansing practices that must be done in practically all chronic ailments. It appears to intimidate a lot of people but is rather simple. That said, it must ideally be learnt only from an expert. Saline water is taken in a *jal neti* pot, which has a spout to facilitate the process. This water is passed through either nostril and comes out of the opposite one. It is said to clear the sinuses in the skull. But its impact is more subtle. As it touches upon sensitive nerves that hold tension in our faces, it removes stress at a very deep level. It is said to keep the face young and eyes clear, and boost respiratory capacity.

The proportion of the water to salt is crucial—one teaspoonful is sufficient for a litre of water. The temperature of the water should be lukewarm. One pot for each nostril is sufficient. This *kri-*



ya may be done twice daily. But keep some factors in mind: You must not lie down immediately after doing this, because some of the water might run back into the respiratory tract. Also, for this reason, inversions must not be practised immediately after it. It is ideal before pranayama. After doing it, vigorous breathing—like bellows breathing (*bhastrika*) or *kapalabhati*—must be done to blow off any leftover moisture in the nostrils. Though it is good to do this *kriya* to prevent respiratory problems, beginners must not start off on it when having an infection.

breathing (*anulom vilom*); skull-breathing (*kapalabhati*); inverted psychic union pose (*viparitarani mudra*); fish pose (*matsyasana*); seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*); cobra pose (*bhujangasana*); and half-spinal twist (*ardhamatsyendrasana*).

One of the main factors in your asana selection for diabetes should be that it applies pressure on the abdomen in a positive way—because it acts like a massage of the pancreas, the main gland affected by diabetes. Equally, choose poses that are most likely to be forward bends as they are powerful de-stressors.

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



HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

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

Family ties

Girija Srinivasan • COIMBATORE

As soon as I entered their Coimbatore home, I was struck by the simple and sweet aura that surrounded this family. Everyone gathered in the room, happy enough sitting around and giving their inputs as I spoke with Alamelu Srinivasan (aka Girija, aged 63). Close by, her husband R Srinivasan had settled into his comfortable armchair, while the couple's son Padmanabhan and daughter-in-law Mythreyi kept a watchful eye on their one-and-a-half year-old son Atharva.

Mythreyi is currently pursuing her PhD in eco-toxicology and the grandparents take care of baby Atharva when she is away at university. As is always the case with babies, especially grandchildren, Atharva adds a fresh charm to their lives. Throughout our interview, this bubbly little toddler kept us entertained with his pranks; he jumped and danced in the middle, imitating every word said! Here's some of what Girijaji and her family told us.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Girija: I grew up moving around a lot due to my father's job in the state government. He was transferred often and we changed homes and cities regularly. I did my graduation from Sarada College in Salem. In 1976, I got married and moved to Coimbatore. I have lived here ever since. We have three children. My daughter Radha and her husband Siva live in

Chennai with their children Pranav and Divya. My son Chander and his wife Anu live in Detroit with their two toddler girls, Aadhya and Smaya. We live here with our younger son Padmanabhan and his family. After my husband resigned from his job in 1991, we started to work from home in insurance, mutual funds, postal savings, and the like. Now, all of us at home are involved in this business.

"Home-cooked food is always more sumptuous and healthy. I also believe that it is better to feed children what is cooked at home rather than formula food"

LOVE FOR FOOD

Girija: As a family, all of us are interested in food. We like traditional Tam-Brahm dishes, but we also like to experiment. I love making chana masala and other Punjabi dishes. It is always a hit at home.

Mythreyi (daughter-in-law): Amma's food is really yum and I enjoy eating her home-cooked meals. We feed Atharva whatever

is cooked at home sans salt and sugar. Young babies cannot really digest sweet or salty foods; they don't need them either.

Girija: Home-cooked food is always more sumptuous and healthy. I also believe that it is better to feed children what is cooked at home rather than formula food.

WATCH AND LEARN

Girija: I did not learn how to cook as a child, but I enjoyed watching my mother cook. In traditional Tamilian houses, food and cooking rules are quite strict, so I never got a chance to dabble much in cooking. After marriage, my mother-in-law managed the cooking but allowed me to help her in the kitchen. This practice has continued, as I do the main cooking at home. But I must tell you that Mythreyi is a very good cook. Whenever she prepares something, it turns out quite tasty!

Mythreyi: Observation is a great way to learn. We do that even as children. Atharva, himself, does not enjoy being with us as much as he enjoys the company of his grandparents.

Srinivasan (husband): If there are a number of people at home, children learn faster. Even though we do not allow him to watch videos on our cell phones, he has learnt to get into YouTube just by watching my actions.

Girija with her grandson Atharva



Photographs by V Karthikeyan / Divine Photography

INSPIRED BY TV

Girija: My husband and I enjoy watching the TV show *Samayal Samayal* with Venkatesh Bhat. I really enjoy trying to replicate the dishes he cooks.

Srinivasan: I don't cook at all but I enjoy watching cookery shows. Venkatesh Bhat's presentation is

excellent. The best thing is that he is a strict vegetarian, so even though he cooks non-vegetarian food, he will never taste it. He simply says, 'I cannot taste it.'

Girija: The way Venkatesh Bhat speaks and cooks makes it very interesting. My husband will ask me to try out the dishes from his presentation.

Padmanabhan (son): My father is an excellent taster and a very good food critic! You can really count on his judgement.

INSTANT MEALS

Girija: We always keep idli and dosa batter in the fridge. This way, we can make crisp dosas and serve it with dosa *molagapodi* at any time.

GODHUMAI PAYASAM WITH THENGA PAL

Wheat kheer with coconut milk

A favourite during festivals, this *godhumai* payasam is a popular and traditional sweet dish from Kerala. Girijaji learnt how to make this dish from her mother. She says the quality of the jaggery is the most important part of this recipe; just ensure that it is clean. Girijaji uses a variety of jaggery known as *urunde vellam*, which is dark in colour. If the jaggery is chosen well, she says it does not require straining when cooked into a liquid. In Tamil Nadu, *paagu vellam* is available, which is a variety of *urunde vellam*.

Ingredients

- Broken wheat (*samba godhumai*): 150 gm
- Coconut: 1 large
- Dark-coloured jaggery: 300 gm
- A small pinch of cardamom powder

Preparing the coconut milk

Grate the coconut or chop into tiny pieces. Set aside 1-2 tbsp of thinly chopped coconut pieces. This will be roasted in ghee and added in the end. Use the rest of the coconut to extract the milk. To prepare the milk, heat 1.5 cups of warm water (about 300 ml). First, add ½ cup of warm water to the grated coconut and grind it finely. Strain the liquid and set aside. This is the 1st milk. To the same grated coconut, add ½ cup warm water, grind and strain. For best results, strain with a thin muslin cloth. This strained liquid is the 2nd milk. Set aside. Repeat the procedure to extract the 3rd milk. Set aside. Throw away the grated coconut.



Method

Pressure-cook the broken wheat until it is fully cooked (about 3 whistles). Set aside. Powder the jaggery and cook in ½ cup water. When it melts, strain if required. Add the cooked broken wheat and the 3rd coconut milk to the jaggery liquid. Allow it to boil for a few minutes, while stirring continuously. Now, add the 2nd coconut milk and let it cook for another 5 minutes. Take jaggery and coconut mixture off the heat. After it cools, add the 1st coconut milk to the preparation. To garnish, shallow-fry 1 tbsp of finely chopped coconut bits in ghee until golden. Sprinkle on top of the payasam with a pinch of cardamom powder before serving.

Godhumai payasam is served warm or at room temperature. The reason for adding the 1st milk at the end is to retain its fresh flavour. Girijaji says that you must choose a coconut which is tender, as it will be sweet.

I like making the *molagapodi* powder myself. In fact, I also make homemade sambar and rasam powder. Because of the humidity in Coimbatore, I store them in the fridge so that the flavours are well preserved and do not spoil.

LEFTOVERS

One of my favourite recipes is my own innovation with leftover rice. To the cooked rice, I add finely chopped or grated vegetables such as beans, carrots and onions. Then, add fresh ginger, green chillies, curry leaves and coriander leaves, all finely chopped. Now, add salt to taste. Don't forget to mix well. Make sure you add enough rice flour or *besan* to bind the

mixture into cutlets; then, shallow-fry on a *tava* with either oil or butter. Enjoy!

FAVOURITE DISHES

Girija: I don't know whether my family really has a list of favourite dishes; it depends on the occasion. Whenever my elder son and daughter come home, the first thing on their list is *poori masaal*. This is a combination dish of fried *poori* with South Indian style potato vegetables.

Srinivasan: In fact, if you are visiting Coimbatore, do not miss the *poori masaal* with chutney at Annapoorna Hotel, which is truly a speciality there.

Mythreyi: It's her touch. You must taste the brinjal curry and the *avial* she has prepared today. Her festival preparations are also really delicious; particularly her *godhumai* payasam (wheat kheer). It is so delicious that I cannot stop myself.

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

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IT'S NEVER 2 LATE BY JACK YORK

Change for \$ 500!

The remarkable story of Francis from Cameroon whose zeal has sparked a quiet revolution

When you reach a certain age (in my case, 58), you have two choices when you get asked how you wound up where you are in your life. You can either spout out a well-honed story of charting and planning your career, step by step, every decision meticulously planned. Or you can tell the truth, which for most people is the reality that a whole lot of random coincidences have put you in a position and place you could never have dreamed of if you would have written your own future. I was thinking about that when I spoke in India last February, zipping around in my auto-rickshaw in Hyderabad, speaking at the 'International Conference on Services to the Elderly'.

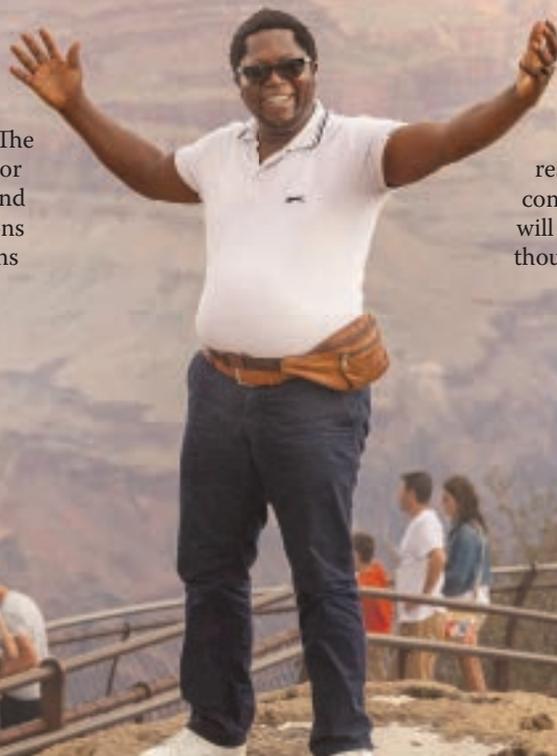
I was particularly contemplating this on 22 April last year when around 3,000 Cameroonian villagers, in a tiny village high above Mbemba in northwest Cameroon, rhythmically danced and chanted my mother Dorothy's name as they sang praises to me. The event was the dedication of a senior centre, dedicated to my mother, and funded through generous donations from close to a hundred Americans

throughout the country. It was surreal, never could have been planned (much less dreamed of), and it only happened because a remarkable man in Cameroon, Francis, decided to do something with a heartfelt donation of \$ 500.

My journey with Francis began in Perth, Australia, in October 2015. We were both invited to speak at the Global Aging Network conference and, either through coincidence or destiny, we wound up on the same panel. I am fiercely proud of the work our company, It's Never 2 Late, does, connecting older adults living in senior living communities to modern technology. But when I heard Francis's story, how he has almost singlehandedly successfully stood up against policies that oppress women and the elderly in

Cameroon, I felt such a sense of awe and insignificance. We spoke briefly after his presentation, said goodbye after no more than 15 minutes of conversation, and went our separate ways. But his spirit, in a hard-to-describe way, floated inside of me after the conference. He touched me in a way that I didn't realise at the time.

I came back to the US, sent Francis a brief email of thanks and appreciation of his work, and had our company send a modest cheque—the \$ 500—to honour his work. There were certainly no strings attached to that donation, no expectation of any 'return', just a small gesture of kindness for a man who has given his life up for the greater good. Many of us, and our organisations, make donations like that; what one gets in return is a form letter (attempting not to look like a form letter) thanking us for our generosity, with a lot of blanks filled in. Francis, however, had a different response—and his response has completely rocked my world, and will ultimately rock the world of thousands of Cameroonians.



Instead of the thank you in an email, six weeks after we sent the donation, I received an innocuous email with several attachments from Francis. To my amazement, and amusement, Francis had taken the \$ 500 and established the 'Jack York Elderly Woman's Sustainable Goat Rearing Project' in Northwest Cameroon! He went to nine distinct villages in Cameroon, and delivered each one of them a goat designed for long-term sustainability to help foster his mission of people taking care of themselves and each other. Along with the narrative, Francis took multiple videos, videos of people chanting thanks to Jack York, man of wisdom, for his generous donations to Cameroon! Are you kidding me? These videos were an intersection of National Geographic meeting *Saturday Night Live!*

After the insanity of the whole experience started to fade, it hit me, deeply: what could this man and his organisation do if they were given more money, say \$ 20,000 or \$ 30,000? With that in mind, and our company's management having a spirit of gratitude, we invited Francis to the US (his first visit) and went on a whirlwind trip, a combination of thousands of miles of driving with thousands of miles of flying; in two weeks, we visited Louisiana, Texas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Maryland, Washington DC and New York. It was magical, not only seeing the joy and exuberance of Francis but seeing our country open up its arms and welcome this gregarious man from 7,000 miles away. The fundraising was a success and the fruit of the money raised (over \$ 30,000) led to the funding of the senior centre named after Dorothy York—the first of its kind in the country of Cameroon.



Photographs courtesy: Jack York

It was magical, not only seeing the joy and exuberance of Francis but seeing our country open up its arms and welcome this gregarious man from 7,000 miles away

This is a story that has not ended; it's just a series of beginnings. If the \$ 500 can turn to \$ 30,000, what's the next step of the journey? Why not keep thinking bigger? One of the painful realities I saw in Cameroon, and Francis educated me about, was the lack of bathrooms in the village schools, a scenario that causes thousands of girls to drop out of school before high school graduation. Francis was back in the US earlier this year; we travelled to over 15 states and are well on the way to funding latrines in several of his villages. Many senior living communities are partnering with the villages; we are hoping the latrines will be the first projects and that, over the years, they will lead to many, many more. I will be heading back to Cameroon, hopefully with an army of colleagues, to help build these bathrooms in April 2018. Feel free to come along for the ride; we could use some creativity coming from India!

So, the message is simple. Whether you send a \$ 500 cheque, or receive one, we are all change-agents in this marvellous planet of ours. If you keep your eyes open, and look beyond your current situation, you might start the next revolution to make things better. And if you're lucky, you'll have a goat named after you!

In conclusion, holiday greetings to *Harmony* readers; thanks for letting me share some thoughts from around the world. If you know of any work being done in America by your countrymen let me know, I'd be happy to meet them and tell their story. Travelling to India early last year was one of the highlights of my life. The intensity of your culture is intoxicating; the culture, the food, the people, the passion. It's a large planet we live on, but it's a small one as well. Thanks for opening my eyes to a culture and a country full of beautiful people doing remarkable work. Bring on 2018!

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



2018: A harbinger of hope? Stay financially and digitally smart to derive maximum benefits in the New Year

With the advent of the New Year, it's only natural for everybody to let go of everything unpleasant. Most silvers feel focusing on the positives will help them welcome the New Year with open arms. And while the adage goes 'health is wealth', the truth is that along with physical health, we also need financial health to sustain us in these increasingly inflation-ridden, money-centric times. Most silvers weave their hopes, aspirations and plans for the near future not only on the basis of how healthy their heart is, but how deep their pockets are.

Those who have just moved into the silver phase of their life may still have their hands full with job responsibilities. Silvers in the age group of 60 to 70 are a more sombre lot, experiencing the realities of advanced age. And those that have crossed the 75-to-80-year threshold are an anxious lot that are unsure about what the future holds. That said, each of these groups embraces the New Year with the hope of physical health and financial stability.

SURPRISES GALORE

India in 2018 can unravel surprises in a range of avenues. The year 2017 was wracked by shocks to the economy in the form of demonetisation and GST implementation, affecting the lives of Indians across all strata. But those may well have been the tremors before the actual earthquake in the form of new economic reforms slated to be released in the forthcoming year.

The question: Will these reforms help improve money matters for silvers? Are there any avenues, methods and instruments available to them that will absorb the shocks, protect their monetary kitty and add to their income pool?

TAKE STOCK

A search for changes involves taking stock of the sources of total income flows that vary from person to person. Some silvers enjoy a handsome pension during their lifetime and have the liberty to invest the surplus in lucrative instruments with varying risk profiles. Others may not be so fortunate and have to depend on fixed income-earning assets such as fixed deposits.

Even a cursory look at asset allocation would show that incomes from these have declined by almost 33 per cent

as fixed deposit rates have been brutally curtailed in 2017. With each passing year, every matured fixed deposit, if reinvested, earns declining interest rates. The Government has now offered LIC's Varishtha Bima Yojana, which carries an 8 per cent annual interest rate. However, it has a fixed tenure of 10 years, with a cap of ₹ 750,000, which puts investors in a bind.

Indeed, monetary changes in the economy have had an adverse impact on the earnings of most silvers. The only way forward is to research and find solutions that will help safeguard the existing amount and add to the income flow.

GROWTH-ORIENTED AVENUES

Investment in FDs as an assured source of fixed income is one of the many avenues. As Alexander Graham Bell rightly said, "When one door closes, another door opens."

This is true of a variety of financial instruments available to investors. Over the past year, the stock market experienced a boom with the Sensex crossing 33,000 and Nifty overstepping the 10,000 mark; stock-market pundits see bulls running the marathon.

While there has been an influx of foreign investors in the market, there has also been a rise in the number of domestic ones. Investors are learning the ropes as stock-mar-

ket gains can easily exceed the income they get from fixed income deposits; in short, equities is the latest buzzword!

VALUE ADDITION

Though investment in equities is an attractive proposition, it is not without risks. It exposes you to the vagaries of stock-market trends, which can be extremely unpredictable and sometimes volatile as well.

But a reasonably long-term investment in stocks with sound financial fundamentals can reward investors with good dividends and growth in value. While the dividends are tax-free, long-term (over one year) capital gains are tax-free as well. Tax considerations and value-addition are aspects that add to the charm of investing in equities.

What typically keeps a large majority of silvers away from the stock market is its volatility and the attendant risk

As different assets undergo changes in their earning potential, the need of the hour is for silvers to restructure their portfolio and shift assets to instruments with a high-earning potential

that the stocks they buy may lose value—which may cause them to lose their shirts too. Silvers willing to balance the risk-reward ratio should consider mutual funds that offer a varied basket of options and obviate the direct risk involved in indulging in the stock market.

Mutual funds also invest in stock-market instruments and carry a similar risk. But long-term investment in well-chosen mutual funds offers stable dividends and grows in value each year. UTI's Mastershare, a mutual fund, is the darling of many silvers as it has consistently rewarded them with good dividends year after year. Mutual funds are liquid and offer a vast spectrum of risk-reward combinations suitable for individual investor profile and risk appetite. They, too, provide benefits such as tax-free dividends and long-term capital gains.

RESET ASSET ALLOCATION

In a rapidly evolving financial space, silvers may find it beneficial to reset their asset allocation, which determines their income flow. As different assets undergo changes in their earning potential, the need of the hour is for silvers to restructure their portfolio and shift assets to instruments with a high-earning potential. They will have to clear the cobwebs off their assets and explore the possibilities of repositioning annuities, equities, mutual fund, bonds, and holdings of gold and silver as well as real estate.

REFORM YOUR MINDSET

The golden rule is to accept change as a permanent factor and be vigilant to derive maximum benefits from your accumulated assets. Very few silvers in India are likely to find gainful employment after retirement. It means they can't work and bulk up their kitty.

In America, the number of seniors working out of sheer necessity has more than doubled to 9 million from 4 million in 2000. In India, wealth creation will have to occur through the present stock of wealth held by seniors as the chances of acquiring new stock is almost non-existent.

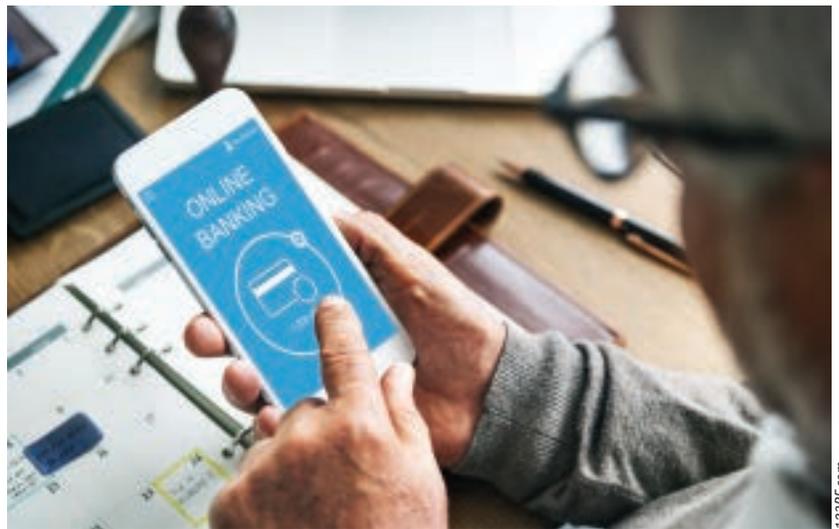
DIGITALLY AGILE

Little wonder then, that it has become imperative to get creative and think out of the box. Demands from the digital world do their bit to stress silvers even further. While most refuse to bow down to these demands, this has proven to be nothing but a futile

Further, they will need to be on the learning curve for current financial developments and be open to information and learning available on various websites. No investor can afford to remain clueless or indifferent to their asset allocation.

HOPEFUL IS HELPFUL

It is said that expenditures are like galloping horses, difficult to rein in. This is especially true for silvers. Declining incomes and constantly rising prices of essentials and medicines have rendered them unsuccessful in maintaining their standard of living. Increasing mediclaim premiums and



attempt. Those who have been proactive have found that many digital processes have distinct benefits.

You can start out small by paying your bills and advance tax through netbanking and save money and time on seeing a consultant. Financial and digital literacy is no more a choice but a necessity. If silvers are to take advantage of the changing landscape of opportunities, they will have to be more market-savvy in order to guard their assets more effectively.

reduced claim payments have also added to the burden. Perhaps the only way to remain unaffected is to stay fit and healthy.

A New Year brings in its wake new challenges as well as islands of opportunity. It is important that silvers gear up to face these and derive maximum benefits. So revisit your asset allocation, improve financial literacy, embrace digitisation and add a punch of physical well-being while welcoming 2018.

The author is an economist based in Mumbai



Photographs by Ravindra Joshi

THE DOCTOR IS IN

For almost 70 years, Dr Balwant Ghatpande has been healing the sick. Could there be a more healthy prescription for a long and fulfilling life? **Suchismita Pai** finds out

At 103 years of age, if you're at a doctor's clinic, chances are you're a patient. But Balwant Ghatpande is no regular centenarian. At the clinic at Rasta Peth, in the heart of Pune, Ghatpande *is* the doctor; he's practised here for the past 69 years.

With an assistant who has been with him for over 33 years, Dr Ghatpande still sees an average of 20 patients a day, and keeps his clinic open even on Sundays. His assistant Mangesh Darje says Dr Ghatpande prefers to attend on his patients all by himself, from taking blood pressure to administering injections and handing out medicines.

The doctor's methods haven't changed much in all these decades, nor has his clinic. The shingle that hangs outside the door, announcing that the doctor is in, looks worn and weathered. Rather than being outdated, it is a metaphor for an intuitive wisdom that blends with the centenarian's experience in healing patients. It's a potent prescription that's never failed to work.

"Today, everyone wants instant gratification, and people do not have the patience to wait for the treatment to take its course. They prefer to suppress their symptoms rather than rest. They diagnose themselves and then run to a specialist rather than go to a general practitioner. Also, there are not as many GPs today as everyone super-specialises these days," says Dr Ghatpande. "Everyone is a businessman and not a practitioner of healing any more. Throwing money at the problem does not fix your health issues."

His clinic is housed in a double-storey building built by the doctor in 1962. Located in an older part of town, the building is called 'Balwant Bhavan'. The clinic is on the ground floor and boasts a small outer room with old-fashioned table and chair, which the good doctor occupies. A man of few words, he motions to a patient to follow him into the examination room, which is exactly what you would see in a Hindi film of yesteryear.

When a patient emerges from the clinic, it's with a little brown paper pouch in hand bearing his or her name scribbled on it. If that sounds a tad rustic, listen to what the doctor has to say. "Patients of yore had full faith in their doctor, who used to be their family physician, their counsellor and often a good friend of the family. The treatment was holistic and it took time. People made peace

with loss of work and pay and let the body recover," says Dr Ghatpande, who charges the princely sum of ₹ 30 to ₹ 60 for every consult.

Darje, the doctor's assistant, says, "He doesn't let me handle anything or even give injections. I just have to ensure that the medicines are stored in their right place and that the general order that has prevailed for decades is not disturbed. He even handles the money himself, keeping it in the drawer under the table, under lock and key. The same drawer stores the bills for the medicines and other important papers."

There's a chemist near the clinic that has been supplying medicines to Dr Ghatpande for the past 30 years. An employee at the store, who has known the doctor for 13 years, remarks, "He checks each bill and even remembers any carry-over or residual sums. He is very meticulous and we are used to this system."

Dr Ghatpande has every reason to be set in his ways, for it was his ability to walk the straight and narrow that saw him through his medical education. As a young man in pre-Independent India, Ghatpande hailed from a poor family in Latur, in rural Maharashtra, but he was determined to acquire a medical degree. So he came to Pune and tutored other students to pay his way through medical school. It was, therefore, a proud day when he earned his degree from the government-run B J Medical School, later upgraded and renamed B J Medical College.

"Today, everyone wants instant gratification, and people do not have the patience to wait for the treatment to take its course. They prefer to suppress their symptoms"

But the young doctor did not have the funds to set up a private practice just then, so he worked as a government medical officer from 1941 to 1948. While he was posted in hospitals across Maharashtra, he honed his skills and picked up valuable experience.

Then, in the wake of Independence and the shifting climate it created, Dr Ghatpande found himself back in Pune in 1948, where he started his private practice. While his clinic is on the ground floor, his home is on the upper storey, where he lives with his son Swanand and daughter-in-law. The old homestead has since seen two more generations of doctors.

"All three of my children became doctors, starting with my eldest daughter, who also married a doctor. They migrated to the US a long time ago. Both my sons and one grandson



are also doctors. But there are no medical discussions at the dinner table,” he clarifies.

The medicine man takes hardly any medicines himself and has managed to shake off the shadow of diabetes that stalked him briefly, with exercise, diet and sheer will power. Except for a fracture in 1995, Dr Ghatpande claims to have never visited a doctor for any sort of illness. He believes in a strict routine that begins with exercise for an hour every day and then a coconut oil massage. He follows this up with a cold bath and breakfast, and he is ready to greet the day!

An avid reader of all newspapers and medical papers, Dr Ghatpande does not wear spectacles and reads late into the night. Television is restricted to the news, never for entertainment; he also believes vacations are for the idle rich.

In fact, he doesn't speak much and rarely expresses any wishes or desires. When his wife was unwell, he buried himself in his work, and it was Swanand who tended to his mother, who eventually passed away. Dr Ghatpande's daily

routine hasn't varied for as long as his daughter-in-law Pratibha can remember. “He is in the clinic like clockwork at 10 o'clock and examines patients till 2 pm,” she shares. “Between 2 pm and 2.30 pm, he comes upstairs to the residence and takes a short nap, post-lunch. After he wakes up, he drinks his tea and returns to the clinic, where he remains till 10 pm.”

Swanand adds, “His needs are few and we really have to do nothing for him, either financially or physically. We only have to ensure his food is soft and to his liking. He rarely speaks more than two sentences a day but follows the news avidly. He knows what's happening but somehow seems financially insulated. He has not raised his consultation fees in decades.”

At a time when most people prefer to spend their silver years relaxing, travelling and indulging in recreational activities, Dr Ghatpande prefers to spend all his time healing people. Indeed, our centenarian is a simple man with a simple goal: “I will never retire and will practise medicine till my last breath. As long as my patients need me, I will be there for them.” ✨

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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:: cover feature ::



Writer, publisher and festival director Namita Gokhale is at the forefront of a literary revival in the country, says Srirekha Pillai

She burst upon the literary scene in 1984 with a rather unconventional but sparkling social satire, *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, which swirled around the cocktail circuit of Delhi, capturing the shenanigans of Page 3 celebs, long before the term was even coined. Here was a woman writer who wrote unabashedly about sex and spoke in a language that resonated with desi readers, far removed from the oh-so-propah language of Indo-Anglian writing in those days.

Reminiscing about the furore and outrage her book caused, writer-publisher Namita Gokhale wrote in an exclusive column in *Harmony Celebrate Age* in August 2014, “I was completely unprepared...I had been brought up, at least by default, to say what I thought, and had never bothered too much about other people’s opinions of me.” The book, though, had a dream debut overseas with literary agency Curtis Brown picking it up within two days of Gokhale’s arrival in London, and Chatto & Windus signing her on. One of England’s oldest literary periodicals, *The London Magazine*, called *Paro* “a magnificent creation”.

Individualistic and forthright, Gokhale has followed—and spoken—her heart right from her early days. Even as a student of English literature at Delhi University’s Jesus and Mary College, she refused to attend classes on ‘Chaucer and Old English’, preferring ‘Modern Indian Literature in Hindi’, an option that remained only on paper, with the college offering absolutely no classes for it. The college debarred her from taking the examination. It was around this time that she met, fell in love and married Rajiv Gokhale, son of H R Gokhale, law minister in Indira Gandhi’s cabinet. Later, in her classic witty manner, Gokhale remarked, “When I got married, the nuns were appalled. They believed I had succumbed to lust and said special prayers for me.”

Born in Lucknow in 1956, Gokhale was brought up by her irrepressible grandmother Shakuntala Pande—niece of freedom fighter Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant—and free-spirited aunts (among them, acclaimed Hindi writer Shivani), in an extended joint family in Nainital. Little wonder then, that the sights and sounds of Kumaon and formidable women form an intrinsic part of Gokhale’s narratives. She paid tribute to her doughty grandmother and aunts through their oral biographies in *Mountain Echoes*. Gokhale herself has been through hell and back. A cancer survivor, she lost her husband at 39. Not surprisingly, love, loss and death are recurrent motifs in her books.

Remarkably, Gokhale has transcended her role as a litterateur to emerge as a bridge between Indian writing in English and regional languages. Yatra Books, of which she is co-founder and director, publishes books in regional languages, besides translating bestselling English authors in Hindi, Marathi, Odia, Bangla, Telugu, Gujarati and Kannada. Her successful book-based show *Kitaabnaama* on Doordarshan was also an attempt to connect different literary traditions and voices.

Recently, Gokhale became the first recipient of the Centenary National Award for Literature presented by the Assam Sahitya Sabha for “her literary contributions as well as her service to the nation in supporting and showcasing literary talents and creating a literary environment in the country”. Meanwhile, her book *Things to Leave Behind* is on the long list for the 2018 Dublin Literary Award.

As the curtain rises on the 2018 edition of the Jaipur Literary Festival (JLF), Delhi-based Gokhale, who is also founder and co-director of what is eulogised as the ‘greatest literary show on earth’, admits, “It is like a flowing river, a stream of creative energy ... seeking and finding its own path.” Much like her!

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

It is often said writing throws up new insights about the self and society. Could you share your journey of discovery?

Each of my books has been in the nature of a personal quest, a journey of discovery. Fictional narratives cover either the path of one's own life and experiences, or a flight of imagination into the life one may have lived. Both are powerful triggers to self-discovery.

You've been a catalyst for fostering a creative environment in the subcontinent through writing, publishing and organising literary festivals. Was it planned?

Nothing in my life was planned. I have been very lucky in that so many of the things I set upon in a spirit of enthusiasm and genuine curiosity rather than ambition have succeeded at different levels. I do strategise and think ahead, but life is so full of unexpected twists and turns that I have learned to go with the flow, carefully observing the terrain and the signs on the ground.

As the publisher of *Super*, you chronicled Bollywood during its golden age.

All of us who worked on *Super* were very young and many of my colleagues in the magazine have remained good friends, especially [editor] Rauf Ahmed. Those were days of laughter and creativity, and I learned to respect the power of popular culture, and of the Bollywood dream machine. The memories... they are too many to share here! But the excitement of producing sharp copy and dazzling design, month after month, was a real high.

You've worked extensively with mythology. What is the appeal of mythology to modern readers?

In India, myth is a subject of vital contemporary interest. The great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, are reinterpreted generation after generation, and they form a matrix most Indians can relate to. I have written *The Book of Shiva* and *The Puffin Mahabharata* for young and first-time readers. The story of Sita's second exile, her abandonment while she was pregnant by her husband Rama, and the general and unquestioning acceptance of this, baffled and infuriated me. I co-edited an anthology, *In Search of Sita*, with Malashri Lal,



Archival images courtesy: Namita Gokhale

which questioned the justice of this through essays, stories and poetry. The book, in turn, inspired others and the general attitude to the subject did change to a large extent. I have also recently written another book for young readers called *Lost in Time: Ghatotkacha and the Game of Illusions*.

In the author's note to *Paro: Dreams of Passion* you quoted your father, "I hope you have been discreet, child." What was the reaction of the rest of your immediate and extended family to this unconventional debut?

Well, I was always considered unconventional and my immediate and extended family were used to my springing surprises at them. All my family, including my mother-in-law, were extraordinarily supportive. I cherish and respect the support they gave, have always given, me.

After *Paro*, there was a significant gap of 10 years before *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*. Did the success of *Paro* place undue pressure on you?



Gokhale during her childhood days; as a toddler, with mother Neerja Pant

Opposite page: With younger sister Sangita

“I repeatedly lost the manuscript from my computer—it would simply disappear—and my computer experts were puzzled and unable to explain quite where the problem lay...Maybe someday I will write a novel about writing that novel [*The Book of Shadows*]”

I wrote a novel after *Paro*, which was only published much later. That was *A Himalayan Love Story*, the first of the Himalayan trilogy. *Paro* was a hard act to follow, and readers and publishers perhaps expected me to follow such a successful formula. However, as I explained, each novel is a personal quest for me, and I was searching for a new narrative.

***The Book of Shadows* is written in the voice of a ghost. I believe you’ve had some psychic experiences while writing it.**

I wanted to experiment with a new voice and the thought of a spirit, suspended in time, observing human activity, sometimes getting drawn into it, and yet not a part of it, intrigued me. The ghost literally got under my skin. I had recently lost my husband, and was absorbed in the contemplation of death, of other unknown dimensions. A

large part of the novel was in a sense ‘channelled,’ it was a form of unconscious writing. Our subconscious minds are more knowing, than our surface understanding.

Yes, there were strange things happening around then. I repeatedly lost the manuscript from my computer—it would simply disappear—and computer experts were puzzled and unable to explain quite where the problem lay. There would be just a line from within the novel—not the first or opening line—that would appear on screen, declaring, ‘I hide in shadows, I lurk in corners.’ It was as though there was a ghost in the machine. There’s a lot more to the tale, and maybe someday I will write a novel about writing that novel!

***Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* deals with past-life memories. Have you had a brush with past-life remembrances?**

As a special guest at a function in Delhi Public School, in 2002



“The Jaipur Literature Festival always had a life of its own. It was, and is, like a flowing river, a stream of creative energy, bigger than all of us, seeking and finding its own path. It’s a great privilege to be associated with this extraordinary festival”

After I had completed *Paro*, I knew this was the novel that waited to be written. There were a series of images that persisted, that didn’t go away. A river with sunlight reflecting on the waves. A man by the river, on a horse. A house on a hill, which I recognised, where I knew I had once lived. These were inexplicable memories, perhaps from another life, and they needed to be made sense of, to be strung together in a story. But that was just the spine of the novel—it was the craft of fiction that helped structure it and bring it to life.

When you write for young readers as in *Mahabharata* or the recent *Lost in Time*, who serves as your sounding board?

I write for myself, for the child within. I do watch out for vocabulary and for a simple flow of ideas. I try very hard not to write down for young readers, or in any way condescend to them. And I have received extremely perceptive editorial support from Puffin India for both the books.

Of all the books you have written, which has been your favourite creative journey?

It’s difficult to choose any one book—each has been a unique creative journey. Writing a novel is never much fun, at least not for me. It’s a self-imposed and addictive form of rarefied torture, which takes over everyday life in alarming ways.

Have there been instances where certain characters have stayed on in your head long after a book has seen the light of day?

I have enjoyed writing all the 16 books I have worked on, though there is always a point midway where it becomes a heavy load to carry all those lives and characters in one’s mind. Sometimes they take on a life of their own, as with the larger-than-life figure of *Paro* in my debut novel, or the whimsical, eccentric and utterly charming Tillotama in the recent *Things to Leave Behind*.

For every writer, the creative process is unique. For you, how does a story take shape?

At first there are some images. Then, some lines of text emerge. Then, the outlines of a shape, a structure, a story. And yet, all the time, I feel the story already exists somewhere, in another dimension, that I have to transcribe, to pluck from the air and give voice to.

Can you share the story behind the genesis of JLF?

I had worked on the first ever Neemrana International Festival of Indian Literature. After that, William Dalrymple contacted me, requested me to help put a new festival together in Jaipur for Faith Singh and the Virasat team. Then, later, Sanjoy Roy and Teamworks entered the picture. So many people contributed to the journey in their different ways, but the festival always had a life of its own. It was, and is, like a flowing river, a stream of creative energy, bigger than all of us, seeking and finding its own path. It has been a transformative experience and a great privilege to be associated with this extraordinary festival.

With so many new writers, is it an exciting time for Indian writing in English?

This is an exciting time for Indian writing—in English and in Indian languages. The dynamics between the various languages, the realities of our changing times, are all leading to a literary moment. India is now the second largest English publishing market, and there is a large internal market, a huge number of aspirational readers. There are also the new opportunities to self-publish, the platforms and outreach made possible by technology.

Incidentally, you also curated *Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond* on Doordarshan. How different was the experience?

I enjoyed working with Doordarshan and it has the most unexpected pool of talent, as well as an outreach unparalleled by other channels anywhere. With *Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond*, I tried to create a multilingual platform where English, Hindi, Marathi, Bangla, Odia writers, and others from across the 22 Indian languages, could be presented in readings and conversations to a pan-Indian audience. It was incredibly successful and we have a legacy of a hundred programmes accessible on YouTube and Facebook.



BOOKMARK

- *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, 1984
- *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother*, 1994
- *A Himalayan Love Story*, 1996
- *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women*, 1998
- *The Book of Shadows*, 1999
- *The Book of Shiva*, 1999
- *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*, 2005
- *The Puffin Mahabharata*, 2009
- *In Search of Sita* (co-edited with Malashri Lal), 2009
- *The Habit of Love*, 2012
- *Priya: In Incredible Indyya*, 2013
- *Travelling In, Travelling Out* (edited), 2014
- *Himalaya: Adventures, Meditations, Life* (co-edited with Ruskin Bond), 2016
- *Things to Leave Behind*, 2016
- *Lost in Time: Ghatotkacha and the Game of Illusions*, 2017
- *The Himalayan Arc: East of South East*, 2018

However, it ended badly. A notorious person from within the organisation, who fancies himself a poet, harassed and insulted me because I hadn't invited him to the Jaipur festival. He recently subjected a friend, a famous Hindi woman writer, to the same sort of public defamation. So I decided to move on.

You wrote *Paro* in longhand and then typed it out. Are you still a pen and paper person?

Yes, I write the first draft with a favourite pen or well-sharpened pencil, in double spacing, in a series of numbered notebooks, which I then type out for the first edit. Sometimes my assistant Rita

With daughters Shivani and Meru, and granddaughter Anina; with mother Neerja



“Writing is an essential part of who I am. It’s tiring and not therapeutic or anything quite so complicated, but it is how I try to make sense of things, and to search patterns amidst the everyday chaos”

Peter types out this first draft for me, for she can decipher and make sense of my chaotic scribbles.

Can you share your biggest literary influence?

The *Mahabharata*, with its stories within stories, and its cast of characters that remain true to human nature despite the passage of thousands of years, has been my greatest literary influence. I came to discover this great epic only late in life, but it has taught me so much.

How can women writers help empower women?

Women writers can give strength to their readers by invoking strength rather than victimhood in their narratives.

How tech-friendly are you? Are you comfortable with the Kindle?

I am reasonably tech-friendly but everything changes so fast and my learning curve is rather slow. I love physical books, I need to hold and feel and smell them, but I’m comfortable reading in electronic formats when I must.

Are we becoming an increasingly intolerant society?

Yes, we are becoming an ugly, communal, racist, parochial, even more patriarchal society. In dysfunctional times, it’s easier for humans to hate than to trust. But I’m an optimist and I believe the cycle will change and harmony and equilibrium will emerge.

Your works, particularly the Himalayan trilogy—*A Himalayan Love Story*, *The Book of Shadows* and *Things to Leave Behind*—and *Mountain Echoes* reflect a proud Kumaoni. How has Kumaon helped shape your personality and literary style?

The Himalayas are the tallest and youngest mountains in the world. Mountain people everywhere are proud and individualistic; they get strength from the terrain. My Kumaoni identity remains an essential part of me, and the landscape and people of Uttarakhand form a recurring motif in my work.

You grew up in a large family comprising grandmother and aunts. How did that influence and inform you as an individual?

My grandmother Shakuntala Pande was an unusually beautiful, intelligent and self-willed person. She gave me love and nurture, as did my mother. I have a large extended family, from both the Kumaoni side and my late husband's Marathi family. It's a joy and privilege to grow up in a joint family, and to live in one. My daughters, my sons-in-law, my lovely granddaughter mean a lot to me.

You got married when you were just 18. How did you meet your husband Rajiv Gokhale?

I met him when I was 17 and he was 20. He was my cousin's friend. I loved him deeply and learned a lot from him.

Please tell us about your family.

My elder daughter Meru Gokhale is editor-in-chief, literary publishing, at Penguin Random House. She is married to writer and historian Patrick French. My younger daughter Shivani Sibal, who holds all our lives together, is married to lawyer Akhil Sibal. Their daughter Anina has two generations of grandmothers: my mother Neerja Pant, who is her 'Badi Nani', and her 'Choti Nani', which is me.

What kept you going through the hard times?

I take life as it comes. The hard times and the heart-break have, in time, yielded joy and understanding.

Do you consider writing therapeutic?

Writing is an essential part of who I am. It's tiring and not therapeutic or anything quite so complicated, but it is how I try to make sense of things, and to search patterns amidst the everyday chaos.

When you look back at your personal journey, what have been the defining moments?

I don't know. Sometimes it's the small things, the intangibles, the accidents, and the random, that shape our lives.



WORDS MATTER

Gokhale is not just the founder and co-director of the high-profile Jaipur Literature Festival (from 2006). She is engaged with other festivals as well.

- Founder and co-director—Mountain Echoes, the Bhutan Festival of Literature, Art & Culture (from 2009)
- Founder—Crime Writer's Festival (from 2015)
- Conceptualised—International Festival of Indian Literature at Neemrana; 2002
- Conceptualised—The Africa Asia Literary Conference; 2006

Besides literature, what gives you joy?

I love to be lazy, to sleep and dream and hang around. It's a luxury I don't get enough of.

What does ageing mean to you?

The passage of years does give perspective on how little, and how much, everything matters. Yes, there is perhaps a precarious wisdom that comes with age.

What is your health mantra?

I'm afraid I don't have a health mantra. I eat and drink as I please, and love *laddoo* and fried food. I swim in summer and avoid medication, though I'm a homeopathy addict. I pray a lot. And try to smile through it all. ✨

Once upon a time

📷 📹 Gustasp and Jeroo Irani





Palaces of yore usually have an in-your-face grandeur, a pomposity and lush orchestration of various elements: architecture, interiors, history and even the occasional spook. It's no secret, however, that some relatively unknown palaces are strewn all across India, providing the buzz of discovery to the stray visitor that their flamboyant cousins cannot impart. Some of these have an aggrieved, abandoned air; others have rich interiors and well-maintained facades; while many have not been lived in and were built on a whim for a visiting royal guest who failed to show up. We undertake a journey through corridors that echo with stories of valorous deeds, love, loss and longing as well as skullduggery and intrigue.

PHALTAN RAJWADA: UN Sung GEM

Phaltan Rajwada did not overawe us with its girth and over-the-top splendour. This lovely little palace in the ancient capital of Phaltan, 59 km northeast of the city of Satara, Maharashtra, turned out to be an unsung gem. Its pale blue façade, adorned with elaborate stucco work and trellised balconies, gave it an air of a stately manor rather than that of a palace of a former princely state.

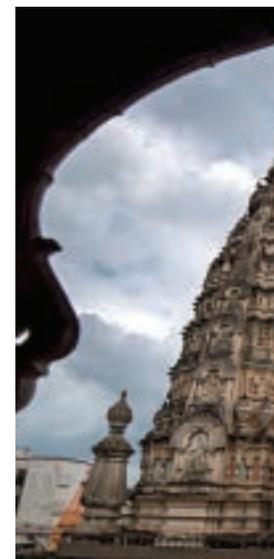
Once past the simple but imposing entrance and the pillared Ram Mandir with its pendulous chandelier, the 19th century palace unfolded like a fairytale. Airy rooms opened onto spacious courtyards. And though we got to see only a part of the three-wing palace, we were thoroughly charmed and intrigued. Indeed, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's first wife, Maharani Sai Bai, hailed from Phaltan and their eldest son, Sambhaji Maharaj, spent much of his childhood in the palace.

We strolled slack-jawed through the royal residence, admiring the polished, hand-carved wood furniture in the

Durbar Hall and its stuccoed ceiling and private meeting rooms that shone under the muted glow of massive chandeliers. Corridors of arched and carved teak wood pillars had windows that opened onto spacious courtyards, making the vast rooms sunlit and breezy. The palace even has a room with elegant silver furniture, including an elaborately carved silver swing; the Gulabi Room with rich red drapes and upholstery; and a vast dining room with an elegantly set dining table. The walls sported gilded portraits of the good-looking royals.

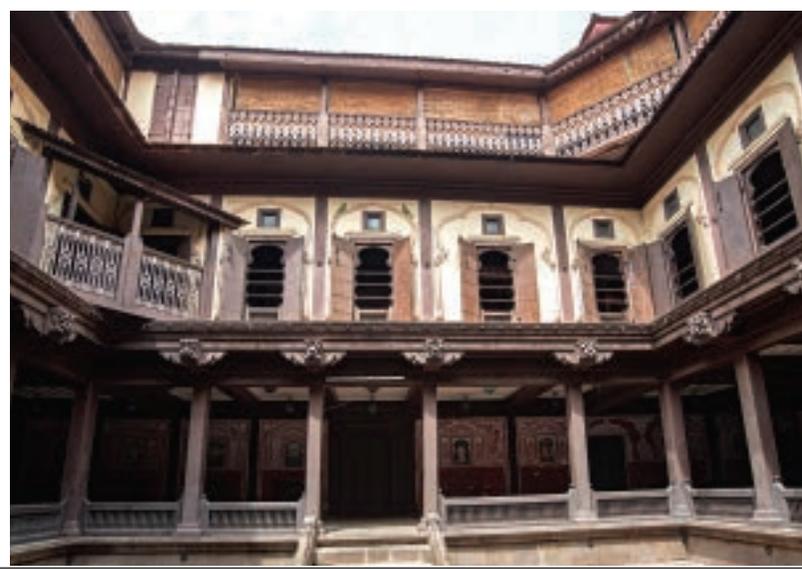
Incidentally, the palace is not open to the general public as it is a private residence but Jakson Inns, a three-star, eco-friendly hotel, located 11 km away, has an arrangement for its guests to visit the palace. Want to feel like a maharaja and maharani for a fleeting span of time? Jakson Inns, the only star quality hotel in the region, can even set up a royal breakfast in the palace with prior permission.

www.jaksonhospitality.com
www.maharashtratourism.gov.in





Clockwise: Outer view of the palace; inner courtyard; the Ram Mandir; a royal chamber



NILAMBAG: AN OASIS

Nilambag Palace rose like a surreal vision amid lush lawns edged by flowering hedges. It was Diwali and the softly floodlit palace's Rajula stone glowed like a beacon, beckoning guests indoors.

We availed of the invitation, for the 19th century royal abode with its multiple arched pillars was an oasis in the midst of the heaving commercial city of Bhavnagar. Designed by a German architect, the palace has a classic bone structure. Home to the royal Gohil dynasty of Bhavnagar, the last maharaja, Krishna Kumar Sinhji was the first ruler to merge his kingdom with newly independent India. In 1984, the palace was converted into a 20-room heritage hotel.

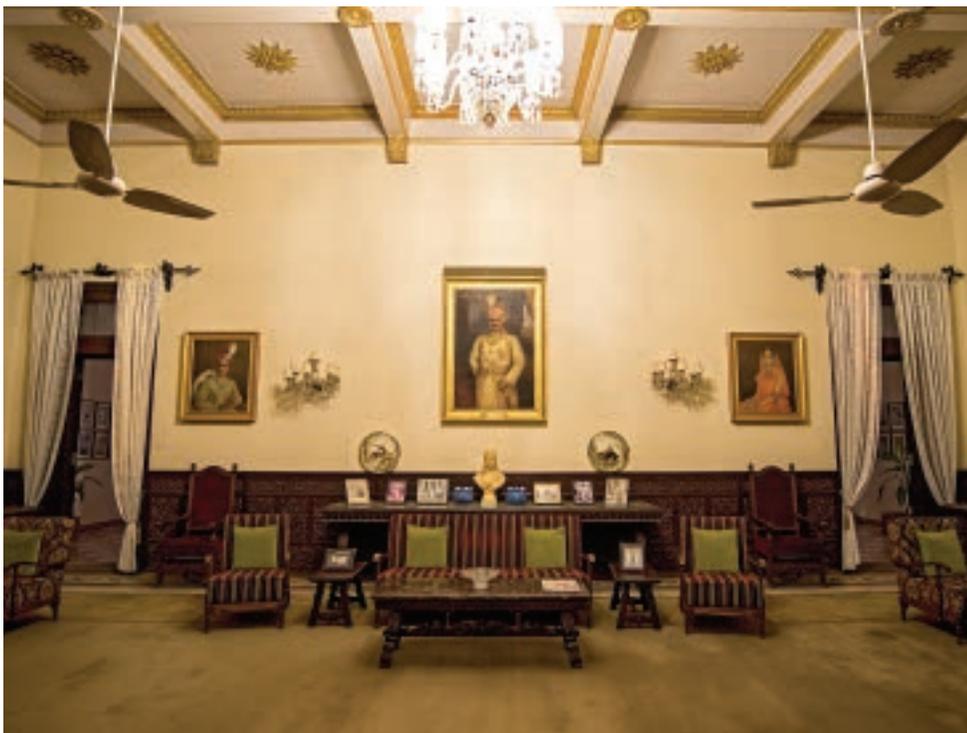
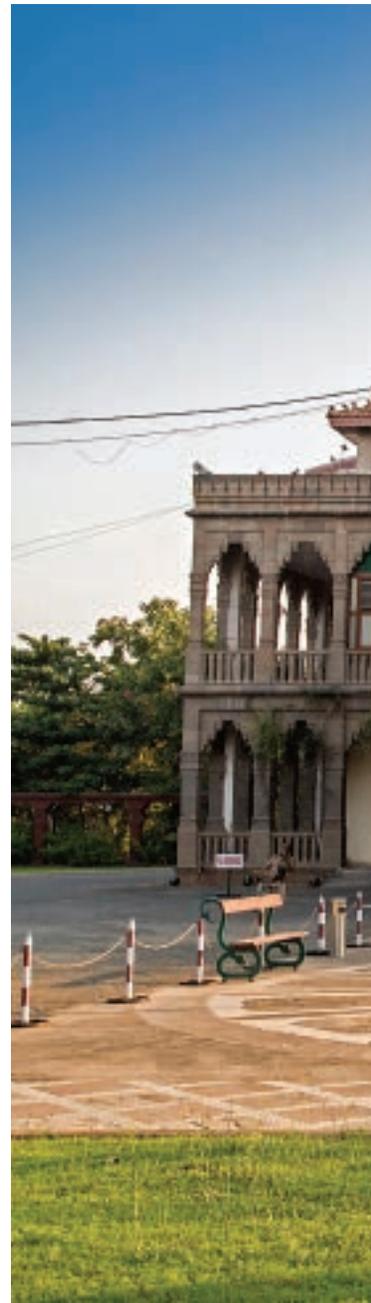
We entered the lobby via a carved teak wood archway that sported period wood furniture while the lifelike portraits of the royals looked down at us sternly. Past a central courtyard, shielded by gauzy gold curtains, a polished, old-world wood lift creaked upward to the rooms. The Heritage Classic rooms—rooms of

the princes—come with high-moulded ceilings, four-poster beds and private balconies; while the understated deluxe rooms were the rooms of princesses. All have the luxury of space and bathrooms the size of a small Mumbai apartment. The premium Maharani Suite looked like the maharani had just stepped out for a stroll in the gardens of her palace.

Stuffed stag and leopard heads; intricately carved *patara* or jewellery boxes (a traditional craft); vintage walking sticks; porcelain crockery specially designed for the family by Mappin & Webb, a British enterprise; and paintings of the birds of Saurashtra and India adorn the walls.

A not-to-be-missed experience was dining in the Durbar Hall, strung with Czechoslovakian chandeliers that imparted a luminous sheen to the Burma teak banquet tables and chairs. What's more, it is whispered that one of the rooms in the palace occasionally has an other-worldly visitor!

 www.gujarattourism.com
 www.nilambagpalace.com



Clockwise: Outer view of the palace; a mounted hunting trophy; women making rangoli in the inner courtyard; the main lounge





NALKNAD: TRAGIC TALE

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown', Shakespeare's famous line, could well apply to the royal residents of Nalknad Palace in Coorg, Karnataka. Shielded by lush forests, at the foot of Thadiandamool, the highest peak in the district, the red-tiled roof, two-storied, pillared palace is riddled with escape routes, trapdoors and dark underground chambers meant to help beleaguered royals escape in case of an attack.

Built between 1792 and 1794, the palace was commissioned by King Dodda Veerajendra to commemorate his victory over Tipu Sultan, with the help of the British colonialists. It is one of the smallest royal abodes we have come across but the main hall and the queen and king's chambers showcase once vibrant murals, including one of a victory procession. The palace is enfolded in a luxuriant garden with a small, carved pavilion in front. The caretaker who loves the palace but rarely sees tourists there told us that King Dodda Veerajendra married his second wife in the pavilion. Incidentally, he had lost his

first wife and his entire family earlier. The second wife's death a few years later drove the bereaved king mad with grief.

Indeed, tragedy stalked this minuscule palace of the Coorg kings. The last monarch, Chikka Veerarajendra, who resided at Nalknad Palace, was dethroned by his colonial masters in 1834 and exiled to Varanasi. But fate had other things in store. The deposed king sailed to England with his beautiful 11-year-old daughter Gowramma in 1852 to claim and recover his lost wealth. There, the lonely little Indian princess captivated Queen Victoria by her air of vulnerability. The Queen had her baptised and called her Victoria Gowramma. The monarch tried to play matchmaker between Victoria Gowramma and another exiled prince, the dashing Maharaja Duleep Singh. But Victoria Gowramma chose instead to marry a much older man, Colonel John Campbell. Tragically, she died when she was just 23 under mysterious circumstances. On her death, it is said that the Coorg jewels and Colonel Campbell vanished virtually into thin air.

 www.karnatakaturism.org



Clockwise: Outer view of the palace; a fading mural; painted wall and ceiling; the entrance corridor



DATIA: PROMISES UNKEPT

Beautiful," the French tourist said, and kissed his pinched fingers with a flourish. Our curiosity peaked. We tweaked our itinerary to include the lonely palace we first saw framed in the window of our train as it chugged through the plains of Madhya Pradesh.

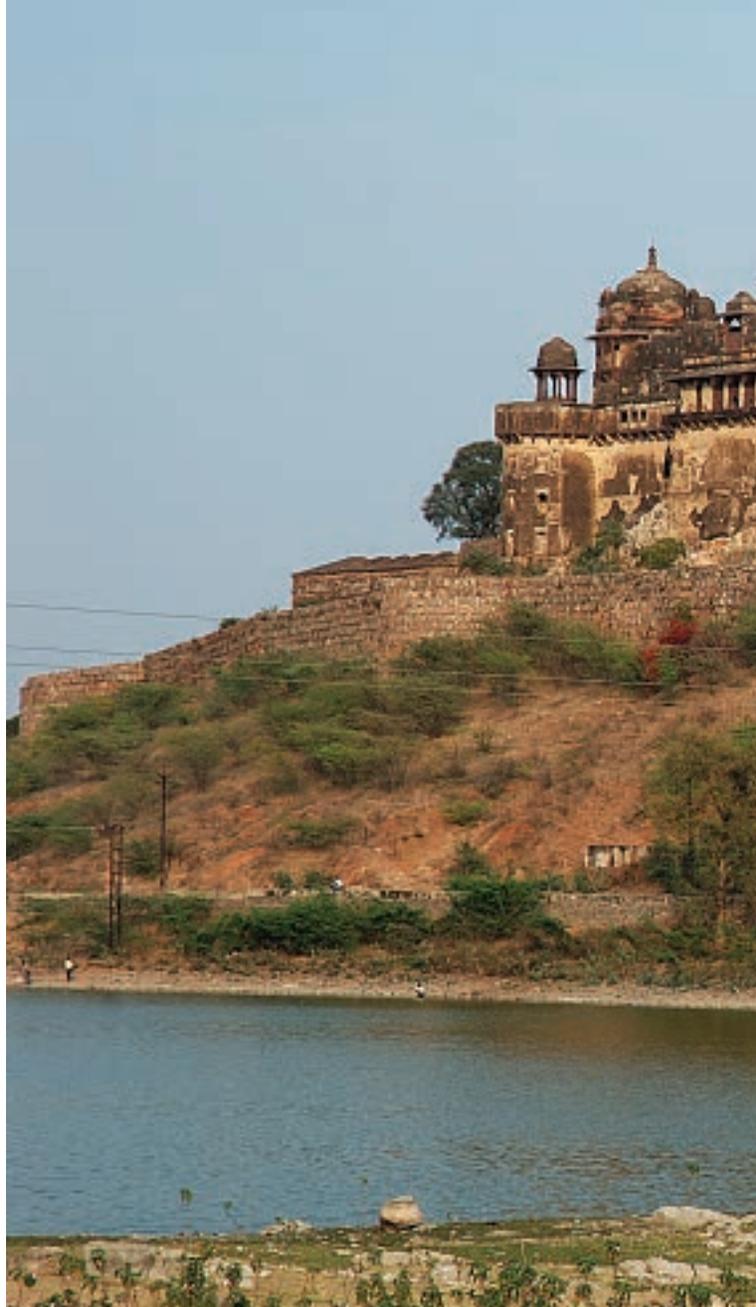
'Forlorn and sad', we would add to the description of Datia Palace, an impressive structure built for an emperor who failed to show up. So the palace was never occupied except by the ghosts of the labourers who died building it. The tragic story of the ungrateful emperor swirled like the wind through this grand structure where the rampart walls once glowed with a mosaic of glistening tiles—now chipped and patchy—and its chambers adorned with colourful murals, now faded.

Raja Bir Singh Deo, ruler of Datia, had done Prince Salim, later known as Emperor Jehangir, a favour by having General Abul Fazal killed. The general had issues with him inheriting the crown from his father, Mughal Emperor Akbar. When Jehangir eventually did become emperor, Raja Bir Singh Deo invited him to visit his domain and built a grand palace to house his wives, concubines and travelling courtiers. According to our guide, he even embedded diamonds—now missing—in the knobs of stairwells so that the women could amuse themselves in a rewarding game of treasure hunt.

But Jehangir knew that the price of an Emperor's gratitude would be high and found endless excuses to cry out of a promise he never intended to keep. And the palace meant for him languished like a fossilised dinosaur on the backwaters of time.

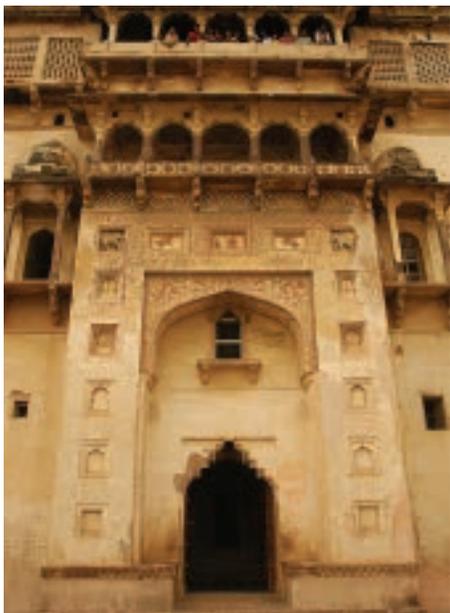
Datia, near Jhansi (44 km), falls within the tourist triangle of Gwalior (77 km), Orchha (50 km) and Shivpuri (105 km).

 www.mptourism.com





Clockwise: Outer view of the palace; view of Datia from a palace arch; the entrance; arc of pillars; cross arch ceiling inside the palace





BY GEORGE: AN ENGLISH CASTLE!

Anticipation, not knowing what surprise awaited us around the next bend, heightened the thrill of our safari drive through Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh. And it was a rewarding adventure in terms of wildlife sightings: a cheetal stag with an impressive set of antlers; monkeys that had colonised an abandoned watch tower; crocodiles sunbathing on the banks of a lake; colourful birds, a peacock....

No! It was no illusion—we had stumbled upon an English castle right in the middle of a thicket of trees. We looked at the four muscle-flexing turrets of a solid stone structure with a sense of wonder. “The castle was built by the maharajas of Gwalior for the king of England when he visited India,” our driver-guide droned as though it was the most ordinary thing one would see on a safari. He might have driven on if we had not stopped him and got down to explore the castle.



The caretaker of this little gem of a building was more forthcoming. According to him, the castle was built as a hunting lodge for King George V when he toured the country in 1911. The Scindia maharajas of Gwalior had hoped to host a grand tiger hunt for their royal guest. However, by the time King George reached Gwalior he had already shot over 11 tigers and had got bored with the sport and took a rain check on the hunting party. The castle, also known as George Castle, was abandoned

and the royal trimmings were either stolen or corroded with age. No tiger sightings for us that day but we were not complaining. How often do we get to see an English castle, lassoing fabulous views of the forest, on a safari? Madhav National Park, Shivpuri, where the marble inlay cenotaphs of the Scindia maharajas of Gwalior are located, is one apex of the tourist triangle that includes Gwalior and Orchha.

 www.mptourism.com



Clockwise: Outer view of the palace; temple priests rendering devotional songs; the Maharaja Suite; the palace lawns



CHITTOOR KOTTARAM: ROYAL ROLEPLAY

What would you do if you were ousted out of your royal abode that gave you access to your favourite temple and deity? Build a new one for yourself and a temple for your God, but naturally! Forced to shift his capital from Perumpadappu to Tripunithara, the Raja of Cochin did just that: built an elegant palace for himself overlooking the backwaters of Cochin and a temple for Lord Krishna that would rival the one in Guruvayoor, part of his old kingdom that he had lost in war. Today, the 14th century palace still flaunts a regal air in the guise of a one-key heritage resort.

Here, guests get to play at being raja, rani, prince and princess for the duration of their stay. Only one family—even if it's just a couple—may reside, at any given time, in the three-bedroom palace with wraparound verandahs, framed by lush lawns.

Yes, the welcome we received when our boat docked at the palace's private jetty was one the rajas of yore would have approved of. The entire staff—manager, housekeeping staff and lady chef—had assembled to receive us under a royal palm-thatched umbrella. We sipped tender coconut water as we sat in a thatched pavilion with gauzy curtains that snuggled in one corner of the green lawns that rolled out in front of the pillared, one-storeyed structure with a red-tiled roof.

It set the tone of our stay: we were deemed royalty. Even our meals—pure vegetarian in deference to the rajas who came here to pay obeisance to the Lord—were a royal repast, flavoured with local spices that skipped like bumble bees on our taste buds.

That evening, we set off on a backwater cruise and nibbled on savouries as the setting sun painted the sky in fiery colours, highlighting the silhouette of spider-like Chinese fishing nets and palm trees. Back at the resort, temple priests sang bhajans as they once did for the rajas of Cochin.

 www.cghearth.com/Chittoor-Kottaram



After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

- The first time your eyes met.
- The first time you mustered up the courage.
- The first time you bared your heart.
- The first time you heard "Yes".
- The first date.
- The first time you held hands.
- The first fight.
- The first time you made up.
- Shouldn't you be celebrating, that first rush of love
before life
and the babies and the bills intruded?
Because for the first time
you're at an age when
you can fall in love with each other
all over again.



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

harmony
celebrate age

A KIND OF MAGIC

To see Sri Lankan artist Senaka Senanayake's compositions on canvas is to take a trip into an animated forest where the smallest creatures are magnified and the leaves, shrubs and trees possess a kind of magic. Inspired by a trip into the island nation's depleting rainforests 20 years ago, Senanayake's new collection is

a continuation of the same theme but now combines images from jungles around the world. "We lost 70 per cent of our rainforests mainly because our colonial masters planted rubber and tea estates in their place. I use my paintings to show the beauty of the rainforests, hoping it would inspire the people to do something about preserving them," the 63 year-old artist tells us. "India had the same colonial masters who did the same thing here!" Hosted by Saffronart, Senanayake's recent works will open at The Claridges, New Delhi, on 12 January.

Courtesy: Saffronart



A lesson in history



Photographs courtesy: CSMVS

SHARED BEGINNINGS
(first of the nine stories at the *India & The World: A History In Nine Stories* exhibition)

Handaxes dating back from 1,700,000 years ago to 2000 BC, used by early humans who travelled from Africa into Asia and Europe. On display at CSMVS were the handaxes found in England, Jordan, Tanzania, Indonesia, and Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in India

An ambitious new exhibition at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) explores India's shared history with the rest of the world, from its beginnings to the contemporary search for freedom. Titled *India & The World: A History In Nine Stories*, the exhibition is a collaboration between CSMVS, the British Museum in London, and New Delhi's National Museum, and is supported by the Ministry of Culture, to commemorate 70 years of

Independence. The exhibition pairs over 200 objects, artefacts and artworks from India and around the world in nine rooms, one for each story. From our shared prehistoric beginnings (*in pics*) and the first cities, powerful empires and faith that grew and spread, which then gave birth to art and trade, and led to the modern quest for freedom, each of these nine rooms represents a theme set in time. The three-month-long exhibition will conclude in Mumbai on 18 February before travelling to New Delhi in March.

“ I would say Indian women artists have made more outspoken art due to the oppression in Indian society of gender, caste and class. We had to and still have to. Indian society may be equal on paper, but in reality our everyday experiences show that it is not. In fact, we have to strengthen our voices in the next decades if we want to achieve a more equal, humane society.

—Contemporary artist **Nalini Malani**, 71, speaking to *Open magazine* on *The Rebellion of the Dead*, a retrospective of her work spanning 50 years (1969-2018), which recently opened at Centre Pompidou in Paris, supported by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA)



Nayana Jhaveri »

« Bhavi Jhaveri

« Yamini Mehta

Chew on this

Shrirang Sharma

Recipes that go back half a century are being kept alive by a group of grandmothers in Mumbai, reports **Sahil Jaswal**

Who doesn't have fond memories of gorging on their grandmother's food, flavours only she could whip up, and only some of which made it to her prized recipe book? Forty-one year-old Bhavi Jhaveri is bringing back that old and flavourful tradition with Nanee's Flavours, a small business that retails traditional snacks made by four grandmothers.

Available in 14 stores across Mumbai and sold among friends and family, these mouth-watering snacks were initially based on the recipes inherited by Jhaveri's mother-in-law Nayana, 77, and her sister Yamini, 65. But it wasn't long before Jhaveri's own mother Harshada, 65, and her friend from Jabalpur, 70 year-old Saroj joined the group, with Harshada's mother's secret concoctions adding to the delicious mix.

Jhaveri's own memories of enjoying 'wheat puffs' and the constant demands for *nani ka paan* at her

this 'n' that

workplace prompted her to start her venture in 2015. The trigger came when she was looking for something more gratifying than her corporate job. She decided to lend her marketing skills to her mother-in-law and Yamini, who were already quite famous in their South Mumbai social circle for their age-old recipes of *Surati jiralu* (an accompaniment used for garnishing and to add flavour) and crunchy *mukhwwas* (mouth-freshener). The senior sisters had also been preparing snacks like 'caramel dates' and 'dry fruit crunch' based on their mother Sadgunaben's recipes, and creating quite a stir.

Once the business came together, all four seniors, including Saroj from Jabalpur, started preparing the aromatic snacks and mouth-fresheners, packaging them and couriering them to Jhaveri, who began to take care of the front end of the business.

"We hold frequent brainstorming sessions to make the recipes a little more appealing to youngsters," is all

Jhaveri is willing to reveal. She says her daughter's school friends, who can't get enough of the *khatta meetha* oats, are her primary test group.

"Parents absolutely love that we have introduced this product," says Nayana. "They are thrilled that Nanee's Flavours has managed to turn something as dull as oats into a delicious snack for their kids," she says with a smile. Besides bringing these age-old recipes back to life, Jhaveri is happy to help seniors discover their entrepreneurial side. "Old age can be tough and it always helps to have something to occupy your mind. I hope to include many more *nani* over the next few years and explore their recipes and share them with the world."

And Jhaveri is dead serious, planning to expand her venture to Ahmedabad and Indore. "We have some clients there, who frequently request us to extend our services to their cities. Rooted in tradition, these cities will prove to be a good market for our traditional recipes."



OFF THE CUFF BY RAJU MUKHERJI

THE RELIANCE CUP: In the first of a new column, we explore Dhirubhai Ambani's exemplary—yet little known—contribution to the cause of cricket

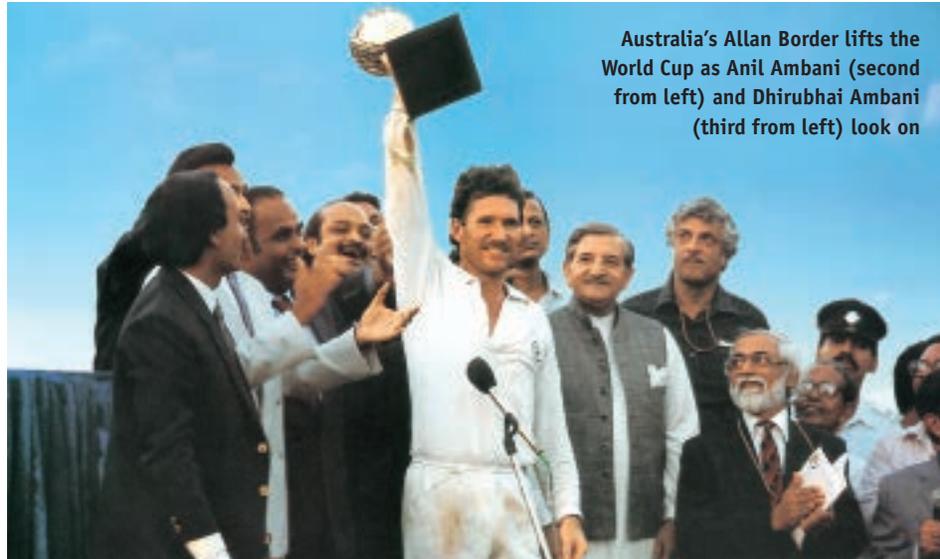
To begin my innings with *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, instead of a sizzling 'sixer', I reckon a classical cover drive would be the ideal start. Let my bat drive home an issue that has never been highlighted by our cricket writers and sports scholars.

In India, we have a tendency to criticise our politicians and industrialists for everything that is wrong in Indian sport. But how many of us are aware that one of India's finest hours in sport was made possible by a trio that comprised a politician, an industrialist and a lawyer-politician?

Dhirubhai Ambani was posthumously honoured by the Government of India with the coveted Padma Vibhushan for his unparalleled contribution to the Indian industrial environment. That said, the sheer magnitude of his achievement in the industrial sector has dwarfed many of his other works in the interest of Indian society. One of his magnificent achievements was in the arena of cricket. Sadly, the issue has never been highlighted in our country. His yeoman contribution to cricket has never been acknowledged and recognised.

Dhirubhai Ambani gave cricket in India a new and novel dimension. He exemplified the spirit of patriotism in no uncertain manner on a monsoon morn in Mumbai way back in 1983. He picked up the phone receiver and gave his assent as the voice from the Prime Minister's Office informed him to meet her within a couple of days. The visionary industrialist did not have a single query. Nor did he want to know the reason for the urgency. Dhirubhai wasted no time.

The next day, he was at Mrs Indira Gandhi's chamber at 10 Janpath in New Delhi to keep his appointment as desired by the prime minister herself. N K P Salve, the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), was also asked by the PMO to be present in



Australia's Allan Border lifts the World Cup as Anil Ambani (second from left) and Dhirubhai Ambani (third from left) look on

the room at the appointed hour. Salve happened to be a cabinet minister at the time and was very highly rated for his integrity as a lawyer as well as a politician.

Mrs Gandhi kept the usual pleasantries short, as was her style, and went straight into the principal issue. She asked Dhirubhai whether the latter would be keen to sponsor a world cricket championship on Indian soil. Dhirubhai Ambani, God bless him, did not hesitate for a moment. Instantly, he realised the image and prestige of his nation was at stake. He nodded and uttered, "Madam, yes, I would be too happy to give a blank cheque to cover the entire cost of the tournament since it is for a national cause." He did not betray any emotion. He asked no questions. He sought no clarifications. The grand visionary immediately grasped that the money was to be spent to uphold India's honour. For him that was enough reason. He offered a blank cheque. Yes, that was Dhirubhai Ambani.

But we are going ahead of the actual story. The story begins at Lord's. 25 June 1983 to be precise. India had reached the Prudential World Cup final against all odds. 'Kapil's Devils' were to play the defending champions, the rampaging West Indies, at Lord's. A few days prior to the final, just after India had defeated the hosts England in the semi-final, N K P Salve requested the authorities at Lord's

for two tickets for the final. The tickets were requested for Siddhartha Shankar Ray and his wife Maya. S S Ray, a former Calcutta University Cricket Blue, was the Indian High Commissioner to the US at the time.

Surprisingly, the authorities at Lord's turned down the request of the BCCI president. Even priced tickets were not made available. For Salve, the epitome of gentlemanliness, this was an embarrassing scenario. The president of one of the finalist teams could not offer even two tickets to an Indian ambassador. Salve, a man of high integrity and self-respect, decided there and then that he would not take this insult to his country lying down.

When India won the coveted trophy, Salve lost no time and brought the winning team over to New Delhi from Heathrow to meet the prime minister. After the reception was over, he made a beeline for Mrs Gandhi and told her of the humiliation he had to face in London over those two tickets. She asked him what he had contemplated to avenge the insult. Salve, the outstanding lawyer and clever politician, had a mind of his own. He devised that he would try to get the World Cup out of the clutches of England, who had monopolised hosting the quadrennial tournament since 1975.

Within the course of the next few months, the BCCI was preparing itself to take on the challenges of the major cricketing powers of the time, England and Australia. It was decided that at the next meeting of the ICC, where the dates of the following World Cup in England would be determined, the BCCI would offer double the guarantee money to all the participating teams. On the day of the meeting at Lord's, true to form, the plan was executed to perfection.

At the ICC meeting held at Lord's to confirm England as host, the eloquence of Salve had the influential lobbies scurrying for cover. In a magnanimous gesture, the BCCI president doubled the guarantee money if the tournament were held in India and, then, for good measure, made some more concessions for the benefit of the players and their families. All reservations about playing the World Cup on Indian soil evaporated into thin air in next to no time.

The ultimate decision of the meeting heralded that the 1987 edition of the World Cup would be held in India. In another masterstroke of diplomacy, the statesman in N K P Salve asked Pakistan to be a co-host. The 1987 Cricket World Cup was the first to vanquish the monopoly of England as the permanent venue. Since then, the

championship keeps moving around the globe by rotation, as it should be in a democratic scenario.

The spirit displayed by Dhirubhai Ambani, N K P Salve and Mrs Gandhi has been forgotten in this land of ours. They showed how politicians, professionals and industrialists can help to shape the world through the medium of sports.

Mrs Gandhi was assassinated in October 1984. The country was in turmoil. The World Cup was only of secondary importance. Obviously, there were far more important jobs awaiting attention.

The 1987 Cricket World Cup was the first to vanquish the monopoly of England as the permanent venue. Since then, the championship keeps moving around the globe by rotation, as it should be in a democratic scenario

But Salve remained resolute. He approached Dhirubhai to find out if he was still willing to sponsor the event. Salve's apprehension can well be imagined. Indira Gandhi was no more. The nation was staring at crisis. But the industrialist from Mumbai said, "Nothing doing, the show must go on. I will not go back on my word." As promised, the blank cheque from Dhirubhai Ambani remained with Salve.

Rajiv Gandhi took over from his late mother. Salve kept his unwavering focus. For his part, Dhirubhai, who had no interest in sports, sent his younger son Anil to get involved with the staging of the World Cup. In one grand gesture of magnanimity, Anil Ambani had all the cricket boards salivating—he offered complimentary hospitality to all the office bearers of the respective cricket boards. This served to add salt to England's wound. People who had denied India just two tickets were granted full hospitality throughout the course of the championship! It was an exemplary Gandhian masterstroke.

Indeed, the trio—Salve, Ambani and Gandhi—was magnificent in handling the global event. The Reliance World Cup was an outstanding success in terms of media coverage, sponsorship and crowd participation. Just goes to show that with the right people in the right places, India can move the world. Dhirubhai Ambani deserves our salute for his superlative, patriotic gesture.

Kolkata-based Mukherji is a former cricket player, coach, selector, talent scout, match referee and writer



Melania Avanzato

All about **EVE**

Narrating the bad and ugly can be an exhausting and difficult exercise for a writer, especially if the stories pivot on human inadequacies, suffering and violence. Mauritius-born writer **Ananda Devi** is widely acclaimed for her profound understanding of the undesirable side of the human psyche. Known for her sensual prose and startling images, Devi's characters chart a course of their own in tales that do not necessarily have happy endings. "I always go towards ambiguous characters, because that's what human beings are, not black or white but in innumerable shades where the same character can be courageous and cowardly, loving and hateful, generous and cruel," observes the 60 year-old writer.

authorspeak

Interestingly, her writing skills got noticed at a rather young age when she won a short story competition organised by French television, open to all Francophone countries. At 19, she published her first collection of short stories. Since then, she has authored 11 novels. Her latest, *Eve Out of Her Ruins* (Speaking Tree; ₹ 299; 174 pages), is poignant. Translated from French by Jeffrey Zuckerman, the story revolves around the lives of four young Mauritians compelled to survive poverty and squalor on a 'paradise' island that perpetuates hate and violence. Through a morbid yet engaging story, Devi unveils the ghastly reality of those "who do not belong"; unfortunately hemmed away under the mesmerising beauty of one of the world's most popular tourist destinations: Mauritius. Awarded the prestigious Prix des Cinq Continents for the best book written in French outside the country, *Eve Out of Her Ruins* is already a prescribed text in some universities in France and Mauritius.

Translated into several languages, Devi is the recipient of numerous awards including the French state honour, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres (2010), and Prix du Reyonnement de la Langue et de la Litterature Francaise (2014). In an email interview to **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the multilingual author, who lives in a small town on the French-Swiss border, talks all things literary, including dark narratives, gender discourse and translations. Excerpts:

You seem comfortable with intense and seemingly dark narratives.

I have had, since my childhood (and despite having had a very happy childhood with gentle and supportive parents), a kind of contemplative and questioning outlook upon the world. I have always felt that I was an observer on the edges, teetering in front of a darkness that seemed to grow out of human tragedies, especially those of individuals who were rarely heard. As I grew up, and as my writing grew up with me, I became more fascinated with the origins of violence, trying to understand where this human paradox—the possibility of immense generosity and of abominable cruelty—comes from. From novel to novel, I have pursued this thread as if it were Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth, leading towards the Minotaur rather than away from it.

Is there a bedrock of emotions that surfaces every time you create your women characters?

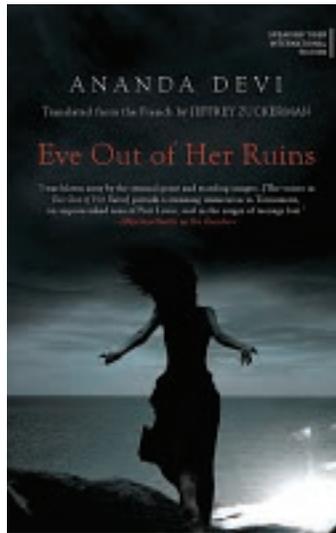
As a writer, I delve into this bedrock of emotions because they are a prerequisite for my becoming fully immersed

and engaged in a story. It so happens that it is women who are the most marginalised even among the marginalised, and this exploration has thus led me towards complex characters such as Eve, who is both *sinned against and sinning*, to quote Shakespeare, although I wouldn't use such moralistically charged words in this context where survival means you are prepared to go beyond morals. I like to toggle with the full gamut of human emotions and passions. But I also want my female characters to go beyond all the barriers and walls that enclose them, including their bodies, and repossess who they are, without counting on any external help, be it man or divine intervention.

What are your views on the existing gender discourse in recent Indian English writing?

There has been so much exciting writing coming out in recent years, as well as in not so recent years, that it would be difficult to summarise or isolate a few. Recently, I read an autobiographical text by Meena Alexander entitled *Fault Lines* (first published in 1993 and republished in 2003) that I found absolutely superb, encompassing the experience of a child and young woman going from India to Sudan to the US with an absolute, raw and poetic honesty. I also loved *A Restless Wind* by Shahrukh Husain, a novel that moves between the UK and India and has a strong female protagonist as well as a range of wonderful female characters, and at the core of which is the quest for identity—if such an identity exists. There is obviously a very large number of books that come out in India every year and that, I am sure, explore perhaps even more unflinchingly the condition of women. There is a certain fearlessness in some of the younger writers. I hope they get recognised in the West.

Is feminism an overrated element in contemporary literature? Do



“I like to toggle with the full gamut of human emotions and passions. But I also want my female characters to go beyond all the barriers and walls that enclose them and repossess who they are, without counting on any external help, be it man or divine intervention”

you identify yourself as a feminist writer?

When I was in my 30s, I recused the term ‘feminist’ because I did not like the pejorative connotations of the word, and was against any kind of label appended to my name as a writer. However, over the past decades, I’ve come to terms with this because I realised that feminism wasn’t a label but a commitment that women are still among the most downtrodden in the world, that violence is still directed towards them even more than towards men.

So, yes, I am a feminist because I believe that we have something to say to the world that is different and might

provide solutions to the disasters we are facing. And by this, I don’t mean that we need to take on ‘manly’ attributes, as too often successful women have had to do, whether in politics or business. I believe female artists have a way of looking on the world, a *Weltanschauung*, that can change the position of women in the world. It is paradoxical because I don’t want to be categorised as a female writer—a writer is a writer, without labels—but, at the same time, I feel I have something to say about women and from their point of view that is necessary, because the battle is not won. Far from it: men haven’t changed.

The issue of rape in India that came to a head a couple of years ago is still as frightful and urgent now as it was in the past centuries. The way women are seen everywhere as being somehow responsible for attracting this kind of violence is something that fills me with rage and a kind of boiling impotence. How can this be changed? What can we do to modify men’s way of looking at women’s bodies? In *Eve Out of Her Ruins*, Eve says that men take possession of her body even before they’ve touched her, just by looking at her. The answer is not to hide this body, but to change the look.

How does your distant connection with India contribute to your distinct style of writing?

Strangely enough, it isn’t that distant. For all people of the diaspora, the cultural presence of India is both vivid and at the same time a source of strangeness. All immigrants feel displaced and need to hang on to a past identity. The problem is that they also have to build a new identity. I must say that I have no problem with having multiple identities. I believe it’s the only way to avoid fanaticism and fundamentalism: being aware that we have different identities and that none of them justifies killing others.

I acknowledge the richness of my Indian origins, but also that of the African culture that came to me through proximity with the continent and the European culture that I acquired through my education. My Indian ancestry manifests itself mostly in the way I write through the symbolism, the mythical aspects, the need to ground everything I write into a larger story. It's been immensely enriching to be able to draw from these sources.

How was the experience of writing *Eve Out of Her Ruins* a departure from earlier novels?

It was a little different in that it started out as a long poem. I had the idea of the title and it sounded like a line of poetry, so I thought I would write something about this girl limping in the ruins of a city at night, but then I began to see it as a story that I wanted to elucidate: who was this girl, why was she limping, why was the city in ruins? And the name Eve obviously has mythical connotations that made me want to tell a story of a 'fall', but where the fall is what makes this young woman stand tall and find her own self. She is by no means fallen. She is a heroine of a Greek tragedy, bringing about by her own acts the circumstances that will lead to disaster. This is very much in line with my other novels, but this one struck a chord with readers because it deals with such a contemporary issue, the tragedy of disenfranchised youth.

Was it cathartic?

All my novels take a toll on me because of their content, density and inner violence. I loved these young characters and was heartbroken to have such a bleak ending. I have tried to go inside their head and heart and subconscious to extract their strength, their fragility, their rebelliousness, their anger.

As someone who has done translations, what do you think is the most arduous part of translating?

I absolutely love the craft of translation. It is essential in making literature cross the frontiers of language, but it has long been seen as the poor sister, the Cinderella of writing. I think that a good translator is a good writer and should be recognised as such. As we become more and more aware of the intricacies and complexities involved, we justifiably give more importance to this art and acknowledge the fact that without it, so many great works would have been inaccessible to us.

The main difficulty is to find the voice of the original author and to render it in another language in a way that reads naturally and fluidly. I often tell my translators to allow themselves to take some liberties with my texts in order to make the translated text read more naturally and idiomatically. I am on the jury for several literary competitions, including one for work in translation, and when I read a book that has been well translated, it is an absolute pleasure, whereas when you feel a text is translated, it means it isn't a good translation. This is why many classical texts are now being retranslated, in order to bring to them this new way of looking at translation.

When not writing, how do you indulge yourself?

I love watching movies, particularly thrillers and science fiction. However, I still look for movies with good screenplays and I don't enjoy blockbusters that are too formulaic. I recently watched a science-fiction movie with a marvellous screenplay, *The Arrival*, based on a short story. So, basically, I enjoy intelligent and entertaining movies.

Do awards pressurise you?

Awards are a welcome recognition of my work, of course, but they are not something for which I strive. Maybe I would have welcomed them more in my early writing years, but with four decades of writing behind me, I am more interested in creating an *oeuvre*, something that will last and live long after I am gone. For this reason, every new work I embark on has to push me beyond my own boundaries, beyond my limits. I

love playing with style, with form, as much as dealing with subjects that are harsh and that will lead the reader towards an uncomfortable place. When readers tell me they had to stop reading one of my novels just in order to take a breath because it felt as if they were being pulled into an abyss, I feel as if I have succeeded in pushing these boundaries further away. Once a reader in France came to me at a festival and said: "I am *Pagli!*"... *Pagli* is the title of one of my novels and I felt she had completely inhabited the novel, had become an intimate part of it. These reactions mean more to me than awards. Admittedly, receiving the second highest honour from Mauritius and a decoration from France did make me proud, especially when I think of my parents, who had three daughters and who did everything to allow their daughters to blossom intellectually and artistically. All these awards make me think of them with great pride and love, although they are no longer here to witness them.

"I don't want to be categorised as a female writer but, at the same time, I feel I have something to say about women and from their point of view that is necessary, because the battle is not won. Far from it: men haven't changed"

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THE YEAR

Elsa Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919)
reflects on the timelessness and
continuity of emotions

What can be said in New Year rhymes,
That's not been said a thousand times?

The new years come, the old years go,
We know we dream, we dream we know.

We rise up laughing with the light,
We lie down weeping with the night.

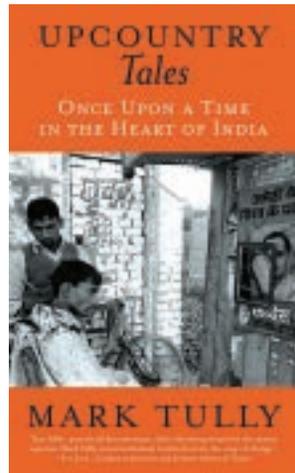
We hug the world until it stings,
We curse it then and sigh for wings.

We live, we love, we woo, we wed,
We wreath our brides, we sheet our dead.

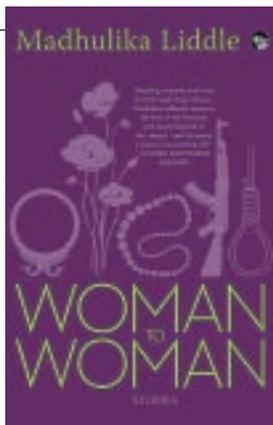
We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,
And that's the burden of the year.

Wilcox was an American writer best known for Poems of Passion

It is difficult to categorise **Mark Tully's** **UPCOUNTRY TALES: ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE HEART OF INDIA** (*Speaking Tiger*; ₹ 599; 287 pages) under any particular genre. It brings to light a comprehensive scenario when India was at the crossroads, prior to globalisation. Known for his dispassionate reporting, India-born Tully makes accurate socio-political observations of an India that is inextricably layered. Set in the interiors of eastern Uttar Pradesh, where three generations of the author's family lived in the second half of the 1980s, each chapter is a detailed essay narrating a tale of memorable people—unlikely

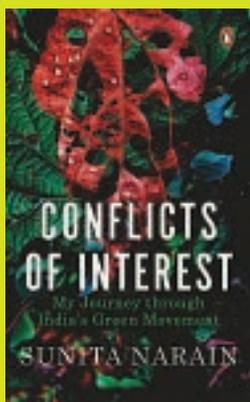


rebels, delightful pragmatists, bunglers and bumblers, quiet heroes—finding ways to deal with bad governance, corruption and social hierarchies. Among the stories are those of a reticent, elderly Dalit who challenges tradition to build a shrine to Sant Ravi Das; a clear-headed, shrewd farmer's wife who saves her family from her husband's foolish endeavours; a former headmistress who leads the battle to save an endangered railway line; a peaceable policeman who defies political pressure to solve a murder; and an agnostic who becomes a monk. Laced with humour and sensitivity, this collection makes for an insightful read.

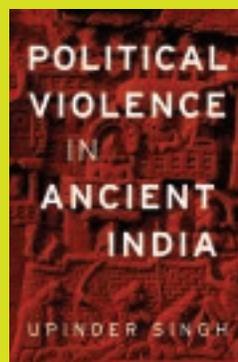


WOMAN TO WOMAN (*Speaking Tiger*; ₹ 299; 176 pages) is a pithy collection of 12 stories told by **Madhulika Liddle** with just the right measure of sensitivity. A clear departure from her previous works, it partakes in the ongoing and increasingly disturbing discourse on women and violence. Liddle's interests in classic cinema, travel, food and history contribute richly to the tapestry she weaves around her protagonists including Paro, Mariamma, Kamini and Sulakshana. The stories depict the fragility of our social and moral conditioning while dealing with women. The collection travels to the mundane with a reasonable measure of humour and then surges with inspiration that rises from the kind of resilience typical of the human spirit.

Also on stands



Conflicts of Interest
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A blueprint for how India can clean up its act and deal with environmental exigencies.



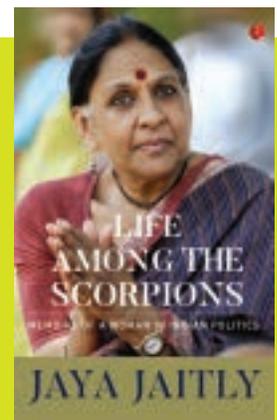
Political Violence in Ancient India
Upinder Singh
Harvard University Press; ₹ 999; 540 pages
The book documents the dynamic tension between violence and non-violence in ancient Indian political thought and practice over 1,200 years.

Life Among the Scorpions

Jaya Jaitly

Bloomsbury; ₹ 499; 256 pages

This hard-hitting memoir looks at Indian polity from a woman's point of view.



{ mysticalmusings }

'Without individual peace, there can be no world peace'

You are the experiment, you are the experimenter, and you are the outcome," says **Kamlesh D Patel**, the fourth spiritual Guide in the Sahaj Marg system of Raja Yoga meditation, popularly known as Heartfulness (www.heartfulness.org). Affectionately referred to as **Daaji**, he is equally at ease meditating in the sublime stillness of a Himalayan ashram and addressing seekers at bustling meets in London, Paris, Sydney and New York. Indeed, Daaji displays the perfect blend of the eastern heart and western mind.

Born in 1956, Daaji spent his childhood in a small village in Gujarat. After graduating with a degree in pharmacy, he did his postgraduate studies in the US, where he went on to own and manage 12 pharmacies. As president of Shri Ram Chandra Mission currently, he keeps travelling, overseeing meditation centres and ashrams in over 120 countries and conducting meditation with Yogic Transmission worldwide. Daaji and his wife have two sons. "By tuning into our heart, we learn to be centred in our highest self," he observes in an email interview with **Srirekha Pillai**.

Can you elaborate on your personal tryst with spirituality?

I was drawn towards spiritual matters from a very young age and continue to be a student of spirituality. In my teens, when I started meditating, my mother would say, "It's not that you started now; you started when you started walking. When your father would go to the temple, you would pull his dhoti, making sure he took you with him."

At a young age I wanted to become a sannyasi; one day, I left home and went to a riverbank where a group of sadhus lived. The eldest among them asked me why I was there. When I told him, he advised me to go home and discover spirituality in worldly life. Later, in 1976, when I was 19 and studying pharmacy, one of my friends took me to a Heartfulness trainer, a very simple lady in her 40s, who gave me an initiation into the Heartfulness system. Soon after that I met my first Guide, Babuji. I had an inquisitive mind, so I backed the teachings of my Guide with my own experiences in meditation.

Whenever we sit in meditation with an open heart, we receive a particular experience. We start with the suggestion, the hypothesis, that there is

a source of light present within our hearts and it is drawing us inwards. Like scientists, we observe and experience each time we close our eyes and connect within. I would say everyone's tryst with spirituality is personal, based on experiences along the path. Trust your instincts, your feelings, and follow your heart.

What exactly is Heartfulness meditation? What sets it apart?

The attributes that define Heartfulness meditation are as follows:

- Meditation is done on the presence of Divinity within the heart.
- This meditation is aided and supported by *pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission.
- Heartfulness has a process of yogic cleaning to fine-tune and purify the mind.
- Another important element of Heartfulness is the practice of connecting with your higher self through prayer.

Heartfulness is a spiritual path that leads us to higher levels of consciousness. As a result, we realise our human potential. Each day brings us newer

levels of awareness and consciousness. By interacting daily with new doses of higher levels of consciousness, our journey into the vast arena of consciousness begins with the simple act of meditation. The beauty is that today's higher level of consciousness then becomes the normal state of awareness, waiting for tomorrow's dose of higher consciousness, which then becomes normal, and so on. Thus, the journey unfolds.

You talk about Yogic Transmission during meditation. Do elaborate....

What is this *pranahuti* or Yogic Transmission? To answer briefly, it is spiritual food. Just as we have nutrition for the body, and mental enrichment and education for the mind, Transmission enriches the soul.

When the soul is satisfied with Transmission, you will receive so much grace and peace, often resulting in a deep meditative state. You will only know this from experience, so I encourage everybody to try it out. Conduct an experiment. First, meditate without Transmission with the Heartfulness technique. Then, try meditating again the same way, this time with the help of a trainer. You can find a trainer through  heartspots.heartfulness.org, or you can remotely



Courtesy: Shri Ram Chandra Mission

“When we meditate sincerely, we recognise the inherent unity among all religions and also feel that unity”



connect with a trainer on the ‘Let’s Meditate’ app. Try this experiment as many times as you like and observe for yourself the difference between meditation with Transmission and without.

What is the role of a modern-day spiritual guru?

In every aspect of our lives, when we are seeking to gain mastery over a subject or skill, we look towards the experiences of those who have gone before us. At school, we seek the guidance of teachers to teach us subjects and expose us to new knowledge. If we want to climb Mount Everest, we seek the guidance of the sherpas who know the path and can lead us to the top. Similarly, in spirituality, the role of a spiritual guru is to act as a guide, serving us and bringing us deeper within ourselves. Today, we find more and more factors pulling us externally, making it important for a spiritual guru to be able to show us the simple way to interiorise. It is important to test a guru, to make sure that he has the capability to take you towards your chosen goal, just as you would if you were looking for a teacher in any other field.

What ails the world today?

Many of us have lost a sense of peace and simplicity; also, happiness and poise. Instead, we feel burdened by complex lives involving worries, conflicts, fears, anger, guilt and a lack of fulfilment. Greed and avarice are also not progressive traits. Without individual peace, there can be no world peace. More and more contentment will lead to infinite contentment in such a way that the seeds of contentment we have cultivated in our heart may bloom one day and create a forest of contentment.

What is the antidote to fanaticism and hatred?

Hatred towards others is always a reflection of self-hatred. So when we purify the heart of its negativity and allow our consciousness to fill with love, hatred will automatically disappear. When we study the teachings of different religious texts and the ways of life they have advocated, we realise there is an inherent unity among all religions. Actually, how can there be any fundamental difference between one true religion and another, as they are describing the same Principle we

call God? The outer differences are merely owing to superficial differences in culture, era, etc. My first Guru, Babuji, used to say vegetarianism would not be a good idea in an Eskimo’s religion, as it would be highly impractical!

When we meditate sincerely, we recognise the inherent unity among all religions and also *feel* that unity. Brahma of the Hindus is the same as Allah of the Muslims, God the Father of the Christians, Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, and so on. There can be no difference among them, as all acknowledge that there is only one God.

What is the key to happiness?

Babuji used to say, “More and more of less and less”. At first this sounded confusing. Over time I realised he meant we need more and more of less and less desires. Our happiness can be seen as a quotient: the number of desires fulfilled, divided by the total number of desires. As a result of acquiring greater understanding of life, we realise that as our number of desires reduces, the quotient becomes higher. As our total number of desires (the denominator) approaches zero, the closer we come to infinite happiness.

 For the full interview, log on to www.harmonyindia.org

SOUL TALK

Thomas M Easley tries to weigh in on the existential dilemma of life

Recently, following my usual morning routine, I went into my studio and turned on my computer. The lines were down, however, and I was unable to log on to the Internet. So I picked up my smartphone. Within seconds I had checked local weather, the definition of antimony, world news, the status of a UPS delivery, my email inbox, and I did a quick Facebook scan.

All was well and I felt happy....

And it was then, at that moment, that epiphany struck and I realised—I loved my phone. That the little electronic object cradled in my palm had evoked in me a very real human emotion....

Expressions of human emotions therefore, even our most elevated ones, are not reserved for loved ones and God. They are evoked by anything that provides... a greater sense of value and security....

Over the ages men have found affection and comfort in a warm fire, strong bow, rifle, truck or home. All of which, we believe, have no soul.

But what if they do? What if my loving my phone awakens the soul in my phone? What if my loving my Jeep or home awakens the soul in them, or the reverse? Does loving them awaken the soul in me?

...Has anyone ever captured a soul—yeti of the afterlife? Examined one in a bottle or test tube? Do we have photographs or footprints of souls? By what measure can we state without doubt that souls exist, that our body comes with a soul when we are born; an appendage of necessity equal to that of our heart, lungs and brain?

A now departed and very dear friend once asserted that some people were born soulless and for this reason human

life gives rise to vicious dictators, cons, rapists and murderers.... But what if we are born soulless and some people are just born more soulless than others? What if having a soul is only made true by disbelief in and non-attachment to the soul?

...That we can neither prove nor disprove that a soul exists has wide ranging implications and brings us, rather circuitously, to the point of this article:

Are we here?

Right now you think you are reading these words in your present while I am here in my present writing them. Are we? How can we be certain of this, or anything else given the very limited scope of human vision, if in fact we are human and have human vision?

“But we are human,” you say. “We have bodies; a fleshy mass that shudders in the cold and sweats under the gaze of a noon day sun.” ... But does being aware of our physical body constitute proof of the existence of that body?

It is by human definition that we certify ourselves as human and living, but what of the bug’s point

of view, or that of the stars, time, space and God? Is man by any other definition still a man?

...

Descartes, the French philosopher/mathematician, stated, “I think, therefore I am,” and maybe he was right. Perhaps all we require to bring ourselves, our souls and God into existence is to think them. In the end we are, or are not, what we think we are, and the importance of either, either matters or it does not.

Greater clarity would be helpful. ... Let me check, there may be an app for that on my phone.



123RF.com

New York-based Easley (b 1949) is an artist, writer, musician, seeker, and teacher



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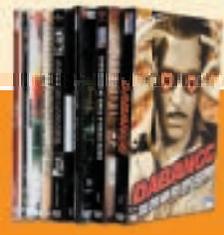
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The Fab Four in India

From time immemorial, India has been considered the crown jewel of the Mystic East. But the blaze of publicity that followed the 1968 sojourn of The Beatles in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram in Rishikesh was unparalleled. The Fab Four—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—were introduced to the Maharishi in London at a time when, weary of giddy superstardom and experiments with drugs, they wanted to slow life down a bit. The Maharishi invited them to spend time in his ashram by the banks of the Ganga to practise transcendental meditation and to learn the nuances of Indian classical music. So, with wives and girlfriends in tow, The Beatles headed to India in February 1968, in the hope of finding eternal peace.

There, they joined a cohort of seekers including American actor-model Mia Farrow and her sister Prudence. Inspired by the sylvan surroundings, the band wrote songs such as *Mother Nature's Son*, *Dear Prudence* (about Farrow's sister), *Ob Bla Di* and *Back in the USSR*. Though it was all hunky-dory at first, things deteriorated eventually. Starr left after 10 days, nursing an upset tummy, and McCartney after a month. Lennon and Harrison stayed on, but left



Dinodia Photo Library

in a huff amid rumours of inappropriate behaviour by the Maharishi; Lennon's *Sexy Sadie* is a reference to the alleged incident.

Incidentally, their stay in India was one of the most productive periods in the history of the band, with Lennon, McCartney and Harrison writing 48 songs, many of which made it to *The White Album*. Many

tunes composed by Harrison were based on Indian classical music and the teachings of Vedanta; while Lennon's *Across the Universe* is a veritable tribute to their days at the ashram—recently converted into a tourist attraction. Most of all, The Beatles' tryst with India escalated the number of hippies hitting the dirt road to the country, in search for peace and ancient Vedic wisdom.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JANUARY 1968

- On 8 January, Pierre Guillard, a mentally ill French man, gouged many holes with a knife in Rubens' *The Virgin and Child Surrounded by the Holy Innocents* at The Louvre.
- On 10 January, India rescinded its approval of the Tashkent Declaration as tensions escalated between the country and Pakistan.
- On 16 January, *Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, based on the novel by Muriel Spark, premiered on Broadway.
- On 23 January, the government of the Madras state—which later became Tamil Nadu—became the first state in India to drop a requirement that students learn Hindi.

“The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.

—American actor, comedian and producer
Lucille Ball (1911-1989)

Allyship

n. The state or condition of being an ally to people or groups that have historically been marginalised, oppressed, or discriminated against.

EXAMPLE: *Allyship* is not showing the world how good you are being, it is showing the world how backwards it is, and constantly producing counter-narratives that promote equality.

—Jay Dodd, “*The Myth of Allyship: Complacency of small victories*”, *The Huffington Post*, February 2, 2016

Source: www.wordspy.com

Beach-spreading

pp. Taking up more than one’s fair share of space on a crowded beach.

EXAMPLE: “In the last few years I’ve been noticing more people with their gear,” Ms. Rosenberg said. She was originally looking to make a comparison between **beach-spreading** maximalists and just-a-towel-and-a-book minimalists. “But the maximalists just won over,” she said.

—Nick Coasaniti & Luis Ferr-Sadurn, “*Reining in beach-spreading, not to be confused with manspreading*”, *The New York Times*, 11 August 2017

CORD NEVER

n. A person who has never subscribed to a cable television package.

EXAMPLE: Comcast’s own streaming service, aimed at cord cutters and more so the **cord nevers** who never sign up for cable, has now launched.

—Sarah Perez, “*Comcast appeals to ‘cord nevers’ with launch of Xfinity Instant TV service*”, *TechCrunch*, 27 September 2017

Manel

n. A panel or similar public discussion group that consists only of men.

EXAMPLE: The range of topics on which men (and usually white men) are, apparently, exclusively experts is impressive and includes (but is not limited to) sustainable cities, infection biology, street photography, forestry research, youth economics, bioinformatics, block-chain technology and, remarkably, obstetrics, gynaecology and infertility. Social media shaming has extended from **manels** to conferences, where the hashtag #YAMMM has gained popularity as people share examples of “yet another mostly male meeting.”

—Imogen Coe, “*How we can (finally) put an end to ‘manels’*”, *The Globe and Mail*, 12 November 2017

Cryomation

n. To reduce a dead body to a powder by freeze-drying it with liquid nitrogen and then crushing the remains.

EXAMPLE: But trends in the funeral industry are beginning to shift as new and reconceived rituals, designed to be more culturally and environmentally sustainable, come into public awareness. “We’re hearing these new words starting to emerge from the field; one is aquamation, a cremation done with water,” explains Dr Interlandi. “Or you’ve got **cryomation**, where the body is actually submerged in liquid nitrogen and crushed afterwards.”

—Siobhan Hegarty, “*This fashion designer makes clothes for dead bodies*”, *ABC News*, 10 September 2017



How does your garden grow?

With burgeoning cities rapidly on the rise, sprawling gardens are fast becoming a luxury of the past. But like everything that belongs to the digital age, there is a sleek new miniature alternative: gardens in a dish! And Rekha Bhayankar, 64, in Secunderabad is an expert at making them. Lucky for us, she's spreading the love free of charge. Armed with a ceramic bowl and all the necessary materials in a bag, she will demonstrate to anyone who asks how to layer aluminium wire, metal mesh, broken pot pieces, charcoal, soil, cocopeat and vermicompost with some precision, so you can grow a little

BUZZ

garden by the window that will last you decades. The oldest one in her possession is 20 years old, when she first started making them. Her only condition is that she likes to teach a group. So if you and your friends are interested in learning how to craft a whole garden—with themes, colours and miniature figurines—hit her up. From letting you know where to source your materials to keeping your garden watered when you're away from home, she will let you in on all her secrets. And unlike bonsais, she tells us, none of this stunts growth and causes distress to the plant. Contact her on (0) 9966769044.

XAI

n. A form of machine learning-based artificial intelligence that enables human operators and researchers to understand how the system derives its results. (Derived from the phrase 'explainable artificial intelligence'.)

EXAMPLE: Armed with XAI, your digital assistant might be able to tell you it picked a certain driving route because it knows you like back roads, or that it suggested a word change so that the tone of your email would be friendlier.

—Matthew Hutson, "Our bots, ourselves",
The Atlantic, 7 February 2017

“Age does not diminish the extreme disappointment of having a scoop of ice cream fall from the cone.

—American gemstone expert and jeweller
Jim Fiebig (1956–2016)

“Good medical care is an unaffordable dream for many”

Surinder Gupta, 65, and family host a free medical clinic and distribute medicines in Mumbai



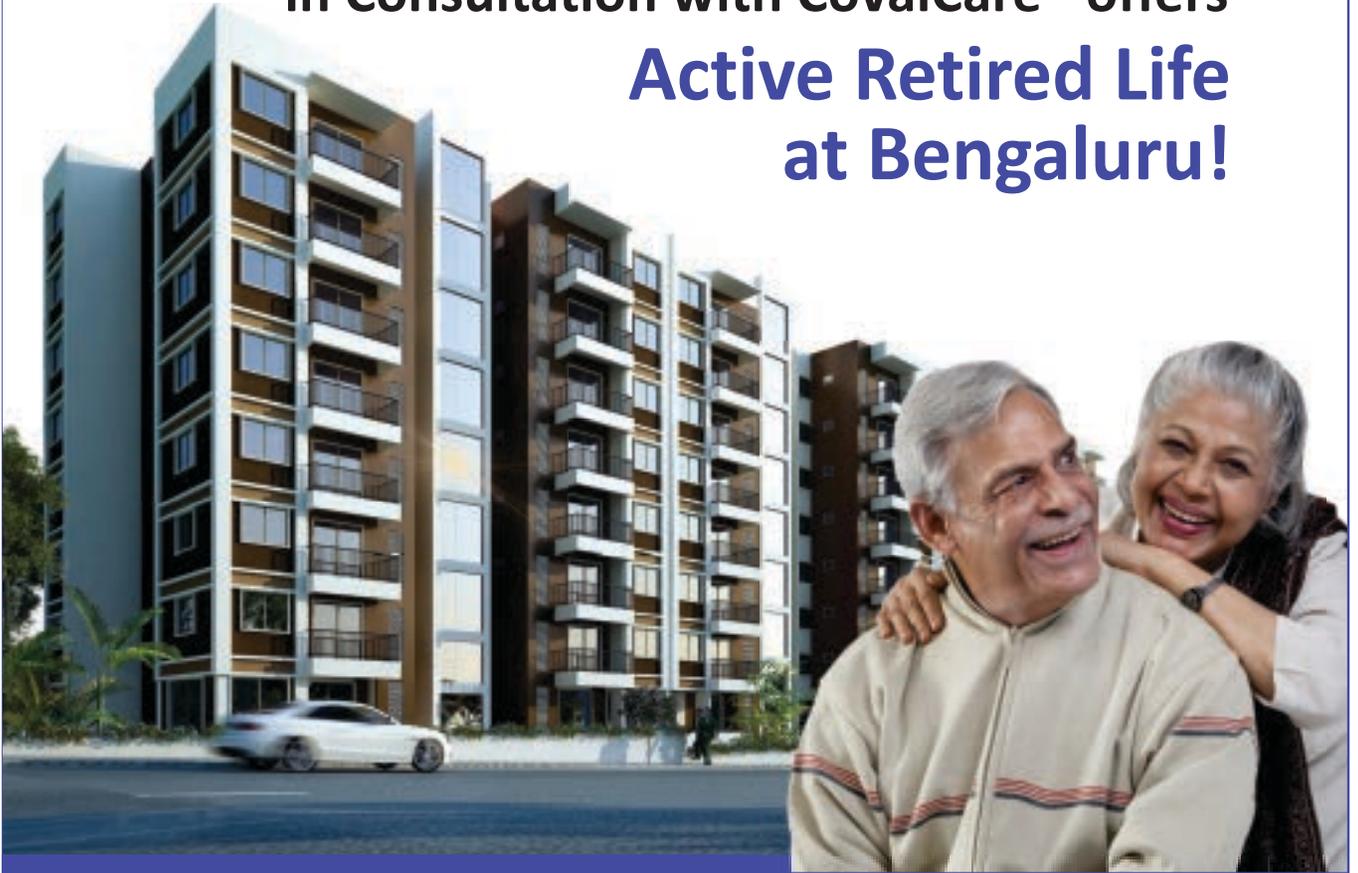
Photographs by Haresh Patel

On a quiet Thursday afternoon in Powai, a Mumbai suburb, a motley bunch of maids, security guards, construction workers and others can be seen in the lobby of Raheja Vihar, a posh high-rise, indulging in small talk while waiting patiently for their turn to see the doctor. The queue stretches right up to the first floor where a free medical clinic runs. In fact, this has been a regular sight since 2014, when the Sukrta Foundation—comprising 65 year-old **Surinder Gupta**, daughter Seema and son-in-law Vikas Goel—organised the first such clinic. Every Thursday afternoon, the clinic is up and running in Raheja Vihar and another housing society nearby to cater to the poor. “My husband Vikas, a banker, realised that good medical care is an unaffordable, unattainable dream for most people belonging to the low income group,” says Seema. Her father, who had retired from the banking sector, stepped in to look after the daily affairs of the foundation and manage the accounts. “Many

Good Samaritans have helped us along the way,” says Gupta. “For instance, the owner of the room where the clinic is run stopped taking rent after he realised what we were doing.” General practitioner Kirti Agrawal, who has been associated with the clinic since inception, says there is no compromise on the quality of medicines. “The cost of the pills and syrups ranges from ₹ 100 to ₹ 500 in the market.” Most patients come with skin problems, rashes, lesions and discolouration. “They are from the nearby Tunga slum. There is a huge lack of awareness about hygiene and sanitation there,” observes Agrawal. One of the regulars, Pawan, a former security guard, says, “Their medicines relieve the pain in my leg, which was electrocuted.” For now, Gupta would like the initiative to grow and expand to other places. “It’s a humbling experience,” he says. “We have learnt to appreciate the value of little things in life.”

—Tanushree Sen

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