

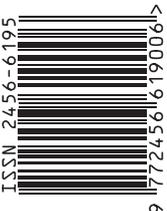
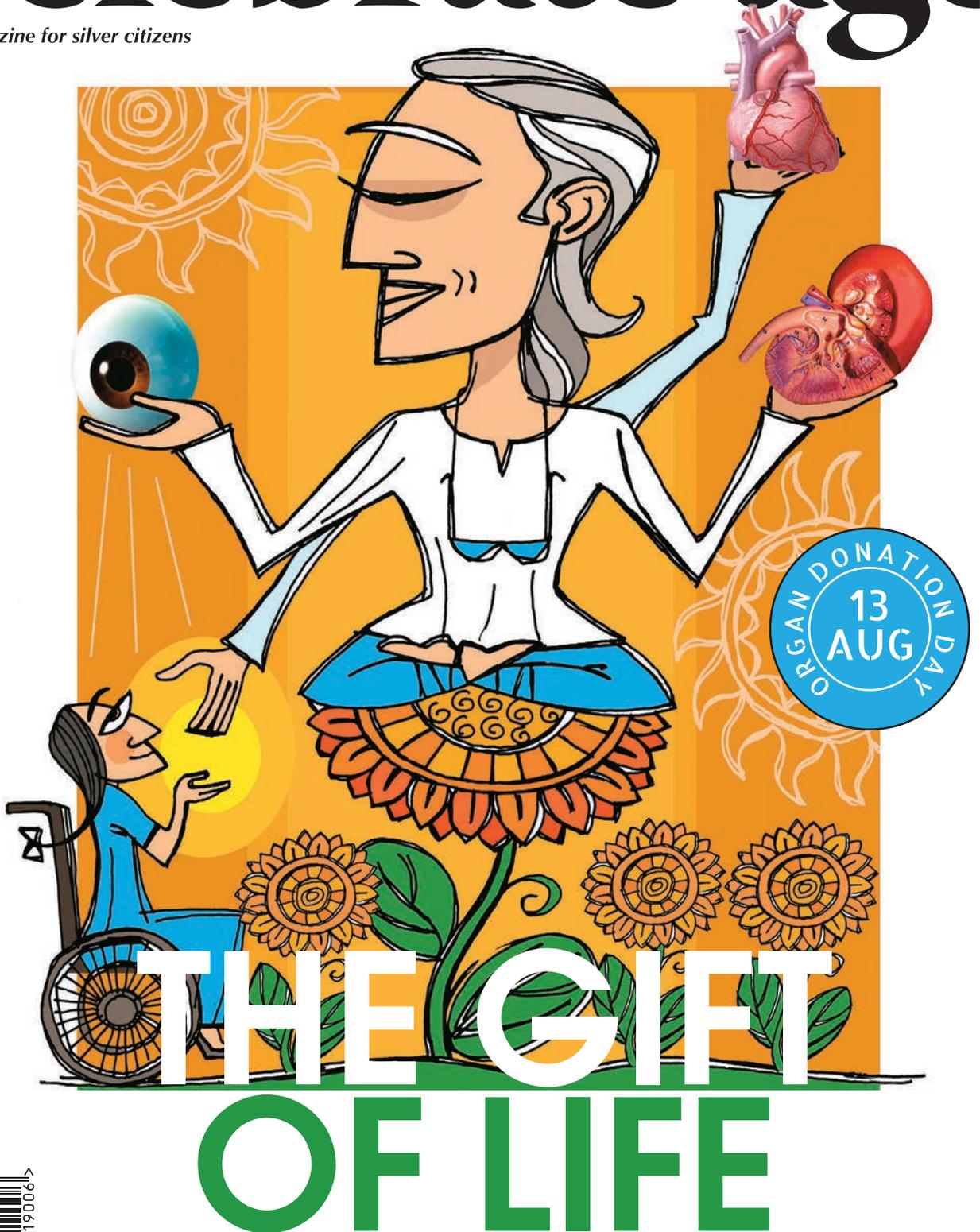
harmony

AUGUST 2018 ₹ 40

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

Subscriber Copy Not For Resale



All about organ donation, how far we have come,
and how much further we have to go

50%* More Powerful

New Goodknight Power Activ+

Protects your family from the strongest mosquitoes



**Zyaada power
push karo,
zyaada khush raho**

*In comparison to TFT 0.88% Liquid Vapouriser when tested in standard lab conditions

SPEAK OUT

Support is in short supply for Indian silvers.

Ironically, at a time when even the West is moving towards innovative measures like granny pods (*see 'Live Smart', June 2018*) to keep silvers close to their loved ones, we seem to have cast our own rich family traditions to the wind.

The numbers speak for themselves. According to a national study by New Delhi-based Agewell Foundation spread across 20 Indian states, 23.44 per cent of elders surveyed—almost one in four—live alone (the number greater in urban areas) and 48.4 per cent live with their spouses, while just 26.5 per cent live with their children or other family members. Living arrangements aside, only 36.8 per cent believe they are financially independent. And most worrisome of all, 62 per cent lack long-term, palliative care (*see 'Orbit', page 12*), with a majority of respondents citing the breakup of the joint family system as one of the main reason for their woes.

It's a familiar litany: loneliness, alienation and isolation, exacerbated by worries about finances, security and healthcare. Even more disturbing, the majority of people who do live with their children feel obliged to take care of the house and their grandchildren 'in return' for care and support and have to live on tenterhooks for fear of censure by the younger generation.

When did relationships within the family become so transactional? How did we come to this? And why aren't more people talking about it?

With the general election around the corner, emotions are running high among all political parties and much rhetoric is being bandied about. Tellingly, though, silver advocacy doesn't seem to be much of a priority for anyone.



Dabboo Ratnani

It's time to change that. Don't let anyone take you for granted—not your family, not the government, not society. Create an extended family with your peers; forge a new support system with like-minded people. Stand up together as a constituency and drive change. Use every forum open to you to address the issues that matter: work with organisations in your community, write to newspapers, post on social media, raise awareness and drive the movement. Demand better legislation to protect your rights, more avenues for financial security, better policing for personal safety, sustainable provisions for long-term medical care, freedom from abuse and safeguards against exploitation.

The time for suffering in silence is over. Speak out—we promise to make you heard.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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PAY IT FORWARD

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Cover illustration: **Harmony Archives / Farzana Cooper**

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

Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

Harmony-Celebrate Age

www.magzter.com

India's premier magazine for senior citizens, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, is now available on international digital news stand Magzter



The magazine can now be downloaded and read on a variety of digital platforms such as iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows 8 and tablets.

Download the free Magzter app or log on to <http://www.magzter.com/IN/Harmony-for-Silvers-Foundation/Harmony---Celebrate-Age/Lifestyle/> today to read the latest issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*.



column one

This issue, our cover feature strikes close to home. My father's passing from cancer five years ago remains the most painful of experiences. However, for my family, his decision to donate his body to medical research is the silver lining of that dark night. Today, with countless lives being lost every day for lack of a transplant, organ donation is an imperative in India. Yet, lack of infrastructure and outdated mindsets are holding potential donors—and their families—back. In "The Legacy of Life", we explain the process of organ donation, share perspectives of people who have given, and gained, and assess how far we have to go.

Indeed, life is precious. But life alone means little without quality. That's what ApnaCare brings to thousands of silvers in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune. The brainchild of US-based technologist Ramu Muthangi, prompted by his own difficulties in finding care for his father, the company offers services ranging from post-hospitalisation, physiotherapy and rehab care to simple (but smart) tools and devices, to enable independent living.

This month, we also celebrate the 71st year of our Independence—a freedom that was hard fought. And along with a fascinating collection of slogans that inspired revolutions across the globe, we present the moving accounts of 88 year-old Dr Dulal Chandra Borkotoky in Assam, who risked his life for the tricolour in 1942 during the Quit India movement, and 93 year-old Bansi Singh in Mumbai, who recalls the trauma faced by her family during the churn of Partition. Let's raise a toast to the sacrifices of the unsung—*Jai Hind!*

—Arati Rajan Menon

Recently, HelpAge India and Agewell Foundation, both leading organisations working for the welfare of senior citizens, brought out their annual reports, which painted a grim picture of the suffering and mistreatment of elders at the hands of society, and their near and dear ones. In fact, they have pegged their percentages from 52 per cent to 72 per cent on various parameters, thus leaving a wide gap. Perhaps their sample size was not large enough (HelpAge's sample size was 5,014, while Agewell's was 10,000), or they forgot to account for government pensioners (about 29 per cent of the senior population) who are economically independent and free from medical expenses.

Indeed, economic independence is a great enabler of general happiness. If one can live life comfortably, fulfil all the family needs and obligations, take care of medical bills and have some savings too, life becomes bright and worth living.

Government pensioners in India are having the best of times. All of them are now enjoying fat pensions, multiplied several times over a period of time (perhaps about 10 times in 20 years) thanks to the several pay commissions set up by the Government to assess the increasing impact of inflation on retired government personnel and compensating them by increasing their dearness and other allowances. (The recommendations of the Seventh Pay Commission are in force now.) An added factor in their wellness and prosperity is full coverage of medical bills for themselves and their spouse. In fact, they get a monthly quota of all prescribed medicines free at the beginning of the month and all major operations that are very expensive for ordinary citizens are available to them free of charge.

With economic independence and full medical coverage, their attitude

of senior citizens towards life has completely changed. Most are back to their carefree selves and having the time of their life. Their steps are positive, their strides are confident and, above all, their health is normal. This is what is required of a normal, healthy citizen—senior or not.

K D Bhatia
Via email

The UN observes World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June every year to highlight the problem of physical, emotional and financial abuse of older persons. In an effort to inculcate the habit of respecting silvers right from a young age, an awareness campaign was conducted by the Dr V S Natarajan Geriatric Foundation at SBOA School & Junior College in Chennai on 13 June, where more than 800 school children took a pledge against elder abuse. V Amuthavalli, commissioner, Department of Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Programme of the Government of Tamil Nadu, released a bilingual book, *Let Us Respect Our Elders*, and conducted an interactive session with the students. The foundation plans to conduct this activity every year across Tamil Nadu; with the help of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, we can spread the message to a wider audience.

Dr V S Natarajan
Via email

HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in
July 2018 on

 www.harmonyindia.org

1. House of cards
2. "I am not a rebel"
3. The world at his beat


MEDIA WATCH

THE OLD & THE BEAUTIFUL

Sexy has no number, or expiry date. Just ask 83 year-old Playboy Bunny-turned-fashion blogger Dorrie Jacobson, who is shattering beauty biases on her Instagram handle *Senior Style Bible*. A recent post has her sharing a racy photo of herself in black lingerie—and we can't keep calm! "Why am I suddenly prancing around in lingerie in my 80s?" writes the Las Vegas-based silver. "Because I want to encourage women to embrace their bodies at every age. Society is obsessed with youth... and I want to broaden that definition of beauty to include women of all ages. Why do we have to be young and flawless to be considered beautiful? If I can stand here in my knickers, with a less than perfect 83 year-old body... then perhaps other women will be inspired to love themselves a little bit more... flaws and all."

Celebrate her attitude at
 [instagram.com/
seniorstylebible](https://www.instagram.com/seniorstylebible)





Photographs by iStock

ORDER A GRANDKID!

There's really an app for everything these days! New **American start-up Papa offers silvers 'grandkids on demand'** to assist them with transportation, household chores or simply keep them company. The process is fairly simple. Elders can get in touch with Papa through the mobile app or by calling its customer service. The representative from Papa offers them a free consultation and pairs them with a college student, called a 'Papa Pal'—these students are recruited after an intensive process. This service is available in two plans. The first is pay as you go, which costs \$ 15 (about ₹ 1,000) per hour, provided it is within 10 miles (16 km) of your Papa Pal; else an additional 50 cents (about ₹ 35) per hour is levied. The second is a monthly membership at a fee of \$ 15 (₹ 1,000) with the same applicable hourly rates. However, members enjoy additional benefits like companionship, house help, and technology lessons as opposed to only social transportation in the pay-as-you-go plan. Wow.

ANTI 'ANTI-AGEING'

Last October, we told you about the increasing **backlash in the beauty industry against the term 'anti-ageing'**. The movement, initiated by *Allure* magazine, is now gathering momentum. Recently, the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) in Britain, in partnership with Lisbon-based Calouste Gulbenkian

Foundation, which works in the fields of art, charity, science and education, has released a statement saying the term 'anti-ageing' should be banned by the beauty and cosmetics industry. "We have seen how valuable a positive and optimistic outlook on ageing can be to personal health and wellbeing, and yet many everyday conversations, informed by the media, are rife with examples of

The term 'anti-ageing' should be banned by the beauty and cosmetics industry

language that either trivialise, vilify, or catastrophise the ageing process," goes the statement. "Chief among these is the persistent use of the term 'anti-ageing' within the cosmetics and beauty industry."

According to website *independent.co.uk*, research conducted by RSPH reveals that about half of women and a quarter of men feel tremendous pressure to look younger. "Too often ageist behaviour and language is trivialised, overlooked, or even served up as the punch line to a joke—something we would rightly not tolerate with other forms of prejudice," Shirley Cramer, chief executive of RSPH, tells the website. "Our report shows that ageist attitudes abound in society and have a major impact on the public's health, and yet they are rarely treated with the seriousness they deserve." We couldn't agree more.

This grandma-grandson duo is breaking the Internet with their comic timing.

American Ross Smith began filming six-second videos on short-form, video hosting entertainment network Vine, and garnered a fair share of fans. But he really hit the (grand)mother lode when he first featured his 91 year-old 'Granny' in one of his clips. Since then, they have posted many videos together, from trying out beer-pong shots to making parody videos for rap songs. Their ultimate 'star' moment came

DYNAMIC DUO

when they beat over 17,900 videos to win \$ 100,000 in the 'Fun Off' contest hosted by media website 9GAG. Now, the duo is working to raise money for Alzheimer's research and have a television show in development! "Honestly, most people—and I was probably one of those people at the time—don't have respect for the elderly," Smith confesses to *cnbc.com*. "Once you're old, you kind of go away to a nursing home. Doing this opened my mind to how awesome old people are and how cool they live their lives. They



Photographs courtesy: Ross Smith

appreciate the small things we don't appreciate in this fast-paced advertising industry-based life." Watch them in action at www.youtube.com/channel/UCqYlcD2MurA9YWe7D911w7A

NORSE SONG

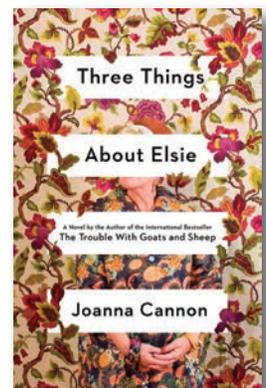


Nordic cultures share a cultural enchantment with nature—the Norwegians call it *friluftsliv*—which finds its root in lore. This is a tradition closest to silvers, which inspired Finnish artist Riita Ikonen and Norwegian photographer Karoline Hjorth to create stunning **photographs that transform elders into mystic creatures with organic origins**. The collaboration, known as *Eyes as Big as Plates*, features about

60 portraits of silvers from different countries that appear to poetically allude to the afterlife and a return to nature. “Maybe it’s the fantasy of being in nature, some fleeting moment in the idealistic brain of the human where you could be one with nature,” Ikonen tells website *artsy.net*. These incredible photographs have been compiled into a book, available at eyesasbigasplates.com/buy-the-book/ for \$ 78 (about ₹ 5,300).

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

A thought-provoking exploration of the pain of nostalgia and the burden of personal truth, Joanna Cannon’s *Three Things about Elsie* (HarperCollins) is the story of 84 year-old Florence Claybourne, a resident of Cherry Tree Home for the Elderly who is tormented by her yesterdays. When she becomes convinced that a man who has arrived at her home is someone from her past who had supposedly died years ago, everyone blames it on the progressive nature of her dementia—except her lifelong friend Elsie. The duo then set out on a journey to uncover the truth and prove everyone wrong. Revealing a deep understanding of the claustrophobia and enforced joviality in care homes, this character-driven story is both empathetic and compassionate. Get your copy on *amazon.in*—the paperback version is available for ₹ 295, while the Kindle edition will cost you ₹ 280.



Friends Adult Diapers Presents

FRIENDS for the ride!

Want to get out of the house and see the world but incontinence and the lack of clean loos stopping you? Now, you have a ticket to ride!

SLAKE YOUR WANDERLUST

Forget that rocking chair—retirement is no longer about sitting around and whiling away your time. After a lifetime of working and fulfilling your duty towards work and family, more and more silvers want to live exciting and adventurous lives. And travel seems to be an activity of choice.

THE DEAL-BREAKERS

Unfortunately, increased incontinence and the non-availability of clean toilets can act as deal-breakers. Risk of infection exacerbates the problem. Whether you travel by car, train or bus, the one common factor that can get you down is dirty washrooms. And while youngsters have long been practising their air squats, not all silvers have the thigh muscles to support their upper body weight.

A SIMPLE SOLUTION

In this day and age, the solution is simple: adult diapers. Wearing one may take some

getting used to—mentally and physically—but once you grow comfortable with it, the world will become your oyster once again.

ALL SIZES GREAT AND SMALL

As with all gifts bright and wonderful, Friends Adult Diapers come in different shapes and sizes. While the traditional diaper with attachable tape is good for silvers with limited mobility, travel bugs can try out the Friends Adult Diaper Pants. Chose from small, medium, large and extra large sizes to fit your waist and settle on a diaper whose absorbency levels will suit the duration of your journey.

EXTRA COVER

The Friends Adult Diaper is made such that one experiences the least possible discomfort, even while wearing it over an extended period. The acquisition and dispersal layer ensures the liquid spreads evenly; the cushiony core made of wood pulp soaks up all the liquid; and the super absorbent polymer converts the liquid into gel, locks it in place and makes it stay dry and comfortable for as long as possible.

TAKE THAT TRIP

Use one at home; go about your daily activities and see how it feels; take a spin around the city and let yourself get comfortable with the secret in your pants! Once you grow used to strapping on a Friends Adult Diaper under a pair of snug briefs, you no longer need to fear public loos—you can just steer clear of them. It's time to lose your fear, take that trip you've been dreaming of, and live your best life.

Watch
this space
next month for
more from
Friends!



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.



Wetness indicator

FRIENDS[®]

— ADULT DIAPERS —

Live young

Available on
amazon.in
Flipkart

Call 1860 425 9009 | SMS FRIENDS (space) your QUERY with NAME to 58888
Website: www.nobelhygiene.com | www.facebook.com/FriendsDiaper

The absence OF CARE



In India, health insurance coverage is essentially limited to hospitalisation

LONG-TERM, PALLIATIVE CARE IS IN SHORT SUPPLY. That's the conclusion of a new study of over 10,000 silvers across India conducted for the UN by New Delhi-based Agewell Research and Advocacy Centre. "Managing home care for the elderly is a massive challenge as multiple service providers—nursing agencies, physiotherapists and

medical suppliers—are small scale and unorganised and, therefore, provide incomplete care," Himanshu Rath, founder of Agewell Foundation, tells media. "In India, health insurance coverage is essentially limited to hospitalisation. The concept of geriatric care has remained a neglected area of medicine so far in the country." Here are some highlights of the report:

Over 75 per cent of respondents have to limit their personal social interactions as their family members direct them to do so, otherwise their family members can avoid providing their basic needs of food and medicines.

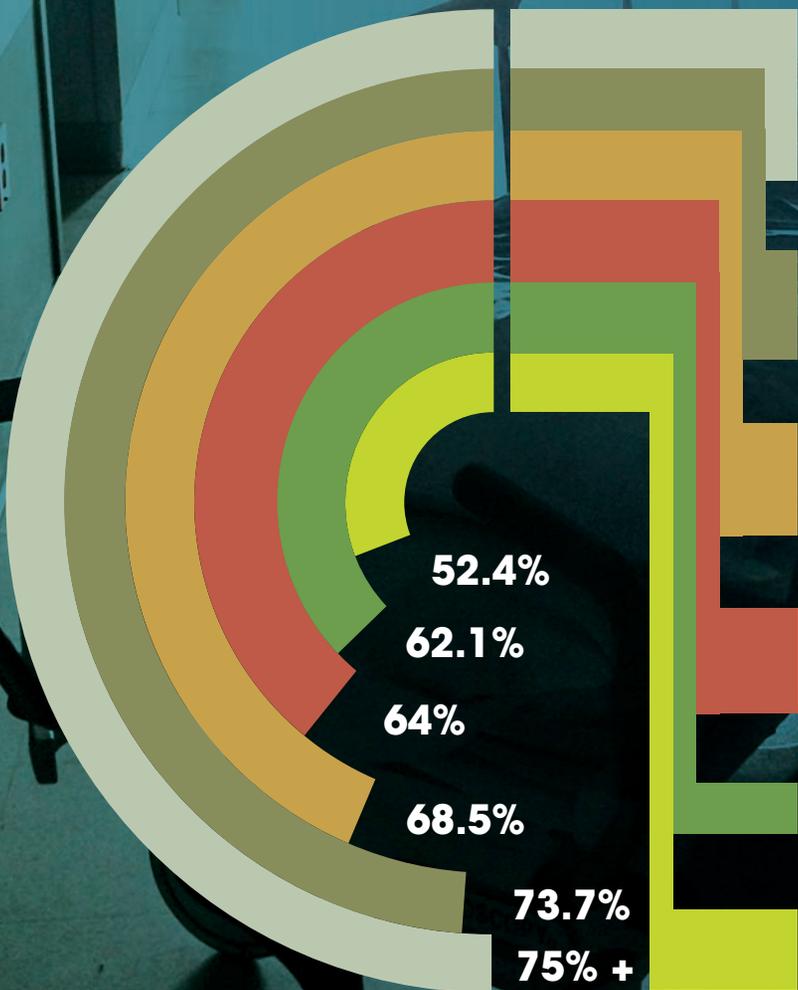
73.7 per cent say they have to take care of the house and other properties of their younger family members to ensure long-term and palliative care in old age.

68.5 per cent of respondents say the breakup of the joint family system is one of the biggest factors for the challenges they face in getting long-term, palliative care.

64 per cent of elderly respondents cite loneliness, marginalisation and isolation as the most critical issues faced by bedridden, elderly patients.

62.1 per cent say that they lack access to long-term, palliative care.

52.4 per cent of respondents say they remained reliant on traditional family support.



Read the entire report at :

www.agewellfoundation.org/images/Independence-in-Old-Age-Long-term-n-Palliative-care-in-India-June-2018.pdf

MYTH-BUSTER

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS of its compatriot BMW, which has made considerable efforts to retain its silver workforce (see *'Orbit'*, May 2013), German automobile company Mercedes-Benz, a division of Daimler AG, has launched a company-wide campaign to dispel myths on ageing. According to Reuters, it has organised a rolling public exhibition, attended by about 80,000 people, including 2,500 of its factory managers, where visitors are asked to choose between a 'young' or 'old' door to enter. Once in, visitors undergo tests to determine memory, balance, ability to work in a team, grip, how high they can jump and how easily they can relax—the results reveal the 'real age' and 'life experience' age, in contrast to their 'biological age'.

“Every age has potential... age diversity means diversity of experience, perspectives and new ideas”



The company has also introduced demographic audits across the company where employees have been encouraged to openly discuss the age structure of their teams and ideate on ways to promote cooperation across ages; launched a corporate video platform where complex processes are explained by older employees; and created a system to help workers swap shifts and allow older employees to work part-time as well as testing ergonomic tools to reduce muscle strain. “Many prejudices about ageing are long out of date,” Mercedes production head Markus Schaefer tells the agency. “Every age has potential... age diversity means diversity of experience, perspectives and new ideas.”

SOFT TARGETS

In a statement to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, the UN-appointed independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, said: “Financial abuse of older persons is rampant but largely invisible, and the problem is expected to grow dramatically with the ageing of our societies.” Pointing out that most abuse goes undetected and it is impossible to assess the extent of the problem owing to scarce data because of under-reporting, she added that most abusers are family members and that, often, even experienced professionals have difficulty distinguishing an unwise but legitimate financial transaction from an exploitative one. Stay on guard!

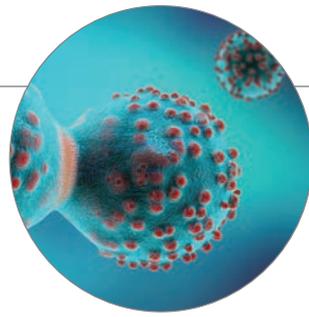


Photographs by iStock

LIVING LIBRARY

Here's an innovative way to tackle loneliness and isolation among silvers: **The Living Library Project** in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The brainchild of the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community, an international network of young professionals hoping to make a positive impact on the local community, the project brings together a group of young students with residents of retirement homes. During their interactions, the

silvers share their life stories with the students and discuss their present-day problems and concerns. Through this project, the Global Shapers hope to understand and address the challenges faced by elders in the city while glean- ing wisdom from Generation A and bridging the generation gap. “Most of the young people feel inspired by the old people,” Marcus Lim, a Global Shaper, tells website *malaymail.com*. “It makes them wonder what they can do to help them to live better.” The average Malaysian population will be over 60 years of age by 2030.



Molecule matters

In what is being hailed as a breakthrough, scientists at the German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ) in Heidelberg have discovered a **molecule that represents a 'key switching point' in the ageing process** based on the impact of oxidative stress on cells. As ANI reports, the protein molecule, called TXNIP (thioredoxin-interacting protein), can control the lifespan of all living beings, from flies to humans. Essentially, the enzyme thioredoxin-1 (TRX-1) in our body is instrumental in defending DNA from oxidative stress as well as in converting and disposing harmful reactive oxygen species. However,

TXNIP restrains TRX-1, which ensures that the reactive oxygen molecules are retained. The researchers discovered that, with age, more TXNIP is formed in the body, which can undermine the protective mechanism against oxidative stress. "Scientists have found hundreds of genes that are somehow related to the ageing process," team leader Peter Kramer tells the news agency. "But it is enough to switch off TXNIP to delay ageing. Similarly, ageing can be accelerated if we get the cells to produce TXNIP. And that makes it an interesting candidate to intervene in the ageing process in the future." This study was published in *The FEBS Journal*.



Photographs by iStock

Rural resilience

IF YOU THINK silvers can't be adaptable, think again. An interesting study by Charles Sturt University (CSU) in Australia conducted in the Blayney Shire area in New South Wales reveals that **silvers are adept at getting around the limitations of a rural location**. As website *blayneychronicle.com.au* reports, older adults are more likely to find unique personal solutions instead of pushing for big-picture solutions to lack of public facilities like transport and specialist health services. What's more, head researcher Dr Ann Lazarsfeld-Jensen observes that silvers have creatively applied their talents to generate income sources after retirement and to keep themselves occupied. The conclusion, according to the website: elderly rural folk share a deep connection with the land and their home, which then becomes a source of their resilience and bestows them with meaning and purpose.

ACCELERATED AGEING

It's not just the years that age your brain but what happens during them. Researchers at the University of California - San Diego have discovered that **tragic midlife events like divorce or death of a loved one can accelerate brain ageing**. In the study, 359 male participants from the Vietnam Era Twin Study of Ageing (VETSA) were asked to make a list of life-altering events in the past two years, which was compared to similar data collected five years ago, when they joined VETSA. Every participant underwent MRI exams as well as physical and psychological assessments within a month of completing the latest self-report. The MRI assessed various physiological characteristics of the brain, like volume and cortical thickness, which were interpreted using advanced software to predict brain age. The researchers concluded that exposure to constant stress was linked to biological weathering and premature ageing.

MOUSE MYSTERY

Ageing affects sleep—we know that. And now, a study on mice may help us determine why. Researchers at the University of Kent have discovered that **the region in the brain that directs the circadian clock can go awry in elderly mice.** As *theatlantic.com* reports, when the researchers put young and old mice through a battery of tests to compare their responses to jetlag, they found that elderly mice are far less flexible than young mice owing to a particular deficit in the brain.

For their study, the team kept both young and old mice in the dark for 10 days while keeping track of their active time. Upon exposing mice to 15 minutes of light and resetting their clocks ahead to induce the effect of jetlag, they observed that young mice were quite responsive and adjusted to period activity later by an hour but the older mice took longer. The researchers also checked for cataracts or eye defects among the older mice to eliminate an alternative explanation for why the light wasn't getting through—only to discover that the problem was with the neurotransmitter that delivers it. On further investigation, they discovered that elder mice are far less flexible to light owing to a missing piece in the receptor in the brain that triggers events influencing the body clock. The study, which is expected to provide valuable clues to the human experience of fragmented sleep with age, was published in journal *Neurobiology of Aging*.



RESORT-RESIDENCES FOR SENIORS



A large slice of the young generation is ambitious and therefore constantly travels across the country, if not overseas, thus leaving their loved ones, often elderly parents, alone at home. Keeping house in addition to taking care of their health and completing day-to-day chores is both tedious and stressful for elderly individuals.

Addressing this growing concern with a practical yet sensitive approach is Pune-based Gagan Properties, which has shaped its vision into reality. The result is Nulife, an ultra-modern, world-class resort-residence facility for senior citizens of our country.

A magnificent project sprawled across several acres of holistic goodness at Kamshet near Lonavala, this facility is a haven of comfort for senior living, owing to its adherence to international standards. Justifying its dynamic tagline that reads 'Grow Young', Nulife is that place where seniors can age gracefully while living in the midst of raw nature. Here, they can live a serene life while immersing themselves in pleasant weather and an unpolluted environment.

HEALTHCARE AND SECURITY – YOUR LIVES ARE PRECIOUS!

Nulife recognises that seniors are vulnerable and that they also worry about

their safety and security. Therefore, protecting senior lives is top priority. The residential facility has tied up with Oyster and Pearl hospitals, making it possible to have a hospital equipped with an ICU inside the residential complex with dedicated doctors, nurses and a resourceful pharmacy. This ensures that professionals are always available to take care of the medical needs of seniors, as and when required.

Other NuCare facilities included in the apartment price are a 24x7 ambulance service, periodical preventive medical check-ups, routine physiotherapy, daily housekeeping, weekly laundry services and round-the-clock security services including CCTV surveillance.

DESIGN AND DETAILS – THE SCULPTURE THAT INSPIRED MANY!

The design of Nulife premises reflects a profound understanding of the ageing process, which inspires the support it provides its residents. It is a true representation of what Nulife provides – nourishing the potential offerings of a rich and fulfilling life to all its residents.

From large doorways, no-step entries and wide corridors, to personalised panic alarm bands, grab bars in washrooms and anti-skid flooring, this project has been planned by globally renowned architect Perkins Eastman,

USA. These specifications are only a few of the many design details that have been incorporated to create a little piece of paradise just for you.

PERSEVERANCE AND SKILL – THE TEAM!

A vision of Gagan Properties, Nulife is the culmination of the best experiences of 21 years of work in real estate. It is a brand that is receptive to innovation and customer satisfaction on progressive levels within the real estate sector. Having delivered more than 6,000 apartments to satisfied clients, and with more than 6 million sq ft currently under construction, the credibility of this project couldn't be better. It offers authentic comfort and style to our beloved elders.

The first phase of the Nulife project has 342 apartments up for grabs, with 1 and 2 BHK apartments quoted at a starting price of just ₹ 48 lakh. Nulife introduces itself as a new way of aspirational living for senior citizens in India and is destined to change senior living on a nationwide scale. Hurry and contact Nulife to avail the best offer, now!

For more information
on Gagan Nulife, call 9371806262
or visit www.gagannulife.com

GAGAN nuli**fe**

Kamshet-Lonavala

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Service



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Services



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A Project By



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📍 Gagan NuLife, Village Khadkale, Off Mumbai-Pune Highway,
Kamshet, Lonavala.

🌐 www.gagannulife.com



MAHARERA Registration Number
PHASE 1: **P52100009642**
PHASE 2: **P52100002941**

CREDAI
MEMBER PUNE

ROBOT NATION

ALWAYS TRENDSETTERS IN ROBOTIC CARE, JAPANESE RESEARCHERS ARE NOW WORKING ON A ROBOT THAT WILL BE ABLE TO PREDICT A PATIENT'S NEED TO USE THE TOILET! IN FACT, ACCORDING TO A REPORT PUBLISHED ON WEBSITE *THEGUARDIAN.COM*, JAPAN'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HAS ALREADY FACILITATED THE MANUFACTURING AND TESTING OF OVER 98 NURSING-CARE ROBOTIC DEVICES, OF WHICH 15 HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOPED INTO COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS. BY 2020, THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO PROVIDE ROBOTIC CARE TO FOUR IN FIVE ELDERLY PATIENTS.



BATH & BEYOND

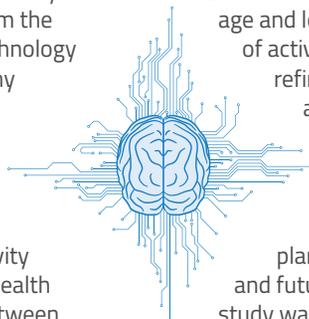
This June, we told you how to make your bathroom smarter to enable independent living. Here's something new: a **'Sit and Shower' system that can mechanise the whole bathing process, from soaping to rinsing**, for silvers and people with limited motor abilities. Designed by Hong Kong-based Automation for Humanity, the device allows the user to bathe seated to eliminate the risk of fall and monitors the temperature to ensure optimal water heating. A trial unit of the system has already been installed in local rehabilitation hospitals and nursing homes across the city. "Many people still want to have control over their lives as they age," Samuel Hui Sing-Kwong, founder and director of Automation for Humanity, tells website *scmp.com*. "But in a nursing home, you will have to accept someone touching you when you take a shower." Bathroom automation will also enhance the productivity of caregivers and help institutions that face a shortage of manpower. Hui and his team are now working to improve the design and create a scaled-down version for private homes.



Photographs by iStock

THE SMART LIFE

Technology doesn't just enhance life, it may be able to predict it. Researchers from the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) and longevity biotech company GERO have discovered that **artificial intelligence (AI) technology can generate enhanced digital biomarkers of ageing and frailty using physical activity data from smartphones and wearable smart devices.** For their study, the team analysed physical activity records and clinical data from the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) between



2003 and 2006 and were able to predict the biological age and longevity risk of the participants from a range of activity measurements. "AI can be used to further refine risk models," Peter Fedichev, science director at GERO, tells website *siasat.com*. "Combination of ageing theory with the most powerful modern machine learning tools will produce even better health risk models to mitigate longevity risks in insurance, help in pension planning, and contribute to upcoming clinical trials and future deployment of anti-ageing therapies." The study was published in journal *Scientific Reports*.

PASS THE SALT, PLEASE

The next time you say 'pass the salt,' don't be apologetic. While doctors advise elders to consume a low-sodium diet as excess salt can raise blood pressure and lead to cardiac and kidney-related problems, a new study has linked sodium levels in the blood to cognitive functions, especially in older adults. Researchers at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, US, draw attention to 'hyponatremia,' a condition where the blood sodium level falls below 135 millimoles per litre (mmol/L). They point out that hyponatremia is linked with cognitive decline in seniors and some neurological disturbances such as attention deficit, falls, fractures, heart problems and premature death. In their study, the researchers examined 5,435 asymptomatic men aged 65 and more. A follow-up of 4.6 years showed that men whose

sodium levels were 126-140 mmol/L were 30 per cent more likely to have symptoms of cognitive impairment and 37 per cent more likely to have symptoms of cognitive decline compared to men with sodium levels of 141-142 mmol/L. The study was published in *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*. The conclusion: addressing low blood sodium levels could be valuable in halting cognitive decline as people age.

**A NEW STUDY
HAS LINKED
SODIUM
LEVELS IN THE
BLOOD TO
COGNITIVE
FUNCTIONS**





RUN FOR YOUR MIND

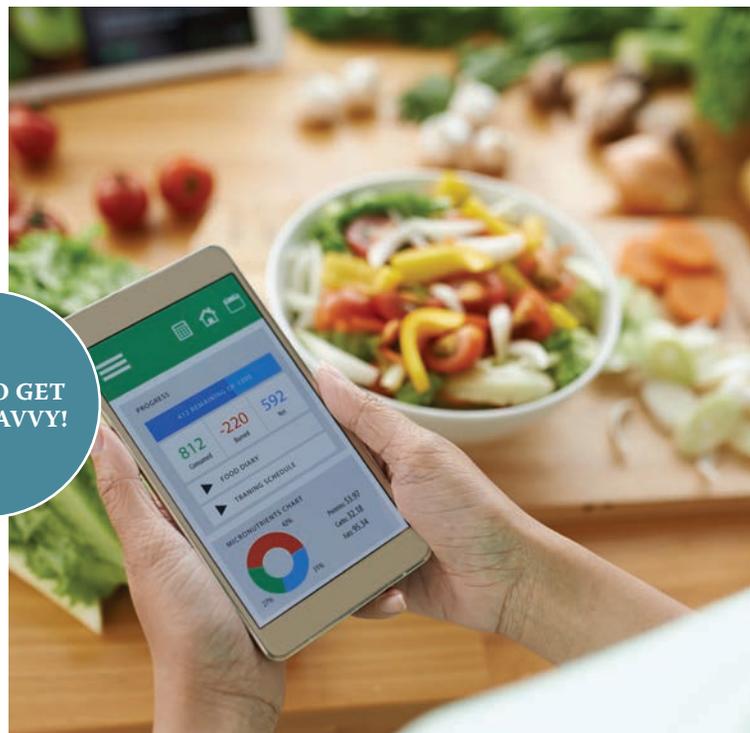
This one's for those who bought a fancy pair of running shoes and track pants but never used them. Researchers are finding that a simple exercise regime not only keeps your body in ship shape, it can also keep your mind tack sharp. Scientists at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Florida, reviewed 100 existing studies and connected exercise with more than 122 tests of brain function. They found that **those who exercised for as little as an hour, three times a**

week, showed significant cognitive advantages. The biggest improvements were seen in various kinds of thinking and speed tests. Significantly, these improvements were observed in people without cognitive decline as well as those with mild dementia. The study, conducted on 11,000 older people, suggests two types of workouts to help keep the mind healthy: aerobics and strength training. These workouts help in problem-solving and processing information. The study was published in *Neurology: Clinical Practice*.

APP YOU LIKE IT

If you're spending too much time on your smartphone, why not use it to improve your arterial health? In an attempt to leverage technology to help people stay healthy, researchers used a **smartphone application or 'app'** to record the users' **food intake and number of steps taken every day.** Users also entered into the app activities they engaged in without the smartphone, such as swimming. The trial included 833 adults without heart disease aged 70 years or under from primary care centres in Spain. The objective was to get participants to consume a Mediterranean diet and engage in physical activity equal to at least 10,000 steps a day. While all the participants received counselling on diet and physical activity, one group also used the 'healthy lifestyle app'. At the end of each day, the app reported a summary of food intake and physical activity, the number of calories consumed and expended, and a recommended plan to improve eating habits and increase physical activity. After three months, participants who used the app had improved their physical activity level. And while both groups improved their adherence to a Mediterranean diet, the diet composition of the app group was even healthier.

TIME TO GET TECH-SAVVY!



Photographs by iStock



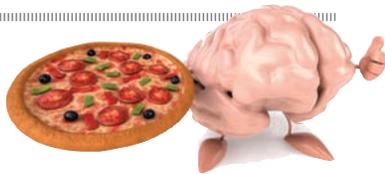
SUGAR-COATED TRUTH

Artificial sweeteners are billed as a great alternative to sugar but the truth being sold to you is sugar-coated. Sweeteners are synthetic chemical compounds that mimic the taste of sugar while containing zero calories. While this sounds, well, sweet, researchers at the Medical College of Wisconsin and Marquette University, USA, have

found that **artificial sweeteners could, in fact, lead to Type 2 diabetes and obesity**, exactly what they are trying to avoid! The team conducted experiments on two groups of mice to check for metabolic changes in the body. One group was fed a diet high in glucose or fructose while the other group consumed a diet with aspartame or acesulfame potassium, common zero-calorie artificial sweeteners. A follow-up study of three weeks showed significant changes in both groups of mice. These changes included concentrations of blood lipids or fats. Moral of the story: curb your sweet tooth the natural way. Just say 'no'.

DEADLY COMBO

Finally, a scientific explanation for our addiction to junk food, especially foods like doughnuts and French fries that are high on both fats and carbs. Studies that used pictures of different kinds of foods—only carbs, only fats and a combination of carbs and fats—showed that foods with the deadly carb-fats combo activated the reward centres of the brain the most, reinforcing one's decision to eat these foods. Scientists say that while there was once a good



evolutionary reason for rewarding humans for eating foods high on fats and carbs, those reasons no longer exist. Worse, those once nutritious foods have since evolved into junk food, which is extremely harmful to health. The study, conducted by the Modern Diet and Physiology Centre of Yale University, New Haven, was published in *Cell Metabolism Journal*.

SUPPLEMENTS DO NO GOOD

They are one of the buzzwords in medicine and find a place in many doctor's prescriptions, especially for the elderly. But are supplements health boosters that are an efficient way to make up for a deficiency or are they of no use at all? A review published in *Journal of American College of Cardiology* indicates that supplements make no difference

to heart health. Researchers at the University of Toronto, Canada, looked at 179 randomised trials on vitamin and mineral supplements and found that the **four most commonly consumed supplements—multivitamins, Vitamin D, calcium and Vitamin C—showed no advantage in preventing cardiovascular disease, myocardial infarction and stroke**. While Vitamin B complex supplements did not reduce the incidence of stroke, folic acid, however, did seem to

lower the risk of stroke by 20 per cent and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Niacin, on the other hand, was found to increase the risk of death when taken with statins, which are commonly prescribed to treat cholesterol. Researchers say that taking supplements is not the same as eating whole foods, which are also rich in other phytonutrients that contribute to overall health. So, the next time you reach for your multi-vits, think again; they might be an empty promise.



SKIP THE CHEMO

It is an essential part of cancer treatment; its toxic side-effects seen as an unavoidable fallout. However, now, **far fewer women who suffer from breast cancer will need to undergo chemotherapy**. This possibility has been thrown up by an international study that is relevant to women who have early-stage breast tumours that have not spread to the lymph nodes; are sensitive to oestrogen; test negative for a protein called HER2; and have a score of 11 to 25 on the Oncotype DX Breast Cancer Assay, a widely used test in the US that gauges the activity of a panel of genes involved in cancer recurrence. The study, which began in 2006 and included 10,273 women aged 18 to 75, found that the target group of women could benefit from oestrogen therapy alone, where a drug is administered to either block the hormone oestrogen or stop the body from producing it. What's more, endocrine therapy was found to lower the risks of recurrence, new breast tumours and death from the disease. The findings of the study have been published in *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Trends & Challenges in Eldercare

India is rapidly silvering. Consider these numbers:

- With close to 130 million elders, India accounts for one-sixth of the global elder population.
- By 2050, close to 20 per cent of India's population will be elders, surpassing the population of young adults in the country.
- By 2050, age longevity is expected to increase to 75.9 years, from the current 67.5 years.
- By 2050, India's population above 80 will be more than the total population of countries like Greece, Belgium and Cuba.

This growth in the numbers of elders brings in its wake many challenges that need immediate attention. Care and access to care will remain top priorities for elders, their caregivers and the Government in coming years. Further, these numbers are also opening up an industry with huge market potential and opportunity.

With the Government beginning to take cognisance of the needs of this demographic, traditional Indian society starting to accept the need for senior housing and senior care in the absence of family fallbacks, and many emerging industry players entering the elder-care space, we are just beginning to get a picture of the times to come.

Given this scenario, **CovaiCare presents a seminar on 'Trends and Challenges in Eldercare' on 29 August 2018 at Taj Gateway, Bengaluru.** The seminar is another step in Covai's sustained initiative to bring together different stakeholders in this emerging space, both from the industry and consumer sides, and initiate a discussion on the needs and challenges in the area of eldercare. The seminar will focus on the changing landscape of elder living and the need to integrate care into living solutions and build an inclusive world. There will also be discussions on pertinent social issues and specific legal issues elders need to address.

Silver Talkies, a platform that promotes active ageing through seniors' clubs, events and activities and has India's only online magazine focused exclusively on the 55+ (www.silvertalkies.com), is the knowledge partner for the event. *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, India's premier lifestyle magazine for silver citizens, is the media partner.

Presented by



THE EVENT

Here are some highlights of the seminar:

- **The need to integrate care into living solutions:** The solutions available today address the needs of independent living and active ageing. However, the need of the hour is to create an enabling and empowering environment that will provide lifelong care and residential support. The keynote address and the panel following it will address different needs that include assisted living, memory care, palliative care, home care, and care for persons with disabilities (PwD). Eminent speakers representing each of these categories will provide insights into the care available today and challenges faced.
- **Legal framework and challenges:** With increase in longevity, many challenges, specifically legal ones, confront elders. What are these challenges and how can they be tackled? The second keynote address will specifically address a few of these challenges through the eyes of a leading legal professional.
- **Elders and PwD:** The focus now moves to a niche segment within the elder segment: elders with disabilities and elders with children with disabilities. India has nearly 21 million people with some form of disability. All current residential projects focus on the able-bodied and are not attuned to house people with disabilities. Our panel will focus on the need to build an inclusive society catering to the needs of those with disabilities. Experts, NGOs and caregivers across a segment of disabilities will discuss associated challenges and the way forward.

PARTICIPANTS

Participation in this programme is by invitation. The audience will represent key stakeholders, including NGOs, organisations working with PwD, parents of PwD, healthcare and homecare institutions, consultants, industry forums, senior citizens' forums and associations, media, builders and architects, academia, and HR professionals. The invitee list is being drawn up to ensure a healthy mix of participants, besides ensuring that the information generated at the seminar reaches a wider audience.



Watch this space for a report on the event

BIRTHDAYS

Former US president **Barack Hussein Obama** turns 57 on 4 August.

Oscar-winning American actor-director **Dustin Hoffman** turns 81 on 8 August.

Rajya Sabha MP **Renuka Chowdhury** turns 64 on 13 August.

Padma Shri awardee, philanthropist and author **Sudha Murthy** turns 68 on 19 August.

Former actor **Saira Banu** turns 74 on 23 August.

IN PASSING

South African anti-apartheid photographer **David Goldblatt** passed away in his sleep at his home in Johannesburg on 25 June. He was 87.

American politician and radio host **Barbara Carlson** died of lung cancer on 9 July. She was 80.

Spiritual leader and philosopher **Dada J P Vaswani** died of age-related ailments on 12 July. He was 99.

Actor **Rita Bhaduri** died of a kidney ailment on 17 July. She was 62.

Lyricist, poet and Padma Bhushan awardee **Gopal Das 'Neeraj'** died of a long illness on 19 July. He was 93.

MILESTONES

- Artist **Anjolie Ela Menon** (featured in the March 2016 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*), 78, was conferred the prestigious National Kalidas Samman for her portrayal of the female form and her multimedia depiction of the spirit of women by the Madhya Pradesh government.

OVERHEARD

“The age barrier still has to be broken in Hindi films. Internationally, that’s not a barrier. You see a Jane Fonda doing a romantic scene even at 80 or a Meryl Streep in the central role. Various older actors are doing substantial and meaty roles.... But we [in India] have to accept that a 50-plus woman still has romance in her life. It’s a reality of life that women have romance, traumas, dramas in their life. Very soon we are going to get there.”

—Actor **Poonam Dhillon**, 56, on the lack of meaty roles for older women and men, in an interview with www.newsgram.com



Dinodia Photo Library

Find your green space. It's time to make those visits to the park more regular. A study by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health has found that access to green space improved brain ageing in over 60,000 British people who were monitored for 10 years, with women the most likely to benefit. The study, published in journal *Environmental Health Perspective*, builds on evidence that the risk of dementia and mental decline can be affected by urban environmental hazards such as air pollution and noise, as well as stress and sedentary lifestyle. Living near green spaces and visiting them increase physical activity and social support, reduce stress, and mitigate exposure to air pollution and noise.



Harmony Archives



Hareesh Patel

Then: Zari motif Now: Rakhi

It's time for Rakshabandhan and the stores are doing brisk business on rakhi sales. Why not sit down with the grandkids this year and help them make their own rakhi, for that personal touch? You will need foam (the colour of your preference), zari motifs, maybe from an old sari or salwaar-kameez, satin ribbon and adhesive. Start with shaping the foam to fit the size of the motif and smoothen out the edges. Further cut the foam thin to about 3-5 mm, depending on the size of the motif. Place the satin in between the foam and the motif and use adhesive to keep it all in place. With a special rakhi like this one, they can expect a special gift!

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. DECORATIVE RAKHIS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN VOGUE AND THERE ARE UMPTEEN WAYS TO MAKE THEM. TRY BITS AND BOBS LIKE SEQUINS, PEARL AND BEADS WITH A FELT BASE FOR A PERSONALISED DESIGN.
2. HANDMADE, BEADED RAKHIS ALSO LOOK FASHIONABLE. TWIST MULTIPLE STRANDS OF COLOURED SILK AND SLIP THE BEADS ON.
3. USING BUTTONS IS ANOTHER OPTION FOR AN ELEGANT AND SOPHISTICATED RAKHI.

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



Herbal high

Fresh herbs grown in your kitchen garden can enhance the nutritive value of your food and add an extra punch of flavour

Growing up in a city that used to see its fair share of greenery but has now become a concrete jungle is very distressing. Looking back, I really miss the garden where my grandmother and mother used to grow plants. Every so often, I would be given the chore of plucking leaves from the garden to toss them in our food. I also used to thoroughly enjoy the times when driving through the city meant spotting multiple balconies or verandas covered in greenery. Now, spotting a humble tulsi plant in a windowsill is a treat to the eye.

If you're one of those silvers who loves nature, don't let the concrete walls and negligible space around your residence dampen your green thumb! Use the space in your balcony, kitchen or veranda to create a mini garden where you can grow fresh herbal plants. A windowsill or a wall with indi-

vidual pots also does the magic. Ensure the herbs get ample sunlight for four to six hours a day.



Indeed, kitchen herbs are extremely beneficial for the physical and mental health of silvers. Including such fresh produce in your meals will enhance your cooking and lend a unique taste to your food. And the aroma of herbs permeating through the home and the pleasure of eating fresh herbs straight out of the pot are simply amazing.

While choosing herbs for the garden, don't just stick to regular ones such as tulsi or curry leaves. Include

other herbs such as mint, coriander, *ajwain* (carom), aloe vera and even chilli, all of which have medicinal and nutritive properties.

With this list of home-grown herbs, start your herb garden and reap the benefits of what you sow!



Photographs by iStock

MINT

I love mint! Picking it from the plant first thing in the morning and tossing it in a glass of hot water with grated ginger in it just perks me up. And a cool glass of water with lemon, mint leaves and rock salt refreshes me on a hot summer day. So often, I just toss some mint leaves in my salad or chop and add them in yoghurt to make raitas and dips. This aromatic herbal plant is easy to grow and, for centuries, it has proved to be a great cure for headaches, colds and coughs. I also treasure it for its ability to soothe the digestive tract, easing indigestion and irritable bowel syndrome. Use mint to make homemade herbal tea or add it to your soups, salads or rotis. It also works as a great mouth freshener. Mint is best grown in a pot; it grows in whatever space you give it.



TULSI

When I was younger, my grandmother and mother used to pray to the tulsi plant every morning and then chew on the leaf. They were wise enough to begin their day with this holy leaf that spreads positivity, perks you up and improves your quality of breathing. The tulsi leaf—green or black—is one of the most important herbs listed in Indian medicines. Adding tulsi leaves to your soup or beverages enhances the taste. There's another variety of tulsi

called basil that tastes excellent in salads and dips like pesto. Add it to herbal infusions and teas to make a soothing beverage. Tulsi is a remedial herb; it is high in antioxidants and reduces blood sugar levels as well as blood pressure. Grow this herb and tap into its healing properties when faced with health conditions such as gastric disorders, common colds, cough, malaria and headaches. Tulsi leaves are dehydrated and sold in capsules as a stress reliever. The medicinal properties of tulsi are beneficial for cancer patients too.

CORIANDER

Whether in leaf or seed form, I always advise people to toss coriander into their food daily. It is one of the most powerful herbs that fights free radical damage, cleans up the blood and inner walls of the arteries and veins, and improves

the level of good cholesterol in the body. It is great for the lungs and should be eaten by smokers regularly. Use it as a garnish, toss it in your food or grind it to make yummy chutney. Coriander contains trace amounts of calcium, iron and magnesium; it also prevents urinary tract infections and checks excessive menstrual flow. In fact, the benefits you will reap after growing this herb are manifold.



AJWAIN (CAROM SEEDS)

The leaves of the *ajwain* plant are useful to treat common cold, coughs, fevers, flatulence and colic. *Ajwain* leaves and seeds have the same carminative properties. The oil derived from its leaves is used to treat microbial imbalances within the body as it doesn't harm the beneficial flora of the intestine.

One of the easiest ways to use it is to add some leaves to your chutney. Adding chopped *ajwain* leaves to a *besan* (gram/chickpea flour) *chilla* prevents the bloating caused by *besan*. And mixing them with yoghurt turns the dish into a delicacy as even a few leaves can enhance flavour.



ALOE VERA

Aloe vera and its clear, gel-like substance contain numerous vitamins, minerals, enzymes, amino acids, natural sugars and agents that are anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial. The combination and balance of this plant's ingredients make it a known healer. Aloe vera speeds up the healing process, particularly in the case of burns, including radiation burns. And aloe gel is the world's best sun block, thanks to its content of MSM (methyl-sulfonyl-methane). No wonder legend has it that Cleopatra would massage fresh aloe vera gel into her skin daily! You, too, can rub it on your face to make your skin tighter and firmer, giving an instant face lift and preventing skin dehydration. You can also blend aloe vera pulp with lemon and papaya for an amazing beauty tonic. Aloe vera contains plant steroids and salicylic acid. Ingesting it helps treat intestinal problems. Aloe vera may be useful in treating diabetes, problems of the immune system and psoriasis. Each leaf of this long, spiked, thick-leaved plant can be sliced and the inside gel eaten or used topically as a lotion.



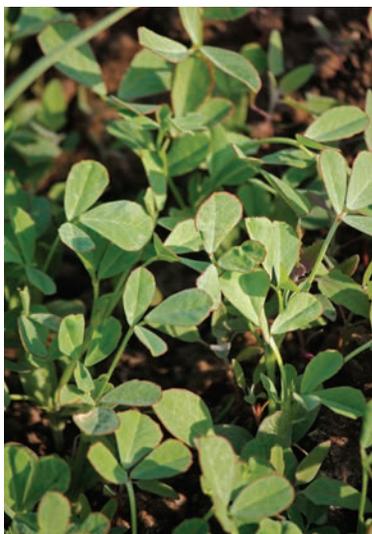


LEMONGRASS

Lemongrass is an aromatic healer. It not only emits a distinct, lemony-citrus smell but is known for its curative properties. Popular in India as *hari chai patti*, it is often chopped and added to the morning cup of tea or herbal infusion. It prevents flatulence, digestive disorders, fevers, menstrual disorders, rheumatism and other joint pains. Planting lemongrass in your herb garden provides you with free aromatherapy too!

METHI (FENUGREEK)

I have grown up with methi in my food and was always told how good the herb is for overall health. It can be used to prepare various dishes: methi *bhajiya*, methi *thepla*, methi paratha, methi *dhansak* and the little methi leaves salad that is a hot favourite today. This leafy green is great to cure anaemia and constipation and keeps your cholesterol levels in check. Diabetics should include it in their diet as it also helps control levels of glucose metabolism.



CURRY LEAVES

Curry leaves are popular in Indian cuisine and do more good than just seasoning your food. They add a distinct aroma and flavour to dishes, and increase the health quotient. Curry leaves are known for their antioxidant properties and ability to control diarrhoea, gastrointestinal problems, urinary



disorders, morning sickness, etc. You can add them to soups, sauces, stews and chutneys, or dry the leaves and crush them for later use. The curry leaves plant can be maintained easily in a pot, but ensure it gets plenty of sunlight.

WHEATGRASS

Wheatgrass is a great natural source of nutrients. In its juice form, it contains 70 per cent chlorophyll, closely resembling the molecules of red blood cells. Chlorophyll is known to produce an unfavourable environment for bacterial growth and is therefore effective in increasing the body's resistance to illness. Wheatgrass is considered a complete food owing to its fibrous content, which is indigestible for humans and should be liquefied before consumption. Drinking wheatgrass juice helps your body build red blood cells that carry oxygen to every cell, and thus aids in cancer therapy. It also helps increase the enzyme level in cells, aiding in the rejuvenation of the body and the metabolism of nutrients.



HERBAL RECIPES

BESAN CHILLA

Ingredients

- Besan (gram/chickpea flour): 3 tbsp
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Onion: 1; finely chopped
- Tomato: 100 gm; grated
- Ajwain leaves: 1 tbsp; finely chopped
- Asafoetida: a pinch
- Salt to taste
- Oil for cooking

Method

Mix the besan with a little water and keep aside for 30 minutes. Add red chilli powder, onion, tomatoes, ajwain leaves, salt, asafoetida and water to prepare batter. To proceed, spread a spoonful of the batter on a hot frying pan of about 125-mm diameter. Smear a little oil around the mixture and cook for a few seconds. Turn it over and cook the other side too till it gets cooked and turns golden brown. Serve hot with green chutney.



LEMONGRASS TEA

Ingredients

- Water: 1 cup
- Fresh ginger: 1 spoon; crushed
- Mint leaves: 8-10
- Lemongrass sprig: one
- Lemon juice: 1 tsp
- Honey/jaggery powder: 1 tsp



Method

Add crushed ginger, mint leaves and lemongrass to water and boil for five minutes. Squeeze some fresh lemon juice in a cup and add a dash of honey/jaggery powder to it. Pour the boiled water with ginger and lemongrass in it; stir and sip this refreshing tea.

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



Find your balance

Tackle the symptoms of vertigo with a sustained yoga practice

Vertigo is not an exotic disease afflicting a few. In fact, it is getting more common these days and afflicts different age groups, including the very young. In some people, it is diagnosed as benign while among those with more drastic symptoms, it is treated aggressively with medication. It has a cluster of symptoms,

from mild dizziness to excessive disorientation, including nausea. In its worst case, it can limit normal life, with patients often advised against driving.

The problem with vertigo is that it has a number of causes, not necessarily related, such as cervical spondylosis, inner ear issues and low

blood sugar, among others. So while conventional medication can deal with the symptoms, one needs to dig into the causes to really weed out the problem. It's important that the medical expert you consult spoors the cause. Also, while balance becomes a real issue with vertigo, yogic poses actually help by retraining the kinesthetic intelligence back into the body. So though you can avoid extreme poses, especially when you have an aggressive attack, you need to continue with some gentle yoga exercises to keep the body engaged in movement so that it does not become fearful. Balancing poses, not surprisingly, work best in this direction.

In vertigo, you need to do grounding poses that help remove anxiety from the body. Standing poses are



Photographs by Hareesh Patel

KNOW YOUR *KRIYA*

Humming bee breathing practice (*Bhramari* pranayama)

Sit in a cross-legged position with your hands in the *prithvi* (earth) *mudra* and eyes shut. Inhale and exhale deeply a few times. As you inhale, make a humming sound. And as you exhale, again make a humming sound. In between the inhalation and exhalation, there will be a natural gap/breath retention—do not force it; it happens on its own and thus does not stress the body. This is one round. Do up to six rounds. In case the process is difficult during inhalation, stick to the basic version of making the humming sound only during exhalation.

best. The simple mountain pose (*tadasana*) and single-legged prayer pose (*ekapadapranamasana*), also called the single-legged tree pose (*ekapadvrksasana*), are great. They have several variations if you feel the need to spice up your practice. Single-legged standing poses, with different degrees of challenges, may be incorporated in a phased manner. These include the crescent pose (*ardhachandrasana*) and its variations and the warrior pose (*virabhadrasana*) and its entire series.

In extreme cases of vertigo, in the initial stage, you can avoid standing forward bends, such as the extreme stretch (*uttanasana*), and lying chest-openers, like the fish (*matsyasana*). Twists, too, need to be modified, especially for those who suffer vertigo owing to neck problems as these will aggravate the symptoms. Grounding and balancing pranayamas like alternate nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) with a modified ratio of inhalation-exhalation and humming bee (*bhramari*) must be done to remove anxiety. This is crucial because, in certain cases, the trigger for vertigo may be psychosomatic. The ideal mudra in such ailments is the grounding *prithvi* (earth) mudra, done by touching the tip of your ring finger to the tip of the thumb (for both hands).

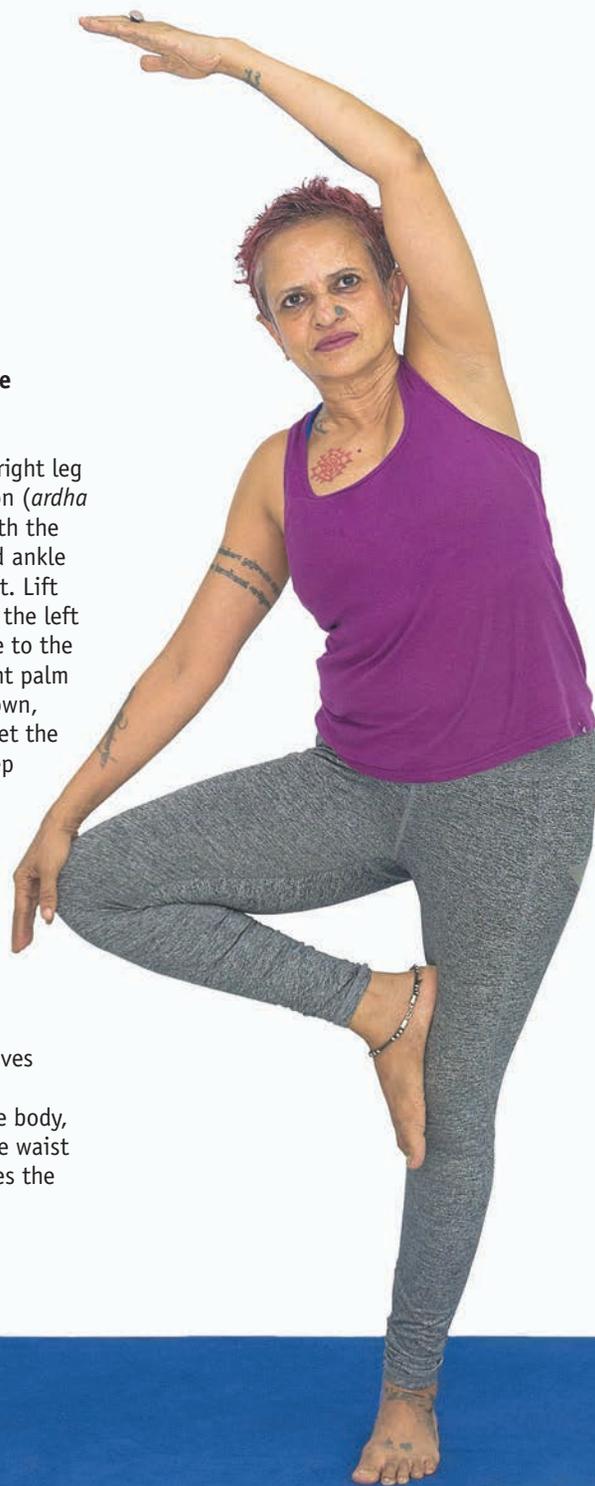
The best complete body workout is the series of energy-releasing practices (*pawanuktasana*). This can be life-transforming—not just for vertigo but several chronic ailments. The series covers the entire body, encourages lymphatic drainage, and is the best module for any issues related to the nervous system. There are several versions of the *pawanuktasana* series and some are also available online. Stick to one set for six weeks, and tweak the challenge by introducing variations.

YOGIC MOVES

Wish-fulfilling tree pose (*Kalpavrkasana*)

Stand straight. Fold your right leg into the half-lotus position (*ardha padmasana*) as shown, with the leg folded at the knee and ankle placed at the left hip joint. Lift both hands overhead. Let the left hand remain as it is, close to the left ear. Now pass the right palm over the right knee as shown, tilting to the right side. Let the torso remain straight. Keep the left leg also straight. The right hand can be at the right knee, or slide over it. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat for the other side. Breathe normally throughout.

Benefits: This pose improves balance and grounds you mentally. It works the side body, gently removing fat on the waist (if held for long) and tones the legs and arms.



Shameem Akhtar 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)



Money mantra: Don't ignore asset allocation

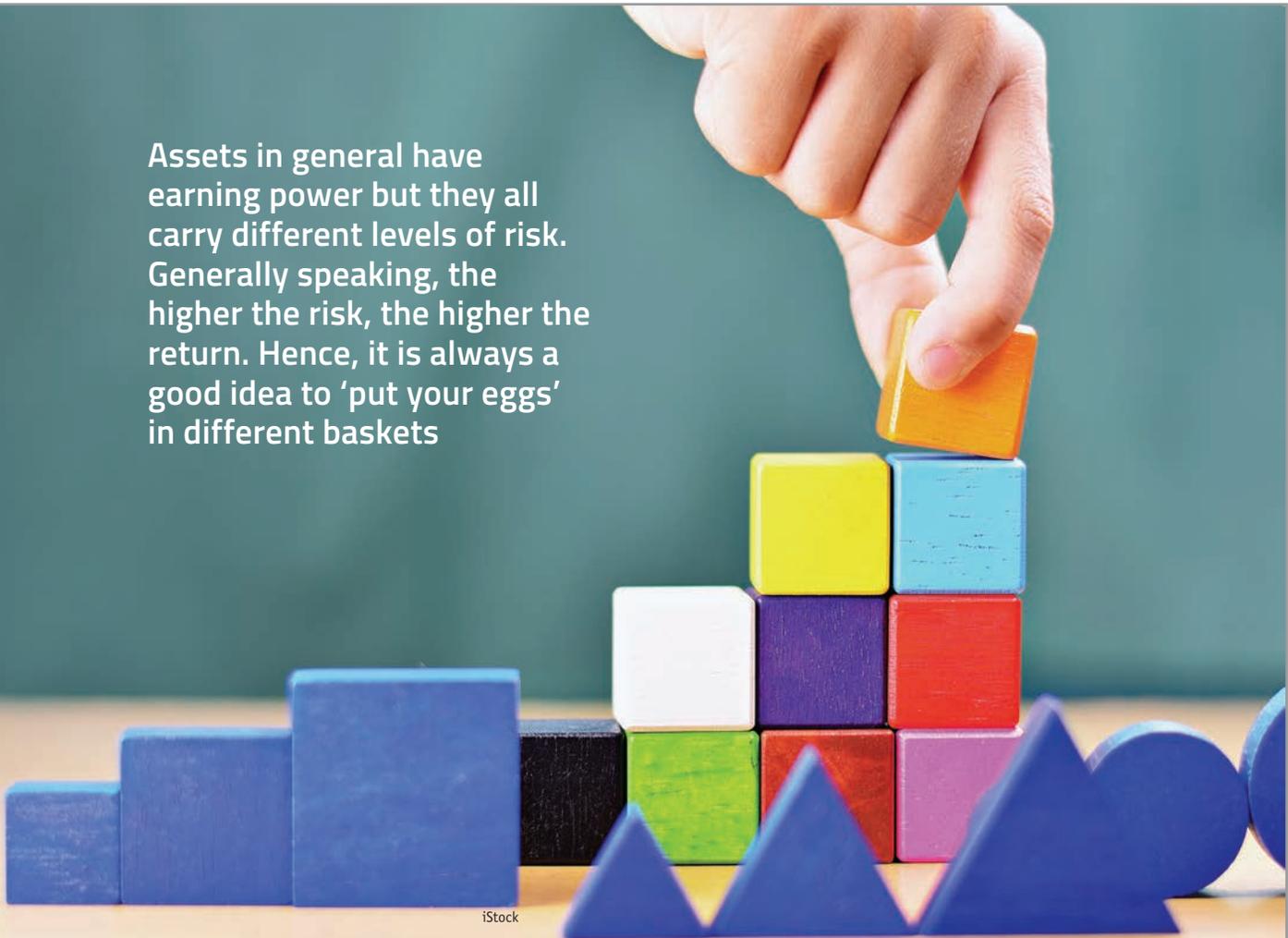
A sset allocation stands for a plan for your hard-earned wealth to meet your goals. I often get a hard stare when I use this term, so let me give you an example. Imagine you are the pilot of an aircraft and have to fly to London from Mumbai. There are two options. You can take off without checking the weather or planning the route, taking it as it comes. Or you can chart a route with the help of air traffic control, check the weather reports throughout the journey to avoid turbulence, and keep monitoring the flight at regular intervals—all so that you

land safely. Asset allocation does exactly that, to your existing and future investments.

“I don't want to waste time on asset allocation!”

This is a frequent pushback I get from investors, especially when they have sufficient earnings and wealth. Most of us feel we have more than our present needs—so why bother? There is also a general fear or lack of confidence in ‘disturbing’ existing investments owing to lack of knowledge. This is the myth I wish to destroy in this article.

Assets in general have earning power but they all carry different levels of risk. Generally speaking, the higher the risk, the higher the return. Hence, it is always a good idea to ‘put your eggs’ in different baskets



So, what are we talking about?

Over the course of our productive lives, we earn and save and/or inherit assets, including property, shares, cash, jewellery, etc. The sum total of this is 'our wealth'. Readers may recollect that I always believe that this is 'our bread earner' or 'third child'! Assets in general have earning power but they all carry different levels of risk. Generally speaking, the higher the risk, the higher the return. Hence, it is always a good idea to 'put your eggs' in different baskets as the wise saying goes. Asset allocation enables you to do precisely that.

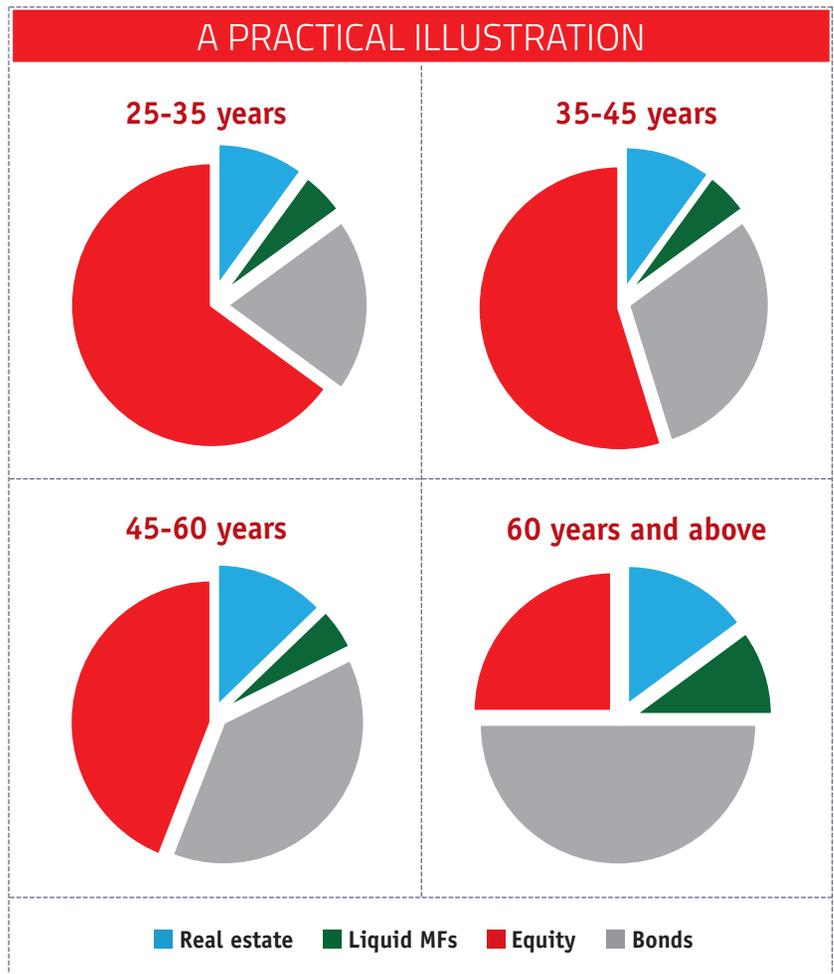
Merits of asset allocation

- To start with, it allows us to take stock of our wealth.
- Depending on our age, we can decide our future goals, including wealth transfer after death.
- It allows us to firmly set a limit to the risk we are willing to take.
- It prevents a potential mismatch of our goals versus investments.
- It sets a reasonable expectation of future returns.

The game plan

I firmly believe in (and practise) the mantra of asset allocation for my clients. One of the factors to closely evaluate before we allocate their wealth is their age profile. This is the most important factor in planning. The charts above indicate what different persons can target as ideal asset allocation. Remember, there is no single glove that fits all, even within the age groups, just a broad guide.

- Be absolutely clear on how much you need as regular income and at what frequency; i.e. monthly or quarterly or annually. Decide how



much investment is needed in low-risk instruments to meet the above need.

- Decide the level of risk you are comfortable with.
- Collate all your holdings, including property, cash, mutual funds, life policy values, shares, deposits and bonds, into a single sheet.
- Evaluate the above if it is ideal to your goals—contact us or your financial advisor if you are not clear.
- Via active consultation, finalise an asset allocation plan you are comfortable with.

- Most important, once this exercise is done, make sure you and your financial advisor implement it and stick to the plan.

We hope this article has thrown some light on a very relevant topic. At Ethical Advisers, we firmly believe investments should be based on well-researched facts and deep knowledge, not rumours. We welcome any questions you may have on this or other topics related to long-term investing—feel free to write in.

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

Freedom's foot soldier

A young 'freedom fighter' risked it all for his country in Assam. At 88 now, Dr Dulal Borkotoky recalls the fateful event, reports **Tapati Baruah Kashyap**



Tapati Baruah Kashyap

Opposite page: Dr Borkotoky, soon after joining the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh in 1957

For Dr Dulal Chandra Borkotoky, 15 August is a little more special than for most others. Every year, as the anniversary of Indian Independence approaches, the events that led up to that climactic moment of freedom begin to replay like a film reel in his mind.

It is a long and vivid stream of memories, the kind savoured only by people who once lived, breathed and participated in the events that changed the destiny of their country. Dr Borkotoky, a retired professor of medicine at Gauhati Medical College, is one of them.

In the run-up to the 71st anniversary of Independence, the 88 year-old takes us back to his life in Sootea village in Darrang district in North Assam, before recalling the

incident that changed him and his family forever. Like most boys his age, he attended school and worked the fields, but the air was politically fraught at the time. "Even as a student, I dreamt of an independent India and took an active part in the freedom struggle," he says.

Dr Borkotoky was anointed in the freedom movement at the tender age of nine. His father, a staunch nationalist, had resigned his job at the British-owned Baganpukhuri tea estate and opened a small grocery shop so he could earn a living. Sadly, he did not live to see the fruits of his sacrifice as he died shortly thereafter.

Like most other boys in his village, the lad too had enrolled with Shanti Bahini, a volunteer force of the Congress that largely comprised high school students

“The officer warned us against climbing atop the police station roof to hoist the flag. Anticipating this, a few men had brought along a long bamboo pole and raised the tricolour in the compound itself as *Vande Mataram* rent the air”



who kept vigil in the villages against the entry of the police. This too was part of the *Swadeshi* movement launched by Gandhi.

“We were required to help the needy and raise an alarm by beating the *doba* [a drum otherwise used for religious purposes] in the village *naam-ghar* in the event that the police entered the village,” remembers Dr Borkotoky. “One night, some miscreants set a government office on fire and a few days later, the government imposed a collective fine on every family in Sootea. Our family, too, was asked to pay ₹ 200. I was initially reluctant to pay the penalty as I was not involved in the incident. Ultimately, we had to sell some paddy from our small granary to pay the fine.”

At the age of 12, he was to experience a life-changing event, one that embodied all the sacrifices he and his family had made for their country. Borkotoky was in Class 6 when the national movement entered a crucial stage. The Congress had announced the Quit India movement against the British, and *Gandhiji* had called upon the people of India to ‘do or die.’ “The people in Assam were politically very conscious. Many had given up their jobs in the government and joined the freedom movement.”

Dr Borkotoky recalls the Congress party’s Quit India resolution of 9 August, which urged all Indians to hoist the national flag atop police stations and other government buildings. “While the All-India Congress Committee had fixed 20 September as the date, our local committee decided to do it as early as possible and fixed 22 August for the task. Accordingly, a large number of people, comprising school students, women and men, marched to Sootea police station shouting slogans. Of course, I was among them. As the procession entered the large compound, the police officer in charge asked his men to take up position.

Suspense building, he continues. “While six to seven policemen held rifles, the others had canes in their hands. The officer warned us against climbing atop the police station roof to hoist the flag. Anticipating this, local Congress

leaders Chenidhar Das, Biman Bora, my elder brother Deben and a few other men had brought along a long bamboo pole and raised the tricolour in the police station compound itself as *Vande Mataram* rent the air. Many of the senior leaders also delivered speeches. Our mission was accomplished.”

Two days later, the police rounded up several people involved in the flag-hoisting incident and sent them to Tezpur jail. Those arrested included six members of the Borkotoky family, including our doctor’s elder brother Deben. “The younger ones were spared, including myself.”

With the elder brother imprisoned for a year, the family suddenly found themselves in the grip of extreme poverty. “Tigers snatched two pregnant cows from our cattle shed, while a goat I had kept to sell so I could buy books was stolen one night,” Dr Borkotoky says.

Even though the residents of Sootea had risked everything on that fateful day, the flag-hoisting incident remained low-profile because, unlike those in nearby Gohpur and Dhekiajuli, it was peaceful. “While Gohpur and Dhekiajuli became well-known because many people were killed when the police opened fire upon the *satyagrahi*, our Sootea incident did not get the publicity it deserved,” Dr Borkotoky explains. “Two persons including a 14 year-old girl were killed in the Gohpur police station on 20 September. As many as 16 people, including a 12 year-old girl, were killed in the Dhekiajuli incident on the same day.” The Dhekiajuli incident also saw an unnamed beggar and a *sanyasi* laying down their lives while holding up the tricolour, he adds. “This was unheard of elsewhere in India.”

Dr Borkotoky, who now spends his retired life reading, gardening, walking and engaging with the local Lions Club in Guwahati, also remembers with pride the day India became independent. “As news came in that India would become independent on August 15, we, the members of *Pragati Sangha*, a youth club formed in the wake of World



The 1954 batch of Assam Medical College: Dr Borkotoky is seen standing fourth from left in the third row

War II, decided to provide a flag to each family in Sootea. A couple of us travelled to Tezpur, then about 30 km across the Jia-Bhoroli river, bought several metres of khadi cloth in green, saffron and white, and began to make flags out of it.

“I had learnt to sew from my mother and I helped sew the flags, while some of us cut them into pieces, and others put the blue stamp of the charkha on them. During the next three or four days, we went around the village selling the flags at ₹ 1 each. Almost every family bought one and we made a profit of ₹ 250, which went to the Pragati Sangha,” Dr Borkotoky reminisces.

Then, for that defining moment, the entire country was swept up in the euphoria of freedom. “On 15 August, we woke up early and gathered at the Bihutoli Bakori, the local ground as it was then called. People from all the villages around Sootea came in large numbers for the flag-hoisting. A Roger radio set that we had in our house was the only radio in the entire area. When we got to know that Gopinath Bardoloi, the Assam Premier (the leader of the Legislative Assembly was then called the ‘Premier’), would deliver a speech over the radio from Calcutta, we shifted it along with two large batteries to the local ground, placed it atop a table, fitted the aerial to two tall bamboo poles, and made a big horn out of cardboard to amplify the sound,” says Dr Borkotoky. He was 17 then, and clearly remembers the crowd sitting in silence as Bardoloi spoke about the freedom that had been achieved after such a long struggle. “After the broadcast was over, several local leaders also spoke about the significance of independence and the task ahead,” he adds.

It’s been more than seven decades since the Sootea flag-hoisting but that day is permanently emblazoned on Dr Borkotoky’s heart. “Gandhiji’s

“I often ask myself what we have actually got by achieving independence. We did get liberty but then liberty should have been accompanied by strong responsibilities”

principles of ahimsa and truthfulness continue to guide me even today. I have never lied in my life, and have never indulged in any act of violence or indiscipline,” says the retired teacher, simple but powerful words that he’s worn as a badge of honour all these years.

Dr Borkotoky recalls with a touch of nostalgia that he took his matriculation examination in British India and got his results in Independent India. “Our batch took the examination in July 1947 when India was still under British rule. When our results were declared in September, India had already become an independent country.” He went on to pass his MBBS exam from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, in 1954, and completed his MRCP from Edinburgh, Scotland, with a scholarship from the Assam government.

“Since I left my native place after matriculation back in 1947, I have never had the opportunity to attend an Independence Day function in Sootea. But then, while I religiously hoist the national flag at my residence on 15 August and 26 January, I also regularly attend the Independence Day programme at the Ambikagiri Park at Chandmari (in Guwahati) every year.”

As we come to end of our conversation, Dr Borkotoky solemnly wonders whether India has justified her hard-fought freedom and the bloody sacrifices made by so many people. “I often ask myself what we have actually got by achieving independence. We did get liberty but then liberty should have been accompanied by strong responsibilities. What we see in day-to-day life is corruption flourishing. I see only corruption and more corruption. If we had wiped out corruption, India would have been at the top of the world. I feel only sadness.” ✨

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

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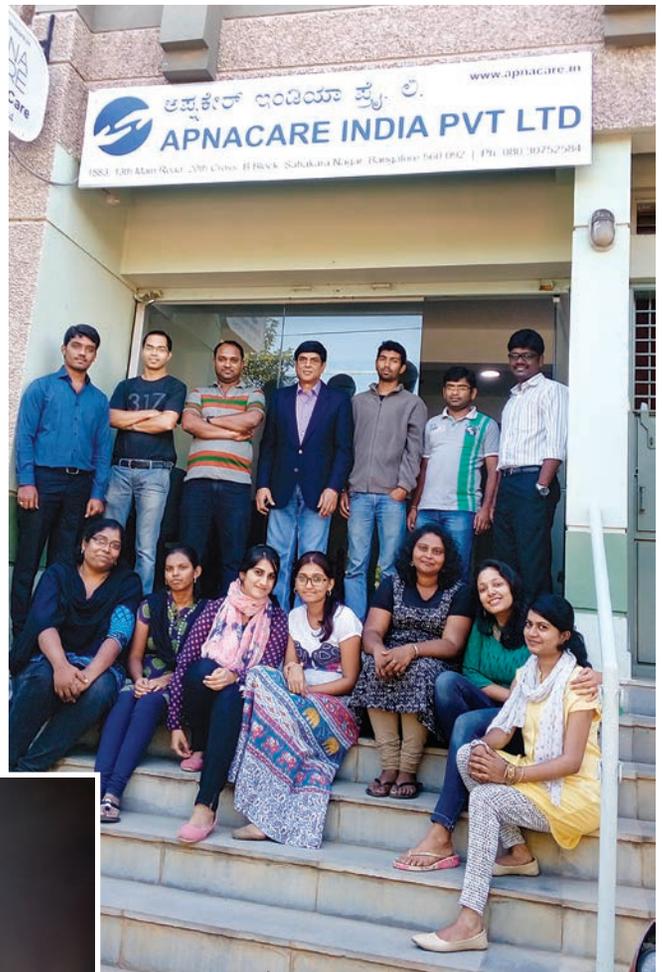
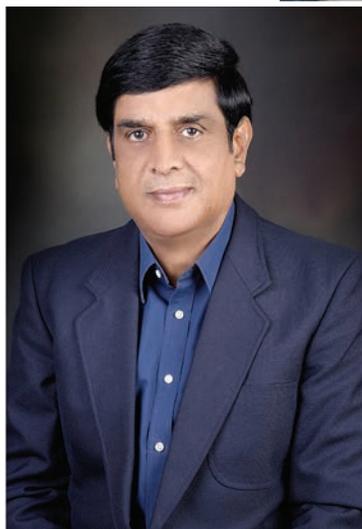
ApnaCare brings home a comprehensive healthcare solution for silvers

When 67 year-old Srinivas in Hyderabad finishes his breakfast, the alarm on his phone goes off, reminding him it's time to pop a pill. For many silvers like him who live alone, Smart Pill Reminder is a useful app that nudges them to take their medication on time. Not only does the app keep a record of medication taken, it sends an automatic message to the neighbourhood pharmacy when it's time for a refill.

Developed by ApnaCare, a first-of-its-kind comprehensive healthcare solution for silvers in India, the Smart Pill app is one of the many technological aides that make the lives of silvers easy. The genesis of ApnaCare, though, lies in a traumatic episode.

Ramu Muthangi, a technologist based in the US, had a difficult time finding care and support for his father in India. Though Muthangi lost his father, he realised the vacuum of a proper home healthcare solution in India. "I also noticed that the talks with my friends in the US inevitably veered towards our parents, their health concerns and our inability to do anything," he admits. "ApnaCare was launched in 2013 to bridge that gap."

With a presence in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune, ApnaCare's bouquet of services include post-hospitalisation and rehab care, physiotherapy, doctor visits, diagnostics, medical tools and assistance in identifying suitable living spaces for silvers. "We are also trying to create awareness that recovery is possible," says Muthangi. "In the US, rehabilitation is a must after health issues, and rehabilitation specialists are called occupational therapists."



"Simple tools such as a red bowl or an album with old pictures can play a vital role in slowing down decline in an Alzheimer's or dementia patient," he continues, emphasising that all products developed by ApnaCare are validated by research. "For instance, it has been established by clinical research that the colour red triggers hunger and thirst and that an Alzheimer's patient will eat 25 per cent more if served in a red bowl."



▶ 1



▶ 2



▶ 3



▶ 4



▶ 5

The latest to join the ranks of simple rehab and recovery tools (see *'Handy Tools'*) is a laser cane with visual clues and audio clips for patients suffering from Parkinson's. "While walking, these patients can freeze suddenly," he explains. "They need visual clues like lines or audio instructions such as a marching band to keep them going."

In an interview with **Srirekha Pillai**, the CEO and founder of ApnaCare draws attention to the need to rehabilitate silvers after neurological disorders. Excerpts:

BACKGROUND

I graduated from IIT Kanpur and during the early days of my career with the Indian Navy, I had the opportunity to work on some really good projects. The equipment I designed for ship communications is still in use. Thereafter, I went to the US and worked at ADC Telecommunications. I was with their R&D wing and was part of the team that wrote the standards for the cable modems you see today. At Polycom, where I went next, I was the technical programme director of their next-generation audio conferencing equipment. Later, I joined Honeywell Aerospace.

THE STORY

My father, who used to be very independent, fell in the bathroom and broke his femur bone. The surgery was successful and he was fine. But I was appalled to discover that there was no good post-operative care in India. We arranged someone to take care of him. However, there was no professional help available. He was not taken on walks or motivated to move his muscles, as a result of which his whole body became stiff. In your silver

1. Leg skates
2. Prism finger ladder
3. Palm skates
4. Cutlery set
5. Rope and pulley

Opposite page: Muthangi; (top) with his team

HANDY TOOLS

Stroke rehab kit

The tools focus on reviving movement, balance and coordination for activities such as walking, sitting, eating, dressing and bathing. These include:

- **Palm skate:** To stimulate weakened palm and wrist
- **Leg skate:** To develop strength in lower limbs
- **Rope and pulley:** For those with weak upper body strength
- **Finger ladder:** For wrist, elbow and shoulder rehabilitation
- **Bent spoon:** For those with decreased wrist movement
- **Water sipper:** Spill-proof water sipper with a straw



- 6. Water sipper
- 7. Hand skate
- 8. Finger exerciser
- 9. Colour-coded rings
- 10. Abacus
- 11. Lace board game
- 12. Activity pillow

years, you should get back on your feet quickly, or you degenerate pretty fast. He became totally dependent on others even for his daily chores. I used to visit him quite often. The doctor told us that all his vital values were good, but he had lost the will to live. When I went back after one of my trips, I got a call saying he was no more.

THE GENESIS

I realised I wasn't alone. Many of my friends were similarly worried about their ageing parents. That is when I hit upon the idea of providing comprehensive healthcare for silvers. My daughter Bhavana, who was studying at Harvard Business School, was excited about it. We did a dipstick survey and found many takers. The real push came when we won a prize at the Biz Plan contest at Harvard Business School in the Social Venture Track.

In 2013, I came to India and studied the system for six months. I toured all the metros and found good service providers. We had our own criteria for checking their quality. We did a background

Parkinson's care kit

The tools help people with Parkinson's disease reverse their symptoms and lead an independent life. These include:

- **Hand skate:** To develop strength in upper limbs
- **Double handle cup:** Makes it easier for those with limited movement in their hands to handle the cup
- **Food bumper:** Helps stop food from sliding off the plates to make self-feeding easier
- **Foldable walking stick:** For extra support while walking; can be carried wherever one goes
- **Weighted cuff:** For tremor reduction during eating; comes with a Velcro grip and easily fits on wrist

check on how they selected people, trained and tracked them. We also tied up with hospitals and clinics such as Apollo, Fortis and Vasan Eye Care for basic health checks. Our clients are entitled to a 10 per cent discount at these clinics. We kick-started our services in Bengaluru, then spread to Chennai and Hyderabad. With over 70 doctors on call, Bengaluru is now completely covered. We have nurses on call for wound dressings and administering injections and IVs. We also provide companion care for personal hygiene.

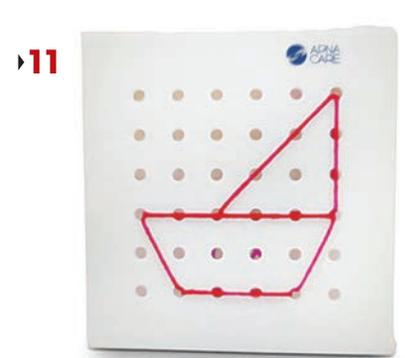
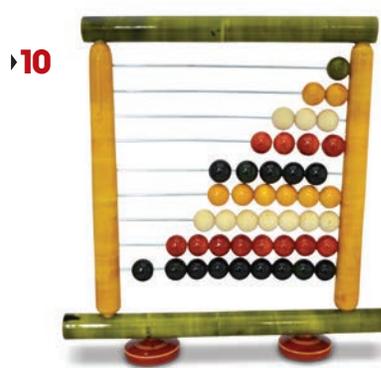
TECHNOLOGICAL EDGE

We use technology to connect people who are seeking care for their elderly loved ones with the best of service providers. We have a good backend system and apps that show whether doctor/nursing/therapist visits were done, while listing the procedures carried out.

We also employ cloud telephony. No matter which number the client calls—Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and US—the call comes to us. We have nurses who attend the call, record the medical history of the patient and allot them the required care. We look for the right person for each patient. For instance, those with peg tubes, tracheal tubes and tubes in the nose and catheter need specialised care.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANGLE

According to statistics from WHO, over 50 per cent of silvers above the age of 60 are prone to depression. This is more so in India than in the Western countries where people lead a highly independent life right from the beginning. I feel silvers here need someone to talk to who can empathise with them. There is this gentleman in Bengaluru we take care of. One of his kids is in



the US, while the other is in Australia. Though his kids have been calling, he doesn't want to go there. We have someone to take care of him. Once a week, our operations manager visits him for feedback. He says he is very happy with the service, but will still come up with a list of complaints so that he can keep talking!

REHABILITATING PATIENTS

Almost 50 per cent of the calls we get pertain to patients with neurological disorders, such as stroke, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, dementia, etc. Having studied what has been done for stroke and dementia patients in the US, UK and Canada, we have come up with solutions that help rehabilitate such patients in India. We have developed a stroke rehab kit, dementia care kit and Parkinson's care kit. In the case of stroke patients, for instance, good rehabilitation after surgery can improve the chances of recovery. Rehabilitation helps stroke survivors relearn skills that are lost when part of the brain is damaged.

Studies over the past decade have shown that the adult brain can 'rewire' itself when damaged in stroke recovery. The ability of the brain to rewire or re-organise itself after injury is called neuroplasticity. Studies have also shown that the adult brain can create new neurons, a phenomenon called 'neurogenesis.' Rehabilitation involving neuro-



Alzheimer's and dementia care kit

This set of tools and devices ensure maximum function in daily life, and helps improve cognition, mood and behaviour. These include:

- **Tic Tac Toe:** Improves hand dexterity in arthritic individuals
- **Abacus:** Helps Alzheimer's patients develop a pictorial representation of the problem in the brain
- **Lace board game:** Improves dexterity, mobility and fine or gross motor skills
- **Wooden stacking ring:** Enhances hand and eye coordination and improves memory
- **GPS tracker:** A wearable safety device that helps track, locate and monitor the individual from even a remote location

plasticity principles requires the repetition of the task to be effective. I have learnt all this from *Stroke Rehab: A Guide for Patients and Their Caregivers* by Karen Murray. There is a 90 per cent chance of recovery from stroke if one follows home rehabilitation regularly.

SAFETY FIRST

We employ people only after a thorough background check, which involves an academic qualification check, address check and police verification. Further, our tracking services record the movement of the caregiver and the services offered.

PATENT PENDING

We have applied for a patent for all our kits. Though some tools are available separately in the market abroad, no one has assembled a kit.

For more details, visit www.apnacare.in

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:: cover feature ::

THE LEGACY OF

With nearly 500,000 Indians dying every year waiting for a transplant, organ donation is an imperative today, overcoming the paucity of infrastructure, lack of awareness and outdated mindsets. Analysing government policies and gathering perspectives from experts, stakeholders and families, **Sahil Jaswal** looks at how far we've come—and how much further we have to go

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ORGAN DONATION

OPEN TO ALL: Anyone can register to be an organ donor, regardless of age, race or medical history. That includes you.

CARE COMES FIRST: Your donation status will not affect the medical care you receive. The first priority of medical professionals is always to save lives.

LIVE AND LET LIVE: A 'living donor' can also save lives by donating a kidney or part of the liver.

REST ASSURED: Organ donation does not become an option until brain death has been declared.

NO COSTS: Organ donation does not have any cost or financial implications for donors or their families.

ACT OF FAITH: All major religions support organ donation and view it as a final act of love and generosity.

DONOR'S DIGNITY: Donors and their families are treated with care, respect and dignity throughout the process.

RESPECT YOUR RITES: Last rites are possible for organ donors. There are no visible deformities.



life

On 5 July 2018, the city of Mumbai saw its 27th cadaver donation of the year and its 92nd heart transplant since August 2015. Dr Anvay Mulay, head of the cardiac transplant team at Fortis Hospital, Mulund, successfully harvested a heart from a 40 year-old donor, a resident of Thane, who succumbed to injuries from a road traffic accident and was pronounced brain dead—the heart was transplanted into a 55 year-old male recipient from Surat.

THE NUMBER CRUNCH

It was another significant milestone in a larger mission: the promotion of organ donation. Every year, nearly 500,000 Indians die because of non-availability of organs—an estimated 200,000 people die of liver disease, 50,000 people die from heart disease and 150,000 people await a kidney transplant, while 1 million people with corneal blindness await a transplant. Indeed, India has an abysmally low rate of 0.86 persons as organ donors per million population—a paltry number by global standards (see *'Global Lessons'*, opposite page).

Thus, every donation, every successful transplant, is cause for cheer. Consider the fact that up until 2008, Maharashtra had not conducted even one successful heart transplant, as we reported in our feature "Donating Lives" (*May 2008*). The tide turned only in August 2015, when Fortis Hospital, Mulund, successfully transplanted a heart into a 22 year-old graphic designer. The heart was flown in from Pune; overcoming the organisational challenges, Mumbai Police created a green corridor and delivered the heart to Mulund, 20 km from the airport, during peak hours, taking one-fifth of the usual time. That year, Maharashtra successfully transplanted five hearts; 2016 saw 47 heart transplants from the state.

Our 2008 report also noted the fact that liver transplant activity was still in its infancy in India—the number of transplants till May 2007 was just 342 in the entire country. Fortunately,

the situation has improved. In 2016, there were 108 liver transplants in Maharashtra alone; across India, there were 665 liver transplants from deceased donors, up from 523 in 2015 and 354 in 2014.

According to data from the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), in 2017, Tamil Nadu saw 176 cadaver donations of which 318 kidneys, 152 livers, 112 hearts and 87 lungs were transplanted, while Kerala had 26 cadaver donations, of which 46 kidneys, 19 liver and eight hearts were transplanted, and Chandigarh saw 44 cadaver donors, with 121 organs successfully transplanted. In Maharashtra, there were 170 cadaver donations compared to 142 in 2016, serving up 503 organs for end-stage organ failure patients. Of the 170 cadavers, 57 came from Mumbai and saved nearly 350 end-stage organ failure patients, marking the organ donation rate at 2.34, comparable to leading states like Tamil Nadu at 2.56. This year, 2018, up until 8 June, Maharashtra has had 57 cadaver donations, from which a total of 763 organs and tissues have been utilised.

UNDERSTANDING ORGAN DONATION

It's clear that organ donation is imperative in India today. But first, it's important to understand the process. Organ donation is when a person allows an organ to be removed, legally, to gift to another person with end-stage organ disease. It is done either by consent while the

donor is alive or after death with the assent of the next of kin.

LIVE ORGAN DONATION

As the name suggests, live organ donation takes place when a person is alive. Individuals of 18 or above can donate their organs and tissues either to 'near relatives' or out of affection to others. Near relatives, according to the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) 1994, refers to parents, children, sister and spouse, but the Act was amended in 2011 to include grandparents and grandchildren. While the Act allows donors to donate out of affection or any other special reason, the process is quite stringent and has to go through the local and, if necessary, the state authorisation committee to curb organ trafficking. A living donor can donate a kidney or a part of the liver.

Significantly, 85 per cent of liver donors in India are live donors. Take, for instance, 55 year-old Anita Sathe, who was diagnosed with cirrhosis in 2011. Further damage was limited through heavy medications. However, in December 2017, her condition worsened and a liver transplant became unavoidable. "The doctors told us that we could either wait for a cadaveric donation, which could have taken at least a year, or somebody from the family could donate," shares Anita. Luckily, the family stepped up—her 28 year-old daughter Anuja's liver matched perfectly. "We were told by the doctors that the liver regenerates, so I was ready to help my mother," she says. In February 2018, a part of Anuja's liver was sliced

GLOBAL LESSONS

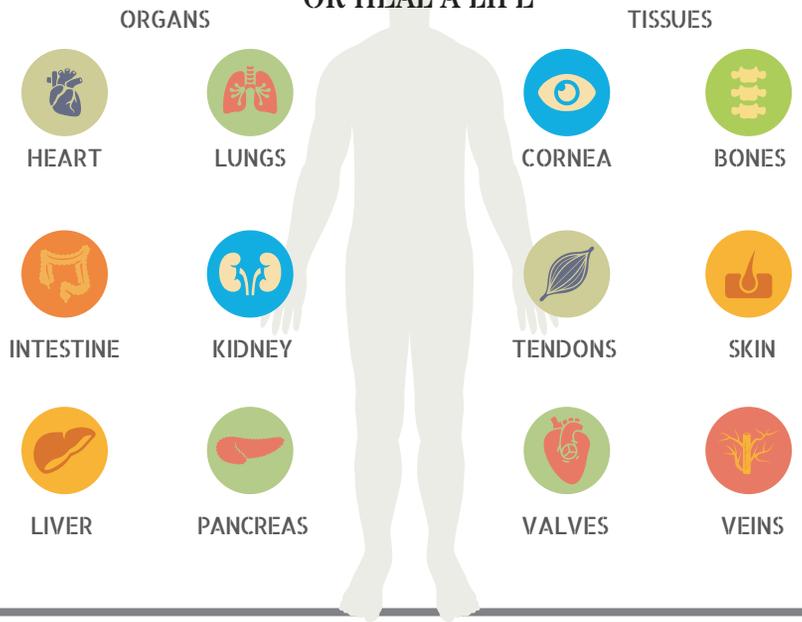
THE TOP 5 (in per million population/pmp)

- Spain - 46.9 pmp
- Portugal - 34.0 pmp
- Belgium - 33.6 pmp
- Croatia - 33.0 pmp
- USA - 32.0 pmp

SOURCE: International Registry in Organ Donation and Transplantation, 2017

- In 1989, the Spanish government invested heavily in the organisational structure of organ donation, ensuring every hospital in the country had its own organ donation coordinator. It also addressed the family consent rate by adopting a long contact method where coordinators identify potential donors early (using clinical triggers) and spend a considerable amount of time getting to know the family of the potential donor.
- In 1991, the Surgeon General of the United States introduced new legislation in the US Federal Register mandating that each hospital had a legal duty to identify and refer every potential donor to the Organ Donor Organisation.
- In 2011, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) appointed Gurch Randhawa, a professor of diversity in public health, to help overcome religious and community objections to organ donation through campaigns, surveys and seminars.
- In 2012, Israel introduced a scheme, nicknamed 'Don't Give, Don't Get', where priority is offered for transplants to living donors and their family members, along with health and life insurance, for up to five years and complete reimbursements to live donors. The transplant rate shot up by 60 per cent within the first year of implementation.

EACH OF THESE CAN SAVE OR HEAL A LIFE



The doctors told us that we could either wait for a cadaveric donation, which could have taken at least a year, or somebody from the family could donate
Anita Sathe, 55, live liver recipient

and transplanted into her mother at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH). Six months hence, both mother and daughter are in the pink of health, although Anita is still being monitored monthly.

"A recipient is monitored weekly for the first month, every second week for three months and then monthly," says Dr Ashutosh Chauhan, liver transplant and hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) surgeon at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH). "The donor is released in five to six days with painkillers and has to come for only one follow-up after seven to 10 days." He adds that a transplant is done only for end-stage liver disease. "Cirrhosis, where scar tissue replaces normal tissue, is the most common reason why adults need liver transplants. Hepatitis B and C, where the liver swells up,

cancer and metabolic disorders, if unchecked, are other reasons that make a transplant imperative."

SWAP DONATIONS

Swap donations are also live donations, but for families that don't have the same blood group. For example, a husband, incompatible to donate his kidney or liver for his wife, can donate for a stranger of another family, provided anyone related to the stranger does the same for his wife. Cases of swap donation were included in the Transplant of Human Organs and Tissues (THOT) Act 2014 in an attempt to increase the donor pool. The Act stated that swap donations shall be approved by the authorisation committee of the hospital district or state and are permissible only through near relatives.



“CAUSES OF CIRRHOSIS INCLUDE ALCOHOL ABUSE, CHRONIC HEPATITIS B, CHRONIC HEPATITIS C, FATTY LIVER DISEASES, AUTOIMMUNE HEPATITIS, BILIARY ATRESIA (NEWBORNS) AND METABOLIC DISORDERS”

- Dr Ashutosh Chauhan, liver transplant and hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) surgeon, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital

However, medical advancements, at least in the case of kidney transplants, have made the concept of swap donations less relevant. “Blood group and tissue match were the criteria for kidney transplant, but at Kokilaben Hospital we have overcome these two hurdles,” says Dr Sharad Seth, head of nephrology at KDAH. “So even if there is a mismatch, the results are successful.” In addition, Rekha Barot, transplant coordinator at KDAH, shares, “Seventy-five per cent of live donors are women. They are either trying to save their husband, children or other family members.”

DECEASED ORGAN DONATION

Deceased organ donation is the aim of donor pledges, and how organ donation rates are determined. Anyone regardless of age, race or gender can become an organ and tissue donor

after they have been declared either brain dead or deceased from cardio-respiratory death (circulatory death), unless they suffer from malignancies like cancer, infections like HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, and diseases like tuberculosis. In India, after death, the consent of a near relative or a person in lawful possession of the body is required before the organs can be retrieved.

DONATION AFTER BRAIN DEATH (DBD)

Donation after brain death is when a deceased person’s family consents to donate their organs to another patient suffering from end-stage organ disease. Brain death is permanent cessation of all functions of the brain—while individual organs may function, there is lack of the brain’s integrating functionality and loss of respiration, consciousness and cognition that confirms death as an irreversible condition. DBD was legalised in 1994 under THOA; the same year, in August, Dr P Venugopal, head of the cardiothoracic centre in Delhi’s All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), carried out a successful heart transplant. After brain death, almost 37 different organs and tissues can be donated, including vital organs such as kidneys, heart, liver and lungs.

A PRECIOUS GIFT

In Mumbai, businessman Chimanlal Sawla, 52, was pronounced brain dead on 17 January 2018—his two kidneys, eyes, liver and heart were donated. “The doctors and the transplant coordinator of KDAH had asked us if we would like to donate his organs,” shares his son Jignesh. “The family agreed unanimously as we knew he would be giving others the most precious gift of life.”

Mumbaikar Nirmala Nandu, 65, knows just how precious it is. Diagnosed with cirrhosis in 2013, she registered for a donation in

2015 through several hospitals. “Almost a year went by waiting for a donor,” she recalls. “When it became unbearable, my daughter got her tests done and turned out to be a match. However, at the last minute a liver was made available from Indore.” The transplant was done in November 2016; two years on, Nandu is back to her household routine.

Indeed, the list of people awaiting transplants is woefully long across the country. In June 2018, in Mumbai alone, 3,000 people were awaiting a kidney transplant, 250 to 300 a liver transplant, and 10 to 15 a heart transplant.

In January 2016, 35 year-old Rubina, another resident of Mumbai, was



“DIABETES AND HYPERTENSION ARE THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF KIDNEY FAILURE. BOTH ARE ON THE INCREASE. IN 2007, 16 PER CENT OF THE US ADULT POPULATION WAS SUFFERING FROM KIDNEY PROBLEMS; NOW, IT IS 20 PER CENT. INDIA STANDS AT 30 PER CENT WITH REGARD TO PEOPLE ABOVE 40 YEARS OF AGE”

- Dr Sharad Seth, head of nephrology, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital

told her heart's functions were limited to 10-15 per cent. In March 2016, she registered through KDAH; on 26 June 2016, she underwent transplant surgery. "A transplant becomes imperative when a patient reaches terminal heart failure, which is also called 'Stage D'," explains Dr Nandkishore Kapadia, director of heart and lung transplant at KDAH. "In the US, 500,000 patients are suffering from heart failure; in India the number is 2.7 million. India is the diabetic capital of the world, so there are more incidents of heart failure." Here, he makes an interesting point: "Despite the rise in terminal heart failure, Mumbai has only 10-15 on the waiting list because most patients are referred late. Either the patient doesn't want to accept that they are heading towards Stage D heart failure or the treating doctor is unaware they have a potential transplant patient. So I would say, at least Mumbai is not lacking in donors, but recipients."

Evidently, it is not only paucity of donors but a lack of infrastructure and awareness that is leading to the needless loss of life. Exacerbating the problem is an archaic mindset guided by superstition.

GROWING INFRASTRUCTURE

In a report published in journal *Neurology India*, Dr Aneesh Srivastava of the department of urology and renal transplantation, Sanjay Gandhi Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Lucknow, writes, "The total organ donation shortage of the country can be met if 5-10 per cent

of victims involved in fatal accidents serve as organ donors." But here's the rub: lack of infrastructure.

As Dr Vimal Bhandari, director of NOTTO, explains, "Over 1.5 lakh people die every year in road traffic accidents. And it is true that in almost 30-40 per cent of fatalities, the cause of the death has been head injury, leading to brain death. However, in such cases, the patient is admitted to public hospitals and the majority have not applied for retrieval and transplant license."

Consider the fact that while there are over 160 government medical colleges in India, only a handful are licensed to be retrieval and transplant centres. According to the NOTTO website, there are a total of 231 transplant and retrieval centres across India, both public and private.

In this scenario, Tamil Nadu stands tall as an example to follow—with 103 transplant centres in place, its organ donation rate, at 2.56, is the highest in India. According to data available with State Health and Family Welfare Department under the Deceased Donor Organ Transplant Programme, a total of 6,481 organ donations have been undertaken in the state from October 2008 to May 2018. In March 2015, the Transplant Authority of Tamil Nadu (TRANS-TAN) was created to coordinate and supervise transplant activities (including live, cadaver and tissue transplants). And while private hospitals still continue to be largest contributors of cadavers to the

programme, the state offers free kidney, liver and heart transplants in government hospitals. Maharashtra is also making strides with a total of 86 organ transplant centres and 42 non-transplant organ retrieval centres (NTORC) (see *Indian Milestones*, page 48). Mumbai and Pune both have 36 transplant centres, as of April 2018.



"IN TERMS OF HEART REJECTION RATE, 95 PER CENT OF HEART TRANSPLANT PATIENTS ARE ALIVE AT THE END OF ONE YEAR; 21 PER CENT ARE ALIVE AT THE END OF 20 YEARS. MINOR TO MODERATE REJECTIONS KEEP HAPPENING BUT THEY ARE TREATABLE. SEVERE LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS ON THE OPERATING TABLE ARE NON-EXISTENT. DYSFUNCTION OF THE HEART SOON AFTER A TRANSPLANT HAPPENS IN 10 TO 15 PER CENT OF CASES, WHICH CAN MOSTLY BE TREATED THROUGH EXTRACORPOREAL MEMBRANE OXYGENATION"

- Dr Nandkishore Kapadia, director of heart and lung transplant, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital



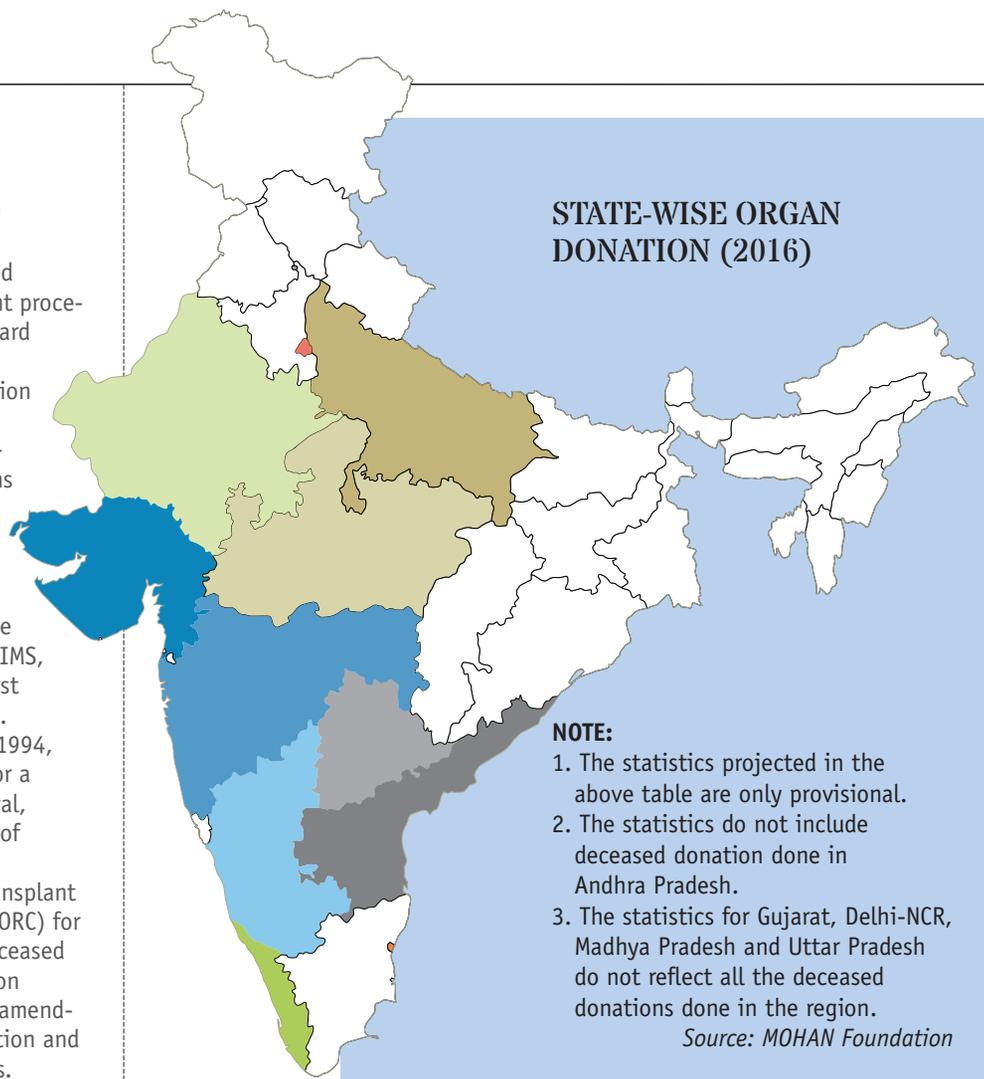
“

Almost a year went by waiting for a donor, so my daughter got her tests done and turned out to be a match, but at the last minute a liver was made available from Indore
Nirmala Nandu, 65, cadaver liver recipient

INDIAN MILESTONES

- **1968:** Dr P K Sen performed India's first heart transplant procedure at Mumbai's King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEM).
- **1994:** The primary legislation regarding organ donation and transplantation, Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was passed in 1994.
- **1994:** Brain death was legalised; on 3 August, Dr P Venugopal, head of the cardiothoracic centre at AIIMS, Delhi, performed India's first successful heart transplant.
- **1994:** According to THOA 1994, hospitals had to register for a license to engage in removal, storage or transplantation of human organs.
- **2011:** Provision of non-transplant organ retrieval centres (NTORC) for retrieval of organs from deceased donors and their registration under amended Act; THOA amendment included tissue donation and registration of tissue banks.
- **2012:** Dr Jnanesh Thacker, consultant cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon, Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai, performed the first successful lung transplant in India.
- **2014:** Cases of swap donation introduced in amended THOA. Swap donations are to be approved by the authorisation committee of the hospital, district or state where transplantation is to be done. Donations permissible only from near relatives of swap recipients.
- **2018:** On 16 June, Indore created a record in central India by facilitating its 32nd green corridor in the past 32 months, for a kidney transplant.
- **2018:** On 27 June, NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation) provided a green corridor for a heart from Mumbai to Delhi, covering a distance of 1,178 km in just 2:30 hours.

STATE-WISE ORGAN DONATION (2016)



NOTE:

1. The statistics projected in the above table are only provisional.
2. The statistics do not include deceased donation done in Andhra Pradesh.
3. The statistics for Gujarat, Delhi-NCR, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh do not reflect all the deceased donations done in the region.

Source: MOHAN Foundation

WHAT TAMIL NADU GOT RIGHT!

- Focus on promoting deceased organ donation
- Emphasis on not letting organs go to waste
- First state to make declaring brain death mandatory
- Training transplant coordinators
- Implementation of transplant guidelines
- Centralised waiting list
- Set of guidelines for hospitals that are not retrieval or transplant centres

Other states, unfortunately, tell a different story. Eastern India is the worst, with most states not having conducted cadaver donations at all, along with Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. "The need of the hour is to get infrastructure in place," says Lalitha Raghuram, country director of the Multi Organ Harvesting and Aid Network (MOHAN) Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation promoting organ donation and transplantation since 1997. Raghuram who has also served as executive director of the Eye Bank Association of India (1993-2002), further adds, "Assam as of now has only five retrieval and transplant centres, and Gujarat has around 12 [according to MOHAN Foundation], while Telangana has 26."

STATE	NO. OF DONORS	KIDNEY	LIVER	HEART	LUNG	PANCREAS	INTERSTINE	HAND	TOTAL ORGANS
Tamil Nadu	180	340	169	79	50	10	0	0	648
Maharashtra	132	204	126	47	1	1	0	0	379
Telangana	106	182	100	15	2	4	0	0	303
Kerala	72	112	64	19	0	1	1	2	199
Karnataka	70	102	61	16	0	0	0	0	179
Gujarat	62	134	61	8	0	1	0	0	204
Delhi-NCR	28	44	26	7	2	0	0	0	79
Chandigarh	27	48	6	2	0	5	0	0	61
Uttar Pradesh	19	36	17	0	0	0	0	0	53
Madhya Pradesh	11	22	11	7	0	0	0	0	40
Puducherry	8	16	3	3	0	0	0	0	22
Rajasthan	8	14	7	5	1	0	0	0	27
TOTAL	723	1,254	651	208	56	22	1	2	2,194

To achieve greater success, both the public and private sectors need to come together. Take civic-run King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital in Mumbai, for instance. This is where the Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (ROTTO) for the Western Zone has been set up; yet, it only received its heart retrieval and transplant license in May 2018. "It's the private sector that is leading the charge," affirms Dr Ashutosh Chauhan of KDAH. "But the overall rate will become better if the government sector also joins hands."

COMBATING POLITICAL APATHY

"Organ donation is a public health issue," says Dr Ram Narain, executive director of KDAH. Indeed, the Deceased Donor Organ Transplant

Programme is run at state level. The steps to create awareness about organ donations, including promoting public understanding of brain death, networking between hospitals and protocols for allocation, come under the state's purview. And all states do not follow the same protocol.

In many states, there is no government body to monitor (or hold accountable for) proceedings in an organ transplant case. Gujarat is one such state with no organ donation policy in place, although it has 12 kidney retrieval centres and two heart retrieval centres—Care Institute of Medical Sciences (CIMS) and Sterling Hospital, both private, both in Ahmedabad. Recently, ROTTO Maharashtra, which administers the Western India zone, refused

to accept any organs from Gujarat till it frames a policy and forms a State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO).

Again, Tamil Nadu forms a stark contrast with its centralised waiting list and streamlined procedures to declare brain death. Hospitals work in conjunction with the state government, which has made it compulsory for all hospitals to report cases of brain-dead patients, enabling it to identify and retrieve organs from potential donors. It also permits relatives of organ donors to get priority in organ transplant, as long as the hospital certifies the relationship. The state also conducts workshops to educate and sensitise medical professionals from across the state on deceased donation.

PRESERVATION OF ORGANS

- **HEART:** 4 hours after removal from the donor
- **LUNG:** 8-11 hours
- **LIVER:** 12-18 hours
- **PANCREAS:** 8-12 hours
- **INTESTINES:** 7-8 hours
- **KIDNEYS:** 24-48 hours

istock



“MANY GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS DON'T HAVE A CLEAR PROTOCOL FOR DECLARING BRAIN DEATH; EVEN THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY SOMETIMES ARE AT A LOSS, SO THEY DON'T COME FORWARD AND INFORM THE AUTHORITIES OF THE POTENTIAL DONOR”

Dr Vimal Bhandari, director of NOTTO

Hearteningly, others have taken a cue. In 2015, Union Surface and Transport and Shipping Minister (and Nagpur MP) Nitin Gadkari, along with Nagpur Mayor Pravin Datke and Rajya Sabha member Ajay Sancheti pledged their organs. In fact, Gadkari has been instrumental in proposing to incorporate organ donation information on the driving license, nationally. Also, Maharashtra Medical Education Minister Girish Mahajan took the lead in starting an online registry for organ donations in August 2016; during his tenure, the number of donation centres in the state increased from three to 17 (four civic-run and 13 state medical colleges) and organ donation has been adopted as a flagship programme of the state government.

What's more, this June, the Indian Union Health Ministry recommended that state health departments offer 'cash rewards' for organ donation. The jury's still out on that one, though, as many experts contend that commercialisation of such an altruistic act would deter people to avoid the stigma of having 'sold' the organs of their loved ones and give rise to organ trafficking, no matter how stringent the processes to gauge the motives of a donation. Instead, they argue that incentives should be non-monetary, as is the case in Israel (*see box on 'Global Lessons'*).

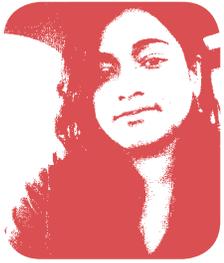
RAISING AWARENESS

Political will aside, lack of awareness is a major bugbear.

Priyanka Borah would agree. The CEO of Zuble Foundation, the first NGO working for cadaver donation awareness in the Northeast, she says, "Lack of awareness among the medical fraternity tops the list of impediments in the programme, followed by lack of awareness among the masses. With infrastructure at a very nascent stage, no proper medical training and lackadaisical networking between hospitals, things are far from getting better." Dr Bhandari of NOTTO adds, "Many government hospitals don't have a clear protocol for declaring brain death; even the medical community sometimes are at a loss, so they don't come forward and inform the authorities of the potential donor."

Many brain death cases occur in public hospitals where declaration of brain death is negligible. In fact, there have been innumerable cases where patients are declared brain dead but are either kept on a ventilator or just taken off it because attendants don't understand the process of organ donation. And with the medical fraternity unaware, family members also find themselves in the dark for options in case of a death.

"Brain death is a difficult concept to wrap their head around for most families," says Bhavana Chabbria of Shatayu Foundation, an Ahmedabad-based public-service initiative by Govindbhai C Patel Foundation. "Even though there are no chances of resuscitation, a brain-dead person is still warm and pink and most families



“

“I got a match within four months but I rejected the kidney... As luck would have it, another kidney was made available to me and on 14 February 2018, I underwent surgery”

Reema Joseph, 36, cadaver kidney recipient

can't come to terms that their loved one has passed away. This is where awareness among the masses and the medical fraternity plays a major role in increasing the donor pool. Correspondence by transplant coordinators over the matter is another step to educate the families of potential donors and probably save many lives.”

Metropolitan cities seem to be doing better. “The masses are surprisingly aware now, through countless initiatives and campaigns by various organisations,” says Raghuram of MOHAN Foundation. “They understand that organ donation is a vital service to humanity.” Concurring with her, Rekha Barot of KDAH says, “Lack of awareness among donors hasn't played much of a role in dearth of organs available, at least in metros. In my personal experience, a family does not agree to donate only when the sentiments attached are extremely overwhelming. Once we explain the deed they are doing and that a brain-dead patient can save at least eight lives, almost everyone agrees to be a donor. And this is true for all classes, educated or uneducated.”

Mumbaikar Reema Joseph, 36, has been the recipient of this generosity. After suffering kidney failure in 2013, she started dialysis in 2015 but her condition continued to worsen. She finally registered through KDAH in October 2017. “I got a match within four months but I rejected the kidney as my family was travelling and I could not make that decision alone,” she reveals. “But as luck would have

it, another kidney was made available to me and on 14 February 2018, I underwent surgery.”

Maharashtra Medical Education Minister Mahajan reiterated this point at the CSR Corporate Meet held on 8 June 2018 by *The Times of India* in association with KDAH. But he cautioned, “Though there is greater awareness... we should not think the battle is won. There is still a set of people that believes in outrageous and outdated theories. For instance, ‘If I donate now, in my next birth I will be born without those organs.’ Such beliefs can be eradicated only by educating the masses.”

ACTS OF FAITH

Religious beliefs do play a significant role in the low consent rates seen in India. This has been cause for concern even in UK and their government is trying to address this (*see ‘Global Lessons’, page 45*).

With this in mind, a key component of the organ donation awareness initiative by KDAH and *The Times of India*, now in its sixth year, is a myth-busting session where religious leaders from various communities set the record straight on the subject.

“People have their own individual beliefs about the next life, but as per the scriptures there is no mention of organ donation being an impediment towards it,” says Swami Shridurgananda, a representative of Ramakrishna Mission in Mumbai.

“What we carry in the next life are the *pancha tanmatra* [perceptions/subtle elements]: *sabda tanmatra* is the sound vibration, *sparsa tanmatra* is touch, *rupa tanmatra* is form, *rasa tanmatra* is flavour and *gandha tanmatra* is smell.”

Father Stephen Fernandes, professor of moral theology at Mumbai's St Pius College, also assures us that the church does not have anything against the act of organ donation. In fact, in August 2000, Pope John Paul II had addressed the 18th International Congress of Transplant Society in Rome, where he called organ donation “a boon for humanity”, if done in an ethical manner.

In Islam, there is a concept called *sadqah-e-jariyah*, which means continued or ongoing charity, which comes to benefit people even after the person who made the donation has passed away. A number of Fiqh (Islamic law) academies, such as the Islamic Fiqh Assembly of the Muslim World League in Jeddah, have opined that organ donation is permissible to save a person's life.

“The fact that our body accepts organs from another's is because our body has been naturally made this way,” reasons Maria Khan of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality, an organisation that shares the spiritual principles of Islam with the world. “It is natural law. If organ donation was unnatural, it would not have been possible for us to donate in the first place. Some Muslims may argue

Massachusetts-based Trans-Medics Inc has developed a portable perfusion system that keeps organs (heart, lung and liver) perfused, ventilated and monitored, replacing the current cold storage preservation method. This system is yet to come to India.

While our government works to get a more effective national transplant programme up and running with proper interstate organ transfers and efficient networking between hospitals, it's time for us, on an individual level, to draw from our own well of compassion and answer the call

USEFUL LINKS

- **Donate Organs, Save Lives:** donatelifeindia.org
- **International Registry in Organ Donation and Transplantation (IRODaT):** irodat.org
- **Multi Organ Harvesting and Aid Network (MOHAN) Foundation:** mohanfoundation.org
- **National Organ and Transplant Organisation (NOTTO):** notto.gov.in
- **Shatayu – A Gift of Life:** shatayu.org.in
- **The Organ Receiving and Giving Awareness Network (ORGAN):** organindia.org
- **Zuble Foundation:** zubleefoundation.com

that organ donation is like *muthla* or disfigurement, which is unlawful in Islam. But drawing this parallel is completely wrong. *Muthla* always involves extremely bad intentions in terms of humiliation, while organ donation is entirely an act of good intention. It is done with the best of wishes for fellow human beings and the deceased donor from whom the organs are retrieved is treated with respect and honour.”

Interestingly, in his writings, Swami Sukhabodhananda references the *Bhagavad-Gita* where Lord Krishna says, “*Tad viddhi pranipaatena pariprashnena sevaya.*” [Be humble, bow down and enquire with a sense of *seva*.] “Organ donation is the *uttama seva*, which is the highest service, giving life to another human being,” the spiritual master explains. “*Seva* is the pathway that helps us go beyond the body and mind.”

CAN YOU DONATE?

This *seva*, this pathway is yours to take—if you so choose.

Too many people mistakenly assume their age precludes them from organ donation, but this is false. Organ donation can be done regardless of age, race or gender, and people as old as 80 and beyond have the potential to save lives by donating their organs.

Significantly, even people who suffer from malignancies, infections and diseases can save lives in their own way: though their organs cannot be harvested for therapeutic purposes,

they can be donated to medical colleges for research, for educating budding doctors in transplant procedures and raising awareness among the medical fraternity.

Sharing her experience of donating her father's body to medical science, Arati Menon, editor of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, says “My father S Sundararajan passed away on 29 December 2013 at AIIMS, New Delhi. As he was suffering from cancer, he couldn't donate his organs but he was adamant all along that we donate his cadaver.” Unlike organ donation, body donation precludes the possibility of performing last rites as the body is given to the medical college/hospital. “The decision was difficult for my mother, as his next of kin, to make, as she is quite religious,” she adds. “But she didn't overrule his wishes because she knew how important it was to him. Today, as a family, we are very much at peace with the decision, and very proud.”

Ultimately, much of it does boil down to family, the need to have frank conversations about organ donation, especially as consent from next of kin is mandatory in India. If convinced, ensure you convince those around you. While our government works to get a more effective national transplant programme up and running with proper interstate organ transfers and efficient networking between hospitals, it's time for us, on an individual level, to draw from our own well of compassion and answer the call. Each one of us has the power to save lives—let's use it.

'LIFE BEFORE ASHES'



Photographs courtesy: MOHAN Foundation

'Life Before Ashes' is a poignant initiative by MOHAN Foundation to spread the message, **'What has now become ashes, could have been another's heart or kidney, if only the organs were donated'**.

These art installations of human organs to highlight the urgency and make people aware of organ donation have been on display at various hospitals in Mumbai, Jaipur, Delhi, and will shortly go on display in Nagpur, Chennai, Hyderabad and other cities across the country.





The Lord of the HILLS

Tirupati's claim to fame might be the sacred and spiritual,
but it's a veritable nature lover's paradise

✦ Chitra Ramaswamy

📷 J Ramaswamy

If it is a pilgrimage for the pious majority visiting it, for several others, Tirupati is a way of life. But the beauty of the spiritual capital of Andhra Pradesh, named the Best Heritage City by the Ministry of Tourism, extends far beyond its sanctity to encompass scenic vistas, wildlife havens, trekking paths and historical monuments to interest even the jaded traveller.

Tirupati, at the foot of Seshachalam hills, one of the several Indian cities to be developed under the Central Government's smart cities mission, enjoys an ancient history. With seven prominent peaks, each with its distinct name, the Tirumala hills—also called upper Tirupati or Seshachalam, the mountain of Sesa, the divine serpent—appear like a coiled snake. On Venkatadri, the last and lowest of these peaks, lies the much revered temple of Lord Venkateshwara. The history of Tirumala can be traced to 15th century CE when it was an established Vaishnavite centre of learning. However, the deity of Lord Venkateshwara, a self-manifested one, is believed to be prehistoric in origin, and the central shrine is believed to have been built by the Greater Pallavas in 4th century

BCE. Documented data attributes its construction in parts to several dynasties including the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas and the Vijayanagara rulers. The *Varaha Purana* mentions Lord Rama as having halted here with Sita and Lakshmana on his return from Lanka, in *Treta Yuga*.

My tryst with the temple city goes back several decades, perhaps as a young teen, when an annual or biannual visit to pay obeisance to the Lord of the hills would be a family ritual, or when weddings would be held there. For my siblings and I—Tamil Nadu-born but Delhi-bred—the bus journey uphill through the Eastern Ghats to Tirumala, negotiating several winding hairpin bends, was an unparalleled thrill. That which was a sanctimonious sojourn to the elders was a veritable picnic for us. We would indulge in the incendiary dishes of Andhra at the very few hotels in existence then, unmindful of our supremely active lachrymal glands and the tongues that would be on fire.

Since then, Tirupati's allure as a potent panacea for people seeking solutions to any number and kinds of problems has increased manifold. Needless to say, the city pulsates with a sea of humanity any time of the year. Infrastruc-

ture-wise, it has taken giant leaps since my childhood and boasts several classy hotels, restaurants, boarding houses and lodges to suit every pocket. Our visits to the temple town, too, have undergone a change; piety has replaced the earlier picnic feel. While for a major part it still remains a family jaunt, we have added another dimension to these trips. Following the path of the devout pilgrim, we trek from the foothills to Tirumala via one of two scenic pathways: Alipiri and Srivari Mettu.

We begin our drive up to Tirupati from Bengaluru, where we reside, just before daybreak. We cover the 280-km distance motoring via the quaint Hoskote-Chintamani-Madanapalle route. The paved roads are flanked by endless stretches of lush fields that spring sunny marigolds and roses in hues of red and pink, besides other vegetation. Unlike the alternative route that takes us to Tirupati via Hoskote, Kolar and Chittoor, there are few eateries on our present course. But the verdure that stretches before us in this direction more than compensates for rumbling bellies that stay sated with the snacks we carry and cups of aromatic masala chai and coffee we gulp down at humble kiosks on the way.

At three, in the pre-dawn hour the following day, we begin our trek to the abode of Lord Venkateshwara from Alipiri, catching our breath now and then as we negotiate 3,550 steps, almost half being steep, in sections. There are several pilgrims of all ages and sizes who provide us company along the way, many chanting "Govinda, Govinda" to pep themselves up for the knee-jerking climb. As we huff and puff our way up, we learn from a fellow traveller that the Vaishnavite philosopher, saint and social reformer Ramanuja climbed these very hills on his knees! The entire pathway is dotted with small outlets providing refreshments and clean water.

The vistas that spread out before us are stunning. Nothing can exemplify better the charm of contrasting colours in nature than canopies of vibrant jacarandas and gulmohars as they blend gloriously with the trees that blanket the surrounding mountains. The boundless sky waltzes with flames above the horizon, signifying the emergence of dawn. The woods spring alive with the chirping of birds as they greet the emerging giant above. His first rays stream in through the gaps in the canopies, drawing curious patterns on our pathway. To

Folklore has it that Silathoranam resembles important aspects of Hindu icons: the conch, discus and serpent hood; the last synonymous with Adi Sesa. The arch, which rises 3 m from the ground, shares this height with the idol of Lord Venkateshwara at the temple





Clockwise from top: Steps leading to Srivari Paadalu; a priest next to an idol of Sankatmochan Hanuman; sculptures on the way to Govindaraja Perumal temple

Opposite page: Geological wonder Silathoranam



add to the magical moments, we see several spotted deer frolicking in the lush forest park adjoining our stepped walkway.

The weather, which is salubrious for the most part of our way up, becomes a trifle weepy. Far above, tufts of light grey clouds begin to swirl with hypnotic slowness during the last stretch of our climb, and then the heavens break into a frenzied drizzle. As we continue our trudge up, we hear *Suprabatham*, the invocation to wake up the Lord, aired through speakers placed at various locations on the hill. This is followed by the continuous drone of mantras by priests at the temple. There is an incessant flow of vehicles making their way up the Tirumala hills. Public buses, many of them rickety, belch smoke as they jerk up for the steep hairpin ascent and trundle their way up the ghats, bringing pilgrims up in hordes. A little more than three hours and we reach our destination, Venkateswara's sacred dwelling; we feel we've peaked the Himalayas!

As we queue up for darshan, we see a fleet of buses come to a screeching halt; their doors fly open and eager devotees, clutching little and large cloth bags, fling themselves out in a frenzy and follow the route we've taken. The doors of the buses hiss themselves shut to begin yet another round trip. The atmosphere is festive, heightened by the religious fervour. The lanes and alleys leading to the temple are redolent with the heady scent of jasmine, roses and other fragrant flowers mixed with the palate-tickling aroma of smoking *chulha*, frying vadas, puris, giant masala dosas, *chhaas* and steaming hot milk and coffee. There are street artists and hawkers peddling their services and wares from little kiosks and umbrellas, shielding themselves from the vagaries of the weather.

As we've procured the ₹ 300 darshan ticket, our hour-long wait to have a minute's glimpse of the Lord in all his grandeur comes to an end. The continuous chanting of *Om Namo Venkatesaya* inside the temple is mystically

Besides being sought by a vast majority of pilgrims who come here to ‘wash away their sins’, Aakashaganga also supplies water for temple rituals. The tumbling water, which becomes a deluge during the monsoons, also finds mention in the *Veda*

powerful, and exudes a positive energy that lingers after we leave the sanctum. Our minds and hearts sated at the success of our mission, we are now ready to explore the environs of Tirumala and Tirupati.

Silathoranam, meaning ‘a garland of rocks’, is a natural stone arch and a major crowd-puller to Tirumala’s verdant sculpture garden that displays the pantheon of deities, including Vishnu’s 10 incarnations, attractively carved and coloured. The fragrance of plants and trees in this expansive greenery is rejuvenating and a welcome change from the hum closer to the temple. The arch, a unique geological wonder, curves over two vertical columns of quartzite rocks, and has been sculpted by the vagaries of weather over 2.5 millennia. Folklore has it that the rocky marvel, located a kilometre away from the main temple, resembles important aspects of Hindu icons: the conch, discus and serpent hood; the last synonymous with Adi Sesha. The arch, which rises to a height of 3 m from the ground, shares this height with the idol of Lord Venkateshwara at the temple.

While theories abound on this unique formation, it is believed to be the only one in Asia,

and one of three in the world—others being the Rainbow Arch Bridge of Utah in the USA and the arch that cuts through the Dalradian Quartzite in the UK. While some scientific quarters believe it could have been formed by a wave action from oceanic transgression or intensified climatic settings and corrosion, others attribute it to having been carved out of quartzite, or simply by weathering of the rock.

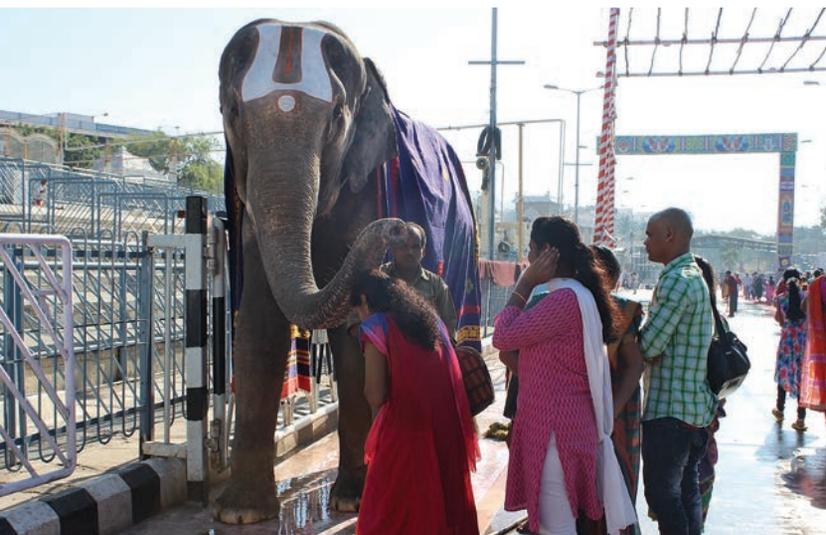
According to mythology, when Lord Venkateshwara first made his presence felt in the Tirumala hills, he set his first foot at its highest point, a place that came to be known as Srivari Paadalu, meaning divine footsteps. He then placed his other foot at the location of Silathorana. Following this, with a giant stride he stepped on to the place where his idol is now situated.

Next, we amble across to Chakratheertham against the backdrop of lush mountains. Alternating between rugged stone steps and flat uneven terrain, we weave our way between boulders to have spectacular views of a gentle waterfall that tumbles down to form this sacred pool. So named after the *chakra* or disc of Lord Vishnu, it glistens with coins, obviously thrown by devotees to have their wishes fulfilled. Legend has it that when Lord Brahma wished to perform penance, he sought Lord Vishnu’s help in identifying a pure location. When the Lord hurled his *chakra*, it sculpted a crater on the hill, creating the spot for Brahma to sit in meditation. Water from the hill streams rushed into this gorge to provide Brahma with water.

We head towards Srivari Paadalu, where a long flight of steps brings us to a small shrine that contains the feet of the Lord, encased in glass. Through a veil of mist and clouds that envelop our environs, we catch glimpses of the temple towers, mountain ranges and verdant valleys spread out below. It is evident, as elsewhere in Tirupati, that commercial interests have blended into the spiritual fabric of the place. Vendors selling an infinite variety of wares are everywhere, while youth armed with cameras beckon visitors to have their pictures clicked even as

Devotees seek blessings from a temple elephant

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): Pilgrims ‘wash away their sins’ at the Aakashaganga waterfalls; trudging up Chakratheertham; Gogarbham Dam





pilgrims scatter the place with coconuts they break with great gusto to the accompaniment of chants of “Govinda, Govinda”.

The clouds play peek-a-boo with the sun as we head towards Aakashaganga, with its fingers of waterfalls set amid dense woods. It is awash with colour and pulsating with bathers everywhere—in the rocky pools created by the aqueous deluge, on sinewy tree trunks that have

branched out at comfortable heights to allow them to sit, and on the steps leading to the base of the falls. Water flows gently, caressing the randomly jutting rocks and boulders and tracing sinusoidal paths before it tumbles in a gush at several places, spreading like serpentine fingers of froth. I lose myself in the integrated harmony—the rocks, dense green woods, sky with tufts of clouds and deluge of water—this is virtual poetry exchanged between the forces of nature.



Commercial interests have blended into the spiritual fabric of the place. Vendors selling an infinite variety of wares are everywhere, even as pilgrims scatter the place with coconuts they break with great gusto to the accompaniment of chants of “Govinda, Govinda”

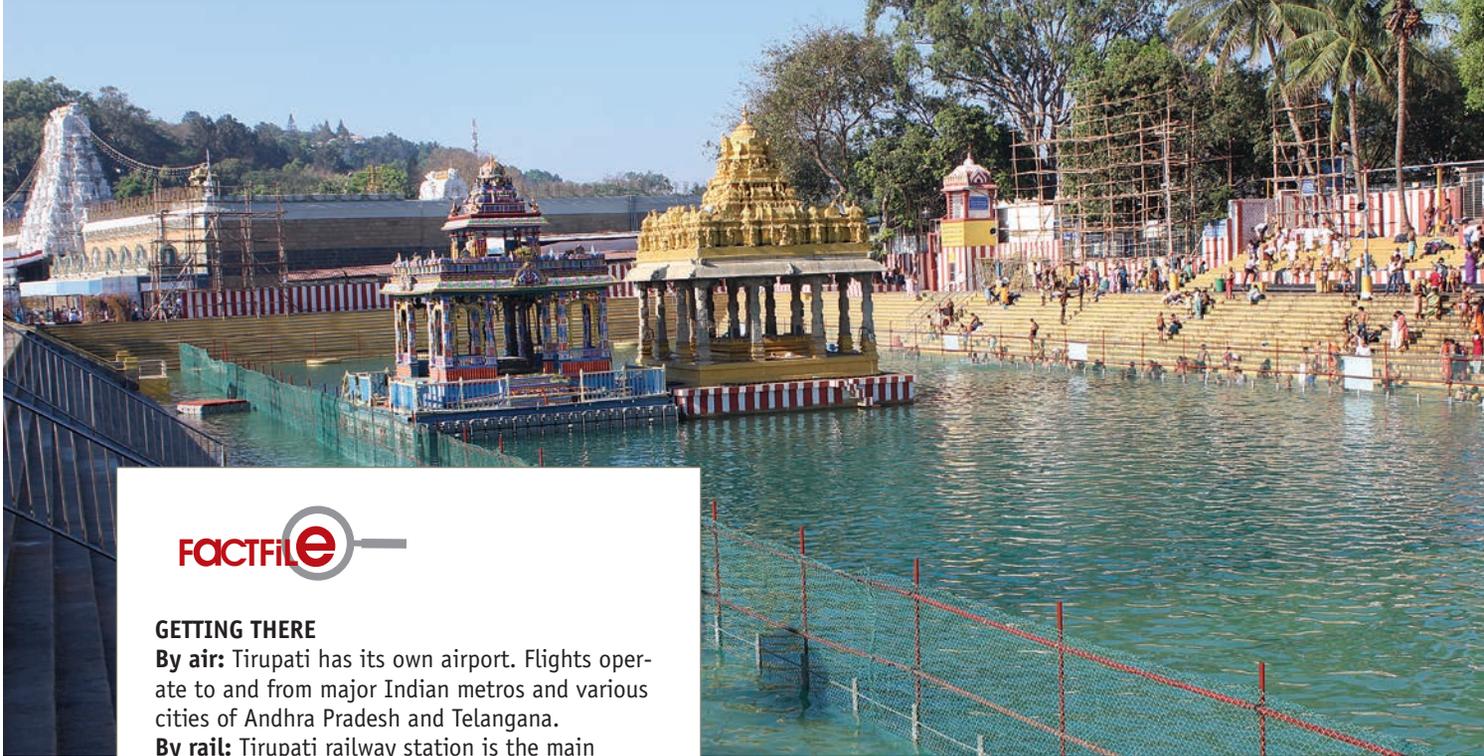
Clockwise from top left: A memento shop; hanging *drishti* masks for sale; a streetside food joint; a cook preparing a giant masala dosa

Opposite page: The main temple tank at Tirupati

Besides being sought by a vast majority of pilgrims who come here to ‘wash away their sins’, Aakashaganga also supplies water for temple rituals. The tumbling water, which becomes a deluge during the monsoons, also finds mention in the *Veda* and has an interesting legend associated with it; it is believed to have originated from the feet of the deity. The Lord, in the guise of a fowler, is believed to have created the waterfall to facilitate his aged devotee Thirumala Nambi to access water for his daily rituals, instead of having to bring water from the Papavinasam falls further away. Our curiosity is kindled as we make our way to the Gogarbhram Dam and Papavinasam falls. Rivulets of water flow from the hills to create

the magical Papavinasam. Young hikers take the more adventurous rocky footpath to reach this serene beauty. Gogarbhram Dam, one of the reservoirs that supply water to Tirumala township, is set scenically in the midst of green mountains. Little islands of green mounds ridden with shrubs and trees attract a host of winged visitors. An avian drama unfolds itself before us as the feathered creatures perform their unique acrobatics, soaring now, swooping down the next minute.

We brave a heavy downpour to reach Talakona falls, about 50 km from Tirupati. The thunderous avalanche tumbles down 270 ft, creating white jet sprays in its wake. A plethora of wild



GETTING THERE

By air: Tirupati has its own airport. Flights operate to and from major Indian metros and various cities of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

By rail: Tirupati railway station is the main railhead. Alternatively, one may travel up to Renigunta station, which is 15 km from Tirupati and lies on the Delhi–Thiruvananthapuram route.

By road: State transport buses ply between Tirupati and several Indian cities.

ACCOMMODATION

Tirupati has accommodations to suit all pockets, including guesthouses, serviced apartments, resorts and budget hotels.

TIPS

- Tirupati is a foodie's delight. Andhra Spice, Hyderabad House, Minerva Coffee Shop and Maurya Restaurant offer gastronomic adventures. Sri Lakshmi Narayana Bhavan has plenty of options for vegetarians too.
- There are no private hotels in Tirumala. However, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanana (TTD) has thousands of cottages and dormitories.
- There are several large choultries with free rooms for families to stay in reasonable comfort. Pilgrims may contact the central reception office near the bus stand in Tirumala for the same. Pilgrims can also rest in dormitory halls provided by TTD.
- TTD also has provisions for free shaving of hair and darshan for those who climb the hill. These free tickets are given midway up.
- For those who wish to spend a couple of days or more at Talakona waterfalls, Andhra Pradesh Tourism has jungle cottages at Haritha Resort.

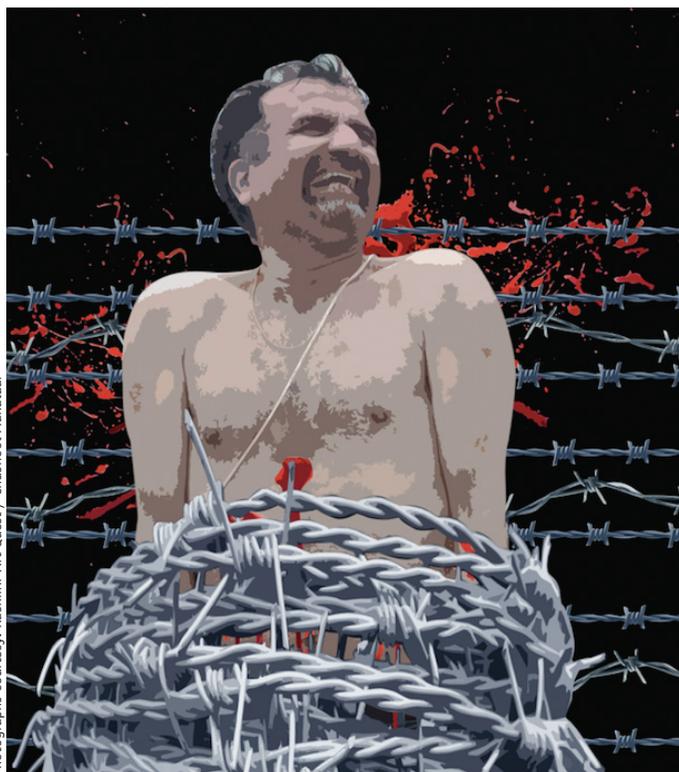
flowers and butterflies in motley hues abounds in the vicinity. The temples that dot Tirupati and its immediate neighbourhood are in themselves alluring, especially for art lovers. Traditional temple designs, from the profusion of sculpted deities in miniature or the flamboyant colours of etched Gods that adorn the gigantic tiered *gopuram*, engross every beholder.

Following a few days' stay at Tirumala hills, we return to Tirupati town, taking the shorter but tougher 6-km route to Srivari Mettu foothills, which is entirely a stone-step pathway, steep in several places, making for more buckling knees!

Chandragiri Fort, 12 km from Tirupati on the Bengaluru route, is a befitting finale to our trip, which we saved for our return journey. The 11th century citadel was built by the Yadava Rayas who held sway over the region for three centuries before the Vijayanagara rulers took control. The fortress, which subsequently fell into the hands of the sultans of Golconda and then the rulers of Mysore, went into oblivion when it was abandoned in the final decade of the 18th century.

We are struck by the simplicity of the structures within the fort, very few of which are in a fairly reasonable state of preserve. The Raja Mahal or king's palace now serves as a museum and displays artefacts collected from the fort precincts. Apart from the smaller Rani Mahal or queen's palace, the fort contains a small lake and huge lawns, both of which apparently attract picnickers.

As the rotund star on the skies above prepares to retire, we are homeward bound, our mind and souls refreshed, not least from the spiritual sojourn as from the delights of nature itself, draped in myriad hues and shapes. ✨



Photographs courtesy: Kashmir Art Quest / Chushool Mahaldar

We are FAMILY

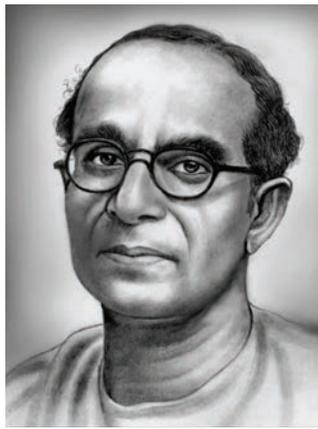
For the first time in 66 years, 60 Kashmiri artists from within the Valley and outside came together for an exhibition titled *Concourse*, which aimed to restore harmony between Kashmir's communities by reflecting on the region's troubled past. Curated by artists Veer Munshi and Syed Mujtaba Rizvi, and organised by Kashmir Art Quest, the week-long exhibition took place at the Old Silk Factory, a 101 year-old abandoned structure in Srinagar. Prominent and upcoming artists

art of all ages, working with different media, showcased work that represented their feelings, thoughts and emotions towards the homeland. "*Concourse*, as an exhibition... brings together artists from multiple places in direct interaction and dialogue with artists from the Valley, and in such a manner that the diversity within the exhibition is a microcosm of the diversity found within Kashmir itself," the curators wrote in their concept note.

"I get a feeling that I am stuck in wires and the pain is no less than blood shedding. Not because of the threat of being killed, but I was afraid of going back to my own place, where I had lived a carefree life"

—55 year-old Delhi-based artist and filmmaker **Chushool Mahaldar** speaking to scroll.in

Sketches of freedom



Come Independence Day and the country will be abuzz with events to commemorate our founding fathers and the countless nameless Indians who fought for our freedom. One such event was recently conducted at the Bookworms

Reading Room in Hyderabad, which paid tribute to unsung heroes of the freedom struggle. On display were the pencil portraits of 155 freedom fighters, first compiled and published as an album titled *The Immortals: Album of Muslim Freedom Fighters* by author and historian Syed Naseer

Ahamed. Among those featured were Abid Hasan Safrani (*right*), who first shouted 'Jai Hind'; Yousuf Meher Ali (*left*), who coined the rallying cry 'Simon Go Back' and the term 'Quit India'; and Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the poet who composed the phrase 'Inqilab zindabad'.

Drawing in motion



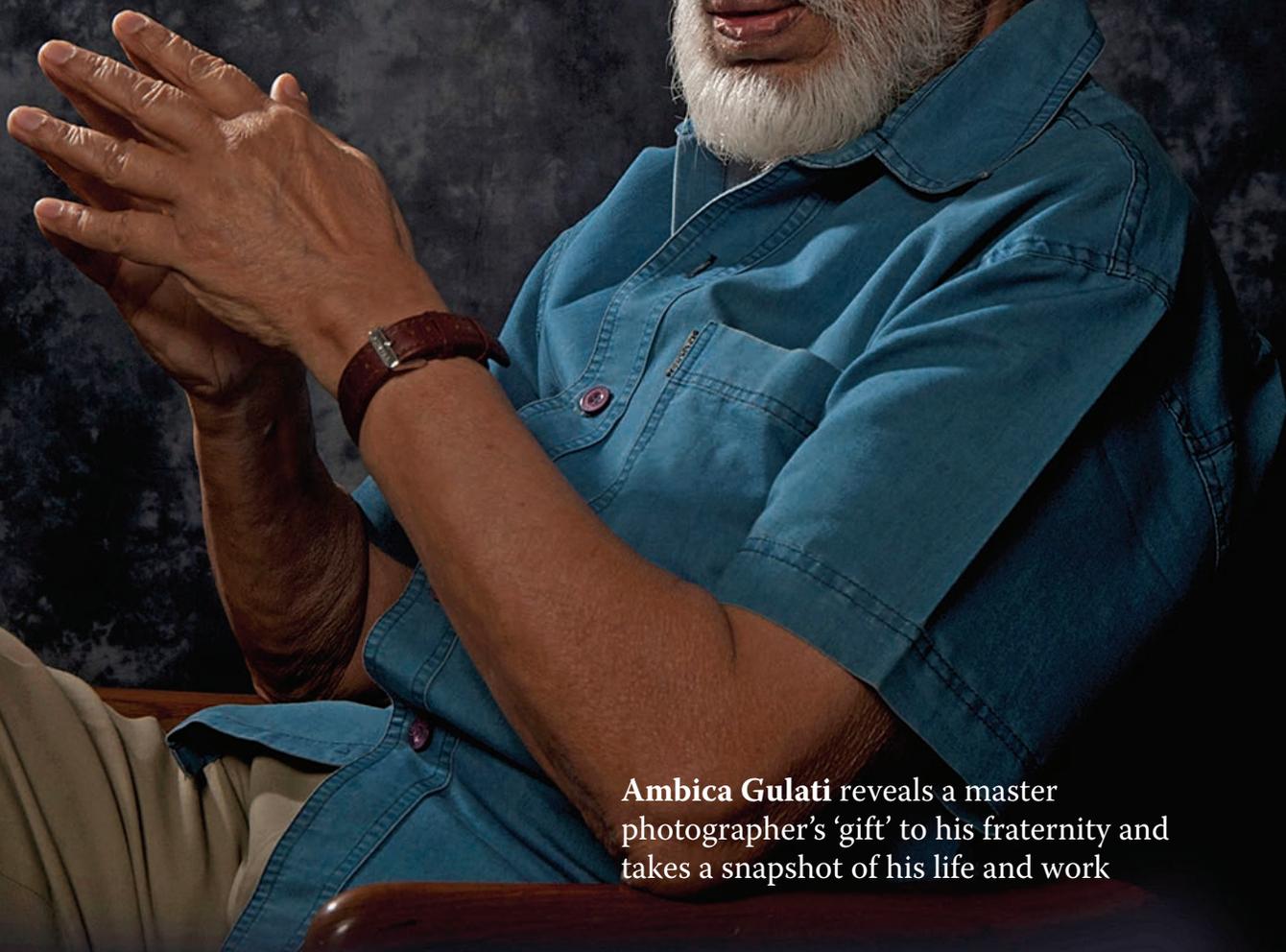
Wikipedia defines copyleft as "a play on the word copyright, the practice of offering people the right to freely distribute copies and modified versions of a work with the stipulation that the same rights be preserved in derivative works down the line"



THERE'S A NEW HASHTAG on Instagram—*#MalaniNotebooks*—and every find there is a keeper. Veteran artist Nalini Malani, 72, has taken to digital art to let off steam while working on a 25-m mural in Italy, and she's sharing the results online. The videos are the result of several scribbles stitched together and represent "short thoughts" that tend to take a dark turn. For instance, in the video titled *Girl With Skipping Rope*, a girl uses her skipping rope to dismember her at-

tacker, and the *Man Full of Himself* video shows a man in a foetal position who rises up and bares his full grizzly self to the screen. "It's like making a photograph of someone you know really well. When they're comfortable enough to let the emotions show, some of their expressions can be quite humorous. It's drawing in motion," says Malani, whose Instagram videos come under 'copyleft' art and are available for free download, speaking to *scroll.in*.

THE BIG PICTURE



Ambica Gulati reveals a master photographer's 'gift' to his fraternity and takes a snapshot of his life and work

Photographs courtesy: O P Sharma

For most of us, taking a picture means pressing a white circle on a smart phone and hoping we have captured a 'Kodak moment'—or the most narcissistic portrait of them all, the 'selfie'. Words like these bring no joy to O P Sharma, who has spent a lifetime behind camera lenses

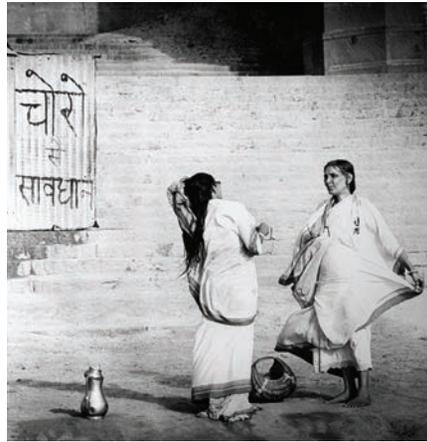
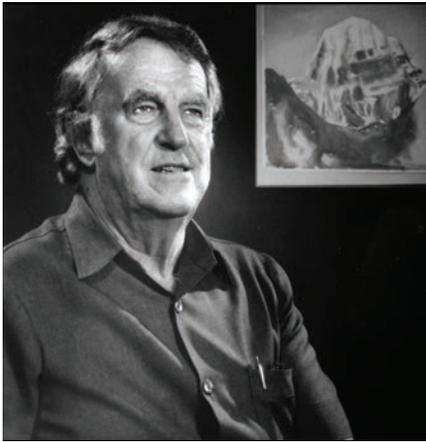
making photos with delicate skill and teaching youngsters how to use their minds and imagination to craft elegant images.

photography

"If a photograph is technically poor, it is only half a photograph," he insists. "Unless you understand each and every part of the photographic process—from pressing the shutter

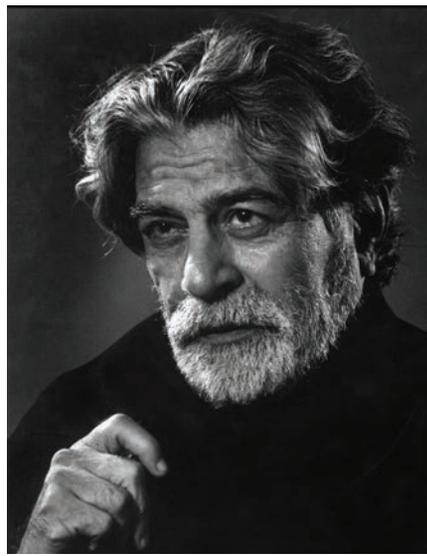
to producing the final print—you can't produce a good image."

Apart from heading the photography department at Modern School, Barakhamba Road, Delhi, for 40 years, where he groomed many budding photographers who went on to make a mark, Sharma has had many prestigious photographic projects to his name: books, advertisements,



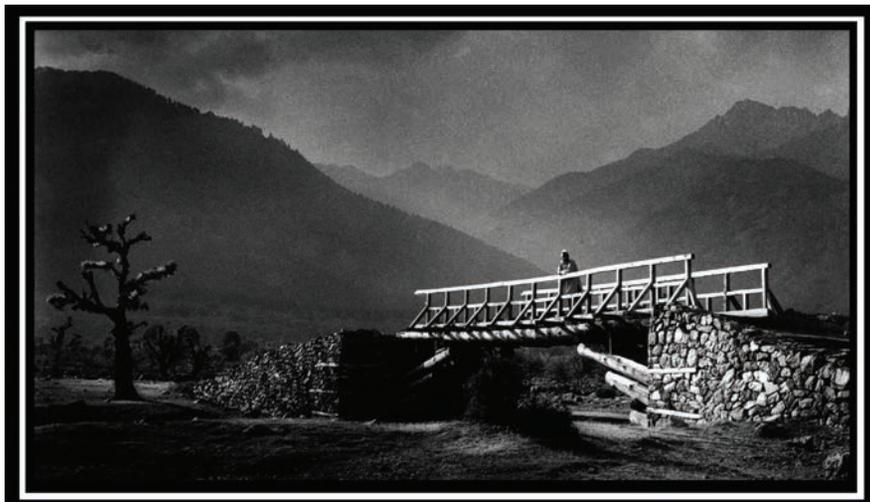
publicity material for films and other commercial assignments. He is the founder of the India International Photographic Council (IIPC) and is one of only five Indians chosen as honorary fellows by the Royal Photographic Society (RPS) in UK. He also led the crusade to recognise 19 August as World Photography Day.

Yet, in a career spanning over five decades, he has loved nothing more than teaching. His late wife Chitrangada, who was once his student and also a photographer, had once said in an interview, "I think what made him such a good teacher was that he always tried to give his students what he couldn't get and had to struggle with."



For Sharma, the pursuit of photography was not quite the accessible career choice as it is today. "I learnt photography from books; studied the history, works and techniques of great masters; and understood that unless you understand the camera and its accessories thoroughly you cannot use any of them," Sharma tells us, sitting behind the teacher's desk at Triveni Kala Sangam, a cultural, arts and education centre in Delhi, where he currently teaches.

Clockwise from top left: New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary; at Banaras Ghat; yesteryear Bollywood star Sajjan; an evening at Pahalgam in Jammu & Kashmir; Ustad Bismillah Khan



Ironically, photography was not even his first career choice. "I used to paint and had an interest in music," he recalls, referring to his student days at Christian College in Lucknow, where he chanced upon a photography exhibition. "I was inspired by the work of Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh. My interest grew and, eventually, my *naani* presented me with a twin lens reflex German camera but she told me she could not spend any more money on this. Therefore, I used to walk from my home to the college, to save four annas to buy film and paper."

The head of the physics department at Lucknow University taught him how to develop black-and-white film, and the lad didn't stop shooting and devel-

oping till he mastered the dark-room techniques. Painting took a backseat and photography became his life.

“My learning came through members of clubs like the Lucknow Camera Club,” he tells us. “Photographers like P N Mehra, A L Syed and Krishna Kumar helped us young ones. On holidays, along with other photographers, I would go to Char Bagh railway station and found many interesting subjects. I captured everything on my camera—people sitting around, the mad rush to catch the trains, street-side hawkers and more.”

His move to Delhi in 1960 proved to be a good choice. Though he graduated in science, he was smitten by photography and determined to work in the field. That quest brought him to the capital. “Luckily, I connected with celebrated painter Mr Kanwal Krishna, who later became my father-in-law, and learnt from him,” he reminisces.

In 1964, Sharma mounted his first solo exhibition; he has since had 40 solo shows, in India and abroad, and had his work published in magazines of that era such as *Dharmayug* and *Illustrated Weekly*. Further, he shot advertisements for agency J Walter Thomson, shot towels for DCM, and more. “I did these commercial shoots with my wife Chitragada. We did the publicity material for films such as *Chhupa Rustom*, *Shalimar* and *Do Boond Paani*. We also did portraits of Shammi Kapoor and Dharmendra,” he recollects.

Other eminent people captured by Sharma include Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Pandit Jasraj, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Begum Akhtar, former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, former president R Venkataraman and Field Marshal K M Cariappa. His work with actor Sajjan was published in a book titled *Rasa Bhaava Darshan*, which contained 215 black-and-white pictures. He has also won an astonishing 600 awards for his work.

He shares another golden memory from back in the day. “In 1972, I won the annual international photo contest hosted by *Saturday Review* magazine in America. My winning entry was titled *Desert Colours*, which I made in Jaisalmer, where I was shooting stills for *Do Boond Pani*. I was the only one they gave a return ticket to, from Newark in the US to Delhi. There I saw photography workshops being held. And I thought that we needed them in India too.” To accomplish this objective, Sharma founded the IIPC in 1983, and started holding workshops “simply for the love of spreading awareness about the art”. His son Aseem now runs IIPC, which is a 2,500-member organisation today.

“If a photograph is technically poor, it is only half a photograph. Unless you understand each and every part of the photographic process you can’t produce a good image”

Indeed, Sharma’s passion for the craft has been so all-consuming that he decided to leave a permanent mark on the global photographic community. The climax of that journey is the celebration of World Photography Day on 19 August every year.

“The idea came to me in 1988 when, over and over again, in various publications that documented the history of photography, I came across this date: 19 August 1839. It was recorded as the date on which the then French government announced the invention of the ‘Daguerreotype’ process of photography as a ‘free gift to the world,’” says the Delhi-based

master lensman. “I proposed the idea to several masters and photographers around the world, about 150 of them, including the RPS and the Photographic Society of America (PSA). I quoted information I had found in several important photography-related documents, books and journals.”

Sharma set about his labour of love in 1998. “Back then, there was no Internet and email, so I wrote lots of letters to different people in many different countries. It took a long time for the replies to come in. By the beginning of 1991, everyone took a unanimous decision and we started celebrating ‘World Photography Day’ that year,” he reminisces, adding that the first to reply in the affirmative was the PSA and the last, the Japan International Photographic Federation. It was a triumphant year for Sharma and the IIPC. “We had about 250 members then and we celebrated the first World Photography Day.”

It has certainly been a long and eventful journey for Sharma, who has seen techniques change and adapted to them along the way. He has used miniature, medium and long-format cameras. He is comfortable with his Nikon and Pentax film cameras, and he sometimes uses his son’s digital camera when they go out on a shoot together. But at the age of 81, Sharma doesn’t shoot much anymore; he does, however, continue to teach theory to eager shutterbugs at Triveni Kala Sangam.

Always the teacher, Sharma’s artistic temperament leans towards being patient and reserved; but there is something he just has to get off his chest. All this reminiscing about dark rooms and the technicalities of photography has made him restless. Finally, he spits it out, muttering that iconic tag line spoken by George Eastman, founder of Kodak: “‘You press the button, we do the rest.’ Since then, people have been ‘pressing the button’ without understanding anything.”

“ I never make calculations about anything including my age. I forget my age the moment I stand behind the camera. For my latest film, I went to gold mines, stone quarries, Sundarbans and tea gardens during the summer but I never feel uncomfortable. I am currently making a documentary feature on unorganised labour in India.

—National Award-winning director **Tarun Mazumdar**, 87, speaking to *The Indian Express* about his upcoming documentary feature, *Adhikar*, on unorganised labour in India

WEAVING a legacy



Harmony Archives / Sumukh Bharadwaj

One of India's most enduring stories of sari revival was on display at the India International Centre, Delhi, recently. Flaunting rich textures, colours and designs, *Vimor Saree Story* celebrated 45 years of documentation, revival and support to the weaver community by Pavitra Muddaya's Vimor. Started in 1974 by her late mother Chimy Nanjappa out of a trunk in her guest room, Vimor has been working to empower traditional weavers, preserve their craft and educate consumers about heritage handlooms and the significance of their motifs. On display at the exhibition were various saris and their modern variations

heritage and interpretations popularised by Vimor, including the original puja sari, the

Nanjappa Original, the Jajie sari, the Assamese sari and the Manipuri *pallu*. For Vimor, however, the journey has been more than about just the garment. "To my mother, these weavers were our friends and family," says Muddaya, speaking to *The Indian Express*. "They found in her someone they could talk to and as I observed their interactions I saw she would talk to them about child marriage, puberty, rituals, and the need for women in their families to work. She would often ask the wives of these weavers to join them and learn, after finishing the household work. She ensured that they were given the utmost respect and then I realised that her success was in their success. That is our legacy."



OFF THE CUFF BY RAJU MUKHERJI

In a league of his own: For hockey marvel Leslie Claudius, a champion without ego, performance and love of the game were far more important than the trappings of victory

In India, our Olympic victories are few and far between. But at the same time, we have had a legendary sportsman who won four Olympic medals and then lost all of them! No riddle this. It actually happened.

For an Indian to win four Olympic medallions, he had to be a hockey player because India dominated world hockey from 1928 to the 1960s. Your guess that the sport is hockey is as perfect as it can be. But can you guess the name of the player concerned?

It happened to be none other than Leslie Claudius, the hockey marvel who won three gold medals and one silver for India in the four Olympics between 1948 and 1960.

Olympic medallists are honoured and revered world over. To win an Olympic medal is an awesome achievement. These champions are a rare breed. But then to win four is nothing short of a miracle. Very, very few international sportsmen have won four Olympic medals and more.

Also, not many international sportsmen have lost their Olympic medals! The legendary 'American Black' boxer Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay) threw away his gold medal out of sheer disgust. But that is another story for another time.

Indeed, Leslie Claudius is the only international sportsman known to have lost all the medals he had won at the Olympics—thanks to an odd-job man who had come to his house to polish his medals and trophies. Unfortunately, the man actually polished off the medals and vanished without leaving behind any trace!

As a freelancer, when I went to Leslie Claudius's residence for an interview for the Tiger Pataudi-edited sports weekly *Sportsworld* way back in the 1980s, the laid-back personality quite casually said, "Ah! You want to see the Olympic medals? I had asked a man to clean and polish my trophies. He took me literally, I suppose. He took the money and the medals with him. However he did a very good job with the rest of the trophies in the cabinet."

I was aghast, "Did you actually keep those gold and silver medals in an unlocked showcase in the drawing room?" He nodded, "My mistake, I reckon. But then why would anybody be interested in my trophies?" When told the medals would fetch millions as souvenirs among collectors, he gave a relaxed smile, "Let's say he needed the money more than I did!" It took a little while to dawn on the interviewer that the phlegmatic individual sitting opposite was in a sphere of his own without any attachment to worldly objects.



The life of Leslie Claudius has always been full of such unusual happenings. Born and brought up in hockey-dominated Bilaspur in Madhya Pradesh, the young Claudius was fascinated by football and was fantastic at it. Among the sports fanatic Anglo-Indian community at Bilaspur, he was an all-round sportsman with particular fondness for football.

Yet, when he came over to football-mad Bengal, first to Kharagpur and from there to Calcutta in 1946, football ironically receded into the background as the game of hockey dribbled into his heart. Office teams like Port Commissioners and

Calcutta Customs helped him with opportunities and his latent talent flowered in next to no time.

At every level—office, club and State teams—he left his mark. It is indeed unbelievable that in only two years since he seriously wielded a hockey stick for the first time, he was donning the national colours in the London Olympics in 1948. With Dhyani Chand and company around, India had won the Olympic hockey gold in Amsterdam (1928), Los Angeles (1932) and Berlin (1936). Because of World War II, no Olympics took place in 1940 and 1944. In fact, the 1948 London Olympics would be the first time Independent India would play under her own national tricolour.

There was considerable consternation among hockey followers. Would India be able to put up a reasonably good show with not much hockey played during the war period? Would the new players be able to live up to the high expectations? Did we still possess the required

talent? But by the end of the London Olympics, the Indian flag kept fluttering to remind us of the exploits of Dhyan Chand, Rup Singh, Richard Allen, Carlyle Tapsell, Eric Pinniger and company. Untried youngsters like Claudius, Keshav Dutt, Ranganathan Francis and Randhir Singh Gentle came to the fore in 1948 and gave relief to hockey lovers around the country. In 1952 Udham Singh and Balbir Singh (Sr) arrived. India's top stature in world hockey remained unscathed.

From 1948, Leslie Claudius was India's mainstay at the pivotal position of centre-half for the next 12 years. This was the continuation of the golden period of Indian hockey. Uninterrupted success was a mere formality. Legendary Indian players dominated the world in a style as distinctive as it was effective. Claudius was always in focal point as the sheet anchor. One moment he would be defending his own goal, the next he would be threatening the opposition's 'D'. Energetic and selfless, he had indomitable courage and will power to overcome any opposition, situation and condition.

Leslie Claudius was a stylist who combined impeccable technique with powers of innovation. He inspired not by hollow words of advice but solid performance. He had no time for provincial, communal or class bias. He had no time for unscrupulous administrators. He formed no group, joined none. He was the shining nucleus of a world champion team.

But the contradictions continued. He was of medium height, very tough but not muscular. He was not an exhibitionist. On the contrary, he was a clean-shaven, young man of exemplary manners and bright eyes. His refreshing charm, modesty, refined voice and conduct belied all the conventional impressions of a star sportsman. He was a champion without an ego. He was an artist without any hangups. He was a superstar without controversy following him. He was a magnificent centre-half without having anyone good enough to be his rightful protégé.

A delightful conversationalist, he once said, "We were unlucky not to have seen Dhyan Chand and Roop Singh at their peak. But let me tell you, son, even in their old age such was their ball control that we had difficulty in taking the ball away from them. Both were wizards with the stick in hand. Roop was no less than his brother Dhyan, but was destined to be forever in the shadow of his elder brother."

During the course of the interview at his McLeod Road flat, Claudius said, "From the 1950s, many Anglo-Indians left India to settle in Australia and Canada. This was a setback for Indian hockey as the Anglo-Indians showed a distinct flair for the stick and ball game." Absolutely correct he was. Many of our past greats came from the Anglo-Indian community.

After three successive Olympic gold medals in London (1948), Helsinki (1952) and Melbourne (1956), Claudius was selected to lead the country at the Rome Olympic Games in 1960. This was his 4th Olympics. Later in 1964, Udham Singh, too, repeated Claudius's record of three golds and one silver.

Sadly, India's domination of the Olympic hockey honours came to an end in the final against Pakistan. Claudius was shattered. For him, the silver medal was no compensation. He bid adieu to the game he loved and served with the greatest of dignity. "That was the saddest day of my life," he recounted. "It was a magnificent final against Pakistan in Rome. No quarters were given and none expected. But the one-nil defeat was just too much for me. I retired on our return." Furrowed eyebrows clouded his face.

Within moments, however, he brightened up, "You know, son, when the national flag goes up the pole you get a strange feeling that cannot be described. Hardened men have tears in their eyes. You only think of your country and nothing else matters. I was lucky to have enjoyed that exhilarating feeling no less than three times." Then, his voice faltered, "On the podium in Rome, we tried to muffle our disappointment. Tough adults cried like children. The silver medal seemed to mock me."

Sport is said to be a great leveller. Claudius is an exception to the rule. For he has had no failures. Yet the man himself felt he had failed the country in Rome. Such were his high standards that even the silver medal was considered a failure!

But no, most certainly he did not fail. Rather he was a glorious example of an ideal champion: charming, modest and selfless apart from being a magical wielder of the hockey wand. The memory of the dignified self still remains a shining model for every aspiring sportsman.

Sport is said to be a great leveller. Claudius is an exception to the rule. For he has had no failures. Yet the man himself felt he had failed the country in Rome. Such were his high standards that even the silver medal was considered a failure!

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



My lost roots

Though Independence brought joy to millions, for many, like **Bansi Singh**, it is still associated with the trauma of Partition

It was on 13 August 1947 that I lost my roots, my roof, and my home. We had to lock up our new home and my husband's medical practice in Lahore—a city of beautiful gardens—and walk out in five minutes, leaving behind all our possessions. With killings and fires raging outside, we had to literally run for our lives, never to set foot again in my home—my country India had been divided and ripped apart by Partition.

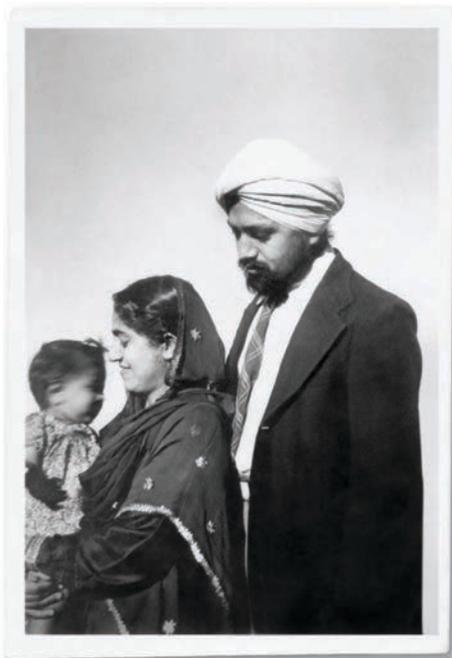
As the car in which we were travelling reached the main road, we were surrounded by a mob. Fortunately, someone recognised my husband's uncle as the doctor who had saved his eyes. So we were spared. We drove fast and reached the border town of Amritsar on the Indian side—a short journey in terms of distance, but longer in moments of angst and trauma.

Incidentally, I had been brought up in a happy and congenial environment, with a loving family, school, teachers, friends and surroundings. Growing up, I had a wonderful time. Later, I graduated, got married and had a son. My son was just five months old when the shock of Partition hit us.

On reaching Amritsar, we learnt that those who travelled by train had not reached alive. All of them—men and women, old and young—had been butchered. Not a single soul was left alive. People travelled in groups by foot or whatever means of transport they could find, fearing attack by frenzied mobs.

So many people lost their families besides everything else. It was heartbreaking to hear the cries and heartrending stories of those who had suffered and faced the killings

of their loved ones and suffered the shame of their womenfolk— young girls were brutally raped and killed in front of their eyes and thrown into the fields. A lucky few families were helped and hidden by kind Muslim friends.



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Those who reached this side of the border were in a miserable state with many severely injured. They had lost everything, including homes, properties, possessions, happy lives, self-respect, dignity and honour. They were physically, mentally, emotionally and financially shattered. Many were separated from their families and had no idea of what the future held for them. But still we found support and much needed love and care from relatives, friends and even completely unknown people on this side of the border.

The days and nights spent in Lahore just before Partition were also terrible. We were cooped up at home as it was dangerous to step out. One couldn't even have fresh food and lived mainly on tinned food, which became available after the leftover war stocks came in. We lived in constant fear as shops and houses around us were being attacked and burnt. Fires were raging day

and night, with tall flames touching the skies. People were being stabbed in cold blood on the roads and streets. The police was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the men in our neighbourhood took it upon themselves to guard our

homes with whatever arms—guns, pistols, swords—they could find.

It was in the midst of such a distressing situation that our son was born on 12 March 1947. Despite my husband being a doctor, it was with great difficulty that we found an ambulance to take me to the hospital.

Things were going from bad to worse when, one day, my brother-in-law, a senior railway officer, who was living in a safe locality, called to say that we should move there as our home wasn't safe. As we stepped out, we saw our car burning, so we quickly went back and rang him up. He sent us a police car with police escorts and we found a few days of peace in his house. When we returned home, it was obvious that we wouldn't be able to live there any longer. A couple of days later, on 13 August, we finally left, never to return.

Meanwhile, we lost touch with our families. It was traumatic not knowing where and in what state they were.



My father was based in Karachi. Later, we discovered that he took a flight to Bombay. He literally cried with relief when he discovered that we had reached Amritsar safely.

With hordes of people arriving, Amritsar became the centre of action. Crowded trains with people perched on rooftops were seen leaving Amritsar. They headed to different places to find help and start life anew. Fortunately for us, my husband found a job at Safdarjang Hospital in Delhi with a large and beautifully furnished accommodation, helping us to start anew with hopes in our hearts. We were grateful to God that we could stand on our own feet soon enough and pick up

the threads of life from scratch, even after going through the trauma and upheaval of Partition. I was also reunited with my parents and siblings in Delhi.

This is just a little part of my story. Even after decades, the whole scene is still vivid in front of my eyes. And even today, my wish of visiting my roots remains a distant dream.

Ninety-three year-old Singh is the author of Khiddo, a book of poems in Punjabi



**THEY
SAID IT**

India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great-grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.

—American author Mark Twain (1835-1910)

A spiritual adventure

A suspense writer penning a spiritual book isn't commonplace. Known for her adventure and thriller novels featuring murders, mysteries and mad chases, **Shobha Nihalini's** latest title is *Dada Vaswani: A Life in Spirituality* (Jaico; ₹ 350; 244 pages). "Duality exists in every aspect of life, not just in writing," says the writer, whose work is a peek into the inner world of the late spiritual leader who passed away recently, three weeks short of his 100th birthday. Meeting Dada was a turning point in her journey as an author, she says, adding, "his open heart and inner strength inspired me to grow spiritually."

A graduate in business administration, Nihalani undertook writing courses and worked as a freelance journalist and copywriter, before turning to fiction. Her debut novel, *Karmic Blues*, was first published in Danish, although it was originally written in English. *Nine*, her trilogy of fantasy thrillers, has three protagonists from a modern-day setting involved in a battle with an evil spirit bent upon avenging the Kalinga Empire. And *Unresolved* is a psychological thriller that talks about the deep secrets that underline and undermine relationships. In an email interview with **Sreekha Pillai**, the Hong Kong-based author talks about the adrenaline surge of the fast-paced world of suspense and the soothing effect of spirituality. Excerpts:

What was it about Dada Vaswani that made you embark on this "spiritual adventure"?

Dada faced many ups and downs in his life, and spoke of them openly. There are very few people who have the ability to influence and inspire, and at the same time speak candidly about their imperfections. Dada was

one such individual. He was 'real' in every sense of the word; he empathised with those who suffered and was sincere about his efforts to help others. He was a spiritual teacher and guide, yet humble, and would insist he was 'still a student'. Dada also understood the pulse of the people and knew how to motivate them towards a better inner life. Amongst the many

authorspeak



charitable endeavours, he pushed for educating girls in the 1930s, a time when girls attending schools was unheard of. After Partition in 1947, when hundreds of thousands of migrants left Pakistan penniless and destitute, he aided fellow refugees to rebuild their lives in India. In 2012, Dada Vaswani initiated 'The Moment of Calm', a global initiative for world peace through the power of forgiveness. In 2017, over 18.7 million people joined in. These are just a few of the empowering moments of his life that inspired me to write about him.

You write about a time in his life when, as a young boy, he was embarrassed about travelling

third class in the railways. The transformation thereon was drastic....

Dada Vaswani was honest about the struggles in his youth—his restlessness, spiritual aspirations, and conflict because of his desire to keep his mother happy. You must understand the context of his conflict: he was a brilliant scholar who had earned a number of double promotions, which enabled him to graduate at the age of 17. He then received a prestigious offer and had the prospects of a successful career. However, at 21, he resolved to renounce all worldly ambitions and dedicate himself completely towards selfless service. He turned to his uncle, Sadhu T L Vaswani, to be his guru. Dada's journey as a disciple was filled with much ardour; he struggled at times but never gave up. Later, Dada took over the responsibility of handling the humanitarian work of Sadhu Vaswani mission. In brief, Dada was all heart!

Did your understanding of spirituality change with this book?

I had a conflicting attitude towards faith and inner growth. While immersing myself in writing this book, I gleaned nuggets of wisdom and tools for transformation, for understanding the world better. Deep in my heart, I felt I needed this nudge, and the book came at an opportune time to guide me. Sometimes, one needs an enlightened soul to remove the blindfolds to see the world differently—with acceptance and harmony.

Did you find the genre switch comfortable?

It was challenging for sure. First of all, I was overcome with panic and a multitude of emotions; I doubted

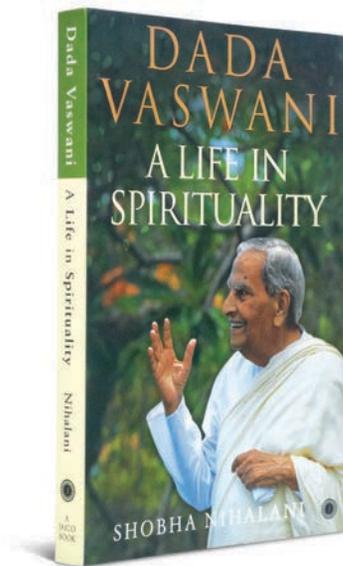
my ability to do justice. I was overwhelmed that I was writing about a great spiritual leader. Slowly, I focussed on the end goal and decided, just as Dada always suggested, that we must overcome our fears and be strong. The challenge was worth the effort.

As a writer of thrillers and suspense stories, how difficult is it to keep the motive and criminal under wraps till the end?

It is very difficult. I am one of those writers who likes to tell it all in chapter one. Through guidance from editors and techniques in writing suspense, I have learnt the skill of the slow burn—give readers as little as possible; keep them on the edge of the seat.

***Unresolved* was dedicated to people with mental health issues. How big do you think is the issue, given that even celebrities are coming out and sharing their experiences?**

Yes, mental health issues are generally swept under the carpet. Sometimes families are ashamed to talk about it. If a person is physically ill, it is easy to discuss and get treatment. From what I have researched, depression is an illness, just like a physical ailment, requiring medical attention and counselling. You cannot tell a depressed person to just snap out of it. A lot more patience, understanding and empathy are required to help those suffering from anxiety, eating disorders, low self-esteem, self-image and other such issues. We are seeing some changes as more and more people are talking about it and seeking treatment. It is helpful that celebrities speak out about experiencing these issues themselves, as sufferers would feel less lonely. But more needs to be done at the grass-roots level and in schools. Everyone experiences mental health issues at some point in their lives, especially while experiencing big changes or problems. It is important to under-



“While immersing myself in writing this book, I gleaned nuggets of wisdom and tools for transformation, for understanding the world better. Deep in my heart, I felt I needed this nudge”

stand that everyone goes through it and that there is no shame in seeking help. With the right help and therapy, people can heal completely. In many cases, they move on with even better mental health and stronger resilience than before.

Which contemporary authors excite you?

I read a lot of books in the suspense thriller genre. There are many authors that keep me hooked and inspire me to become a better writer. For instance, Keigo Higashino writes with such simplicity yet so much intensity that the characters are singularly impressive. He is amazing with setting the scene and developing the story at a slow pace. More recently, I read two books by Jane Harper. She is another

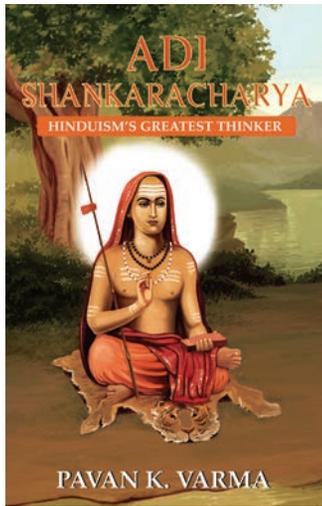
one of those authors that can grip your attention; her vivid descriptions of landscapes are so beautiful and emotional. Also, Andrew Mayne has excellent storytelling skills and his characters are refreshingly unique. I just completed a book by Araminta Hall; I was totally hooked from the word go. She writes from the male point of view, bringing out the character with such sensitivity and wisdom—all along, we are immersed in the mind of a man's obsession for a woman.

Given the fact that you are a Hitchcock fan, how would you define his perennial appeal?

He was the master of suspense. Besides, he was an excellent director, who used camera techniques to enhance the suspense effect. But most interestingly, his characters were ordinary people who were flawed in some way, and hence resonated with the audience. More than the plotlines, we remember the characters of his films. His villains were sinister yet charming. And some of his heroes suffered from phobias. He played with the psychology of the characters, exploring their dark side. When you watch a Hitchcock movie, you can quite easily get immersed into the atmosphere of mystery with his complex characters. This style is what resonates and carries timeless appeal.

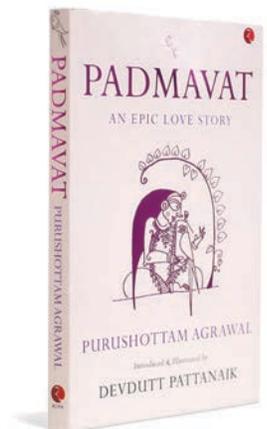
Your work life seems eclectic—freelance journalist, copywriter, bookkeeper, teacher, salesperson and finally author. Were you trying to find your groove?

Yes, I've always been a restless soul, constantly searching for something that would motivate and add value to my experiences in life. Books are my best friends. And I love to create stories. I've been writing for two decades. I feel fortunate that I have been able to continue, which is what keeps me motivated and inspired every single day.

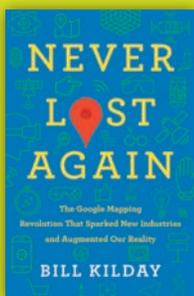


A great deal has been written on Adi Shankaracharya as a subject of religion, philosophy, spirituality and literature. However, **Pavan K Varma's ADI SHANKARACHARYA: HINDUISM'S GREATEST THINKER** (Tranquebar; ₹ 699; 364 pages) deserves particular mention because of the anecdotal methodology in which the former diplomat and renowned author has chosen to write about the illustrious revivalist and renouncer. Without diluting the intense discourse on Shankaracharya's voluminous contribution in reviving Vedic teachings on wellness of the human mind, body and soul, Varma dexterously elucidates the multidimensional persona of the great thinker. For an ordinary reader possessing esoteric leanings, the author carefully meanders through Indian classical thought dealing with the fundamentals of 'Who am I?', 'What is the purpose of my existence?', 'What is real and unreal?', and so on. And as Varma articulates in the book, "Hinduism, as a religion, is inseparable from Hinduism as a philosophy." The comprehensively researched book details the life, journey and teachings of the guru while appropriately interlinking and interjecting the kinds of perceptions, thoughts and ideas that arose from Varma's own understanding of the domain. Given the contemporary mood regarding Hinduism, this book helps to reiterate facts through a historical portrait, while dismissing myths and misnomers.

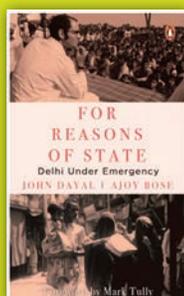
In keeping with the fourfold ideal of dharma, *artha*, kama and moksha in Hinduism, where spirituality and Eros co-exist, **Purushottam Agarwal** in his **PADMAVAT: AN EPIC LOVE STORY** (Rupa; ₹ 295; 193 pages) argues that the eponymous epic by Malik Muhammad Jayasi is about the ability of love to uplift man into the divine. While doing this, he dismisses the widely held view that Jayasi's epic is essentially a work of Sufi symbolism where God is the beloved and man her lover. As the writer points out, love is primary in the epic, battle is only secondary. Jayasi takes the historical event of the capture of Chittor fort by Alauddin Khilji and transforms it into a moving tale of love, search, spiritual angst and sacrifice. While Padmavati, the central female protagonist, is seen as the epitome of feminine charm and beauty, it is Nagmati, the first wife of Ratanen, who epitomises the real plight of women in a patriarchal system. Navigating through Hindu and Islamic literary traditions, the writer demonstrates his skills as a literary historian. As he insists, *Padmavat* should be appreciated for what it truly is—a remarkable and timeless ode to love and beauty.



Also on stands



Never Lost Again
Bill Kilday
 HarperCollins; ₹ 599; 368 pages
 An insider's account of the Google mapping revolution that changed our world, sparked new industries and augmented our reality.



For Reasons of State
John Dayal and Ajay Bose
 Penguin; ₹ 599; 320 pages
 With a foreword by Mark Tully, this new edition focuses on the ringside view of the events that unfolded during the Emergency.



The Hippie Trail
Sharif Gemie and Brian Ireland
 Aleph; ₹ 399; 256 pages
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MY INDIA

Let's celebrate our 72nd Independence Day with **Paramahansa Yogananda's** poignant tribute to this great land

Better than Heaven or Arcadia
I love Thee, O my India!
And thy love I shall give
To every brother nation that lives.
God made the earth;
Man made confining countries
And their fancy-frozen boundaries.
But with newfound boundless love
I behold the borderland of my India
Expanding into the world.
Hail, mother of religions, lotus, scenic beauty,
And sages!
Thy wide doors are open,
Welcoming God's true sons through all ages.
Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God –
I am hallowed; my body touched that sod.

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Born Mukunda Lal Ghosh, Yogananda (1893-1952) was an Indian yogi and guru who introduced millions to Kriya Yoga. His Autobiography of a Yogi remains a spiritual masterpiece

THE GREAT INDIAN PARADOX

Amid surging modernism, the spiritual soul of India shines through, observes **Andrew Cohen**

India has always been the most intriguing and mysterious country, and remains so to this day. Even the long shadow of encroaching modernism has not dimmed the unique spiritual gifts of her rich and complex culture. My friend Ken Wilber suggests that India has contributed at least 95 per cent of our understanding of human interiority.

The first time I heard about this amazing land was from my father. During World War II, he served in India and Burma, building roads for the US Army. I remember him describing the sense of awe he felt as he first glimpsed her shores. He was on a transport ship with thousands of other GIs when the captain declared grandly: "Gentlemen, behold Mother India!"

I am one of countless baby boomers who went to India to seek the jewel of enlightenment. I realise how trite that sounds, a postmodern cliché if there ever was one. But in my case, and for countless others, she has spiritually delivered more than one could ever have imagined possible. What was so special about being in Mother India as a young seeker was that she affirmed the validity of one's spiritual aspirations in a way that is almost impossible to find in the West. She allowed me to unselfconsciously seek for the elusive promise of liberation that the Buddha, Adi Shankara, Ramana Maharshi and Jiddu Krishnamurti all exemplified.

By that time in my life, I had already committed myself to the spiritual path in earnest, and most of my friends seemed to think I was a little lost. They couldn't relate to the fact that I was seeking for a mystery that modern and even postmodern culture didn't yet recognise as having much value or substance. In Mother India, the liberating power of higher states of consciousness and the possibility of enlightenment are universally accepted as realities. More than that, they are held up as the loftiest and most precious of human experiences and attainments.

I longed for the inner freedom that the great masters described so eloquently. My wishes would soon be granted. Shortly after I arrived, I met my Guru H W L Poonja, whose indescribable grace transformed my life beyond all recognition. If we have the good fortune to meet such a being, we will know it. The unanticipated impact on our souls will always surpass our wildest expectations.

Many people believe that in the throes of surging modernism, the magic, charm and mysterious depth of India are being lost, but that's just not true. Thirty years after my first visit, I find myself in the humbling position of bringing back the precious gift that India gave me so freely.



I encountered many different points of view but what stands out most clearly from my recent pilgrimage are the many varying and often contradictory experiences. In this land that has taught the world so much about spirituality, I frequently encountered a shocking denial of spirit and deep interiority—the legacy of an encroaching modernist worldview. On other occasions I was deeply

moved, because my heart was able to freely express its passion for spirit in a way that just doesn't happen anywhere else on earth.

While it is true that the majority of India's young educated classes are largely ignorant of India's unique contribution to humanity's spiritual heritage, there are remarkable exceptions. One student, aged only 18, surprised me when he unselfconsciously asked in front of his classmates a truly profound question: What is the difference between Adi Shankara's description of Brahman as the self versus Gautama the Buddha's description of the absolute principle as emptiness? Are they the same, or are they different?

Spiritual India is most definitely alive and well.

A New York-based spiritual teacher, Cohen is the founder of Evolutionary Enlightenment, a school of thought that believes in transcending the personal

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TRIPPING on the bus



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When American writer Ken Kesey of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* fame bought a bus, painted it wild in psychedelic colours, and collected a band of revellers—Merry Pranksters—willing to be part of an experimental subject for psychotomimetic drugs, little did he expect it to be as momentous as it turned out to be. The trip onboard 'Further', as the bus was named, turned out to be exciting in more ways than one. It became a catalyst in

the growth of the counterculture or hippie movement and gave birth to New Journalism, a revolutionary way of writing and recording events, employing techniques of fiction writing in journalism. Considered a seminal work, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, published on 19 August 1968, is a trippy account of the days spent by author Tom Wolfe travelling and living with Kesey and the Pranksters in a bus equipped with loads of acid/LSD-laced orange juice (Kool-Aid).

Kesey had volunteered, for \$ 75 a day, to be an experimental subject for psychotomimetic drugs and admitted LSD made him "see into people" and opened "hidden doors of the mind". Though he was a famous writer, he was not a visible icon and his experiments with drugs were limited to a small circle. Wolfe's account of Kesey and the Pranksters brought their ideologies and drug use to the mainstream. Experimental in structure and style, the book was one of the first non-musical documentations of the counterculture movement and its disdain for convention. Wolfe drew on letters, interviews, recordings, photos, diaries and conversations with dozens of sources in his book to reflect upon the influence of drugs on music, society and the law. Thus, the book became the first-ever attempt at explaining accurately, in painstaking detail, the subculture, making it a masterpiece of journalism.

Today, the book is mythologised as the starting point of the psychedelic '60s. Many of the details are blood-chilling, nauseating and revolting. However, no one can deny the journalistic contribution of this hallucination of a book. Wolfe's account managed to captivate readers, permitting them to read the book as a piece of fiction rather than a news story. In an ultimate tribute to the book, *The New York Times* called it the "essential" book on hippies.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: AUGUST 1968

- On 7 August, floods claimed over 1,000 lives in Gujarat.
- On 23 August, following the resignation of chief minister Sardar L S Gill, Punjab was placed under President's rule.
- On 31 August, West Indian cricketer Garfield 'Gary' Sobers set a first-class cricket record hitting six consecutive sixes, a feat equalled since only by Ravi Shastri in 1985.

This Independence Day, we take a look at slogans from around the globe that inspired revolutions...



Liberté, égalité, fraternité

Language: French

Translation: Liberty, equality, fraternity

Origin: France

Revolution: French Revolution

Year: 1789

Significance: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* became the motto of France long before it was officially incorporated into the constitution. It came into use during the Age of Enlightenment, which inspired the French Revolution. One of the earliest recorded usages was by French lawyer and politician Maximilien Robespierre on 5 December 1790, in his speech *Discours Sur L'organisation Des Gardes Nationales*. Interestingly, these words also appear in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.



वन्दे मातरम् *Vande mataram*

Language: Sanskrit/Hindi

Translation: I praise thee, Mother

Origin: India

Revolution: Indian Independence Movement

Year: 1882

Significance: *Vande mataram* was originally written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay as a poem and then composed into a song by Rabindranath Tagore, who sang it at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress. It became the expression of nationalism freedom fighters and revolutionaries across India. *Vande mataram* has been translated into many Indian languages and has many variations, but the version sung by Lata Mangeshkar in the film *Anand Math* is a mass favourite.



Слава Україні!

Slava Ukrayini!

Language: Ukrainian

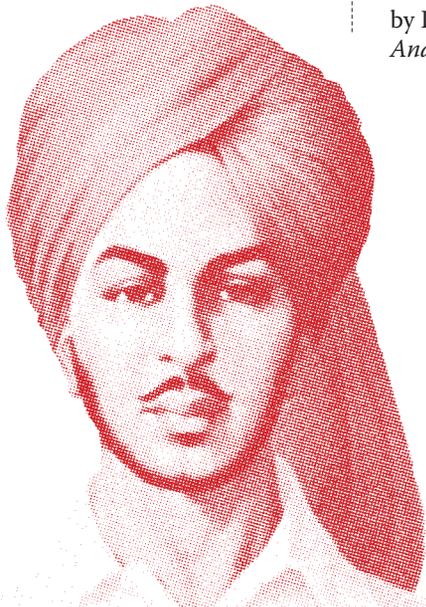
Translation: Glory to Ukraine!

Origin: Ukraine

Revolution: Ukrainian nationalist and independence movement

Year: 1918-1920

Significance: *Slava Ukrayini* was first used by the Black Zaporozhtsi Cavalry Regiment of the Ukrainian National Republic Army that fought for the independence of Ukraine in 1918-1920. Since then, it has been a part of every Ukrainian political uprising and became the official slogan of the national political party Legion of Ukrainian Nationalists. Today, the slogan has become a two-part greeting where *Slava Ukrayini!* is responded to with "*Hetmanu slava!*" (glory to the heroes) to honour and remember the people who gave their lives during their independence struggle.



इंक्लाब जिन्दाबाद



Inquilab zindabad

Language: Hindi/Urdu

Translation: Long live the revolution

Origin: India

Revolution: Indian Independence Movement

Year: 1921

Significance: *Inquilab zindabad*, coined by Urdu poet Mualana Hasrat Mohani in 1921, became popular in 1929 when Bhagat Singh and his accomplice B K Dutt chanted it while bombing the Central Legislative Assembly, Delhi, to protest British colonial rule.



Bolje grob nego rob, bolje rat nego pakt

Language: Serbo-Croatian

Translation: Better the grave than a slave, better a war than the pact

Origin: Kingdom of Yugoslavia (present day Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina)

Revolution: Yugoslav coup d'état

Year: 1941
Significance: *Bolje grob nego rob, Bolje rat nego pakt* was the rallying cry during the demonstration that broke out in Belgrade (now in Serbia) on 26 March 1941. Demonstrators were protesting against the decision of Prince Paul, then ruler of Yugoslavia, who signed the Tripartite Pact with Hitler promising neutrality in World War II. The next day, a coup led by the Royal Yugoslav Army Air Force deposed Prince Paul and his regency.



Hasta la victoria siempre!

Language: Spanish

Translation: Until victory, always! or Ever onward to victory

Origin: Cuba

Revolution: Cuban Revolution

Year: 1965

Significance: *Hasta la victoria siempre!* was taken from the farewell letter by communist revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara to then prime minister of Cuba Fidel Castro when the former left for Bolivia to set up guerrilla forces in 1965. Although Che was killed in 1967, his words, popularised by Fidel Castro, have become the ideograph for the Cuban revolution against US-backed Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. The slogan is also inscribed at the monument of Che in Santa Clara, Cuba.



জয় বাংলা *Joy Bangla*

Language: Bengali

Translation: Victory to Bengal or Hail Bengal

Origin: People's Republic of Bangladesh

Revolution: Bangladesh Liberation War

Year: 1969

Significance: *Joy Bangla* was the war cry of the Mukti Bahini (Bangladesh Forces), who fought for their independence from Pakistan in 1971. The slogan was first used on 22 February 1969 to celebrate the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, who was imprisoned in Pakistan. The phrase is a contender for the national motto of Bangladesh.

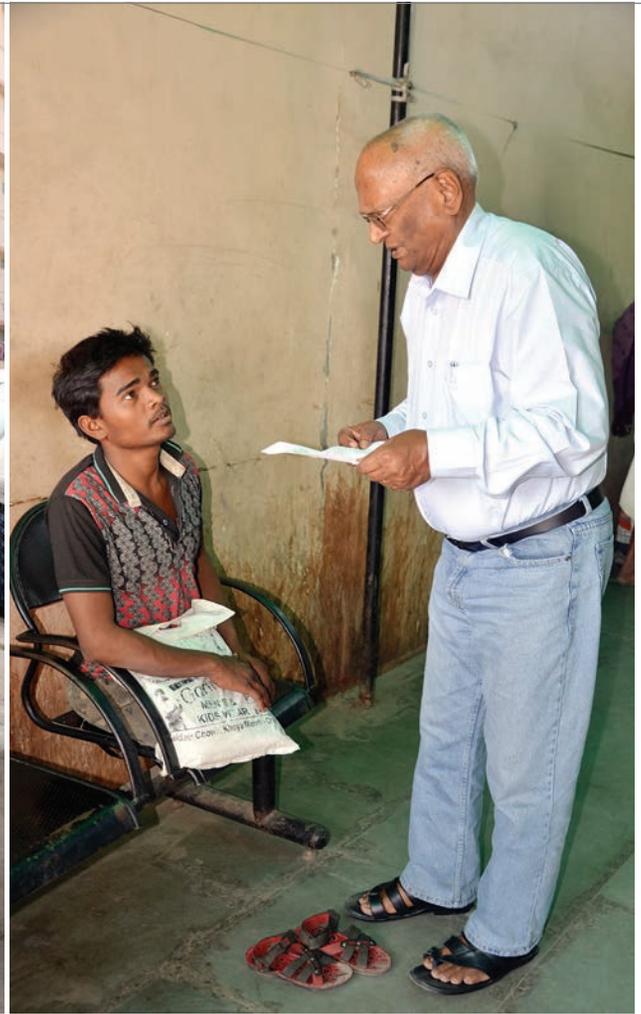
*...hoping for a free,
equal and better world*

GHANSHYAM AGARWAL, Jaipur

“Health and illiteracy are the biggest detriments in our country’s march towards progress. From educating the girl child to buying books to read with patients, buying medicines and sharing in their sorrow, pain and angst, I have been a part of people’s arduous journeys”



Photographs by Surendra Jain Paras



A photographer by profession, Ghanshyam Agarwal, 83, Jaipur, has been spending two hours every day at hospitals and shelters for the differently abled since 2004. On weekdays, he visits Sawai Man Singh Hospital and, over the weekends, he is at Mother Teresa Home, spending time with the residents. Not only does he listen to their grievances, he provides help in whatever form he can, including feeding and washing

them. Born to freedom-fighter parents in Sikar district of Rajasthan, and having accompanied them to jail at the age of six, the concept of *seva* has been ingrained in him since childhood. Currently, he is sponsoring the education of two girls who will graduate in 2019. Earlier, he had sponsored the education of another girl, Tanya, who is currently employed with a law firm in Delhi and now helping to educate others.

—Sahil Jaswal

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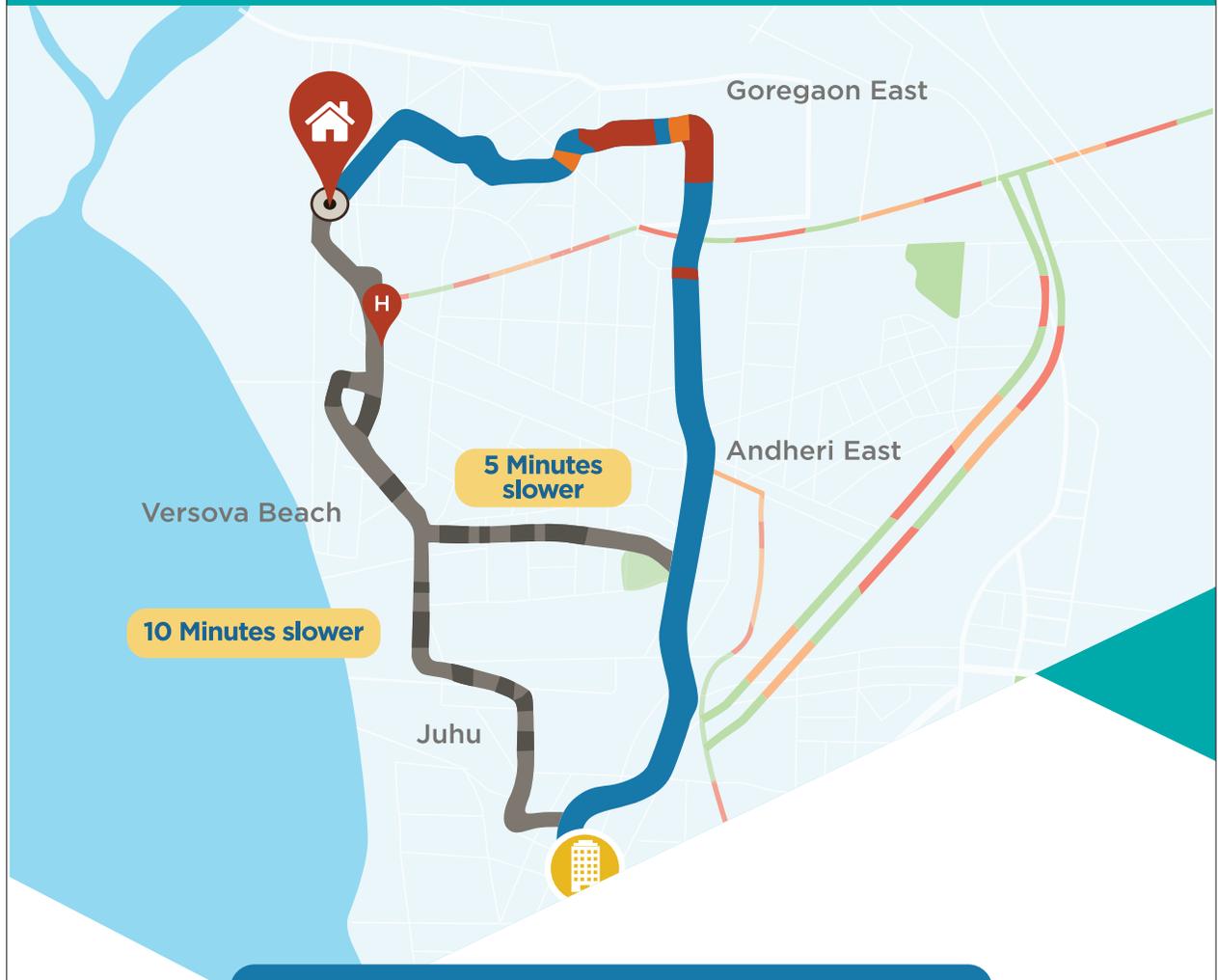
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