

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

MAY 2018 ₹ 40



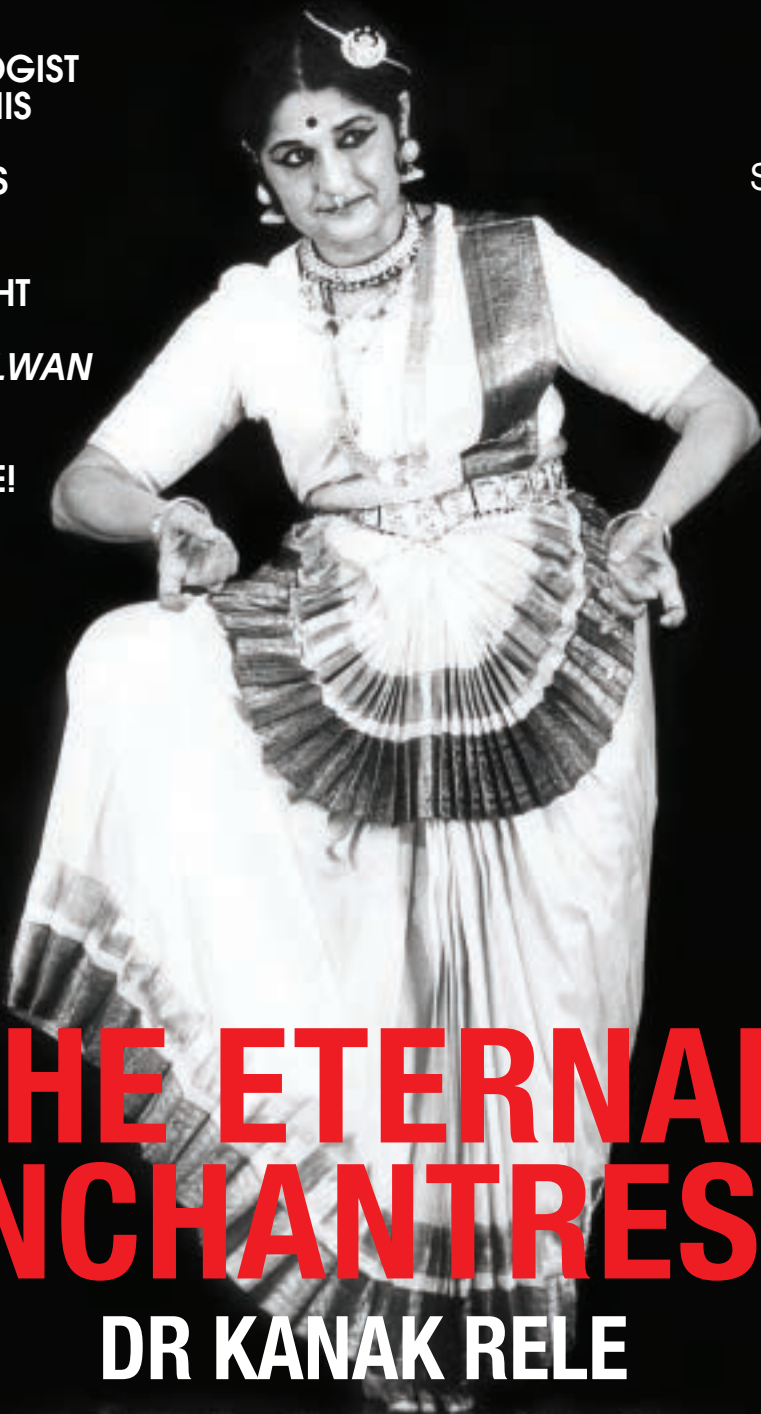
ARCHAEOLOGIST
B B LAL ON HIS
PIONEERING
DISCOVERIES

A TRIBUTE TO
HEAVYWEIGHT
CHAMPION
GAMA PEHELWAN

BEWARE OF
CYBERCRIME!

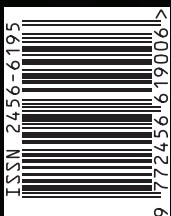
ENCOUNTER
Veteran filmmaker
and photographer
Soonil Taraporevala

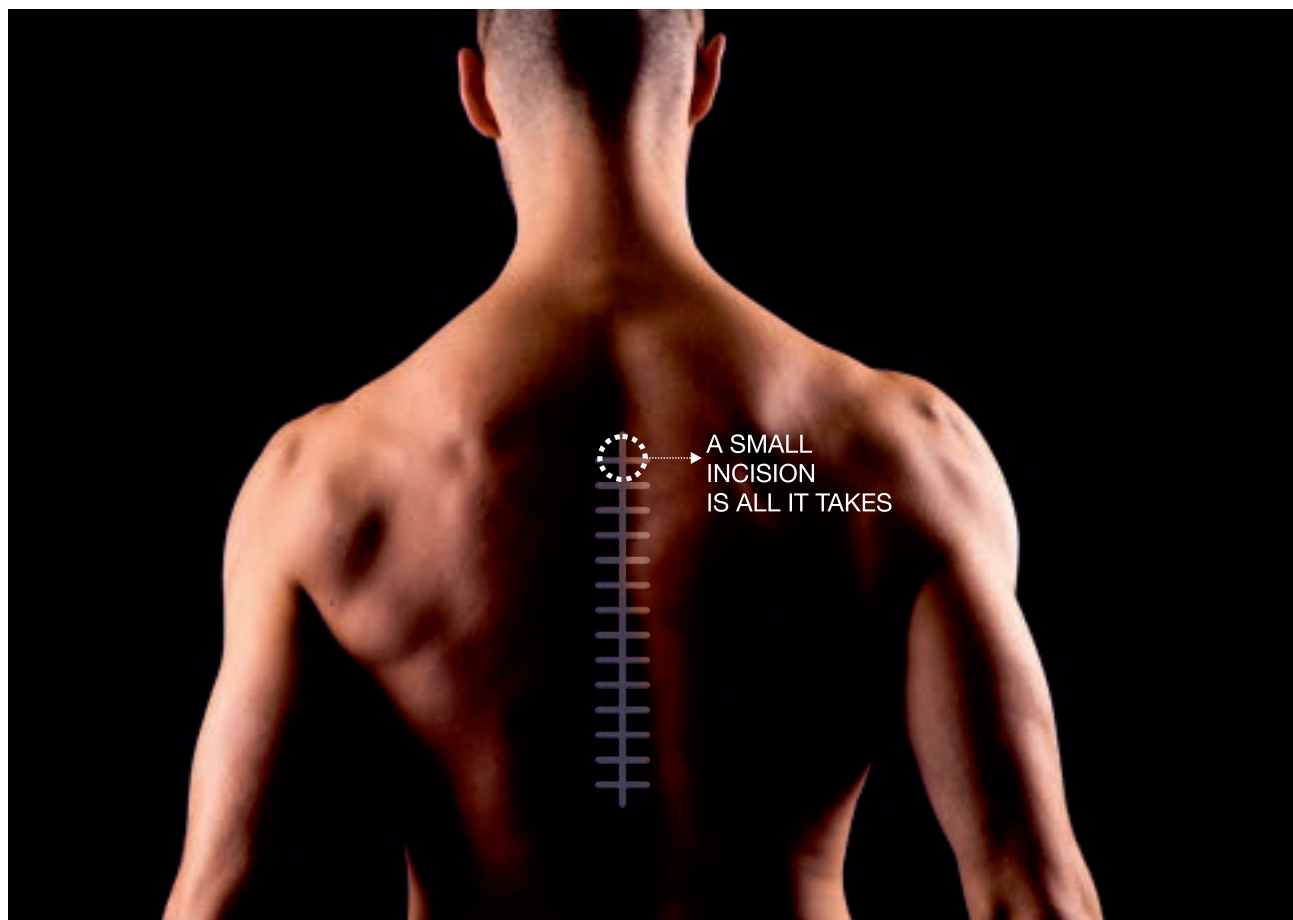
DESTINATION
Ravishing Rügen



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DR KANAK RELE





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WORK ON!

We've been talking about the potential of the silver workforce for 14 years—it's nice to finally see Indian companies catching on.

I recently read a news item about Truebil, a virtual marketplace for pre-owned cars, hiring silvers as interns to work on short-term stints. The company plans to retain the services of about eight retired people over the age of 60 with experience in mid to senior management levels. Their stated objective is twofold: to give pensioners a second innings and a chance to adopt new-age technology, and to utilise their potential as mentors to a workforce that has an average age of 28. Beginning in Mumbai, Truebil will offer these three-month, flexible 'internships' in Bengaluru and Delhi as well.

We hope this trend gains impetus—after all, it's a win-win situation for both parties. While re-entering the workplace can empower pensioners financially, their employers have it pretty good too! Apart from the wealth of knowledge and experience they bring to the table, a recent American study actually ranked older workers higher than their younger colleagues on a range of professional parameters. Older workers were found to have a stronger work ethic, including punctuality, reliability, commitment to quality and eagerness to learn; they displayed a lower rate of absenteeism and more job loyalty; their work experience, naturally, was more varied, thus enriching the company; and they exhibited better people skills, especially in terms of customer service and conflict resolution between colleagues.



Dabboo Ratnani

In fact, according to many economists, getting silvers back to work could be one of the most promising ways to address the "demographic destiny" of an ageing world, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported a couple of years ago. Citing the case of Japan, where 22 per cent of people over 65 work, and Germany, where companies like BMW are making workplace infrastructure more silver-friendly to lure back their retirees, the article quotes Jens Weidmann, president of the Deutsche Bundesbank, saying: "The young can run faster, but the old know the shortcuts."

Indeed! It's time for corporate India to wise up to this fact. Equally important, it's imperative that silvers never forget their own strengths, the wealth of their expertise, and their infinite potential to be relevant. *Harmony* promises to remind you, every month!

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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index

features

44 . Encounter: Ace filmmaker and photographer Soonni Taraporevala looks back at her incredible journey

54 . Destination: With white-chalk cliffs and Gothic architecture, Germany's biggest island Rügen is in a league of its own



62 . Etcetera: Veteran archaeologist B B Lal continues to uncover facts about the Vedic people and other ancient civilisations

columns

30 . NUTRITALK: Wellness consultant Naini Setalvad suggests nutritious alternatives for the lactose intolerant

33 . YOGA RX: Shameem Akthar shows simple practices to keep memory loss at bay

34 . IT'S NEVER 2 LATE: International columnist Jack York shares the remarkable story of Jean Makesh from Ohio

40 . MONEY MATTERS: Economist Priya Desai suggests ways to counter cybercrime and keep your finances safe

70 . OFF THE CUFF: Raju Mukherji pays tribute to the legendary Gama *pehelwan*

76 . AT LARGE: Author Swati Lahoti raises a toast to mothers, the wind beneath the wings of their children

WEB EXCLUSIVE www.harmonyindia.org



SOUND OF SILENCE

Former hostage negotiator Richard Mullender from the US helps corporate firms win boardroom wars

48 cover feature



Mohiniattam exponent Dr Kanak Rele on how taking dance to everyone became the mission of her life

Cover photograph courtesy: Dr Kanak Rele

every issue

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

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

82 . SPEAK: With photographic evidence, C R Balaji takes up civic issues in Chennai


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



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

BUTTERFLIES *never retire*

The first click of the mouse.

www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age

column one

I must confess we didn't plan it. But this issue features a remarkable cast of people that, even by our own standards, is varied and interesting beyond measure!

For starters, we have Mohiniattam revivalist and cultural icon Dr Kanak Rele on our cover. The 80 year-old's relentless mission to breathe new life into the art and "take dance to everyone" through her institution Nalanda continues to awe and inspire.

B B Lal knows something about relentlessness. At 96, the archaeologist is writing his 21st book, his "moving finger" unstoppable, adding to an incredible oeuvre that has shed light on India's historic roots over a 70 year-career that has included some landmark excavations.

Meanwhile, Sooni Taraporevala has her own inimitable way of paying tribute to her roots: her unmissable films and riveting captures. The 61 year-old's second book of photographs—the first was on her own Parsi community—is an ode to her beloved Bombay: warts and wonders.

And then we have Chris Parry. Unsung, but every bit a star. This ad maven followed his passion for photography—he is managing partner at Marathon Photos, which chronicles personal moments of glory for marathon runners across the world, and runs a company that combines travel with photography lessons. Oh, and the 71 year-old is a cancer survivor. As he told us, "I think of old people as 'old' because they are old in their ways of life. On the other hand, my children go, dad, you should grow up!" Now that, right there, is what *Harmony* is all about. Salute.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Dr V S Natarajan Geriatric Foundation has moved into an exclusive office since 4 March. With the scope of our work expanding at a rapid pace and more and more projects coming our way, we hope to cover more ground in the domains of geriatrics and gerontology with this dedicated space. The new office is quite spacious and is situated on Saidapet, one of the most central localities in Chennai, making it easily accessible to stakeholders and benefactors alike. The office dedication function was attended by various dignitaries, representatives of organisations in the geriatric care domain and several geriatricians.

We would also like to inform you that the Geriatric House Call project, Dr V S Natarajan's brainchild, is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Launched in 2008 with only 30 doctors, physiotherapists and nurses, it now boasts a strength of 62, with over 8,000 elders benefiting from the project. At the celebration, we felicitated doctors who had rendered services over the years and announced the expansion of the project to the north Chennai areas of Royapuram, Tondiarpet and Thiruvottiyur, with 15 more doctors from the area inducted into the programme.

This project is a boon not only for elders but youngsters employed as caregivers to elders at home. Sustaining the project for 10 years has been both onerous and a privilege for us. We thank *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for its continued support and patronage and for helping us deliver this important message across the elderly community and other stakeholders.

Dr V S NATARAJAN

Via email



I write with reference to your Article, "For the Love of Urdu" ('Etcetera'; April 2018). Urdu as a language is dying in India. I remember the early times when it was an integral part of our traditions and culture. Even in Bollywood, up till the 1960s, the best of the movies had an Urdu base and all actors were well-versed with this poetically scintillating language. It was when Dev Anand came to Bollywood that the tide turned towards a more Hindi-centric script. The contribution of Sahir Ludhianvi and Shakeel Badayuni using Urdu *shayari* in Bollywood songs is exceptional and spellbinding and we can never forget *Mere Mehboob* and *Mughal-E-Azam*. For quality films, Urdu needs to come back, in dialogues and lyrics! Bollywood can contribute a lot to the promotion of Urdu and I really hope they bring back this almost extinct form of art.

Mahesh Kapasi

Via email

Thinking of Mother's Day, some old memories whizz through my mind, making me traverse the long years, taking me back to the days when I was a growing child

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

Experience

A second childhood

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

Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age

CONTRIBUTOR



Our columnist in 'At Large' this month, **Swati Lahoti**, holds a postgraduate degree in English and an MBA in marketing and HR. She has worked as a copywriter with advertising agencies and placement consultant. However, the role most dear to her heart is that of a mother. Her debut work *The Wind Beneath His Wings* is about her redemption as a student, teacher, mother and, most important, daughter. She lives in Mumbai.

under my mother's love and care. But then I am suddenly pulled back to the world I have created with my kids. And this tells me motherhood is something more than an emotion; it's a pull so strong, so poignant that it can take someone like me to travel *alone* across the seven seas just to see her son, if only for a few days.

The word 'Ma' itself symbolises the depth of emotions motherhood has to offer: intense love, affection and attachment between a mother and her child—although the younger the child, the closer to the heart he/she is... at least, in my case. I have seen my kids' hands wrapped around my finger and then I have seen them fly away from my nest for first, studies, and, then, work. I have seen them start their own lives. From seeing them every day and then once a year, I can say that it is the only kind of love where the heart doesn't grow fonder with distance. A mother's role can never be relinquished; the intensity of

her love can never fade, no matter the distance or time spent apart.

I hope this Mother's Day, as you read my letter, you will all travel back in time and remember the countless times your mother moved earth and sea just to make you smile. To conclude I would say, sometimes just a "Hi" over the phone from my children can remind me of the happiest of memories.

Bansi Singh
Mumbai

Terrific round-up of the famed city of Tokyo in "Chasing Cherry Blossoms" ('Destination'; February 2018). It takes the reader right to the middle of the city. Well done, Rekha Sarin.

Ashok
Via www.harmonyindia.org

HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in
April 2018 on

 www.harmonyindia.org

1. Pet pursuits
2. It's never 2 late
3. Midnight's Children:
Flavia Agnes

Thank you *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for sharing with us a beautiful journey through some of the lesser known, yet majestic palaces of India in the story "Once Upon a Time" ('Discovery'; January 2018).

Brian Norman
Via www.harmonyindia.org

I am a new subscriber to the magazine; the April issue, "Friends Forever", was my first. I found the font of the magazine extremely small, straining the eyes. As your magazine *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is mostly for senior citizens, it is important that the fonts be large enough to be read by all age groups. Kindly look into my request.

Bhagchand Jain
Via email

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

inside

P22: An eye-opener

P26: Shutterbug!

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



NEWSWORTHY

WALK SAFE

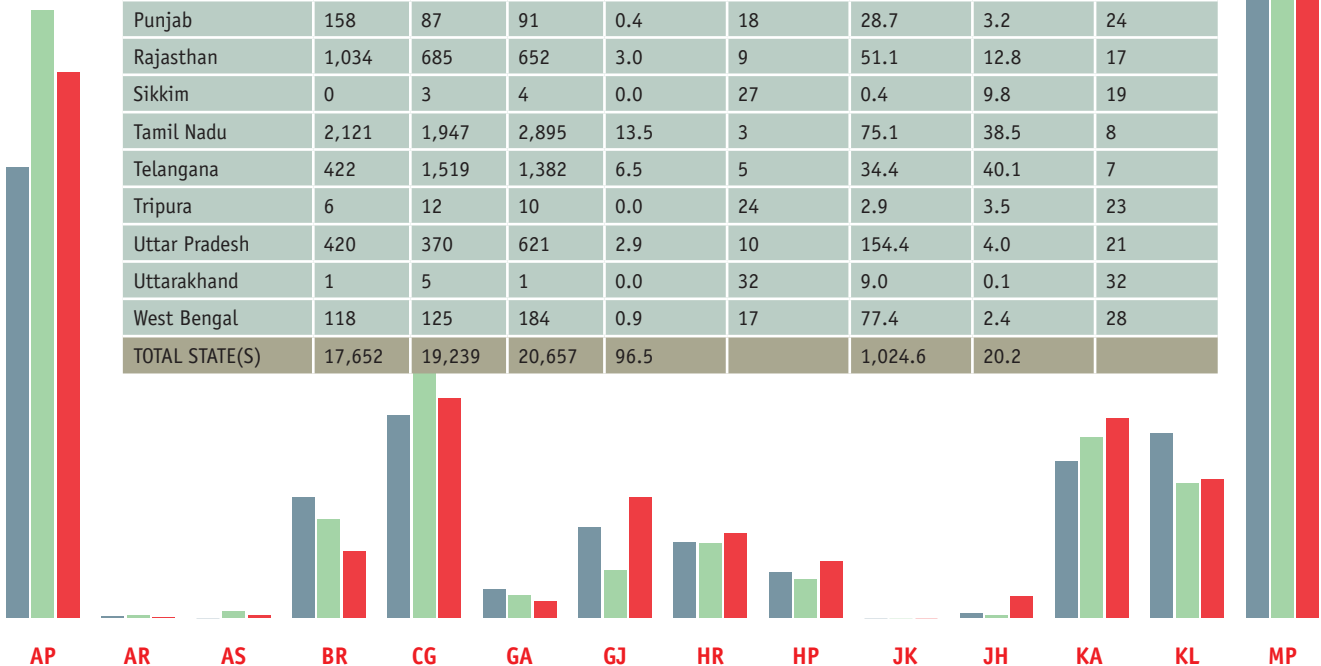
AFTER THE TRAGIC ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ELDERLY PEDESTRIAN HIT BY A NEGLIGENT DRIVER, FINLAND'S TRAFFIC SAFETY INSTITUTE HAS RECOMMENDED THAT ELDERLY PEDESTRIANS USE HELMETS. IN ADDITION, IT HAS ADVISED OLDER PEDESTRIANS TO EQUIP THEIR WALKERS WITH LIGHTS OR REFLECTORS.



SOFT TARGETS

Silvers continue to be soft targets for crime. In fact, according to a report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh together accounted for 40 per cent of crimes against senior citizens. Here's the alarming nationwide snapshot.

States	2014	2015	2016	Percentage state share to all-India (2016)	Rank based on incidence/% share (2016)	Mid-year projected senior citizen population (in lakhs) (2016)+	Rate of total cognizable crimes (2016)++	Rank based on crime rate (2016)
Andhra Pradesh	1,852	2,495	2,243	10.5	4	48.3	46.4	4
Arunachal Pradesh	4	7	2	0.0	30	0.6	3.1	25
Assam	0	17	6	0.0	25	20.8	0.3	31
Bihar	496	404	272	1.3	14	77.1	3.5	22
Chhattisgarh	833	1,077	902	4.2	6	20.0	45.0	5
Goa	73	59	43	0.2	21	1.6	26.3	10
Gujarat	372	195	496	2.3	12	47.9	10.4	18
Haryana	310	306	349	1.6	13	21.9	15.9	12
Himachal Pradesh	188	159	233	1.1	15	7.0	33.1	9
Jammu & Kashmir	0	0	0	0.0	-	9.2	0.0	-
Jharkhand	12	6	56	0.3	19	23.6	2.4	29
Karnataka	642	742	818	3.8	7	57.9	14.1	14
Kerala	758	551	571	2.7	11	41.9	13.6	15
Madhya Pradesh	3,438	3,456	3,877	18.1	2	57.1	67.9	2
Maharashtra	3,981	4,561	4,694	21.9	1	111.1	42.3	6
Manipur	14	16	6	0.0	26	2.0	3.0	26
Meghalaya	9	6	2	0.0	31	1.4	1.4	30
Mizoram	7	6	15	0.1	23	0.7	21.9	11
Nagaland	0	0	3	0.0	29	1.0	2.9	27
Odisha	383	423	229	1.1	16	39.8	5.7	20
Punjab	158	87	91	0.4	18	28.7	3.2	24
Rajasthan	1,034	685	652	3.0	9	51.1	12.8	17
Sikkim	0	3	4	0.0	27	0.4	9.8	19
Tamil Nadu	2,121	1,947	2,895	13.5	3	75.1	38.5	8
Telangana	422	1,519	1,382	6.5	5	34.4	40.1	7
Tripura	6	12	10	0.0	24	2.9	3.5	23
Uttar Pradesh	420	370	621	2.9	10	154.4	4.0	21
Uttarakhand	1	5	1	0.0	32	9.0	0.1	32
West Bengal	118	125	184	0.9	17	77.4	2.4	28
TOTAL STATE(S)	17,652	19,239	20,657	96.5		1,024.6	20.2	



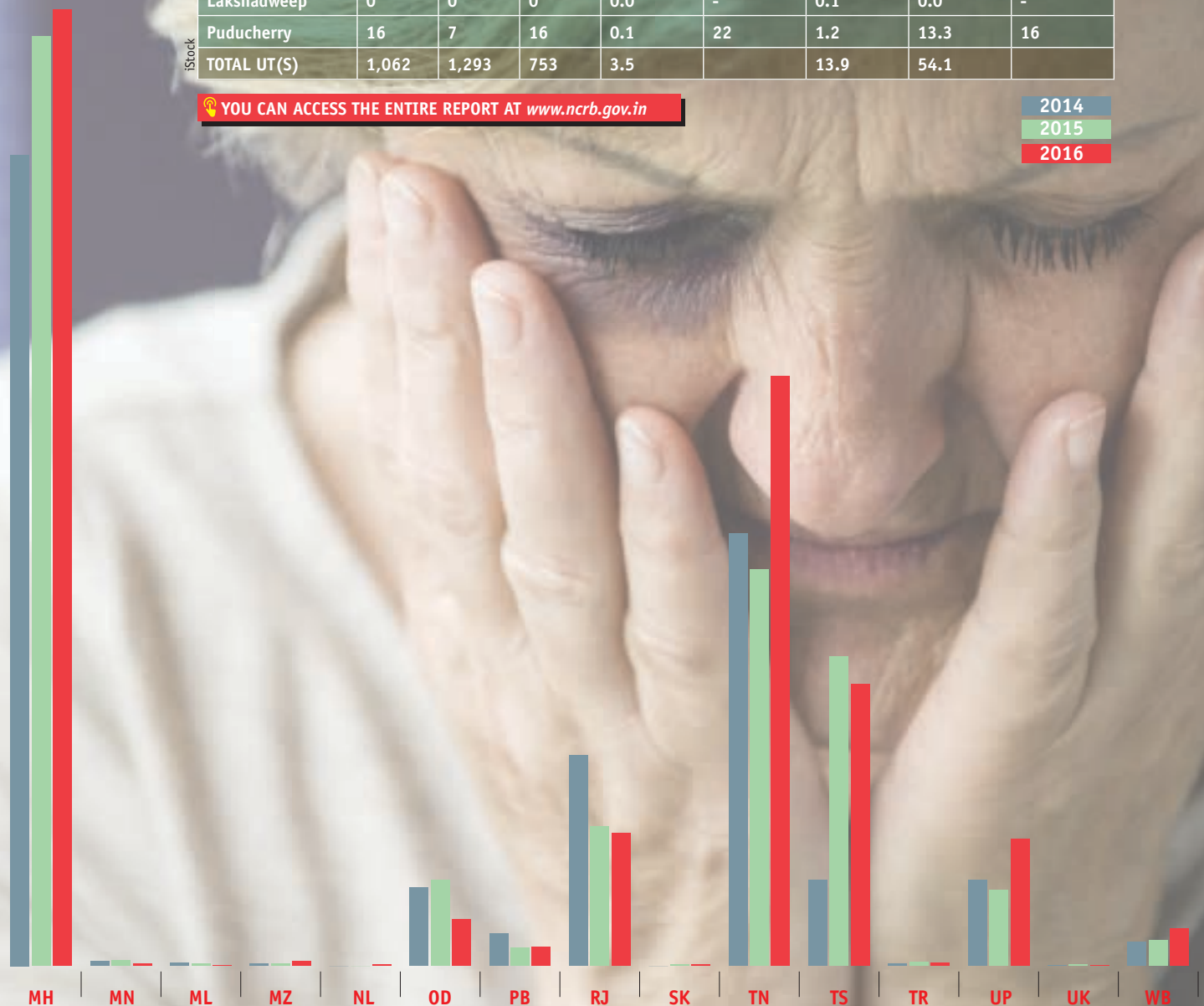
Union Territories	2014	2015	2016	Percentage state share to all-India (2016)	Rank based on incidence/ % share (2016)	Mid-year projected senior citizen population (in lakhs) (2016)+"	Rate of total cognizable crimes (2016)++	Rank based on crime rate (2016)
A & N Islands	12	12	4	0.0	28	0.3	15.7	13
Chandigarh	13	26	48	0.2	20	0.7	71.6	1
D&N Haveli	0	0	0	0.0	-	0.1	0.0	-
Daman & Diu	0	0	0	0.0	-	0.1	0.0	-
Delhi UT	1,021	1,248	685	3.2	8	11.5	59.7	3
Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0.0	-	0.1	0.0	-
Puducherry	16	7	16	0.1	22	1.2	13.3	16
TOTAL UT(S)	1,062	1,293	753	3.5		13.9	54.1	

 YOU CAN ACCESS THE ENTIRE REPORT AT www.ncrb.gov.in

2014

2015

2016





Friends Adult Diapers
presents

Good nights with **FRIENDS**

A good night's sleep is one of life's purest, simplest pleasures. Very little compares to the feeling of waking up refreshed, ready to start the day with a spring in your step.

SILVERS NEED SLEEP TOO

It's time to bust a myth: older people don't need less sleep. In fact, people require about the same amount of sleep from their 20s into old age, although the number of hours may vary according to the individual.

MIND IT

Sleep deprivation can cause confusion, irritability and increased anxiety and unease. Over time, it can lead to distortion of memory, depression, decreased mental capacity, and an increased risk of mental illness, such as dementia and paranoia.

BODY LANGUAGE

Physically, too, lack of sleep can affect your balance owing to grogginess. What's more, when the problem persists, it can lead to diminished muscle strength and endurance, increased wear and tear on the vital organs, heightened sensitivity to pain, increasing risk of diabetes, and a weakened immune system.

DESPERATELY SEEKING SLEEP

Many silvers get much less sleep than they need owing to a gamut of health issues;

**Watch
this space
next month for
more from
Friends!**

conditions like sleep apnoea and restless leg syndrome; the effects of medication; pain arising from arthritis; acute anxiety; and, of course, incontinence.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

While most people are reluctant to discuss it or even acknowledge they have it, incontinence affects over 200 million people around the world. And one of its most pervasive manifestations is nocturia, which is a major cause of sleep deprivation.

WHAT IS NOCTURIA?

Defined as excessive urination at night, nocturia is one of the common causes of disturbed sleep in the elderly. By fragmenting the sleep cycle, it leads to a

negative impact on quality of sleep and is associated with daytime tiredness as well as an increased risk of falls. Further, contending with wet/soiled sheets in the morning can generate a sense of helplessness that can compound depression while adding to one's chores—and depleting valuable H2O to boot.

OVERNIGHT COMFORT

Don't let night-time incontinence blight your days anymore. Overnight diapers can give you up to 16 hours of protection to ensure calm, sleep-filled nights, leading to happier, healthier mornings.

GOOD NIGHT, EVERYONE!

As super-absorbent, overnight diapers don't need to be changed during the night, caregivers, too, can enjoy a restful night—remember, sleep deprivation takes a toll on your caregiver's mental and physical health as well. Another upside: no soiled sheets in the morning.

TAKE BACK CONTROL

So what are you waiting for? Own the night, wake up to the light, and live your best life.

Ensure that he sleeps like a baby.



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.

TRIPLE ADVANTAGE



Specially designed
for Indian bodies.



Cloth-like;
breathable sides.

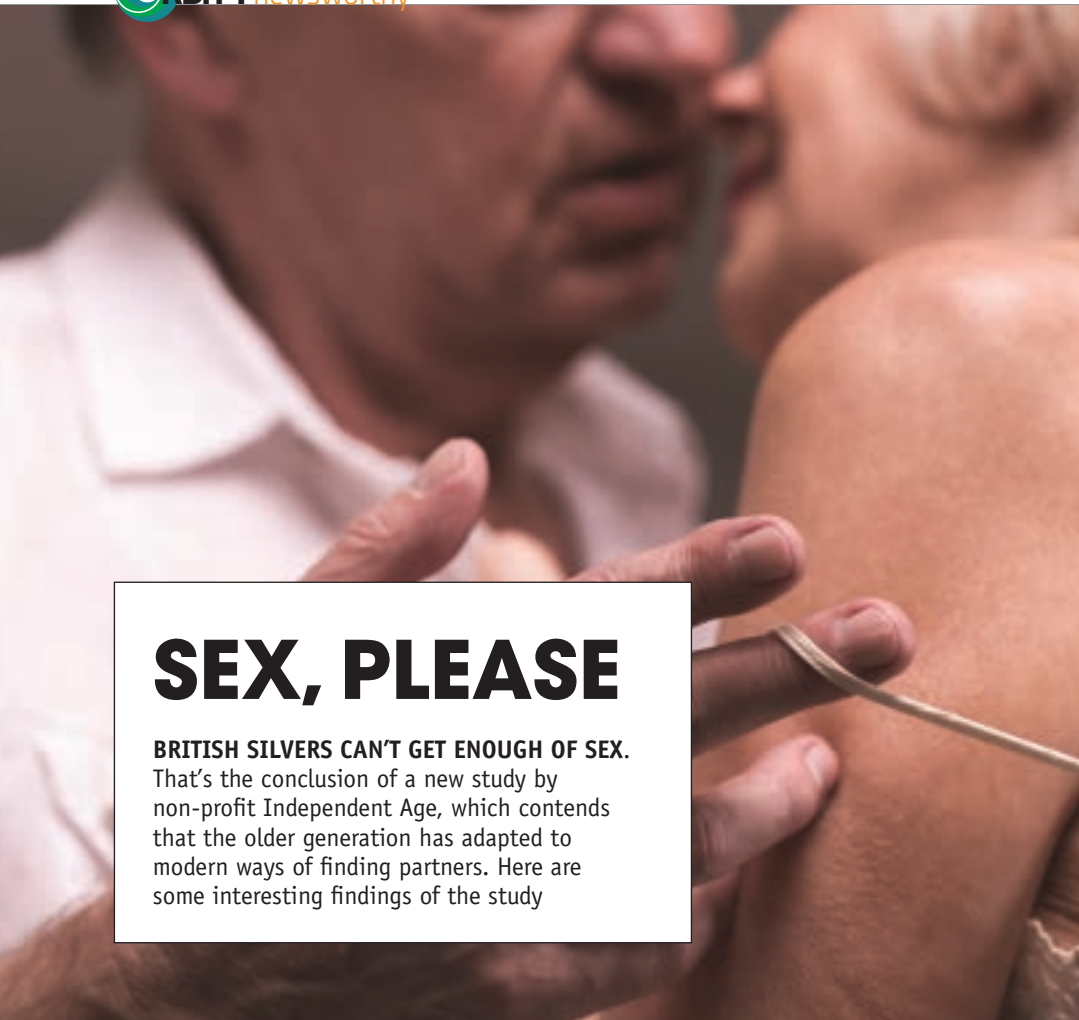


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indicator

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Website: www.nobelhygiene.com | www.facebook.com/FriendsDiaper



SEX, PLEASE

BRITISH SILVERS CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF SEX.

That's the conclusion of a new study by non-profit Independent Age, which contends that the older generation has adapted to modern ways of finding partners. Here are some interesting findings of the study

52%

of people over 65 say they are having too little sex

1/10

pensioners have had multiple sexual partners since retiring



Three in 10 retirees who've started a relationship in the last decade met their partner online

iStock



Nearly a third of silvers went to bed with a new partner on their first date or at least seriously contemplated doing so



Less than a tenth of the silvers failed to take precautions against STDs when they first started having sex with a new partner

"Strong relationships are important in later life and ideas about friendship, romance and intimacy may well change throughout life," Lucy Harmer of Independent Age tells website dailymail.co.uk. "Close relationships can offer emotional support, and can make a difference by staving off loneliness and giving you resilience and support to get through difficult patches in life." Among its other activities, Independent Age offers advice and information to silvers on safe sex.

SHOW TIME If you live in Delhi or Mumbai, you can beat the Monday blues at a PVR cinema near you. The 'Senior's Day' scheme entitles people over 60 with valid age proof to a complimentary beverage (Tropicana juice), reserved aisle seat with service, and a chaperone to help procure tickets with no standing in a queue for all shows starting before 1 pm on Mondays. To know more, log on to www.pvrcinemas.com/pvrstatic/supersaver/seniorcitizen.html



BATTLING LONELINESS Today, loneliness has been identified as a public health epidemic across the world, with emotional and physical consequences. And the Netherlands has decided to do something about it. The Dutch government will invest € 26 million to fight loneliness in a plan that includes home visits, identifying risk areas, setting up helpline support, and building interactive neighbourhoods.

DEALING WITH DEMENTIA

Last September, we told you about Korongee, ‘a dementia village’ in the suburb of Glenorchy in Hobart, Australia. Now, **the Japanese city of Matsudo is following suit as part of the Japanese government’s ‘Orange Plan’ to help people with**

dementia. As London newspaper *The Guardian* reports, Matsudo has over 11,000 people in care for dementia, a number that is expected to increase to 26,000 by 2025. In response, the city has developed ‘drop-in centres’ and dementia-friendly cafes, and initiated patrol initiatives and local volunteer groups to spread awareness about dementia and provide necessary information on dementia services. Residents can attend 90-minute lec-

11,000

PEOPLE IN
CARE FOR
DEMENTIA
IN MATSUDO,
JAPAN

tures and become ‘dementia supporters’, identified with a bright orange bracelet. In fact, 21,490 people are already qualified as ‘dementia-aware’ and about 3,000

frequently participate in neighbourhood patrols, helping to reduce the number of missing people. Salute.



Courtesy: Dr Dhires Kumar Chowdhury

SILVER SYMPOSIUM

An international gathering of doctors, paramedics and social workers engaging in geriatric healthcare assembled for the Midterm National Conference organised by the Geriatric Society of India on 18 March in Kolkata. Attended by over 350 delegates, the conference aimed to discuss the state of the elder-care community in India and the need for a geriatric unit in hospitals. The event was inaugurated by veteran Olympian footballer Padmashri P K Banerjee in the presence of state minister of women development and social welfare Dr Shashi Panja from the West Bengal government. There were a total of 36 scientific sessions on topics related to medical and social issues affecting the elderly, which were moderated by experts in the field of gerontology.

Dr Dhires Kumar Chowdhury, spokesperson and chief functionary of Banchho Healing Touch, a community-based support group for the elderly, said, “We think that a collaborative effort—between scientists and organisations working for the cause of the elderly—can be a force towards a successful run of the geriatric care movement in India, which is why we put together this Midterm National Conference.”


Not to be outdone by teens who have their texting codes—LOL, OMG, TTYL, AF—we silvers have codes of our own!



ATD: At the doctor’s
BFF: Best friend’s funeral
BTW: Bring the wheelchair
BYOT: Bring your own teeth
FWIW: Forgot where I was
GGPBL: Gotta go, pacemaker battery low
GHA: Got heartburn again
IMHO: Is my hearing-aid on?
TOT: Texting on toilet
TTYL: Talk to you louder
LMDO: Laughing my dentures out
OMMR: On my massage recliner
OMSG: Oh my! Sorry, gas
ROFLACGU: Rolling on floor laughing and can’t get up

Hope these help.
GGLK! (Gotta go, laxative kicking in)

ALTERNATIVE FACTS

Since launching her blog **Alternative Ageing** in 2014, journalist-turned-nutritionist **Suzi Grant** has taken the Internet by storm with her positive approach to ageing. A resident of Brighton, UK, Grant, in her late 60s, busts archaic notions related to ageing, especially for women, with a mix of quirky fashion advice, health, travel and lifestyle tips, natural anti-ageing techniques, recipes, and much more. "There's this outdated notion that, as a woman, when you reach 'a certain age' you have to disappear, but as I've passed all these dreaded milestones, I've embraced ageing," she tells website *mirror.co.uk*. "I want to grow old positively, naturally, and certainly not invisibly. I just want to spread my message... to inspire people to make positive, small changes, not to aspire to some unrealistic portrayal of how you should be." Today, she has over 11,000 followers (and counting) on Instagram—and more than half are under 30 years of age! Check out her blog at  www.alternativeageing.net

Zachary Innes-Mulrairie

The first Brit

British TV station Channel 4's documentary *The First Brit: The 10,000 Year Old Man* reveals fascinating truths about the 'Cheddar Man', the fossil of the first British



Cheddar Man is a human male fossil found in Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset, England. The skeletal remains date to the Mesolithic Age (ca. 9100 BP) and it appears that he died a violent death

man. Previously, there was scant information available about the man—he was supposedly 5 ft 5, weighed 10 stone (about 63.5 kg), and died in his early 20s over 10,000 years ago. Recently, following a collective DNA study by experts from the Natural History Museum, genetics professors at University College London, and archaeologists, new facts have come to light about his appearance and origins. For instance, a reconstruction of his face has revealed that he had blue eyes, dark curly hair and considerably darker skin than believed, pointing to Middle Eastern ancestry. The study also throws up evidence of cannibalism. Little wonder then, that the

documentary has caused such a stir! Learn more at www.channel4.com/programmes/the-first-brit-the-10000-year-old-man



DOCTOR-DIRECTOR

FOR A DOCTOR, this is really pushing the creative envelope.

Howard Weiner, a 73 year-old neurologist from Harvard Medical



School has written and directed *Abe & Phil's Last Poker Game*, a film that deals with the reality of living in an assisted facility for seniors. The story of an improbable friendship between two residents of the facility, it stars Academy Award-winning actor Martin Landau (who died at the age of 89 after the film was made) and Paul Sarvino, 78, and poignantly illustrates the concerns of silvers: diminished cognitive faculties, loss of potency and the omnipresence of death. "I am very emotionally moved by elderly people," Weiner tells *The Times of Israel*. "They are magnificent vessels

of life's experience. There is a very strong story in the life of old people. We all have that ahead of us—if we are lucky." See the trailer of the film at www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVlk7f-zk-I

MINUS 100 British soap opera legend June Brown of *EastEnders* fame is redefining 'extreme' in a new TV show, *100 Years Younger in 21 Days*. The 90 year-old is joined by seven celebrities between the ages of 45 and 77 as they undergo a series of drastic and rather bizarre 'natural' beauty treatments to defy ageing, including snail and urine facials.

"It is one of ITV's most bonkers shows yet," a source tells London newspaper *The Sun*. "Some of the techniques are absolutely out of this world but luckily the celebrities have agreed to get stuck in." The goal is to lose 100 years between the eight celebrities in 21 days on the island of Sardinia, which has the highest rate of centenarians in the world. Each celebrity will have a tailor-

made dietary and workout routine in addition to intense age-defying treatments. Scientific testing will be conducted to uncover the biological age of their face, body and brain and the results will be revealed at the end of the 21 days. The show, available online at www.itv.com/hub/100-years-younger-in-21-days/2a5259a0001/, can only be viewed in the UK at present.

Watch this!



Courtesy: AliveCor

All those who suffer from needle scare can heave a sigh of relief. This vital tool makes it easier to detect hyperkalemia, a condition that points to high levels of potassium in your blood, without any pricking of the skin. The new **Apple watch wristband**

sensor provides an interesting and non-invasive way to detect high levels of potassium that can be dangerous for the heart. The **AliveCor KardiaBand** comes with an electrocardiogram (ECG) system which, when paired with artificial intelligence technology, reads potassium levels. After that, the

sensor sends the information to an app. These findings were based on a study of 2 million ECGs linked to 4 million serum potassium values collected from 709,000 patients between 1994 and 2017. A new Cleveland Clinic study says the smart band also detects abnormal heart rhythm and atrial fibrillation.



D for deficiency: We all know how important this vitamin is for our health, yet a **significant number of Indian seniors are deficient in Vitamin D**. Two separate research studies were conducted by the National Institution of Nutrition, Hyderabad, to assess the concentration of 25-hydroxy vitamin D in the serum. Blood samples of 298 people aged 60 and above were randomly selected in Hyderabad. The findings, published in journal *Annals Of Human Biology*, showed that 56 per cent of seniors were deficient in Vitamin D, which contributes to health issues such as stiffening of the arteries, problems with bones, and muscle weakness. As all it takes for the skin to synthesise Vitamin D is 20 minutes of direct sunlight every day, the researchers believe we are spending just too much time indoors.

SMOKE ALARM

Kick the habit or kick the bucket. Researchers have found that **cutting back on the number of cigarettes you smoke does not reduce your risk of heart disease or stroke proportionately.** Yes, it lowers the risk but not by much. Researchers at UCL Cancer Institute at University College, London, UK, analysed 141 studies of 12 million people to calculate the risk of heart disease and stroke associated with smoking. These were their startling results,



published in the medical journal *BMJ*: Men who smoked just one cigarette a day, as opposed to 20, did not reduce the risk of cardiopulmonary disease to 5 per cent, as mathematics seems to suggest. The risk was actually 46 per cent for heart disease and 41 per cent for stroke, in relative terms. For women who smoked one cigarette a day, the excess risk for heart disease is 31 per cent and for stroke 34 per cent. This doesn't mean you shouldn't smoke less; it means you shouldn't smoke at all.

DAYTIME SLEEPINESS

HERE'S A RED FLAG for silvers who feel excessively drowsy in the daytime. A study published in *JAMA Neurology* has found that **cognitively normal individuals who feel sleepy during the day show a build-up of amyloid plaque in their brains.** These plaques are precursors to age-related Alzheimer's. The study was conducted by researchers at Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota, US, from 2009 to 2016. Of 283 people aged 70 and older, 63 participants were found to have excessive daytime sleepiness associated with increased amyloid plaque accumulation in their brains. The findings are important for physicians, who have another possible marker for Alzheimer's to watch out for in their patients.



Photographs by iStock

Some like it hot, others like it hotter. Either way, it's **bad news for those who love their morning cup of tea or coffee steaming.** Science says it raises the risk of developing oesophageal cancer. Researchers at the National Natural Science Foundation of China examined 456,155 people who did not have cancer and were aged between 30 and 79. They were asked if they drank a warm, hot or burning hot beverage and their progress was followed for nine years. The findings showed that those who had burning hot tea and smoked or had alcohol too were at a five-fold risk of developing cancer of the oesophagus. Hot beverages damage the tissue lining the oesophagus, which increases chance of injury from smoking and drinking. The study was published in journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Get a move on

There's no denying the benefits of regular exercise but new research has thrown up some interesting insights for silvers. According to a study by a team at Tufts University, Boston, **exercising cannot prevent an individual from becoming frail but it can prevent disability in frail seniors.**

The researchers randomly chose 1,635 adults between the age group of 70 and 79 to participate in a structured exercise programme of 150 minutes per week. The programme comprised walking and other activities to improve strength, balance and flexibility. The two-year study found that while

exercise did not halt the march of ageing and that those who were prone to becoming weak did indeed exhibit signs of frailty, these individuals could still perform simple, everyday tasks like rising from a chair without difficulty. The findings were published in journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

BLOOD TEST FOR CANCER

Science may have discovered a simple blood test that can detect cancer, even in its earlier stages. Nickolas Papadopoulos and his team of scientists at the Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Cancer Centre in Baltimore have developed **CancerSEEK, a test that detects cancers** responsible for 60 per cent of cancer deaths in the US. The research team took blood samples from 1,005 people diagnosed with these cancers and found that CancerSeek



was able to identify signs of cancer in 70 per cent of the participants. At the same time, the team made 812 people who were cancer-free undergo the blood test and only 1 per cent were flagged as positive. What makes the test even more appealing is that its cost is lower than conventional ones. The flipside is that the test does not pinpoint the affected part of the body and may raise a false alarm in some people. The findings were published in journal *Science*.



TURMERIC TALES

What if we said you could simply reach into your kitchen cabinet and take a dose of happiness? Better still, that it could also improve your memory? If you're thinking that's too good to be true, read on. In everyday terms, this mood-enhancing, memory-boosting spice is called turmeric, which is already a cornucopia of medicinal benefits. Now scientists have found that **curcumin in turmeric, also known to Indians as *haldi*, acts as a mood-lifter and improves cognitive function**. Gary Small from the University of California-Los Angeles tested 40 seniors with mild memory complaints, aged between 50 and 90, some of whom were given a placebo and others curcumin, twice daily. The findings after 18 months revealed that those who consumed curcumin showed improved memory and cognitive skills. The researchers believe that the antioxidant properties of curcumin reduce brain inflammation, which is linked to Alzheimer's and depression. The study was published in the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.

COMFORT BEFORE SURGERY

FOR SILVERS who are apprehensive at the prospect of surgery, doctors are saying, 'We hear you'. This comforting news comes from **hospitals in the US that are helping prep patients in the run-up to major surgery**. Duke University's Medical Centre in North Carolina, for instance, adopts an interdisciplinary approach, which recommends a customised exercise regimen along with healthy foods and ways to reduce stress before surgery. Called the POSH (Preoperative Optimisation of Senior Health), the programme encourages a dialogue with doctors to address queries and explain the benefits of the surgery. Research has shown that patients who underwent POSH spent less time in hospital, were less likely to return to hospital in the next 30 days or require home healthcare and had fewer complications. The American College of Surgeons will use POSH to promote centres of excellence in geriatric surgery in the country.



Photographs by iStock

MOVE IT!

Did you know that simple daily activities like walking the dog, gardening, mowing the lawn or indulging in low-intensity exercises can help you live longer? Researchers at University College London in the UK tracked 1,200 men without heart disease who were aged between their early 70s and late 80s. The findings, which were published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, point out that **daily activities can increase your lifespan by 17 per cent**. The British Regional Heart Study, conducted on 8,000 participants aged 40 to 59 across 34 years, also showed that those who got moving for daily activities lived longer. Even if your workout schedule isn't lengthy, make sure you move your body in your free time.

Carry a card. A startup company in Chennai has launched the 'VIP of Life' kit, an emergency ID card with information such as emergency contact, medical information, insurance details, nearest hospital, etc. In case of an accident, medical situation or emergency, this will help the medical/rescue team help you faster and more effectively. The service is absolutely free—just log on to vipoflife.org, sign up as a member, fill up a form, validate your mail and print your VIP of Life ID card. And, yes, don't forget to carry it wherever you go.

Then: Tetra Pak Now: Coin purse



Tired of stray coins lying about the house or the jingle of loose change in your pockets? Make your own fancy coin purse from old empty Tetra Pak boxes. You need an empty Tetra Pak box/carton (the more colourful the better; say, a juice box), scissors, pencil to mark off fold lines, ruler, coloured tape and Velcro. First, flatten the box and cut out both ends, so it forms an open-ended rectangular box. Draw three horizontal lines on the box, dividing it into three equal parts. Cut out the sides and the back of the top third of the box, so only the front

strip remains; this will be used as the flap of the coin purse. Fold inside the sides of the box to get the extendible gussets.

Flip up the bottom third of the box, neatly juxtaposing it with the middle third, giving you two compartments to store your change. Cover the ends of the wallet with coloured tape; we used red. Staple the two pockets together so the wallet doesn't open up.

Lastly, use Velcro to fasten the flap to the wallet.

RECYCLING FACTS



- Tetra Pak cartons are fully recyclable, but according to The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) only 30 per cent of them are being recycled in India.
- Tetra Pak cartons are attributed with the lowest environmental impact compared to other packaging formats like glass bottles, PET, HDPE (high-density polyethylene) plastic containers or metal cans.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. MAKE A VASE OUT OF TETRA PAK BOXES BY JUST CUTTING OFF A PART OF THE BOX; IT'S PERFECT BECAUSE IT'S WATERPROOF.
2. TETRA PAK BOXES CAN ALSO BE USED TO ORGANISE YOUR DRAWERS. SPLITTING THE BOX INTO TWO WITH A CLEAN SINGLE CUT IS ENOUGH.

An EYE-OPENER



Haresh Patel

Continuing with our mission to educate and empower silvers, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, in association with leading real-estate builder and developer Partham Group and Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH), organised a glaucoma awareness session for the members of Senior Citizens' Association, Versova, on 31 March at CWC High School in Andheri West, Mumbai.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Anuradha Rao, senior consultant at the Department of Ophthalmology, KDAH, informed the silvers that glaucoma was one of the leading causes of blindness in the elderly, next only to cataract. "Glaucoma, also known as *kala motia* in Hindi, is a disorder associated with high intraocular pressure that damages the delicate optic nerve head, resulting in gradual and progressive loss of vision," she said. She implored silvers to go in for regular eye checkups to delay the onset of glaucoma and treat an existing condition. "It has no cure but is treatable," she emphasised. "With timely intervention, further loss of vision can be curbed."

Dr Rao went on to explain the anatomy of the eye, the reason why glaucoma can affect some people more than

others: an anatomically small eye or a narrow angle vision; and the different types of glaucoma—congenital glaucoma, since birth; secondary glaucoma, caused by an injury; acute close-angle glaucoma, particularly prone to a hyper-metropic eye and open-angle glaucoma caused owing to a wide angle between the cornea and iris.

The event received an encouraging response from the silvers present. "Dr Rao's session made us sit up and take notice of this degenerative condition," said R G Prabhu, 77, a member of the association. "I now feel I should go for an eye test to eliminate the doubt of its existence."

Earlier, the Partham team apprised the audience of its upcoming township Paraiso de Casa at Silvassa. Raunak Joshi, marketing manager, Partham, shared details about the amenities being offered at the township to promote holistic senior living. "We believe in making life simple and luxurious for people above 55, hence the tagline 'Life Begins at 55' for our township," said Ekta Kotecha, marketing executive. "We got some amazing insights from the audience about what more could be offered to provide the comfort they deserve. After all, who better to guide us than silvers themselves?"

Yoga for SILVERS

The second in a series of events held in association with Partham Group, *Harmony-Celebrate Age* organised a yoga session for silvers to promote healthy living. On 15 April, members of the Kailash Tower Senior Citizens Club from Kandivali (West) attended a yoga and meditation session guided by *yogacharya* Parasmal Duggad (featured in 'Speak'; February 2018). "Yoga is an important practice that should be an integral part of everyone's lifestyle, seniors and youngsters alike," he said. "This pre-Vedic practice has delved deep into areas that even medical science is yet to explore."

Duggad commenced the session with some basic concentration techniques, moving on to breathing and facial exercises. He demonstrated mudras to keep one's BP in check, apart from practices to relieve sinusitis. He also displayed the unique Paras mudra he has invented that, according to him, alleviates joint pains and strengthens the knees.



Sahil Jaswal

"The benefits of yoga far outweigh the rigours of the postures and this was explained beautifully by Mr Duggad," expressed Hemant V Maniar, a 70 year-old member of the club, after a relaxing session. "This was a new experience for all of us and extremely enlightening."



WHERE DID I GO WRONG?

I was being discharged from Alam Hospital and Research Centre in Ranchi after a week-long stay there. My wife Jyoti was busy entertaining well-wishers who had come to see me. And although I had been advised by doctors to avoid anything that would stress me, there was a tumult rising in my head regarding what had gone wrong that fateful night.

I had lost all sensation that ungodly night a week earlier. My son Saurabh found me unconscious in the room with no pulse, a fading heartbeat and my body stiff as a board. I was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors said I had suffered a heart attack.

The medical team resuscitated my heart using CPR and took me in for angiography. The verdict: one of my arteries was completely blocked and a second artery was more than 70 per cent blocked. The doctors introduced stents into my blocked arteries, in two separate procedures, and now I was ready to go home.

Try as I did, I couldn't figure it out. What could have caused such a deadly attack? I exercised every morning without fail; I cycled four to five days a week; practised yoga; and avoided oily and spicy foods. I never ate street food. What could have gone so horribly wrong?

The doctor who treated me was astonished to find that I was neither diabetic nor did I have abnormal blood pressure. He put it down to the cigarette smoking. With the help of the doctor, I also realised that my family history (my mother had undergone bypass surgery) and neglecting an annual health check-up had contributed to my heart attack.

Suddenly, the door opened and my wife entered with a plate full of fruits. "Doctor suggests that you eat something every two hours," she said, with a smile. She also asked if I was stressing myself again.

"No, I am not stressing myself but have realised where I went wrong," I replied. I leaned against the divan, took a piece of apple and, in a sombre voice, I vowed, "I will not repeat those mistakes."

—Binay Kumar Pathak, Ranchi



The STAR SENIORS festival

19 MAY
PUNE

With over 100,000 silvers living in the city, Pune is a hub of activity for senior citizens. And they don't intend to fade into oblivion! In fact, from innovative business start-ups to crusading for civic rights, following their passion and becoming social game-changers, the city's senior citizens are, in every way, stars.

The debut edition of The Star Seniors Festival, to be held on 19 May in Pune, seeks to celebrate this vibrant community by applauding their efforts, giving them a platform to share their expertise and experience, and encouraging them to lead a happier and better life. The brainchild of physician-entrepreneur Ashwin Naik,

founder of award-winning social enterprise Vaatsalya Healthcare and co-founder and chair of the National Association of Social Enterprises, and engineering graduate and curator for TEDxPune Ashish Gupta, the event will bring together eminent speakers and savvy silvers for enlightening sessions, blended with entertaining performances.

Indeed, the aim of The Star Seniors Festival is to impel silvers to break their shackles, overcome barriers of age, health and discrimination, and live their lives in a more vibrant and independent manner. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is proud to support this event as Media Partner.

Stay tuned for detailed coverage of the event next month





19 SATURDAY MAY 2018

At Pt Bhimsen Joshi Auditorium
Aundh, Pune

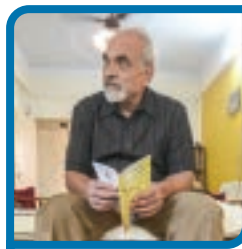
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Madhukar Pawar
Activist
Executive, ASCOP



Madhuri Pawar
Activist
Executive, ASCOP

For tickets, contact (0) 80070 30905

Shutterbug!

Marathon runners have Chris Parry to thank for saving their special memories. What they don't know is that the Englishman is running a 'long haul race' of his own, as **Natasha Rego** discovers

A marathon is one of the greatest tests of endurance; every year, across the globe, hundreds of thousands of people are caught on camera during these events. Who wouldn't want to save their moment of glory—remember, it's more about participating than about winning—for posterity?

The world's largest photographic site, Marathon Photos, has shot at over 6,500 of such mass participation sporting events in some 66 countries since 1998, and has more images online than photo agencies Getty and Corbis put together. Their secret: they hire local professional photographers to capture images and video clips of participants at these events.

Lucky for us, they're front and centre at the biggest runs in the country, thanks to Chris Parry, a managing partner at Marathon Photos, who made this possible when he struck a deal with Procam International, the promoters of mega running events in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Kolkata, about 12 years ago.

Over a leisurely seafood lunch in Mumbai, the 71 year-old explains to us how the portal works: "All those hundreds of thousands of photographs and videos are married to the bib numbers of individual runners that appear on each frame with the help of identification software. and uploaded onto the company's portal, just hours after the race is completed." As for those images where the number is partially hidden, Parry says, "For that we have a search

engine where you can key in what you were wearing on that day, say a green shirt and black shorts, and it will find the relevant images for the runner to add to their photo album."

Headquartered in New Zealand with a network of photographers the world over, Marathon Photos maintains a permanent online archive (www.marathon-photos.com) of over 159 million photographs of some 28 million athletes from mass participation sporting events across the world. And those numbers are steadily growing.

Driving the point home, Parry says, "At the Mumbai Marathon this January, we had about 20 photographers who shot over 150,000 photographs of about 24,000 runners in the full and half marathons. But, for instance, at Ride London, one of the world's largest cycling events, we take nearly half-a-million photographs of participants as there are so many different locations and the race is so long."

Parry, a photographer and former ad-man, is in charge of gaining contracts in different markets. Naturally, his job keeps him on the move for almost half the year. He refers to an app on his phone when we ask him where he is off to next. "From here, I go to Washington DC to meet with race organisers, then to Austin, Texas, for the Running USA conference. I fly home to the UK for a couple of weeks before I take off to Abu Dhabi for a triathlon." The app helps him keep track of his schedule—as his friend and colleague Dilip Jayaram, CEO of Procam International, tells us, he

Above: With wife Karen
Below: Parry's children

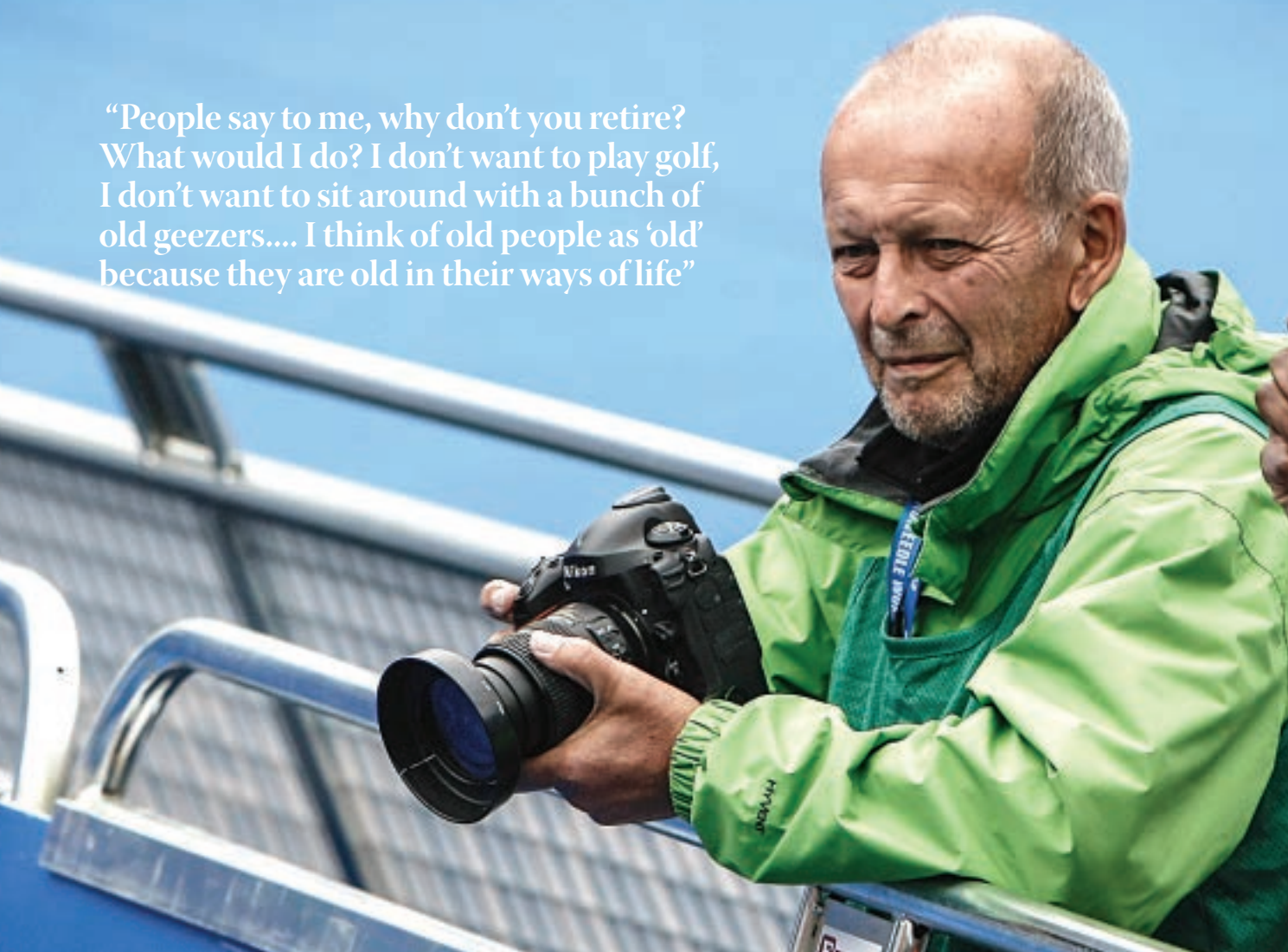


sometimes forgets which country he needs to be in next! We look at the app to take stock of the places he has visited in the last 12 months: 37 cities in five continents.

Home, though, is the town of Marlow in Buckinghamshire, near Windsor—"near the queen!"—and this is where Parry's tryst with photography began. After a flourishing career in advertising and long, successful stints with top brands, he decided to quit the corporate world. "I had spent 30 years in advertising and had had enough of its cut-throat, bureaucratic nature," he says. So he turned to his wife of five years at that time and said, "Karen, what shall I do?" She said, "Follow your passion!"

Parry's passion, as you may have guessed, was photography, a hobby he had picked up from his amateur

“People say to me, why don’t you retire? What would I do? I don’t want to play golf, I don’t want to sit around with a bunch of old geezers.... I think of old people as ‘old’ because they are old in their ways of life”



Tony Wallbank / Marathon Photos

photographer father. He set up a website and held a small exhibition in Marlow of some landscapes he had made over the years. Celebrating at the local pub after a successful show, Parry turned to Karen and asked her again, “Well, what do I do now?” And she said, “Carry on!”

At the exhibition, a man named Chris Sumner, director of a store for running equipment in the UK, liked Parry’s photographs and asked if he could use them on his website. It turned out that Sumner was also the race director of two major races in the UK, which intrigued Parry. “In my lack of knowledge about such running events, I asked him if he needed a photographer for the race. He said, actually you need a bit more than one photographer!” Because one race had 20,000 and another race had 25,000 participants.

Sumner introduced Parry to some companies that shot sporting events; Marathon Photos was one of them. And they didn’t just want Parry to shoot for them; they wanted him to be a partner. He joined them on the condition that he could also start and run his dream photographic tour company on the side. “Francis Kay, the founder of Marathon Photos, agreed, but he also thought I would be too busy to do both,” recalls Parry. Indeed, he did get busy

bringing in the contracts. When he started, there were only about three events in the UK that Marathon Photos was shooting and barely a handful in Europe. “But within a few months, we got loads of events. I’m a salesman, you see. I even brought India to the company.”

Not bad for a guy who failed all his high school exams except the one in religious knowledge! “The headmaster sat my parents down and said to them, ‘I’m sorry Mr & Mrs Parry, but I have no hope for your son at all. The only thing I can suggest is that he takes up the cloth and become a priest.’”

Five or six years later after high school, he rose from the dispatch department of an advertising agency—where he carried printing blocks of ads to newspapers before they went to print—to become the director of his first advertising agency. “That day, my father went down to see the headmaster and had a few words with him!” he chuckles.

Parry’s career path followed an enviable trajectory. “I became accounts director, then board director, then managing director, then I set up my own company, sold



Photos Parry shot of British Olympian Mo Farah (above) at the Great North Run, 2016; at the starting line of the Delhi Half Marathon, 2008

that, then set up another company and sold that, then joined a top advertising and marketing agency in London,” he rattles off. In fact, he has created, bought, sold, merged, developed and run several successful, multinational marketing agencies.

Though it took him 12 more years, Parry did eventually get to start his dream company, Plus One Photo Tours, which, for customers, combines the joy of travelling to exotic locations and getting a lesson in photography while you’re at it.

It all came together just before his 70th birthday, which he was celebrating at a villa in Spain. As he lay in the pool on an inflatable swan, he turned to Karen and said, “Karen, we are going to set up the photo tours company.” As he started brainstorming on how to go about it, Karen, a marketing and communications professional herself, started scribbling notes under the shade of an umbrella by the pool. At one point, she looked up and went, “Where do you find all the energy?”

“I have no idea, to be honest,” he tells us. “People say to me, why don’t you retire? What would I do? I don’t want

As a consequence of his surgery and chemotherapy, Parry now only shoots in warm countries. When it gets cold, he loses sensation in his fingers and he has no sensation in his toes

to play golf, I don’t want to sit around with a bunch of old geezers.... I think of old people as ‘old’ because they are old in their ways of life. On the other hand, my children [four in all] go, dad, you should grow up!”

Sure, but starting a company at the age of 70? Parry confesses, “I wanted to create something so that if and when I die, though I don’t intend to, I would leave behind something for Karen to continue.”

Parry knows a thing or two about staring death in the face. Three years ago, he was diagnosed with cancer and had to undergo a nine-hour surgery. “I got cancer of the oesophagus—where all the food goes, and the drink, and anything else you put down there. The tumour was also in my stomach, so they had to remove half my stomach. And of that half stomach, my surgeon Nick [Maynard] then created a new oesophagus. Just amazing! So now I have a very small stomach and no way of knowing when I am hungry.” (They had to also remove the part of the stomach that produces the ‘hunger hormone’ that lets a person know they are hungry.)

There was another consequence of his surgery and chemotherapy: Parry now only shoots in warm countries. When it gets cold, he loses sensation in his fingers and he has no sensation in his toes. He also has to calculate when to begin and end a meal, because he can’t eat as much as he used to. “But I can drink as much, though I get very drunk very quickly, because I don’t have the mass for it anymore,” he affirms, having lost a dramatic 40 kg since his operation. He weighs only about 80 kg now.

But nothing, it seems, can hold Parry down. Three months after his operation, he was having lunch in Mumbai with Karen, sitting right across from the table we are at now, and starting to adjust to life after cancer. “Life is completely different now,” he says. “Every day is a special day and everybody should think that because you don’t know if today will be your last.”

Parry will be back in India this May, just in time to rally his photographers for the TCS World 10K in Bengaluru. Peak summer will be receding and the monsoon will be looming. But the air will be warm—just the way he likes it.



Ruskin Bond



Pankaj Kapoor

BIRTHDAYS

Filmmaker **Mrinal Sen** turns 95 on 14 May.

Actor **Madhuri Dixit-Nene** turns 51 on 14 May.

Former Indian prime minister **H D Deve Gowda** turns 85 on 18 May.

Author **Ruskin Bond** turns 84 on 19 May.

Cricket commentator, former player and coach **Ravi Shastri** turns 56 on 27 May.

Actor **Pankaj Kapoor** turns 64 on 29 May.

Actor **Paresh Rawal** turns 68 on 30 May.

IN PASSING

Emmy-winning writer and producer **Steven Bochco** lost his battle with cancer on 1 April. He was 74.

South African anti-apartheid activist **Winnie Mandela**, former wife of late President Nelson Mandela, died after a long illness on 2 April. She was 81.

Senior artist **Prabhakar Rao**, popularly known as Raobali, passed away after a heart attack on 4 April. He was 81.

Telugu actor **Chandramouli** passed away on 5 April. He was 80.

Theatre activist and Padmashri recipient **Moti Lal Kemmu** passed away on 15 April after a prolonged illness. He was 85.

Noted film director **Bhimsain Khurana** died of renal failure on 17 April. He was 81.

Veteran journalist **T V R Shenoy** died on 18 April in Mangaluru. He was 77.

Former US First Lady, mother of President George W Bush and literacy campaigner **Barbara Bush** died on 18 April. She was 92.

Supercentenarian and world's oldest living person **Nabi Tajima** died on 21 April. She was 117.

MILESTONES

Senior journalist and TV presenter **Karan Thapar**, 62, was felicitated with the G K Reddy Memorial National Award for his contribution to the field of journalism in March in New Delhi.

Civil engineer and 'Metro Man' **Dr E Sreedharan**, 85, was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to transforming the face of public transportation in India at the Entrepreneur of the Year programme in April in Mumbai.

Author and director of Jaipur Literature Festival **Namita Gokhale**, 62, was honoured with the Flo Icon award by Indian President Shri Ram Nath Kovind at Vigyan Bhawan, in April in New Delhi. Missile scientist **Tessy Thomas**, 55, also received the award.

OVERHEARD

"The young always want to feel as though they're the ones to do everything first. But naturally, it's all been there before. All I'd say to them is that ageing is an adventure. It's a frightening adventure because health becomes an issue... Growing old is not for pussies—you've got to have courage in life anyway."

—English actress **Helen Mirren**, 72, speaking to website www.springchicken.co.uk



Dinodia Photo Library



NUTRITALK BY NAINI SETALVAD

The dairy dilemma

Digestive troubles are most common in seniors and often associated with lactose intolerance. Switching to a lactose-free diet can help



Photographs by iStock

Milk and its products have always been a part of the Indian diet, in some form or another. In fact, in the Indian subcontinent, milk is considered the purest drink, consumed by gods and humans alike!

We have read about milk being rich in protein, certain vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates and essential fats. Mixing milk and its by-products—ghee, butter, buttermilk, yoghurt, paneer, cream and cheese—with grains and vegetables forms the basis of wonderful preparations that delight the palate and provide the mainstay for an all-round healthy diet.

However, many seniors across the world find it difficult to digest milk and its by-products. Surprisingly, large groups are complaining of symptoms such as bloating, intestinal cramps, flatulence, constipation and acidity after consum-

ing milk. Various international and national studies are still figuring out the cause for it.

Scientific evidence suggests that cross-breeding has led to change in the quality of milk from A2 beta-casein milk to A1 beta-casein milk (milk that lacks a form of beta-casein protein). The A2 beta-casein milk from the humped Gir cattle (zebu variety) is better for human consumption. It is highly suitable for mental and physical growth and comfortable to digest with no allergic reactions. On the other hand, A1 beta-casein milk protein cell from high-yielding exotic varieties like Holstein cows lacks antioxidants and could cause heart disease, inflammation, diabetes, autism, schizophrenia and other ailments. Also, the milk molecules are not similar to that of mothers' milk, so our bodies are unable to digest or tolerate this milk, leading to severe discomfort in the stomach that gives rise to lactose intolerance and ill-health.

WHAT IS LACTOSE INTOLERANCE?

Lactose intolerance refers to the inability to digest milk sugars called lactose. This inability is the result of an insufficient amount of an enzyme called lactase in the gut, which breaks lactose down so it can be absorbed in the bloodstream. In the earlier stages of life, lactase is naturally produced in the digestive system and, therefore, kids are able to digest milk.

However with increasing age, the lactase enzyme in the body starts decreasing as a result of a genetic programme in the body. The lack of lactase enzyme further causes irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which affects about 5 per cent of the Indian population, and gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which affects an estimated 8-20 per cent of Indians.

CAUSES AND TRIGGERS

Genetically modified A1 beta-casein milk protein can react negatively in your body. Lactose intolerance is also triggered by drinking raw milk that lacks good bacteria and is difficult to digest. However, fermented milk or milk products—paneer, yoghurt, kefir (cultured, fermented milk drink), ghee, etc—that contain good bacteria can help digest lactose in the body. The more the 'live active cultures' of bacteria in the milk, the better it is. This is one reason why many Indian silvers do not know that they are lactose intolerant—they largely never consume raw milk in huge quantities. And for those who are truly intolerant, no form of dairy products will ever be good to consume.

Lactose intolerance usually presents with a number of symptoms including breathlessness, bloating, flatulence, intestinal cramps, indigestion and dysentery after dairy consumption. In some people, it also causes respiratory problems.

RECIPES FOR THE LACTOSE INTOLERANT



WATERMELON SOUP

Ingredients

- Watermelon: 250 gm; cubed
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Garam masala powder: 1 tsp
- Curry leaves: 4-5
- Ghee: ½ tsp
- Salt to taste

Method

Blend the watermelon cubes in a blender to make a juice. Strain it to remove the seeds. Heat the ghee in a wok or *kadhai*. Sauté the curry leaves with red chilli powder. Add the watermelon juice, garam masala and salt. Let it cook for 5 minutes. Take off the flame and serve hot.



GREEN MUSK MELON MINT SMOOTHIE

Ingredients

- Green musk melon: 10-12; cubes
- Mint leaves: 2 tsp
- Crushed ice: ½ cup
- Lemon to taste

Method

Mix all the ingredients in a blender and serve chilled.

MANAGING LACTOSE INTOLERANCE

First and foremost, switch to A2 beta-casein milk, which is available in major supermarkets. Some brands of beta-casein milk available in the market are Vita Farms, Kesariya Farms and Happy Cow's Milk.

India's ancient culinary wisdom says that while consuming milk has its side-effects such as asthma, cold and cough or bloating, it is also rich in nutrients. So you can negate the side-effects by using the ancient Indian medicinal properties of herbs and spices handed down by our ancestors. To start with, add salts, herbs, spices, chai masala and cow's ghee to your dairy products. You can add various combinations of turmeric (*haldi*), pipramul (*ganthoda*), saffron (*kesar*), basil (*tulsi*), ginger (*adrak*), honey and cow's ghee to your milk. Other ideas include adding chai masala to your tea; natural salts and cumin seeds to your yoghurt; or tempering your buttermilk with cow's ghee and spices. If you're eating plain paneer, sprinkle a little chaat masala, lemon juice and spices on top to make it easier to digest. Western countries are now serving turmeric lattes and coffees that are essentially milk with turmeric and cow's ghee or coconut oil.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES

Supplement your body with probiotics that help increase healthy bacteria and aid digestion. You can try non-dairy alternatives such as coconut milk, soymilk and nut milk. However, soymilk is difficult to digest and best taken in its fermented form. Some alternatives commonly available in the market are Sofit by Hershey's, Silk almond milk by White Wave Foods, and Soy Milky and Almond Fresh by Life Health Foods. Replace your butter with tahini (sesame seed butter), peanut butter, cashew butter and almond butter. Also, substitute your milk-based yoghurt with

WALNUT MAYONNAISE

Ingredients

- Walnuts: 1 cup
- Peppercorns: 3-4
- Lime juice: 1-2 tbsp
- Garlic: 2 pods; optional



- Date paste: 1 tsp
- Mustard powder: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste

Method

Grind all the above ingredients to a smooth paste. Serve as a dip or salad dressing.



coconut milk yoghurt, soy yoghurt or paneer.

All these alternatives are available at grocery stores and supermarkets such as Food Hall, Nature's Basket and Spencer's as well as some online health food shops. Though they don't come cheap, they're worth having as they are high in calcium and fortified with minerals and vitamins.

You can also make nut milk at home. Choose a nut of your choice: almond, cashew or coconut. Soak a few pieces of the nut in water overnight. The next day, blend the soaked nuts together with water. You can adjust the quantity of water depending on the consistency and taste required and your homemade nut milk is ready!

So the next time your doctor tells you that you are lactose intolerant, don't be disheartened. Use it as an opportunity to expand your horizons and try out a wide variety of nutritious options. And please note, as a silver, if you're cutting out dairy products from your diet, it's important to supplement your body with Vitamin B12 and Vitamin D3, especially if you're a vegetarian.

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



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Remember this

Yoga can help keep memory loss at bay

Only as late as last year, a fantastic discovery was made by researchers: the mammalian brain uses lymphatic vessels to drain off its waste. Further, different studies linked this to the fact that dramatic degeneration of the brain happens when it is unable to clear this build-up of lymph through vessels that were discovered in the outer membrane of the brain called dura.

Though it is a marvel and a puzzle how the yogic sages made this connection at all, this explains why yoga uses simple exercises used for lymphatic drainage to help treat degenerative brain diseases. These exercises are called joint/energy releasing practices or the *pawanmuktasana* series. Interestingly, these practices also help manage weight by tweaking the process of lymphatic drainage.

These are essentially simple practices that address each joint system of the body and cover the entire body. Though seemingly simple, they can be very challenging if the number of repetitions is increased. There are several variations for each of these

practices, so there can be exciting personal practice (*sadhana*) built around this series.

Alongside this, for problems related to memory loss or brain-related ailments, you must include pranayama practices that are balancing and calming, like alternate nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) and humming bee breath (*brahmari*). Dynamic meditations, like satsangs, chanting, laughter yoga (*hasyoga*) and walking meditation, should be part of the treatment. These simple habits can have even more of a dramatic impact on brain health than exotic or difficult poses.

In the latter group, inversions, like the headstand (*sirsasana*) and shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*), and forward bends, like the down dog (*adhomukhasvanasana*) and child pose (*balasana*) are good for the brain. This may be hyperbolic, but it is said that there are 84 lakh asanas in yoga. So to keep the mind excited about your *sadhana*, you can use several variations of these practices. When you use props or simpler modifications, even apparently difficult poses can be easily transited.



Haresh Patel

YOGIC MOVES

Neck circles

(*greevasanchalanasana*)

This may be done seated or standing. Very gently, roll the neck in a clockwise manner and then in an anti-clockwise manner. This is one round. Do three to five rounds daily, in the morning and evening. Those with neck problems must avoid this altogether, or do only half circles, unless guided by an expert. Movements must be very gentle. Most people do this without awareness and very fast. It is best to coordinate the movement with your breath, doing inhalation in half the movement and exhalation in the other half.

Benefits: This dislodges tension in the neck. Several major lymphatic drainage vessels pass in this region. In alternative therapies, all the nine major energy channels of the body pass through the neck and this clears their pathways.

KNOW YOUR KRIYA

Palming

Close your eyes. Rub your palms vigorously, creating warmth in them. Hold the palms at closed eyelids, gently cupping them. There should be no pressure. The warmth from the palms must be passed on to the eyes. Hold till the warmth is passed on to the eyes, soothing them. Do this three to five times, especially if your eyes are tired,

you have been using gadgets too much, reading a lot or even when stressed. **Benefits:** This relieves both physical and mental stress. In yoga, the practices that deal with eye health belong to the fifth limb, of *pratyahara*, and are highly regarded because these also impact the mind powerfully. Science has long established that vision and stress conditions are related—the size of the iris changes under stress and the health of the peripheral vision is directly related to our ability to deal with tension.

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)



IT'S NEVER 2 LATE BY JACK YORK

A visionary in action

Puducherry-born Jean Makesh has used creativity and innovation to design a one-of-a-kind therapeutic care programme for silvers in Ohio

Greetings from the US! Most of the articles I've written for *Harmony* have come from long-standing relationships I have with individuals in the world of senior living that have a connection with India. For instance, people like Vivian Tellis Nayak and Bhakti Gosalia. But since I took on this responsibility of writing every other month, I find myself looking for people doing innovative work—whether I know them or not—that have a connection to India. That is this month's story, a chance encounter at a conference in Florida recently where I met a remarkable visionary in the field of ageing, Jean Makesh.

Jean looks you straight in the eye; he's happy to speak his mind. He is comfortable taking on the status quo of how elders are treated in the US. He gets animated as he talks about it; it's clearly a passion that runs deep. He was born in Pondicherry, India, and completed his high school there. He likes to reminisce about his home country as a place where the culture of love, caring, obedience and respect for elders is followed. That is the foundation of his work.

His career in senior living started in 1995; he was employed with SunDance Rehabilitation as an occupational therapist. He has undergraduate degrees and a post-graduate diploma in occupational therapy as well. In addition, he has an MBA from Lake Erie College. After working for some large providers in the US, he ultimately founded—and is now the CEO of—the Lantern Group, a community based in Ohio



Photographs courtesy: Jean Makesh

The Lantern Group's five-year goal is to develop an effective treatment methodology and techniques to treat individuals with Alzheimer's disease and certain forms of dementia

in the United States. The philosophy of Lantern is simple: 'Home, where the right to good quality of living, is every human's birthright.'

Jean has always thought out of the box and Lantern has become his model of the future. In his own words, he likes to be "five years ahead of everyone else when it comes to senior living in general as well as in technology implementation". At

Lantern, he has designed a state-of-the-art, award-winning assisted living and Alzheimer's care facility. His fascination and passion for ageing formed the impetus to design and create a therapeutic care programme that is one of a kind in the country, and the world. Some of his recognitions include Entrepreneur of the Year, the Model Practice Award and Next Avenue's 2016 Top 50 Influencers in Ageing in the country. And he talks like he's just beginning: Lantern's five-year goal is to develop an effective treatment methodology and techniques to treat individuals with Alzheimer's disease and certain forms of dementia. The end goal is to reintegrate our elderly back into their community.

One of his most creative projects has been to design and develop a patent-pending, retro-virtual time capsule to nurture and facilitate memory that promotes functional independence. In fact, the care delivery model he has developed is the only care programme in the world that is therapeutic in nature. It utilises the individual's environment, learning and activities to activate repressed memories and stimulate newer learning. This work has led Jean to be featured in various local and international media. As he says, "Ageing begins the day we are born and ends the day we depart. It is an evolutionary process that nourishes and expands our prosperity through knowledge and lifelong experiences. Embracing, cherishing, celebrating and respecting ageing should be our culture and our way of life. Ageing should be revered!"



Silvers at one of the Lantern communities engaged in cerebellar and hemispheric integration exercises to strengthen cerebellar functions such as posture and coordination, improve muscle strength and increase flow of blood to the brain

Jean also stays connected with his roots. He is one of the primary shareholders in a business called Expat Group, based in Bengaluru. He has also been invited to partner with developers and real-estate groups in India to design and build senior housing, assisted living and memory

care communities. Currently, actively engaged with a developer in Dallas, Texas, he appears open to explore other opportunities in India.

Jean, it was a pleasure to get to know you a bit through this interview. Your passion is contagious and your ideas

visionary. You're a man to watch in this industry and a credit to your success in two continents. I think your self-assessment of being five years ahead of the curve is accurate—we look forward to watching you challenge the status quo for many years to come!

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



COMPELLED TO WRITE

In 1950, I was just eight years old when Assam experienced a devastating earthquake. The catastrophe scarred me so deeply that, many years later, it compelled me to write a poem on the subject. Titled *Hai! Hai! Mahaprolay*, it was my way of overcoming the trauma.

When I was in college, my stories were regularly published in newspapers and magazines in Assam. It was exhilarating and inspiring to see my name in print. I am pleased to say that my passion for writing got me the Asam Sahitya Sabha award in 2013, which was followed by a literary pension. At present, I have 28 books in Assamese to my credit.

I tend to write about women characters, whether the agony of women in a patriarchal society in my novel, *Snehamayee*, or the anxieties of a little orphan girl in my children's novel *Maram and Monmi*.

Writing short stories and novels are second nature to me, so I decided to emerge from my comfort zone and try my hand at satire, poetry, lyrics and plays. You can imagine how thrilled I was when my play *Ajoli Aitar Sanghat* was broadcast by All India Radio, Dibrugarh in 1988.



Tapati Baruah Kashiap

I live in Jorhat with my sons and daughters-in law and try to use my time in the most productive way. Apart from writing, I am associated with a few women's organisations and am a member of the Assam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, a women's literary body.

My current creative preoccupation is a short story collection called *Jadi Jibone Koi* ('If Life Speaks') that I am working on while writing my autobiography!

—Dipika Baruah, Guwahati



HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

The last in the series about silvers who believe nurturing the body and mind is the key to joy

The Thanjavur connection

Chandra Padmanabhan, CHENNAI

It was back in 1992 when I received a birthday gift that sparked my interest in south Indian cuisine. It was Chandra Padmanabhan's *Dakshin*, which went on to become a bestseller among cookbooks. I tried one recipe after another and encouraged by the positive feedback, I went on to cook an entire *saapad* (full meal) for my guests on a Sunday morning, with only Chandraji's book as my guide. The elaborate meal was a roaring success, and won me great applause and confidence. At 27, that recognition in the family mattered a lot. Years later, when we finally met in person, I was simply overawed by Chandraji's charming persona. With her sparkling energy and passion, it is little wonder that, at 75, Chandraji remains one of India's finest cookbook authors today. Her cookbooks—*Southern Spice*, *Simply South* and *Dosai*—have received rave reviews with the last two winning the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards.

IN HER OWN WORDS

I was born an Iyengar but lived in various metropolitan cities through my life, which heavily influenced my cooking style. My parents also enjoyed experimenting with a mixture of cuisines while living abroad. Even though I define my cooking as a *khichadi*, there is predominantly an influence of Thanjavur cuisine. I learnt to cook from my mother-in-law, whose family came from Thanjavur. She was a brilliant cook and I used to watch her and document her recipes. She did not follow any accurate measures but cooked by instinct. I would ask her to set aside

the quantities being used and then measure them to evolve the perfect recipe. My interest deepened and I became an avid learner, observing others whose cooking I admired. This experience inspired me to become a cookbook author.

THE LITERARY JOURNEY

I think my love for writing and editing began because my husband was in the publishing industry. He started

"I learnt to cook from my mother-in-law, whose family came from Thanjavur. She was a brilliant cook and I used to watch her and document her recipes"

the publishing house East West, now known as Westland, in Chennai. I was one of the directors and became involved in editing manuscripts as well. During that time, I noticed a dearth of cookbooks on south Indian cuisines. Somewhere along the way, I decided to fill the gap and *Dakshin* was born. Readers loved it and my journey continued.

HOW RECIPES EVOLVE

My mother-in-law used to say, "Each family has its own recipes depending on what the members like. But primarily, all family recipes are patriarchal." She was right! My father-

in-law disliked seeing tomatoes in his dal and *rasam*, so my mother-in-law used to boil the tomatoes and make a puree before adding it to the dishes. Most of her recipes call for tomato puree. As she taught the next generation, that became a tradition.

THE MARATHA INFLUENCE

Due to Thanjavur becoming the heartland of TAMILIAN Brahmins, almost all of its famous recipes are Brahmin recipes. Some of my favourite traditional Thanjavur recipes are *vattal kozhumbu* and *karvepillai kozhumbu*. However, Thanjavur Brahmin cuisine has a lot of Maharashtra elements to its recipes as well. Almost 250 years ago, when the Marathas settled in Thanjavur, they brought with them their culture and other influences. Getting its name from King Samboji, sambar is a popular Thanjavur dish that has only existed for the past two centuries. Also recipes such as *vangi bath* and *rasa vangi* are Maharashtra influences on south Indian cooking as the term *vangi* itself is a Marathi word.

TRADITIONAL FOOD PRACTICES

Our elders often spoke of how healthy and rich their food was. Nutrition was an important factor in their cooking. The lifespan may have been shorter, but their existence was healthier and more holistic. Pure cow's ghee was aplenty then and used extensively in cooking. So were nuts. I have seen my mother-in-law adding cashew nuts to dishes like *vattal kuzhambu*. In those days, adding peanuts and cashew nuts to dishes, including tempering, was a common practice.



Photographs by D Kalaiarasan

MY FOOD GUIDE

There are some simple food practices that I have retained over time. I believe in having a sumptuous breakfast every morning. I include buttermilk and curds in my meals compulsorily. I avoid dals and greens at night. I feel people should return to how they ate as children. When we were young, the entire family would have a sit-down meal (lunch) at 10 am every morning. Then, around 2 pm, tiffin would be served. Nowadays, many youngsters say they do not have time for a good breakfast. Can we really make that choice when it is not healthy to do so? This is exactly why I wrote *Dosai*, which features over 100 *dosai* recipes such as instant dosai and millet *dosai*. I took into account existing health conditions and did adequate research to compile these recipes.

MY MASALA DABBA

It is an indispensable part of my kitchen. You may not believe it but the round, quintessential masala *dabba* with seven containers is not a traditional practice. Our ancestors used a square *dabba* with more items. The cooking was also done in larger portions. But for today's generation, I recommend the masala *dabba*. It is handy and makes cooking an efficient procedure. I store chana dal, *urad* dal, mustard, fenugreek seeds, coriander seeds, cumin seeds and turmeric powder in my masala *dabba*; red chillies are kept on the inner lid.

MY FAMILY HEALTH SUPPLEMENT

My father's family did not drink tea or coffee; they consumed a health drink called *pazhayadu* instead. This

is made by soaking leftover rice in water overnight. The next morning, it is mixed with buttermilk and consumed with pickle. The fermentation process that takes place at night makes this a healthy, everyday option. *Pazhayadu* is a strengthening supplement that helps prevent inflammation and acidity.

INDEPENDENT AGEING

My son Gautam, who now heads Westland, daughter-in-law Savitha and grandson Amithav live close by and take good care of me while still allowing me to have my independence and be my own person. I enjoy being active on social media. I keep myself busy and enjoy meeting family and friends over lunches, club meetings, and book club events. I am indeed blessed.



KARVEPILLAI KUZHAMBU

(Curry leaves sambar)

Though most people love the flavour of curry leaves, as Chandraji says, very few people consume the leaves; many have the tendency to pick out the leaves from dishes and set them aside! This traditional recipe from Chandra Padmanabhan's kitchen has curry leaves ground with spices, thus enhancing the flavour while retaining the health benefits.

Ingredients

Red chillies: 5-6; dried
Black peppercorns: 1 tsp
Cumin seeds: ½ tsp
Asafoetida powder: 1 tsp
Black gram dal: 2 tsp
Uncooked rice: 1½ tsp
Tamarind (without seeds or strings): lime-sized
Curry leaves: ½ cup; tightly packed
Salt to taste

For tempering

Gingelly oil: 2 tsp
Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
Fenugreek seeds: ¼ tsp
Red chilli: 1 dried; halved

Curry leaves are widely used in south Indian cuisines for their pleasant aroma and health benefits—they are rich in calcium, iron, phosphorus, copper and magnesium, and a good source of vitamins A, B, C and E. They also have antioxidant properties, helping prevent several diseases.



Method

Dry-roast the red chillies, peppercorns, cumin seeds, asafoetida powder, black gram and rice. Fry over low heat, tossing gently, till fragrant. Cool and add the curry leaves and tamarind. Grind to a fine paste, adding very little water. Dissolve the ground paste in 2 cups of water. Add salt and set aside. Heat 2 tbsp of gingelly oil. Add all the ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add the dissolved paste and simmer till it thickens. Serve hot with rice and roasted papad.

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

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 50, 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



MONEY MATTERS BY PRIYA DESAI

How safe is your money? With frauds and cybercrimes on the rise, silvers must stay vigilant to keep their finances secure

Rarely a day passes without news of a financial scam or an ingenious fraud. With new and advanced technologies being put to use in the financial world, the skills and finesse of conmen have also evolved, finding newer ways to deceive the gullible. In fact, financial thefts, cheating and frauds have become the order of the day. And statistics reveal that silvers rank high among targets for fraudsters.

NEW DAY, NEW CON

Just the other day, I chanced upon a news article about a silver being conned of ₹ 35,000 by an impersonator. The latter presented himself as a State Bank of India executive trying to help with a credit card problem, seeking details including an OTP (one-time password). The gentleman realised he had been duped only when he received an SMS notification informing him that the card had been used to make a purchase.

In fact, banking institutions have been regularly sending out awareness messages informing account holders not to part with any card-related details and passwords. Unfortunately, most people don't pay heed.

THE VULNERABLE LOT

Silvers as a demographic are prone to financial frauds owing to many factors. Though they have savings stashed in different forms, most aren't adept at managing their own financial affairs because of reasons such as:

- Rapid transformation in the financial landscape
- Technological advancements
- Constantly evolving regulatory environment
- Tedious paperwork.

Moreover, they are fearful of the fact that their oversight or ignorance will lead to mistakes that will prove costly. All these factors create a medley of fears, resulting in a dependence ethos when it comes to financial issues.

The physical limitations of advancing age also lead to dependency, impelling silvers to seek financial guidance from their near and dear ones. This creates fertile ground for scammers on the lookout for victims. It becomes nigh on impossible for silvers to identify these glib talkers with confident body language and perfectly honed presentation skills as scammers.

TECH ISSUES

The world of finance and technology has undergone a sea change. Most silvers are unable to understand the technology involved in the financial world and find themselves at a loss when it comes to keeping pace with these changes.

There has also been a significant change in requirements for different types of investments and the fine print is just that—it's too fine to read or understand. In their post-retirement phase, most silvers struggle to find safe and suitable investment avenues for the money they have accumulated over the years.

TREAD CAREFULLY

Today, there are many investment potholes where your money may just languish, not fetch the desired returns and become permanently lost. Here are some of them:

PONZI SCHEMES

Most silvers prefer to invest their money in fixed deposits. Ponzi schemes that promise phenomenal returns and offer future interest payment cheques exploit this trait. Conmen convince unsuspecting silvers that these cheques are the surety. But it doesn't take long for the initial hefty payments to turn into a trickle and then nothing at all. The phoney company

does a vanishing trick, leaving investors high and dry.

Sahara (₹ 36,000 crore), Saradha (₹ 20,000 crore) and Rose Valley Chit Fund (₹ 60,000 crore) are just a few of the sharks in the deep, dark waters of Ponzi schemes. These schemes have stripped many silvers of their lifetime savings. The Government has now approved the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill 2018 to plug the loopholes in existing laws against these schemes.

MUTUAL FUNDS

Mutual funds (MF) trumpet attractive features such as tax-free dividends and investment growth. The variety of MFs can easily baffle investors, especially silvers, resulting in mis-selling. Brokers taking high net-worth silvers for a jolly ride is by no means an exception.

Seniors are easily cheated into investing in MFs that provide fat commissions to brokers but are a low-value invest-

Like soldiers navigating through minefields, silvers must learn to master tactics that will help them counter the phenomenal rise in cybercrimes today

ment for them. Keep in mind that mutual funds are never a guarantee of return on investment. They expose investors to the capital market, misguiding them with a grand vision of inflated returns. Most silvers are unable to manage these funds smartly. They eventually find themselves dealing with declining net asset values that wipe out their interest earning potential as well as capital investment.

MEDICLAIM POLICIES

One of the inescapable features of ageing is the need for health insurance or mediclaim policies. It becomes the perfect avenue for exploiting silvers and there is rampant mis-selling of policies. Not only is the fine print metaphorically so, but it is also literally impossible for seniors to read. It's also why buyers eventually end up placing their trust in individuals that sell these policies.

There are a number of options to choose from and only an expert would be able to find something that's best suited for silvers. Many seniors are sold policies with inadequate cover. What exacerbates the situation is that seniors also find themselves forking out rapidly increasing premiums with each passing year. In the recent past, a leading bank was accused of mis-selling an insurance policy, leading the customer to believe he was investing in a fixed deposit.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit card cloning has defrauded many thousands of rupees from the bank accounts of silvers. The grievance redress process is ill-regulated and poorly implemented, doing nothing to alleviate the hassles one goes through. A credit card is like a double-edged sword; while it's a useful product to have in your financial armoury, the risk aspect makes it unsuitable for most seniors in our country.

Vishing (VoIP/Voice phishing) is a 'social engineering' technique where fraudsters call you and extract personal information. This information is then used to access and use your accounts. In fact, some fraudsters also use it to assume your identity and open new accounts.

PLAY SMART

Indeed, the world of finance is never bereft of risks. Yet like soldiers navigating through minefields, silvers must learn to master tactics that will help them counter the phenomenal rise in cybercrimes today. According to a recent report, senior citizen cybercrime fraud cases account for 10 per cent in Pune, 20 per cent in Bangalore and 20 per cent in Kolkata. Here are some precautions to keep in mind:

- Adopt financial decision-making as a responsibility.
- Obtain and analyse information proactively to arrive at a decision to invest or buy a financial product.

- Treat institutions and individuals from the finance world as strangers and approach them with a measure of scepticism.
- Maintain complete privacy of financial information like credit/debit/ATM cards, bank accounts, bank locker, insurance policies, etc.
- Do not discuss financial problems with strangers and in public places with friends.
- Update bank passbooks regularly and scrutinise credit/debit entries to identify and avoid fraudulent debits.
- Free advice from brokers or agents can prove costly as they have a different agenda than an investor.
- Treat unsolicited emails and calls related to your financial matters as trash and do not respond.



- Allowing others to handle financial documents like unsigned cheques, forms and filling details can result in mistakes and is an open invitation to frauds.
- Be alert about bank messages and take quick action in case you sense something is amiss.
- Many financial frauds go unreported and unpunished. Do not be embarrassed to report them.
- In view of the growing number of cybercrimes, Internet users must use cyber protection such as firewalls.

The only way forward is alertness and knowledge upgradation. Being open to the use of technology and gaining a better understanding of safer transaction methods will help reduce the possibility of being defrauded. Awareness and presence of mind are the keys to keeping your finances safe.

The author is an economist based in Mumbai



HELPLINE BY DR HARSHBIR RANA

In this column, we answer your queries on personal and social issues related to ageing, elder care and intergenerational relationships

Q I am a 59 year-old woman living in an apartment in Mumbai. Since my father passed away two years ago, my mother has been living alone in a flat nearby. She is 83 and rarely ventures out. As I am her only child, I am her caretaker; my husband and I make it a point to visit her every day without fail. However, these days, she has become too inquisitive—she wants to know everything that is happening in our lives and has an opinion on everything. I find this too intrusive. If I refuse to answer her, she gets upset. For this reason, many a time I just don't feel like calling on her. But then I feel guilty. If I do visit her, I come back irritated and frustrated. How do I deal with this?



Photographs by iStock

A Living alone is not easy and it is very clear that your mother is very lonely. For most women, their family is their life. In your mother's case, your father and you would be the most important people in her life. With your father's passing, you have become the focus of her life. Her interest in all your affairs is her way of showing her concern and love for you. Also, please understand that she has no other interests, as she rarely leaves the house. That said, it is very easy to understand your irritation towards her constant questioning.

The upside of this situation is the love you and your mother share. Often,

there is little or no love left between parents and children, which is clearly not the case here.

In your case, the problem becomes easier to deal with if you understand your mother's perspective—she is not interfering but cares for you. You are her only source of interest and you need to accept that. Try a few of the following recommendations

to rearrange her life in such a way that her loneliness is reduced:

The problem becomes easier to deal with if you understand your mother's perspective—she is not interfering but cares for you. You are her only source of interest and you need to accept that

- Instead of just visiting her every day, fix a day and take her out—maybe for lunch or tea, to any restaurant or club. A regular outing will be a welcome change for both of you.

- Social games such as bridge, carom, chess, rummy or solitaire can help reduce the loneliness.

- Try and arrange a place where your mother can meet people—a

seniors' association, a park or the sea face.

- Sometimes, going to a religious place on a weekly or daily basis also breaks the monotony.

- Hobbies such as embroidery, sketching, painting, reading and singing can be encouraged.

During your visits, try and divert the conversation to treasured moments

of your mother's life, such as childhood memories, early married years, places she visited with her loved ones, etc. This way, the time you spend together will become something you look forward to.

Q. Last week, I was shocked to see one of my junior school teachers begging for alms at a signal in Lajpat Nagar in New Delhi. Looking at me, she was both happy and embarrassed. She is 78 now with no family of her own, no income or savings; she lives with her nephew who has been threatening to throw her out of his house very soon. My heart goes out to her but I am not sure how I can help her. Can you guide me?

A I can empathise with you; it is indeed shocking to see people we have known, loved, respected in such a terrible state. First, I would encourage you to form a group of your school friends who knew this teacher. This 'core group', working with energy and purpose, would be able to do a number of things for your teacher:

- You can get your teacher financial assistance under the Delhi Government's

It is indeed shocking to see people we have known, loved, respected in a terrible state... You can get your teacher financial assistance under the Delhi Government's Scheme of Old Age Assistance, which would be ₹ 2,500 per month, remitted quarterly

Scheme of Old Age Assistance, which would be ₹ 2,500 per month, remitted quarterly. For this, she will need a proof of residence (she should have lived in Delhi for over five years), proof of age and a bank account.

- Try an intervention with her nephew to gauge if their relationship can be mended. This would certainly improve her condition.

- If she is on the verge of losing the roof over her head, you can try to get her into one of the following old-age homes for women:

- St Mary's Home for Aged Women, Rajpur Road
- Arya Mahila Ashram, Rajinder Nagar

Also check out these homes below, which are free:

- Nirmal Hriday, Majnu ka Tila
- Gharaunda, Asola



- Get the alumni of the school involved in providing her support; many schools have alumni groups that give monetary assistance to teachers in need.
- Find out if your school has an association for retired teachers. This group can play a vital role in her rehabilitation.
- Try and get a health check-up done for her as she might need medical help.

This process will not be easy but persistence will yield results. Please write if you need further help.

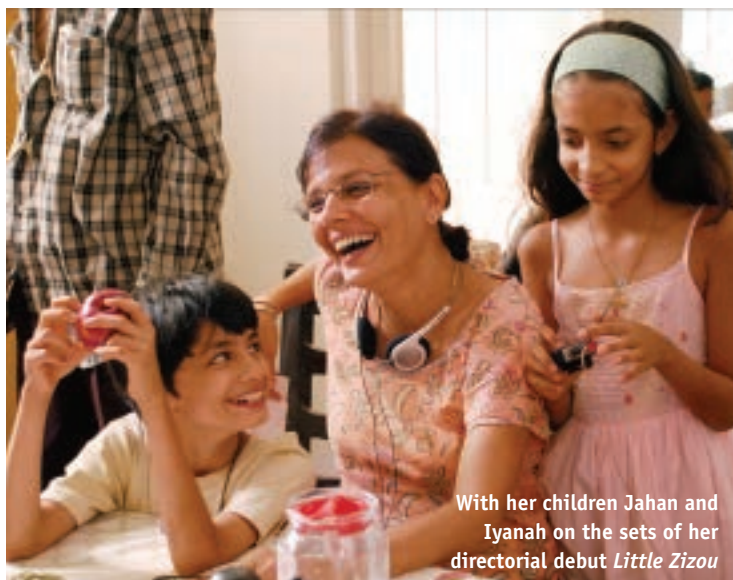
Dr Rana is a New Delhi-based social gerontologist and Founder of Positive Aged. Email her with your queries at positiveaged@gmail.com or write to us at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org. Visit www.positiveaged.com

Namaste MUMBAI

Sooni Taraporevala has themed most of her work on her beloved Bombay and then Mumbai. What does the veteran filmmaker and photographer have in store? **Shail Desai** finds out



Shail Desai



With her children Jahan and Iyanah on the sets of her directorial debut *Little Zizou*

Aparna Jayakumar

“I wrote Little Zizou to suit them. I incorporated into the script what I had heard them say on and used their sibling rivalry to good effect. I was, and still am, very proud of the work they did on that film”

Beyond the clichés that describe the creative brilliance of an internationally acclaimed filmmaker and photographer, Sooni Taraporevala is a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde. But alternating between periods of solitude and diving for inspiration into the world at large is absolutely essential to her process.

“Scriptwriting is very solitary because it’s just me, holed up in what I call my ‘writing cave’ while staring at a blank wall and a blank screen. When it comes to photography, I have to go out into the world and interact with people,” she says. “They are two very different activities but I like not being stuck to just one thing.”

Taraporevala is still basking in the afterglow of her second book, which released in December last year. Titled *Home In The City: Bombay 1977-Mumbai 2017*, this collection of photographs is the culmination of a four-decade-long journey.

As her lens panned from Bombay, as it was then called, to Mumbai, the city we know today, Taraporevala did much more than just document myriad facets of this metropolis with her camera. It was a much more personal journey, for it is during this time she evolved as an artist—from a photographer to scriptwriter and then film director.

Over the years, she also went on to write the screenplays of movies like the Oscar-nominated *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and *The Namesake* (2006) in collaboration with celebrated film director Mira Nair as well as other directors and producers.

On a balmy morning in Mumbai—Bombay, for old-school faithfuls—Taraporevala takes time out from her busy schedule to look at the big picture. As a young girl, she schooled in Mumbai before she went to Harvard Univer-

sity in the US as she found the college environment here “not intellectually stimulating enough.”

Until then, she had left the country only once, to visit her aunt and uncle in Hong Kong. To her surprise, her grades and other pursuits at school earned her admission—and a scholarship—to Harvard and she soon found herself on her second international flight out of Mumbai.

“I was very fortunate as it was the only place that offered a scholarship,” she says with a smile. “My parents were very brave about letting me go; I was an only child. But who could refuse the best college in America? It was a no-brainer and I was off in 1975.”

At Harvard, Taraporevala majored in English literature but took film and photography courses as well. “I was fascinated that you could actually study film, so I did a lot of film courses and picked up photography during this time. Though I had been gifted an Instamatic [camera], I bought my first real camera with money borrowed from a roommate,” recalls the intrepid explorer, whose photographs have since found a place in the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. “I also did a lot of theory and criticism classes, in addition to the filmmaking course. This was a time when there were no videos, so the only way you could watch a film was if it was screened or projected, or if you saw it on a Steenbeck machine, which was used to edit films. That’s how we watched films. For instance, one entire semester, I studied Alain Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, shot by shot, on a Steenbeck.”

A year later, at Harvard, Taraporevala found a buddy in filmmaker Mira Nair, with whom she went on to collaborate. “We were both a part of the Class of 1979, but were never in the same classroom as we pursued



“I would love to do a commercial film but my training and studying was all to do with non-mainstream. That’s my history, that’s what I have done and I don’t know if I can switch streams midway”

different majors. I don’t think we ever took a course together. Our collaboration started with friendship,” says Taraporevala, who went on to become a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which hosts the Oscars, and a Member of the Writers Guild of America.

On a semester off from college in 1977, Taraporevala returned to Bombay and began photographing the city, though she had no clue where it would lead. While taking time off, she ventured out to take photographs of her neighbourhood around Gowalia Tank. It was a

photographic and personal journey that culminated last year, when she released *Home In The City: Bombay 1977-Mumbai 2017*, which includes essays by Pico Iyer and Salman Rushdie.

Over the next few years, Taraporevala found her gurus in various fields. When it came to photography, she was fascinated with the works of Henri Cartier-Bresson and Helen Levitt, among others, while she loved the films of Francois Truffaut, Federico Fellini and Satyajit Ray. Following a master’s degree in cinema studies at New York University, she returned to India to find her calling.

With husband Firdaus, and children Jahan and Iyanah



Nazneen Khurshed Vajifdar

Taraporevala’s first job was as a freelancer with publications such as *Diner’s Club* and *Namaskar* magazine, in addition to *Indian Express*, where she worked on travel stories, both as a writer and a photographer. In 1986, she wrote her first screenplay, *Salaam Bombay!*, which was so successful that she found another career as a screenwriter.

After two decades of screenplay writing, Taraporevala made her directorial debut with *Little Zizou* (2009), of which she also wrote the screenplay. A family drama-cum-comedy set in Mumbai, the National Award-winning film screened at 17 national and international festivals was in theatres in Mumbai for 12 weeks and is in the archives at Harvard University and in Fukuoka, Japan. The film is special to her as the cast and crew comprised

family and friends, including her two children, Iyanah and Jahan Bativala.

“I wrote the roles to suit them,” she reveals. “I incorporated into the script what I had heard them say on a daily basis and used their sibling rivalry to good effect. They were marvellous, they did a great job. I was, and still am, very proud of the work they did on that film.”

Another passion project was her book of photographs, *Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India*—a photographic journey of the Parsis, a community she belongs to and knows all too well. The photos range from 1980 to 2004. She published the first edition in 2000 herself, through a company she set up called Good Books. She went on to co-publish the second edition with Overlook Press in New York in 2004. The book is now a staple of most Parsi households in India and abroad.

Though Taraporevala was familiar with the subject, the project came with its share of challenges. “I found it hard to make interesting pictures of the younger generation of Parsis in the 1980s,” she confesses. “I was one myself and we were just sort of miniature versions of the adults, whereas kids today are of a different mindset. The world has opened up a great deal now. We had just two programmes on television back then, so it was a lot different. The Internet has changed things today.”

With time, Taraporevala had to embrace change, both with her photography and scriptwriting. Her early college applications were drafted on a manual, portable typewriter, before she moved on to an electric typewriter at college. *Salaam Bombay!* was plotted on an electronic typewriter, after which she got her first computer, a Toshiba, with the archaic DOS system. A disaster later, she discovered Apple and has never looked back. On the photography front, she was most comfortable shooting in black and white before Raghbir Singh encouraged her to explore colour. She made the transition to digital in 2004.

In 2016, Taraporevala forayed into a new medium and made a virtual reality documentary titled *Yeh Ballet*. The 14-minute documentary features two young boys from the chawls of Mumbai who won scholarships to study ballet in the US. Produced by Memesys Culture Lab, it premiered last year.

These days, Taraporevala is working on another film that she hopes to direct soon. Asked if she has any desire to make a commercial blockbuster, she laughs. “I’m not sure I have a commercial bone in my body. I would love to do a commercial film but I’m not sure I know how to because my training and studying was all to do with non-mainstream. So that’s my history, that’s what I have done and I don’t know if I can switch streams midway. But, hey,



MOVIES

- 1988:** *Salaam Bombay!* (screenplay)
- 1991:** *Mississippi Masala* (screenplay)
- 1998:** *Such a Long Journey* (screenplay)
- 2000:** *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar* (co-writer, screenplay)
- 2006:** *The Namesake* (screenplay)
- 2008:** *Little Zizou* (writer, director)

DOCUMENTARY

- 2013:** *Girl Rising* (co-writer)
- 2017:** *Yeh Ballet* (director)

PHOTO BOOKS

- 2000:** *Parsis: The Zoroastrians of India*
- 2017:** *Home In The City*

Salaam Bombay! was commercial! It did really well. It was popular. It still is. It just wasn’t mainstream, if you know what I mean. By ‘mainstream,’ I mean *Housefull 2* and other films like it.”

Taraporevala’s children have followed in her footsteps. While Jahan is studying film, Iyanah is still finding her drive as a sophomore in the US. But photography is what the mother and daughter bond over, as Taraporevala wakes up to pictures Iyanah has developed in the dark room and sent her via WhatsApp. “It gives me a real thrill. My father was an amateur photographer and I remember how I used to ‘air mail’ photos to him every once in a while alongside the weekly letters. It takes me back to those days.”

The balancing factor at home is her husband, Dr Firdaus Bativala, a dentist by profession, who, Taraporevala says, is more passionate about films than she is. “We are from different fields, so he balances my life fantastically,” she shares. “We have a lot of things in common like the love for books and reading, the same sense of humour, and the same absentmindedness! If I’m in the middle of a story, I can be walking on the road and thinking about it. I’ve walked into lamp posts and I’ve taken Firdaus to Navjots and weddings on the wrong dates. Then again, as we are both a little absentminded, it equalises.” 🌸

“

Mohiniattam is my life

”

Through her incredible work of a lifetime, legendary Mohiniattam exponent Padma Bhushan **Dr Kanak Rele** has breathed fresh air into the dance form and given it a place of its own in the realms of Indian classical dance. In conversation with **Sai Prabha Kamath**, the doyenne shares her journey of resurrecting Mohiniattam from the throes of extinction



IN THE QUIET NEIGHBOURHOOD OF JVPD SCHEME in the western suburbs of Mumbai, the Nalanda Dance Research Centre is not just a landmark; it is a monument to the performing arts. As we enter the three-storeyed building, we are welcomed by the reverberations of *thattu kizhi* (an instrument comprising a wooden plank and a stick to provide rhythmic beats to dance) and thumping feet. This institution has created generations of distinguished performers, academicians and teachers in fine arts. And, for Dr Kanak Rele, the 80 year-old founder-director of Nalanda and rejuvenator of Mohiniattam, “establishing the institution has allowed me to take dance to everyone, which *was* and *is* my ultimate goal.”

As we settle down for an interview in her spacious administrative office amid intermittent school bells and phone enquiries, Dr Rele—graceful in a red sari and plaited hair—shares how her life is irrevocably intertwined with the journey of Nalanda and how resurrecting Mohiniattam became her mission.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

She was born in a Gujarati aristocratic family from Bombay who were staunch nationalists and Gandhians. “We used to wear only khadi and as a young girl, I used to spin the *charkha*,” she reminisces. When her father passed away at a very young age, she and her mother shifted for a short time to Santiniketan in West Bengal, where her uncle was learning painting. “There, I vaguely remember seeing an old man with a long beard wearing a peculiar gown—that must have been Rabindranath Tagore!” she recalls. The creative atmosphere left an indelible mark on the young mind. “My mom used to tell me that whenever I saw a dance, I used to be transfixed and used to watch the dancers intently.”



After returning from Santiniketan, she was initiated into Kathakali when she was six, under the late guru ‘Panchali’ Karunakara Panikkar. “My guru was a giant in facial expressions and *streevesham* [female character] in Kathakali. I was one of the first women to learn Kathakali and I continued learning from him.” Later, Dr Rele also went on to learn Bharatanatyam under legendary gurus Nana Kasar and Chokkalingam Pillai but never had the inclination to pursue the dance form.

THE LAWYER-DANCER

After her marriage to Yatin Rele, a well-known cricketer and banker, she shifted to the UK and went on to study international law in civil aviation at the University of Manchester. However, she continued practising dance. “Upon our return to Bombay, I was offered a job in Air India. At this juncture, I declared I wanted to be a professional mainstream dancer and not pursue a career in law. My mother was really upset with me as there was a social stigma attached to taking up dancing as a career. However, I continued unabated



Mohini is the enchantress and attam means dance. When I started training in it, I entered a fantastic world of beauty from which I have never returned



with the wholehearted support of my husband.”

ESTABLISHING NALANDA

In the 1960s, students generally had to spend huge amounts to have an *arangetram* (dance initiation on stage) under established gurus. “I was shocked to learn this from dance students from humble backgrounds.” Her belief that dance should be for all prompted her to establish Nalanda, a centre for imparting dance training without any discrimination. “When we were allotted this piece of land by the government, it used to get flooded frequently owing to its proximity to Juhu beach,” she recalls. Despite many such odds, Nalanda was born in 1967. Her husband was a pillar of support as they built the centre brick by brick. “If I handled the professional part, Yatin, with his banking background, handled the finances superbly.”

To give dance an academic temper, the visionary in Dr Rele next came up with a proposal to have a degree for dance, something unheard of in those times.

Though she received a lot of criticism for the idea, she was successful in obtaining a University Grants Commission (UGC) scale for dance. Indeed, she worked hard on formulating a structure for the course. In 1973, Dr Rele opened Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, an exclusive college for dance affiliated to the University of Mumbai, empowering students who were artistically inclined to take up arts as a full-time career option.

THE REVIVALIST

Simultaneously, Dr Rele continued giving Kathakali performances all around the world. But destiny had something else in store. Her true calling came when she met Kalamandalam Rajalakshmi, a Mohiniattam teacher, and started learning the dance form from her. “*Mohini* is the enchantress and *attam* means dance. It is a dance form with lyrical feminism, gentle movements and distinct facial expressions. I had seen Mohiniattam before and used to love the white-and-gold costumes and traditional hairdo. And when I started training in it, I entered a fantastic world of beauty from which I have never returned.”

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- Nrityachoodamani, Madras (1978)
- Gaurav Puraskar from Gujarat government (1989)
- Padma Shri (1990)
- Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1994)
- Kala Vipanchee (2004)
- Kalidas Samman (2005-06)
- Padma Bhushan (2013)
- Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, Akademi Ratna (2013)
- Natya Kalottunga (2018)



“

According to the tenets of the *Natya Shastra*, dancers are not qualified to take sides or present current issues.

So in my dance presentations, I portray characters from Indian mythology and Hindu epics with current nuances

Owing to lack of patronage, Mohiniattam—a classical dance form from Kerala that traces its technique to *Natya Shastra*, the ancient Sanskrit text on performance arts—had become a dying art on the brink of extinction. When Dr Rele learnt about this, she took it upon herself to revive this dance form; for this, she made several trips to Kerala with her husband. In 1970-71, a research grant enabled her to document the dance through its surviving exponents, Kunjukuttyamma, Chinammamma and Kalyanikuttyamma. With this recorded data, she structured the dance form and created a new grammar, methodology and technique, thus rejuvenating it. “Mohiniattam is my life now,” she shares.

ENRICHING MOHINIATTAM

Dr Rele’s untiring efforts to revive Mohiniattam caught the eyes of Kerala’s poet-dramatist-scholar Kavalam Narayana Panikkar. Watching her dance to Carnatic music, he suggested she change the rendition to Sopana Sangeetham, a blend of Vedic, folk and tribal music of Kerala. As Sopana Sangeetham was the base for Kathakali too, Dr Rele lapped up the idea. They worked in collaboration for over three decades, with Dr Rele

choreographing to Panikkar’s lyrics, until his death in 2016.

Dr Rele’s endeavour to enrich Mohiniattam and put it on a pedestal made her explore powerful subjects, including social concerns. “According to the tenets of the *Natya Shastra*, dancers are not qualified to take sides or present current issues. So in my dance presentations such as *A-Neeti* and *The Enlightened One – Gautama Buddha*, I portray characters from Indian mythology and Hindu epics with current nuances,” she explains. Through her productions such as *Kubja*, *Draupadi* and *Gandhari*, she has touched upon several contemporary social issues of women too.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS GALORE

Apart from Mohiniattam, Dr Rele has choreographed a vast repertoire of classical dance-dramas such as *Amrut Manthan*, *Dashavatara* and *Shodashopachara*. A regular performer at programmes in India and abroad, she recently enthralled the audience at the cultural festival Kalabhivardhana 2018 (*see pic on right*) in Mysuru, where she was also conferred the ‘Natya Kalottunga’ award.

As a dance pedagogist, Dr Rele is the only dance exponent on the Curriculum Development Committee of UGC and has been invited by several educational institutions to formulate their courses of study. And her internationally registered research on body kinetics for Mohiniattam is accepted all over the world today. Further, she has made documentaries on dancing legends such as Birju Maharaj, Kelucharan Mohapatra and Ramankutty Nair. Her documentary *Nritya Bharati*, on the seven Indian classical dance forms (Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Mohiniattam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri), has been acquired by the Ministry of External Affairs as the official capsule for dance missions overseas.

What’s more, several prestigious universities and learning institutions for Indian performing arts have prescribed Dr Rele’s *Mohiniattam - The Lyrical Dance*

A FLAG-BEARER OF ACTIVE AGEING

At 80, Dr Rele leads an active life despite a major foot surgery a couple of years ago. While her day is dedicated to the administrative work of Nalanda, her evenings are reserved for project preparations and seminar presentations. "After a brief illness, my husband is recuperating at home; I have started spending more time with him now," she shares. A voracious reader, her day is incomplete without practising dance, yoga, pranayama and Pilates. "In fact, dance is the highest form of yoga," she declares. She is a small eater. "I am happy with just *khakra* and *chaas*. But for a healthy life, what matters is what you eat and how you treat your body. Do not neglect it," she advises. Emphasising that age should not deter one from living life to the fullest, she adds, "I have friends who have isolated themselves because of their age. Share your knowledge or care for your grandchildren—silvers need to come forward and be a part of society."



For my production *Gandhari* some years ago, I danced with my eyes closed, which was seen as an innovation then. In my opinion, the content can change but the form should not

and *Bhaavanirupana* as textbooks for their undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Indeed, in 2013, for her remarkable work in Mohiniattam, Dr Rele was honoured with the Padma Bhushan; the same year, she received a fellowship from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the Akademi Ratna.

PRESENT PERFECT

Life has come full circle for Dr Rele as the Sangeet Natak Akademi is soon releasing a documentary on the life of the doyenne. "Right now, I am busy giving them my inputs." Does she feel dance is evolving? "Yes," she replies. "In fact, dancers have started experimenting more now with different themes. For my production *Gandhari* some years ago, I danced with my eyes closed, which was seen as an innovation then. In my opinion, the content can change but the form should not."

Her current projects include choreographing Jayadeva's *Ashtapadi* along with her senior students, formulating a master's course in

movement science, and archiving works of her lifetime for Nalanda.

A LIVING LEGACY

Today, while Dr Rele oversees the administration of Nalanda, her family is also involved in the institution's myriad activities: her daughter-in-law Uma, who holds a doctorate degree from Nalanda, is the principal of Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyala, and son Rahul, a businessman, helps run the institution. The love for dance truly runs in the family. "My granddaughter Vaidehi, who is a solicitor like me, has now registered for a PhD with the institution."

In its 51st year, the institution has certainly come a long way. "Today, it is the premier dance institution in the country recognised as a scientific and industrial research organisation by the Ministry of Science and Technology, and offers bachelor of fine arts (dance), master of fine arts (dance) and PhD in dance, apart from various diplomas," says Dr Rele with pride. "I will be leaving behind dance and movement in every corner of this institute." ✨

An island TALE

Dotted with white-chalk cliffs, pristine beaches and Gothic architecture, Germany's biggest island Rügen is in a league of its own



Devesh Joshi





Driving next to the glittering Baltic coast, surrounded by hearty Germans tucking into herring sandwiches, I realised that East Germany is unlike any other part of the country I've seen before. It has a kind of charm that vaguely differs from that of the south or the neighbouring Frankfurt in the west.

With an area of about a thousand square kilometres, Rügen is Germany's biggest island. In its southeast are a host of resorts whose architecture is an amalgamation of different styles from different periods. In the north lies Jasmund National Park with its iconic white-chalk cliffs and a rare beech tree reserve. Travel a few kilometres to the west and you will step back in time at the coastal town of Prora, where Hitler once envisioned the world's largest seaside tourist resort.

Seebrücke, the wooden pier
in the town of Sellin



The northeast coastline of Rügen has vast expanses of white sand beaches and white chalk cliffs, the latter being the relics of the last Ice Age. During storms, the eroding chalk cliffs are known to spew fossils of oysters and sea urchins

I was told by our guide that the island of Rügen was a popular tourist getaway as long back as the 19th century and visited by the likes of Bismarck and Albert Einstein. Incidentally, its chalk coastline was immortalised by Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich in 1818. However, Rügen fell into oblivion as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) took over East Germany. But with shifting time and power, and with cheap flights and trains connecting Rügen with Berlin and Hamburg, the island came into prominence once again.

The gateway to the island is Stralsund, a Hanseatic town that dots the skyline with its Gothic red-brick churches. From Stralsund, there is a stunning 2,800-m bridge that takes you to Rügen.

During our three-day stay, the town of Sellin was our base. One of the highlights of the town is Seebrücke, a wooden pier with a spectacular house on it with a world-class restaurant-bar that serves top German beers. You can also catch the most stunning sunrise in the world here.

The northeast coastline of Rügen has vast expanses of white sand beaches and white chalk cliffs, the latter being the relics of the last Ice Age. During storms, the eroding chalk cliffs in the National Park of Jasmund are known to spew fossils of oysters and sea urchins. The vast expanse of beech trees in the park makes it a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Lynx, wolf and bear are part of this fascinating wilderness. The rare sea eagle also breeds here regularly.



Wooden treetop walk at the
Naturerbe Zentrum

White chalk cliffs at
Jasmund National Park

Opposite page: The vast
expanse of beech trees at
Jasmund National Park



The notorious site of Prora has identical buildings lined up along the beach for as far as 4.5 km. Hitler's original plan was a lot more ambitious, with buildings spanning 8 km and all rooms with a seaside view



The Nazi-planned tourist structures of Prora receiving a makeover from a gloomy brown to a hopeful white



WHEN TO GO

Though it's fairly okay to visit Rügen any time of the year, you may want to avoid winters. The weather is warm and sunny between March and September.

VISA & CURRENCY REQUIREMENT

As Germany is a part of the EU and shares the common currency, getting Euros is never a problem. If you are visiting Germany and other European countries, it is best to carry a travel card issued by your bank. As Indian nationals, it's mandatory to obtain a Schengen visa. The maximum validity of the visa can be up to a period of three months.

GETTING THERE

The best way to reach Rügen is by taking a flight to Berlin and then taking a train (€ 50 per person). Alternatively, you can take a bus from Berlin (€ 15).

A few kilometres away from the park is the notorious site of Prora, with identical buildings lined up along the beach for as far as 4.5 km. Hitler's original plan was a lot more ambitious, with buildings spanning 8 km and all rooms with a seaside view. The war, however, put an end to his plans and the facility remained unused. Though not a place that makes for happy memories because of its history, Prora, as I discovered, is still a massive draw for international tourists. Local authorities have now started selling parts of the resort to the general public as independent holiday apartments.

My favourite part of the trip was a visit to Baumwipfelpfad, a 2-km canopy walk ending at a 40-m tower that offers some of the most amazing views of the island. The entire way is easily manageable with a stroller. On the way are information stations with interesting facts about the woods and the bird species that inhabit them.

As I called it a day, I saw a majestic white-tailed eagle, native to the island, spread out its wings and take a flight far away into the horizon. 🦅

What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson

to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.



If you're about 60, we believe Hammy is just the magazine for you. Filled with humor, instant snacks, cooking recipes and columns, Hammy encourages you to do just one thing: live young.

Hammy
celebrate age



Photographs by Jithesh Damodar



Art of the MATTER

When Kanayi Kunhiraman unveiled a 30-ft sculpture of *Yakshi*, the first nude sculpture installed outside a temple in Kerala, it provoked controversy. Fifty years hence, things have changed. This April, the Kerala government, in association with the Kerala Art Lovers Association, organised a three-day celebration to honour the work of Kunhiraman. "Many have termed the sculpture obscene. But I believe nudity is the truth. Even after the protests and attacks, my

sculpture

work is still protected in the state. It helped me understand better the other aspects of my work, its significance and the importance given to art by people in the state," said the sculptor at the inauguration of the event, which marked the sculpture's 50th year and the sculptor's 80th birthday. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan even called *Yakshi* a "symbol of freedom" at the event held at Kanakakunnu Palace in Thiruvananthapuram. The event included an exhibition by photographer Jithesh Damodar, who travelled with the artist for 13 years and captured what went into the making of Kunhiraman's works.



Clockwise from left: During the casting process; meditating beneath the imposing sculpture of *Yakshi* at Malampuzha garden; by the landmark conch at the Veli Tourist Village, Kovalam, which is dotted with numerous stone and grass sculptures by Kunhiraman

Opposite page: At work on *Akshara Shilpam* which was installed at the Kottayam Public Library in 2015; at the *Relaxing Man* sculpture on Shankumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram





The Aryan CONUNDRUM

Rekha Sarin

At 96, archaeologist B B Lal continues to uncover facts about the Vedic people and other ancient civilisations, writes **Rekha Sarin**

It is 6.30 pm. In keeping with his evening schedule, Braj Basi Lal, better known as B B Lal, is on his computer, writing his 21st book, *The Rise of Civilisation in the Ganga Valley*. At 96, his energy remains indefatigable. In an animated conversation over a cup of tea he reveals fascinating nuggets of information derived from excavations during his distinguished career of over 70 years in archaeology. From an initiate in the days of pre-Partition India, Lal rose to be director-general of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from 1968-72. With a piquant sense of humour, Lal describes how he “gatecrashed into the ASI”. Incidentally, at 23 he was turned away for being two years younger than the prescribed age. However, the bar was lowered for him upon the intervention of British archaeologist Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler, under whom Lal had trained at Taxila and Harappa. Ever since, it has been an unceasing journey of research and pioneering discoveries. In fact, the Government recognised his contribution to tracing India’s historical roots with the Padma Bhushan in 2000.

Apart from books including *Rama, His Historicity, Mandir and Setu*; *The Sarasvati Flows On*; and *The Rigvedic*

history

People: Invaders, Immigrants or Indigenous?, Lal has written seminal papers that include dissertations on his earliest excavation, Sisupalgarh in Odisha, a 7th century BCE fortified township. His excavations at Hastinapur, Ayodhya, Nandigram and Chitrakoot helped identify the historicity of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. During his tenure at the helm of the ASI, Lal carried out excavations at Delhi’s Purana Quila. Based on the findings of painted grey-ware pottery (PGW) at this site, that dates between the 6th and 12th century BCE, Lal established that it was the location of the Pandava kingdom of Indraprastha, somewhere around 900 BCE, the period of the war as indicated in the epic.

On the transnational front, in 1960 Lal was part of the team sent by India on a UNESCO mission for excavations on the Nile. He was also involved in the preservation of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. His theories have been discussed in international forums. Yet, in the epilogue of his autobiography *Piecing Together: Memoirs of an Archaeologist*, he writes with humility: “The moving finger types, and moves on and on. I am only a typist, the dictation-giver is Someone Else...”

With daily meditation, reading and writing, Lal maintains a disciplined lifestyle. He stays in Delhi with his eldest son and family; his younger sons are settled in the US. His late wife Kusum partnered him for 75 years and unfailingly accompanied him to excavation sites. Lal's passion for archaeology has endowed him with incredible mental agility. He smoothly recites from the *Vedas* and *Puranas* to validate his observations. "Use it, or lose it" seems to be his mantra, as his faculties remain ever engaged unceasingly, like the moving finger that never stops.

EXCERPTS FROM A CONVERSATION

How did you develop an interest in such a niche subject as archaeology?

Frankly, I just strayed into archaeology. I wanted to pursue mathematics for my master's degree. But while graduating I fell seriously ill owing to overwork as I was giving tuitions to supplement my scholarship, which was not enough to meet the expenses. If I did not take the examination, I would have had to repeat my BA without the grant. So I took the dive. Mathematics needed more application; predictably, I scraped through. I did well in English and I don't know how but I got the highest marks in Sanskrit. That brought me a scholarship. In need of money, I took up Sanskrit. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise. One of the subjects offered for the final year was epigraphy: the study and interpretation of ancient inscriptions. As you may know, epigraphy takes you closer to archaeology.

Tell us about your first memorable experience as a student of archaeology.

In those days, the Archaeological Survey was not in a very good shape and Wheeler, who was later knighted, was appointed director-general. He

wanted to infuse new blood into the organisation. I was selected by my vice chancellor to be sent for training to an excavation site in Taxila, Punjab, now in Pakistan. Looking at my biodata, Mortimer said: "You are a student of Sanskrit. You know nothing about archaeology. Have you come here to recite the *Vedas*?"

However, I joined the trenches as an under-trainee and learnt 'layerology', as we students nicknamed the technique of studying the layers of soil deposits during excavations. One evening, I saw Mortimer drawing a section of one of the trenches. Though technically superb, I felt his drawing did not do justice to the interpretative part of the layers. When I tried

"In school, we learn that the Aryans were foreigners and the period given to the Aryan invasion is about 1200. I wanted to know the truth, and the archaeological evidence came in handy"

to reason, he dismissed me. Next morning, when I was on the field, he came rushing to my trench and said, "My dear boy, you were correct, I was wrong!" At another site, I had another encounter with him about structures and demonstrated to him stone by stone why he was incorrect.

Several years later, in 1971, when I was invited to deliver the Gandhi Memorial Lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, Wheeler introduced me, making a special mention of this incident. That is one of my most treasured memories.

Officially, it is believed that the Vedic Period existed around 1200 BCE. However, you have theorised that it dated earlier, somewhere during the 3rd millennia BCE. How did you arrive at this conclusion?

In school, we learn that the Aryans were foreigners and the period given to the Aryan invasion is about 1200 by Max Mueller, the German scholar. I wanted to know the truth, and by chance the archaeological evidence came in handy. It is like this: In the *Rigveda*—the oldest surviving record of the Aryans—the river Sarasvati is mentioned about 70 times. She originated in the Himalayas, breaking through the Shivaliks at Adhbadri, passing through Haryana, Rajasthan, and Sindh in Pakistan before emptying out in the Rann of Kutch.

Coming to the Indus Valley, this was first identified at Harappa, then Mohenjo-daro and several other sites around there, but with Partition, not a single site came to our side of the border. Archaeologists started explorations and we excavated a site called Kalibangan in Rajasthan. A team of hydrologists did boring and found that this is where the Sarasvati dried up around 2000 BCE, possibly owing to tectonic movement in the Himalayas that created a wall blocking the flow of the river. What does it mean? Clearly, the *Vedas* are earlier because during that period the river was alive.

Then again, in the 10th *mandal*, all the Rigvedic rivers are mentioned in strict geographical order, 'O Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Sutudri (Sutlej)', and so on, till they reach Sindh, starting from the upper reaches of Ganga-Yamuna down to the Indus where the Rigvedic people were living. This compels us to give a joint name, the Indus-Sarasvati Civilisation. That means the *Vedas* and the Harappan civilisation are two facets of the same coin. Now, as we know, the Harappan civilisation originated about

6-7 millennium BCE and if this civilisation is indigenous, the Aryans are also indigenous. But of course, we must give marks to Max Mueller for the fact that he brought the *Vedas* to the knowledge of the Western world.

So you are saying that the Aryans were not invaders but indigenous?

Yes, the inhabitants of the Harappan civilisation were the Rigvedic people themselves. Rather, during the 2nd millennium BCE, some of the Vedic people travelled westwards. There is a 6th century Sanskrit text called *Baudhayan Srutasutra* that mentions the movement of the Aryan people through Gandhara, Persia, Ararat to Turkey. At Bogahkuei in Turkey, inscribed tablets have been found dated 1380 BCE. The peace treaty between the Mittanis and Hittites mentions four Vedic gods: Indra, Varun, Mitra and Nasatya. This clearly proves the Aryan presence and their importance, so much so that they were witness to the treaty. Quite a few people are accepting this change, and this has been discussed in several seminars and not been challenged.

What are the processes involved in dating a site?

In a habitation, people burn wood for fire. The charcoal produced in the process can be used for dating. It has a certain amount of Carbon-14 (C-14) that goes on decreasing as time passes. Scientists have found out a system by which they can date a piece of charcoal. The deposit in which charcoal occurs gives you a good date line, though it may not be absolutely correct. You can give or take a hundred years to that. Then, you have pottery, tools, jewellery and coins, which are support sources to dating a site.

You mention that there is a definite kernel of existential truth in our great epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. How did you arrive at the historicity, for instance, of the *Mahabharata*?

Originally, there were 8,800 verses in the *Mahabharata* and it was called *Jaya*. Later, it stretched to 24,000 verses and was called *Bharata*, and today it has 100,000 verses. Post-Buddha, which is 6th century CE, literature is clear and dated. Evidence shows that Krishna is prior to Buddha, somewhere around 1000 BCE, so you can imagine how much the *Mahabharata* has got inflated, but that does not mean it is not true.

The important thing is that all the sites mentioned in the epic, such as Hastinapur by the banks of the Ganges near Meerut and Kurukshetra in Haryana, continue to bear the same name. During excavations, the same grey pottery—bowls and dishes with black painted designs—dating between 1200 and 800 BCE, was found. Luckily, we got very good evidence in Hastinapur, where I put an excava-



Receiving the Padma Bhushan from then president of India K R Narayanan

tion trench across the mound from the western to eastern end. Strangely, I did not find the river intact on the eastern side. This gave me many sleepless nights. Then, one early morning, I took my team to the trench again and explored. Sure enough, we found an erosion line with silt and sand deposit that had cut away the mound. Not completely satisfied, we did boring in the river and found at 15-m depth the same material—silt. This was an absolute affirmation that a flood destroyed Hastinapur and the capital was shifted to Kausambi. Here, literature also comes to my rescue. The *Vayu Purana* and *Matsya Purana* give a history of the rulers after the *Mahabharata*. Fifth in line was Nichakshu, during whose time, owing to flood, the capital was shifted to Kausambi [Lal quotes in Sanskrit from the *Purana* that mentions the flood]. In the lowest levels of Kausambi, we find the same painted grey ware. Archaeology gives evidence, while literature supports archaeology to establish some truth.

Do you think there is a continuum of culture through civilisations?

If you look at the Harappan sites, you will find terracotta figurines in three colours: yellow ornaments representing gold, hair in black and *sindoor* line in red. Many customs, like the use of the swastika, are still prevalent. We have terracotta figures in yogic asanas that are a craze today. In Kalibangan, we found the remains of an agricultural field dated 2700 BCE with intriguing crisscross furrow marks. There was a reason for this: mustard plants being tall were planted in a north-south direction, so they didn't cast shadows for the lower plants that were grown in east-west directions. This planting method is carried out even today. Cities may have been washed out but customs and traditions have carried on.

What is your own formula for life?

Enjoy each moment. You and I are having tea. Let's enjoy it!

Epic retelling

Theatre lovers in Chennai recently witnessed Girish Karnad's epic retelling of the story of Yayati, a mythological king from the *Mahabharata*, at Rani Seethai Hall. Directed by Arundati Raja of the Bengaluru-based Jagriti theatre group, the production was based on an English translation by the playwright himself. "It follows a more dramatic path [than the original story laid down in ancient texts] and puts more focus on the women in the story—Queen Devayani, her slave Sharmishtha, the daughter-in-law Chitrlekha and Swarnalatha, the maid," says Raja, speaking to *The New Indian Express*. In a tale that follows a series of events sparked by a sexual encounter, *Yayati* powerfully depicts motifs of lust, social prejudice and betrayal. "If the Oedipus myth—symbolising the offspring's aggression against the parent—is central to the Western psyche, the reverse is illustrated, powerfully, by the myth of Yayati: the father's sexual aggression against the son. And this Jagriti production brings alive on stage, in all its passion and tragedy, the destructive play of that eternal conflict," says Karnad about the play. *Yayati* will be performed in Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru in the second half of the year.



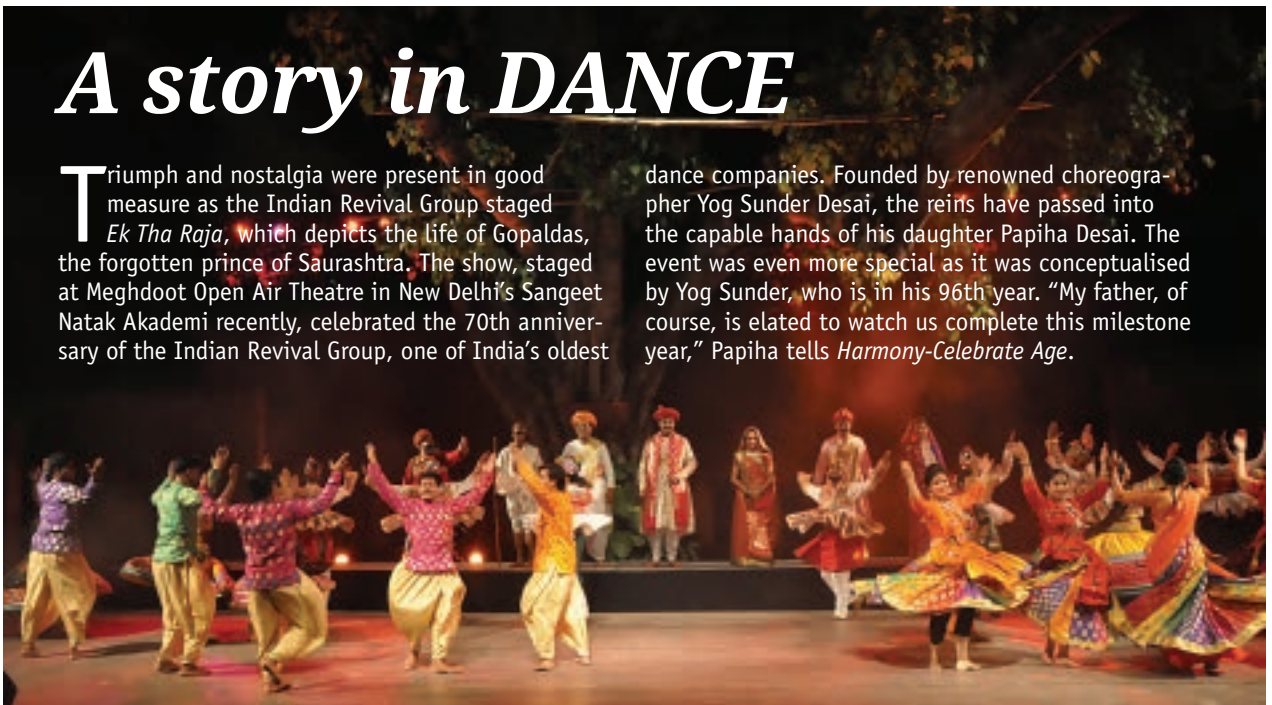
“You cannot see the sea at Nariman Point [Mumbai]—there are just office buildings and windows. And every window has a different reflection of the sea. It is a surreal sight. It struck me that much of this area is reclaimed and we think we have conquered the sea, but the sea is asserting its presence. It is as if it is telling us, ‘You think I am not there, but I am’.

—Artist **Meera Devidayal**, 71, speaking to Mid-Day on her new exhibition, *Water Has Memory*, at Chemould Prescott Gallery, Mumbai, which is on till 12 May

A story in DANCE

Triumph and nostalgia were present in good measure as the Indian Revival Group staged *Ek Tha Raja*, which depicts the life of Gopaldas, the forgotten prince of Saurashtra. The show, staged at Meghdoot Open Air Theatre in New Delhi's Sangeet Natak Akademi recently, celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Indian Revival Group, one of India's oldest

dance companies. Founded by renowned choreographer Yog Sunder Desai, the reins have passed into the capable hands of his daughter Papiha Desai. The event was even more special as it was conceptualised by Yog Sunder, who is in his 96th year. "My father, of course, is elated to watch us complete this milestone year," Papiha tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*.



Life in a cuppa

In *The Palaces of Memory – Tales from The Indian Coffee House* (Tasveer; 224 pages; ₹ 2,500), British photo-journalist **Stuart Freedman** captures intimate moments amid the cacophony that is the historic Indian Coffee House and narrates his experiences after visiting more than 30 of them across the country



The circular coffee rings on the faded plastic table work like an old map of the city, a cartography from one era of Delhi to another. The waiter Gopal Singh, who has worked here since 1981, wipes them away with a well-used rag. A big man with a square head and an impressively starched turban crowning his face, Singh wordlessly takes an order and moves swiftly away. A steel tray held expertly in his upturned palm contains half a dozen empty, chipped coffee cups. Above him a tired ceiling fan ticks and clicks and whirls, battling bravely against the Delhi heat and dust.

On a spring day in 2011, the 'women and family' section is half-full. The booths of dark wood are cracked and stained. The leatherette sofas have burst, revealing their metal spring guts. Surgery to repair them with duct-tape has on the whole failed. Still intact but deeply sagging seats bear the imprints of a million corpulent Delhi bottoms.

Two tables in front an older man, his henna'd hair slicked down, reaches over and whispers to his younger, female companion. She turns her head and smiles. He retreats, victorious. A wife? A lover? A million days

The Indian Coffee House, General Hospital Junction, Thiruvananthapuram. Designed by British architect Laurie Baker, it resembles a large pink wedding cake. The entire building was conceived as a continuous spiral ramp, with a central circular service core with dining spaces provided on the outer sides

The Coffee House taught me a very valuable lesson; that the people whiling away their days over coffee in gloriously chipped cups were the same as the people of my Hackney past. The 'other' was not strange and unknowable but similar

Patrons enjoy plates full of boiled rice, a dish available only at the Indian Coffee Houses in Kerala

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): A man translating Bengali poetry into English at the Indian Coffee House, Kolkata; a menu card at Kolkata's Indian Coffee House remains unchanged since 2012; a waiter takes a moment to smile for the camera as a pot of water comes to a boil in the kitchen of Indian Coffee House in Shimla; rows of bread toast—a staple accompaniment with steaming cups of coffee—at the Indian Coffee House, Plaza Building, Kannur



whiled away over coffee. A million stories. Opposite, an elderly couple sit silently facing each other. She wears a pretty sari, he a shirt and slacks. You just know that they have been coming here for years. The ritual. The same table, the same time, the same idly and vada. These are ordinary Delhi-wallahs: not the nouveau riche with their sleek cars and their appalling me-first, India-Shining-manners. Not the poor—who are being systematically written out of the narrative of modern India—but ordinary people still trying to hang on to a civility in a city that is increasingly no longer civil.

...

When I arrived in New Delhi in the mid-1990s, the Indian Coffee House on Baba Kharak Singh Marg was a refuge. I had already travelled widely and made work in the region in both Pakistan and Afghanistan but Delhi

seemed somehow wilder and more complicated. I struggled to understand its complexity; its jarring layers. It somehow reminded me of London. I grew up in the 1970s in Hackney—now a byword for bohemia—then a motif for inner-city poverty....

The Coffee House reminded me of the places from which I knew I had to escape and explore the world. In a sense I had come full circle. The Coffee House taught me a very valuable lesson; that the people whiling away their days over coffee in gloriously chipped cups were the same as the people of my Hackney past. The 'other' was not strange and unknowable but similar. The conversations I was invited to join—of politics and poetry—were the same I'd shyly listened to in Hackney. Suddenly, I felt more at home in a strange city and, when I travelled in India on assignment, I sought out Indian Coffee Houses and they never disappointed.

Extracted from the original essay written by Freedman in The Palaces of Memory – Tales from The Indian Coffee House, published by Tasveer and supported by Dauble, that accompanied a travelling exhibition of the same name



OFF THE CUFF BY RAJU MUKHERJI

STEEL, STRENGTH, SKILL: Following in the footsteps of his namesake Ghulam *pehelwan*, Gama *pehelwan* scaled the wrestling firmament, becoming the heavyweight champion of the world in 1910

The first native-born Indians to put India on the world sports map were our wrestlers. Rock-solid men of immense strength. Courageous and crafty. Men of impeccable self-control and discipline.

The legendary grappler Gama *pehelwan* was the first among Indians to become the heavyweight champion of the world in 1910.

Gama was not his real name. Born in 1880 in Lahore, then the capital of undivided Punjab, Ghulam Mohammed Baksh was sent to Datia in the erstwhile princely state of Holkar (now Madhya Pradesh) at an early age to be under the tutelage of Aziz Meera Baksh, his uncle. The young Ghulam Mohammed was an exceptional fighter of outstanding promise. As he began to win duels and become popular, the modest youngster let it be known that he should not be called Ghulam: "Please do not call me Ghulam. There is only one Ghulam *pehelwan*. Ghulam *bhai* is the one and only Ghulam. None else."

He was referring to the Amritsar-born Ghulam Mohammed, who was under the patronage of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. The senior Ghulam was a magnificent wrestler who spent long hours in meditation. He was a saintly soul with wide knowledge of medicinal roots and herbs. He helped the rural poor in every way he could. He was a deeply respected figure among the wrestling community in India. When the senior Ghulam was asked if he should be addressed as *Bade* Ghulam in the context of the emergence of the younger Ghulam of Datia, the saintly man merely uttered, "Call me by any name you like. But I shall always remain a *ghulam* [servant] to the men around me." This was the classical tradition of the Indian wrestling fraternity: mutual respect and abject simplicity.

Thankfully the junior Ghulam's guru Aziz Meera Baksh solved the issue in a very logical, sensible manner. The

famous and highly respected Ghulam *pehelwan* of Amritsar-Jodhpur would retain his name and the younger Ghulam of Datia would sacrifice his natural identity and be known as Gama *pehelwan*. This yet again goes to show the magnanimous attitude of the Indian wrestlers of the time. Since that day, there was no confusion about the identity of the two marvellous wrestlers.

The senior Ghulam Mohammed, born in Amritsar in 1870, was a quiet individual who balanced his time between the *akhara* mud-pit, deep meditation and Ayurvedic service to the downtrodden. In 1899, Motilal Nehru took him to Paris for exhibition bouts with champions of various nations. Ghulam returned undefeated. But tragedy struck the following year when he was merely 28. He passed away in Calcutta after being stricken by cholera for a few days. Thanks to the munificence of wrestler Gobor Goho's grandfather Ambika Charan, he was buried with great respect. The remains are still well preserved in the cemetery at Upper Circular Road and the grave is still frequented by the wrestling fraternity.



Gama *pehelwan*

In late 19th century India, the legend of Gama began. Here was a stocky grappler who could beat all opposition by the sheer use of his awesome physical power. The powerful man would lift his opponent high above his head

and throw him down on the mat. None in India could match his phenomenal strength and every opposition was decimated with clinical precision. What's more, the fearsome wrestler of massive girth was as handsome as he was modest and generous.

Maharaja of Patiala Bhupinder Singh, a great patron of sport, was highly impressed by the skill and power of Gama *pehelwan*. Under his generous patronage, Gama set sail for the UK in 1910 to match his strength and skills against the best European grapplers, who were physically much bigger and taller. Other wrestlers in

the squad were Imam Baksh (Gama's younger cousin), Gama, Gobor Goho and Ahmed Baksh. Gobor Goho was just 17 at the time; he went on to become the first-ever official world champion wrestler from India. But that is another story for another time!

On this trip none from Europe could put Gama on the mat. In Europe, the Western wrestlers of superior height and build first made fun of the short-statured Indian grapplers, "Fat, softy poets, aren't they?" Within a few days, however, reality dawned. Just 5 ft 7 inches in height and about 200 lb in weight, Gama's immense strength combined with his technique had the white-skinned wrestlers in total disarray. From the Atlantic to the Caspian, he reigned supreme. The big-built American wrestlers, who had laughed at the short-statured Gama, met with the same fate. Gama was declared the champion of the world. But as there was no official professional wrestling championship at the time, Gama's status remained 'unofficial'.

Gama could not take part in the Olympics because he would have been considered a professional wrestler as he was patronised by the princely states, especially the Maharaja of Patiala. At the time, the Olympics were strictly for amateurs. Only people who did not earn money through their sports skills were eligible to take part in the Games.

At the time, the world champion was Stanislaus Zbyszko of Poland. On 12 December 1910, the two giants fought each other with no quarters given, none asked for. At the end of over two hours of gruelling duel, it was decided to stop the fight for the day and a rematch scheduled. But Zbyszko did not show up and the organisers had no option but to crown Gama with the world title. For more than a decade, he was unrivalled. None quite came close to defeating him.

He remained the undefeated heavyweight champion of the world till he retired for a very interesting reason. Close on Gama's heels was his cousin Imam Baksh. In fact Imam's father, Aziz Meena Baksh, coached Gama and Imam. Imam was indisputably among the greatest ever but he never received the world crown because he constantly refused to fight against his elder cousin out of a tradition of respect prevalent among certain wrestling gharanas in India. In Gama's later



When the senior Ghulam was asked if he should be addressed as Bade Ghulam in the context of the emergence of the younger Ghulam of Datia, the saintly man merely uttered, "Call me by any name you like. But I shall always remain a ghulam [servant] to the men around me"

years, he would certainly have lost the world crown to Imam had the younger cousin duelled with him.

But not only did Imam not fight Gama, he let it be known that whoever wanted to fight Gama would have to defeat him first. As no world-class wrestler was able to beat Imam, the reign of Gama continued till his retirement. His title, however, was unofficial as there was no recognised wrestling championship at the time. After Partition, he went from Patiala to settle down at his birthplace, Lahore, where he expired in 1960.

Unfortunately, today, the art of wrestling—patronised by the princely states of Patiala, Koch Bihar (or Cooch Behar), Holkar and Jodhpur among others—has lost its way in urban India. Little do we know of our sports history and rich heritage; we have scant respect for our own splendid past in the sports arena.

As I said, the first Indian sportsmen to become internationally renowned were our wrestlers. Formidable men like Karim Baksh (1892), Ghulam Mohammed (1899), Gama *pehelwan* (1910) and Gobor Goho (1921) brought unprecedented honour to India under colonial shackles. They conquered the world with sheer blood and guts in an environment of hostility and humiliation. These men relied on themselves. They possessed strength, skill, courage, determination and self-belief. Giving little credence to faiths, they were totally devoted to the ideals of their deity, Lord Hanuman. Thankfully, despite the neglect and complete lack of interest, the legend of Gama *pehelwan*, as the '*Rustam-e-Zaman*', still continues to reverberate among the rural masses of the subcontinent. Today, these hardy, brave jawans from rural India guard India's borders just as Gama *pehelwan* once uplifted and guarded India's self-respect.

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

The courtesan CHRONICLES

Reading **Ruth Vanita's** latest title *Dancing With The Nation: Courtesans in Bombay Cinema* inadvertently brings to mind Mahasweta Devi's quote: "Indian culture is a tapestry of many weaves, many threads. The weaving is endless as are the shades of the pattern. Somewhere dark, somewhere light."

Given that Hindi films constitute an integral part of everything that is casually termed Indian, the book is truly fascinating and insightful. Although, as Vanita clarifies in the introduction, "My book is not primarily a film studies work." The intensely researched work examines gender and sexuality through a stratum of courtesans. Though socially ostracised, courtesans, according to historical records, were considered custodians of etiquette (*naffassat*). In *Dancing With The Nation*, the author's study of over 250 Hindi films spanning 1930s to the present highlights a little known fact: courtesans emerge as the first group of single, working women showcased in South Asian cinema.

Prior to teaching South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Montana, Vanita taught at Delhi University. She is known for her specialisation in British and Indian literary history with a focus on gender and sexuality studies. She is also the co-founder of *Manushi*, India's first feminist magazine. Some of her better known titles include *Gender, Sex and the City: Urdu Rekhti Poetry in India 1780-1870*; *Love's Rite: Same-Sex Marriage in India and the West*; and *Gandhi's Tiger and Sita's Smile: Essays of Gender, Sexuality and Culture*. In addition, Vanita has translated works of writers such as Premchand, Rajendra Yadav and Mannu Bhandari. In an email interview with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, she talks about modernism of courtesans and the vast Indian heritage of erotic art, literature and thought. Excerpts:

How is *Dancing With The Nation* different from your other books?

All my earlier books were on written literature—poetry and fiction in different languages. This is my first book on cinema, though I have been writing film reviews for decades. I wrote this book for everybody who enjoys watching Hindi movies. I wanted to write about movies other than the over-examined *Umrao Jaan* and *Pakeezah*. So I watched lots of movies, right from *Aadmi* (1939)

authorspeak

and *Raj Nartaki* (1941). I was excited to watch so many heroine-centred movies from every decade, with courtesans often being the heroines. What was pivotal to me was recognising the way the lives of real-life *tawaif*, many of whom were directors, producers, actors and singers in early films, were refracted in movies. Courtesans are the first group of single, working women in films. They are also highly independent in the modern way, owning houses and driving cars (*Shair*, 1949; *Benazir*, 1964). Some form their own alternative families by adopting sisters (*Sunny*, 1994), brothers (*Gomti Ke Kinare*, 1972; *Dream Girl*, 1977) and children (*Amar Prem*, 1972). Most courtesans on screen are shown living a hybrid Hindu-Muslim lifestyle.

What were the challenges while working on the book?

Some old films were hard to find. I posted queries on Facebook and received helpful replies. YouTube was invaluable. Finding the right stills from old films to use in the book and finding the right cover picture were difficult. I was very lucky that Priya Dutt kindly gave permission to use the picture of Waheedaji from *Mujhe Jeene Do*.

What inspires or intrigues you about sexuality, given your insightful contribution to the subject through your earlier works?

The fact that although humans often mistrust and suppress desire or *kama*, it manages to find myriad creative ways to express itself. This is why Kamadeva is a God and *kama* is one of the goals of life. As the *Kamasutra* playfully puts it, "Who knows when, where, why and how one does it?"

Does *Dancing With The Nation* provide fresh perspectives on the subject?

This book pays tribute to the way courtesans, shown in films as working women, intellectuals and artists—all of

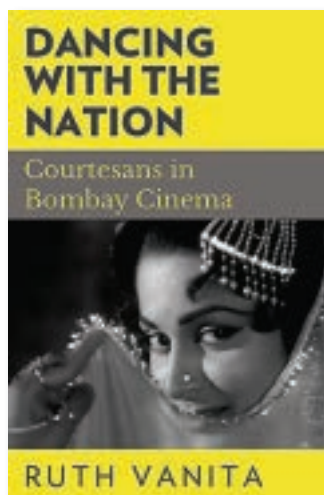


Mona Bachman

which they were in real life—bring music, dance, ideas, and the playfulness of Eros to modern Indians across all divides. Even in the films of the 1940s and '50s, courtesans make their own choices regarding whom they want to love, live with, and marry. They often take the initiative in pursuing a man. Courtesans are models for the modern ways of loving and desiring; romantic heroines incorporate many elements of courtesan eroticism into conjugal eroticism.

In India, do you think the discourse on sexuality, gender and culture outside intellectual circuits is often misconstrued, if not misunderstood?

Thanks to the puritanism of 19th century British rulers, which Indian social reformers and nationalists by and large embraced, 20th century Indians have tended to be embarrassed about our wonderful heritage of erotic literature, art and thought. Despite this, our many traditions of erotic fun, play and creativity did survive; for example, in popular film songs such as the *mujra*, the *sarapa* and funny, over-the-top songs like *Jaane kahan mera jigar gaya ji*. Courtesans used to perform not just romantic or mystical songs but humorous, non-mystical ones, which I studied in my 2012 book on Urdu poetry in Lucknow, titled *Gender, Sex and the City*. Today, many Indians are shaking off the burden of colonialism and acquiring a new self-confidence with regard to many aspects of life, including pleasure and sexuality.



“Courtesans are the first group of single, working women in films. They are also highly independent in the modern way, owning houses and driving cars”

How do you balance academic responsibilities and literary engagements?

I'm fortunate to be able to teach many of the subjects I am interested in and research whatever subject I want to. My research has, therefore, not remained confined to one area but has ranged widely over different cultures and topics, from the epics and *Purana* (I have just written an essay on male-female dialogues in the *Mahabharata*) to Shakespeare, from translating Hindi and Urdu poetry and fiction to the cycles of influence between Indian and European writers. I find research very pleasurable, especially working with manuscripts and forgotten texts. I had a great time watching over 250 films for this book. My partner Mona is a great support in all my work.

How frequently do you visit India?

I don't see them as visits or trips. I see India as my home. For now, I am living both in Missoula in the US and Gurgaon. It was great to meet many old and new friends at the Delhi release of *Dancing With The Nation* in December.

How do you like to relax?

Chatting with friends in person or on the phone, reading for pleasure, playing with my son, listening to music, watching movies and going for walks.



What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all; cram in a day what his youth took a year to hold.

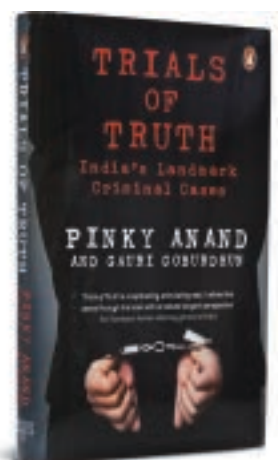
—British poet Robert Browning (1812–1889)

Gurmehar Kaur's SMALL ACTS OF FREEDOM (Penguin Random House; ₹ 399; 188 pages)

is an emotive memoir. Refreshingly lucid in style, the story meanders back and forth while the author attempts to make sense of life's seriousness and a spate of compelling circumstances that enveloped her family following the Kargil war. Having lost her father Captain Mandeep Singh in the war, Kaur's intent in penning her debut book stems from another brave act as well—when she became the subject of nationwide attention through a video clip that showed her holding a placard saying 'Pakistan did not kill my father, war did'. Agonising as the journey was for her personally, the author shows the strength that comes from being an army officer's ward. A true tribute to the families of brave men who unhesitatingly take a bullet to protect their motherland.



Drawing on her vast experience as a senior advocate and additional solicitor general at the Supreme Court, **Pinky Anand** examines criminal cases that have captured the public imagination in **TRIALS OF TRUTH (Penguin Random House; ₹ 499; 209 pages)**. Penned in collaboration with her daughter **Gauri Goburdhun**,



the timeline of the book spans the 1970s to recent times. Balancing her astute observations as a lawyer with empathy as a civilian, Anand manages to keep the narrative compelling. She deconstructs watershed cases such as the Billa-Ranga aka Geeta and Sanjay Chopra murder case, the Nanavati case, the Nithari killings and the Priyadarshini Mattoo murder to showcase the strategies employed by legal counsel on both sides with absolute clarity. Anand also brings to the fore the role of civil society in making the legal system more accountable as seen in the Mattoo and Jessica Lal murder cases, where culprits were brought to book after intervention by the public. While all the referenced cases shook the conscience of society, nothing compares to the ramifications of the Nirbhaya case, which compelled the judicial system to review some archaic laws. Subsequently, not only were rape laws reinterpreted but the Juvenile Justice Bill was also amended to consider those between 16 and 18 years as adults, besides evolving the Good Samaritan Law to safeguard witnesses. Anand's insights not only delve into the finer details but provide context to the cases that have had a lasting impact on society as well as judicial institutions.

Also on stands

**Love and The Turning Seasons****Andrew Schelling**

Aleph Book Company;

₹ 499; 302 pages

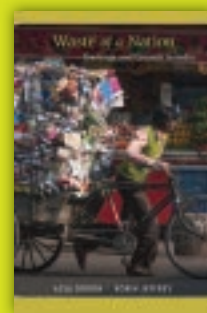
A collection of India's finest erotic and spiritual poetry spanning 2,500 years.

**Across the Universe****Ajoy Bose**

Penguin Random House;

₹ 699; 320 pages

A delightful account of The Beatles' legendary trip to Rishikesh in 1968.

**Waste of a Nation****Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey**

Harvard University Press;

₹ 799; 393 pages

A comprehensive look at various aspects of 'waste' in Indian society and history.

13 MAY
MOTHER'S
DAY

NATURE, THE GENTLEST MOTHER

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In this ode to nature, **Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)** encapsulates the qualities that make a mother

Nature, the gentlest mother,
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest,
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon,--
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

Along with Walt Whitman, Dickinson is considered to be the founder of a uniquely American poetic voice



To mom, with love

Swati Lahoti pays tribute to mothers, who not only shape their offspring but an entire family line

13 MAY
MOTHER'S DAY

Life has not been a bed of roses for me. My late father wanted me to become an IAS officer. Though I was a good student, I made some strategic errors and failed my father miserably. Though I am a postgraduate in English, with an MBA in marketing and HR, I never achieved what my father dreamt for me. My mother, Kamala Agarwal, who saw me struggle unsuccessfully all these years, remained a pillar of support. It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that she has been a catalyst in my evolution as an individual and mother. It is she who never let me forget that I have the potential to achieve big things in life and that it was never too late.

I tasted success for the first time when Alind, my elder son, made it to IIT, and I assigned this beautiful journey to paper in black and white. *The Wind Beneath His Wings* is an account of the two years of preparation that went into making this possible. When my mother read the book, eyes tearing up, she said, "Wherever he is, Papa would be proud of you." The book happened to be my redemption as a daughter.

Coming back to my mother, consciously or subconsciously, she has influenced my mental makeup as a mother and interactions with Alind. During his preparations for IIT, there were times when he used to think it was just not in him to nail it. It was then that I had to constantly assure him that he was capable of this and much more. When it came to Alind's preparations, the tenaciousness with which I supported him, knowingly or unknowingly, I derived from my mother. As they say, a child may fail to listen to his parents but will never fail to imitate them.

What I am about to narrate might seem like a small incident but bears testimony to the dedication of a mother. My *chacha* was getting married. I was in the second grade then and my elder brother in third grade. An old teacher used to come home to tutor us. We were a well-knit

family (still are!) and my parents were completely involved in the wedding. Mother didn't want our studies to suffer and reckoned that if we studied for two hours in the morning, we could have fun during the day. Our teacher proposed that if mother could prepare tea for him, he could come at 6 am and teach us for two hours. It was peak winter with a biting cold wave. Despite that, mother would still be up in the wee hours of the morning, wake my brother and me, and prepare tea for our teacher. This arrangement continued for two weeks till the wedding was over. Never once did she complain about forsaking her sleep for us.

In the course of life, I have picked up many practical tips from my mother. She has taught us the importance of discipline, which I too have inculcated in my sons. To achieve any goal in life, we need to be disciplined.

Alind made it to IIT only because of his disciplined approach. He balanced studies in his daily routine with sports and entertainment. That helped him stay focused without getting bored or tired.

Also, if my sons and I appreciate the simplest of food, it's because of my mother. We have learnt not to be finicky about the food we eat and be thankful for every morsel on our plate. Here, I would like to share an incident I have narrated in my book. Alind was part of a group chosen by his coaching class to be trained intensively for IIT. It was a


residential programme of about a month. Many students left the coaching midway as they were tired of the minimal vegetarian fare during meal times. Alind stayed the course, finished the training and did well in his exams.

Today, when I look back at life, I realise how quietly and unassumingly my mother had been moulding me for taking on the trials and tribulations of life. Through me, she has moulded my sons as well. At 73, she still continues to inspire us. On Mother's Day, I would like to raise a toast to every mother in the world, who indeed is the wind beneath the wings of her child!



iStock

Lahoti is a Mumbai-based author. Her debut book *The Wind Beneath His Wings*, published by Prabhat Paperbacks, is a mother's story of ups and downs, smiles and tears, and triumphs and tribulations

A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair playing in a pond. The man is in the water, wearing a dark shirt, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The water is dark blue and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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The city of DAWN



Susheela Nair / Harmony Archives

A microcosm of the world, Auroville or the City of Dawn was set up on barren wasteland atop a dusty plateau in 1968. Envisaged as a 'universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities' by Mirra Alfassa, the spiritual partner of philosopher-yogi-guru Aurobindo, the purpose of the town was to realise human unity. The name Auroville has its origins in the French words *aurore* meaning dawn and *ville*

meaning city. Designed by French architect Roger Anger to accommodate 50,000 people, Auroville currently hosts citizens from 52 nationalities, including the French, Germans, Italians, Americans, Japanese and the Dutch. Among these are engineers, architects, doctors, dancers, writers, artists, horticulturists, hippies, technicians, students and teachers. Every citizen is expected to contribute to the city through meaningful work. At the centre of the city is the iconic Matrimandir, a large golden sphere symbolising the birth of a new consciousness.

For decades, this unique city has been drawing spiritual seekers from around the world. Today, with eco-friendly practices such as organic farming, alternative energy mechanisms, rainwater harvesting, reforestation, plant-based sewage treatment and natural dyeing, Auroville is also a leader in sustainable living. Healthcare, schooling and electricity are absolutely free in this experimental city, which, incidentally, is also a cash-free society. Fifty years since inception, Auroville has managed to translate many of its lofty ideals into a working reality.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MAY 1968

- On 14 May, the world's smallest television set was introduced by Japan's Matsushita Electric Industrial Company (now Panasonic). Weighing 600 gm, and with a 3.8-cm screen, it could be slipped into a coat pocket.
- On 14 May, The Beatles announced the creation of Apple Records, a division of Apple Corps Ltd, in New York City.
- On 15 May, the Nobel Prize in Economics was created as a sixth category by the Nobel Prize Committee.
- On 28 May, a Garuda Indonesia Airlines Convair 990 Coronado jet crashed shortly after taking off from Mumbai, killing all 29 people on board.

“Girls used to come up to me and say, ‘My sister loves you.’ Now girls come up to me and say, ‘My mother loves you’

—American baseball player Lee Mazzilli

DOG-DIRECTED SPEECH

n. A manner of talking to dogs characterised by a high pitch, slow cadence, frequent repetition, and whimsical tone.

EXAMPLE: Infant-directed speech (IDS) is a special speech register thought to aid language acquisition and improve affiliation in human infants. Although IDS shares some of its properties with **dog-directed speech** (DDS), it is unclear whether the production of DDS is functional, or simply an overgeneralisation of IDS within Western cultures.

—Alex Benjamin & Katie Slocombe, “Who’s a good boy?!” Dogs prefer naturalistic dog-directed speech”, *Animal Companion*, 2 March 2018

Nerd-sightedness

n. The inability to see beyond a technology’s interesting technical aspects, particularly to miss its ethical implications; to see the world from the perspective of a nerd.

EXAMPLE: The other serious risk is something I call **nerd-sightedness**: the inability to see value beyond one’s own inner circle. There’s a tendency in the computer-science world to build first, fix later, while avoiding outside guidance during the design and production of new technology.

—Catherine Stinson, “Deep learning: Why it’s time for AI to get philosophical”, *The Globe and Mail*, 23 March 2018

Source: www.wordspy.com

Begpacker

n. A backpacker who finances their food, lodging, or transportation expenses by asking for handouts.

EXAMPLE: But in the age of social media, crowdfunding, and hashtags, the dream of free travel has morphed once again, giving us the phenomenon of **#begpackers**: People who travel backpacker-style on a beggar’s budget, asking for contributions, freebies, and handouts from locals or fellow travelers... as they go.

—Rosie Spinks, “The ‘begpacker’ phenomenon shows how fake poverty has become a status symbol”, *Quartz*, 30 January 2018

FAILSON

n. An adult son who is under- or unemployed and lives with his parents, particularly one who has no goal other than to spend the day playing video games and watching porn.

EXAMPLE: The primary effect of nepotistic hiring practices isn’t necessarily that a herd of unqualified **failsons** get jobs coaching the tight ends or “consulting” on the defense, it’s that a pedigreed group of people related to prominent coaches have the barriers to entry lowered almost completely for them.

—Patrick Redford, “The FAU offensive coordinator job explains college football’s nepotism problem”, *Deadspin*, 17 January 2018

BEHAVIORCEUTICAL

n. A physical activity that improves mental health, particularly by reducing stress or anxiety.

EXAMPLE: “I made up this term called **behaviorceuticals**, instead of pharmaceuticals, in the sense that when we move and when we engage in activities, we change the neurochemistry of our brain in ways that a drug can change the neurochemistry of our brain,” said Kelly Lambert, a neuroscientist at the University of Richmond.

—“How busy hands can alter our brain chemistry”, *CBS News*, 18 March 2018

Ghost hotel

n. A residence that is used mostly or exclusively as short-term rental accommodation, particularly when offered through an online booking service such as Airbnb.

EXAMPLE: But using spatial analysis we have identified 4,700 listings across New York City (16 per cent of all private-room listings in the city) which are in fact **ghost hotels**—entire units or even whole apartment buildings which have been converted into many private-room listings by the owner.

—David Wachsmuth, et al., “The High Cost of Short-Term Rentals in New York City”, School of Urban Planning - McGill University, 30 January 2018

“There are three periods in life: youth, middle age and ‘how well you look’

—Businessman and former US vice president Nelson Rockefeller (1908-1979)

CLUB CLASS

A CLUB FOR PEOPLE OVER 55 YEARS



After four years of organising exclusive events and workshops for elders in Bengaluru, social enterprise start-up Silver Talkies has launched ‘Silver Talkies Social’, its very own club for people above the age of 55. Located at 100 Feet Road, Indiranagar, the club aims to enhance communication, introduce senior-centric concepts through

expert interaction, and alleviate loneliness. “Many seniors who were regulars at our events and workshops came back to us asking, ‘What next?’,” shares Nidhi Chawla, co-founder of Silver Talkies. “Seeing their passion and enthusiasm to do more and to interact more often, we felt it was time to concretise the concept and give them a platform where they could meet and engage regularly.” Cheers!

“It’s much easier to register and pursue complaints now”

C R Balaji, 50, takes up civic issues in Chennai



Mallika Rajkumar

While most of us crib about the inefficiency of the civic body when we see a flickering street-light or an overflowing garbage dump, **C R Balaji** brings it to the notice of the relevant authorities, with photographic proof to boot. “Unlike the olden days, we don’t have to run to government offices anymore; complaints can be registered online in a jiffy,” says the 50 year-old Chennai resident, recalling how he used to accompany his grandfather to municipal offices to register complaints in his childhood. “Now it’s easy to track the status of the complaints as well.” A 2016 workshop titled ‘Stand Up for Your Rights’, conducted by Arappor Iyakkam, a local NGO, revived Balaji’s interest in civic issues. He joined the organisation, actively participating in various civic drives, besides personally auditing Chennai’s lakes including Poondi, Puzhal, Ambattur and Retteri among others, and raising requests, RTIs and complaints. In the past two years alone, he has raised about 400 complaints on various issues ranging from garbage disposal and water leaks to desilting lakes. “The important thing is to follow up,” he avers, recalling how it took four months of relentless pursuit to get civic authorities to clear debris from Mandaveli railway station in 2016. With a demanding job as a senior executive in a public limited company, Balaji manages to squeeze in time for his civic work in the mornings or during the weekends. In his pursuit of justice, he leaves no stone unturned, sometimes even writing to the chief minister’s office, as he did when complaints to the Greater Chennai Corporation and the Deputy Commissioner of Health to get hyacinth removed from a water body in the city’s southern suburbs didn’t evoke any response. His mail to the CM worked; the waterway was promptly cleaned. “People like Balaji can make any government work for the public good,” observes Subathra Devi, a volunteer with Arappor Iyakkam. “We definitely need more heroes like him.”

—Catherine Gilon



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