

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

JANUARY 2011 ₹ 30

REPUBLIC DAY SPECIAL:

**Parents of
martyrs pay
it forward**

DIARY 100

**Guwahati's
oldest man**

APPEARANCES:

**WORK OUT
YOUR FACE**

RESOLUTIONS

1.1.11

**SHOBHAA DE AND NINE OTHER
ACHIEVERS TOAST THE NEW DECADE**

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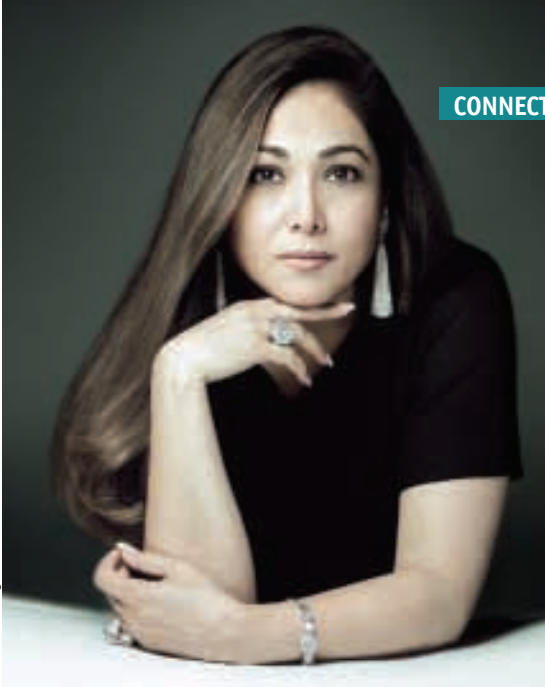
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Turning the page

Suresh Natarajan



Life is meaningless without evolution: personal, professional or spiritual. Change is inevitable, synonymous with growth. And all of us who have tried to change something fundamental about our lives know how achingly difficult it can be—yet how rewarding. We just need to bite the bullet and take a leap of faith to transform our possibilities into realities. And there's no better time to make that happen than the beginning of a new year.

After putting the past decade to rest, it's time to write a new chapter in our lives. In the belief that we must be the change we want to see and following a process of brainstorming, our magazine has taken that leap, that next step in its own personal evolution as a mirror of your dreams.

For starters, our cover puts our motto, 'Celebrate Age' front and centre. This clarion call is now our calling card; a way to address our silver constituency directly, stating proudly our *raison d'être*. As you turn our pages, you will discover other changes, some dramatic, others subtle. A less structured feel that does away with artificial brackets and lets each feature speak for itself. More emphasis on

news you can use to ramp up your life. New writers from different spheres. An all-encompassing view of the silver world that expands our horizons—and yours. And greater visual and editorial dynamism and vibrancy to power each story, every nook and corner of the magazine.

Our loyal readers don't need to worry though—change doesn't mean abandonment of the worthy. This is still your magazine and will continue to showcase inspiring silvers; bring you the latest on healthcare, finance, nutrition and exercise; serve up a smorgasbord of leisure options; and be relentless in our advocacy of silver rights. We just promise to do it better, brighter and more interactively to ensure that every reader doesn't just connect to *Harmony: Celebrate Age* but is able to turn the next page in tandem with us. Do tell us what you think.

A Happy New Year to you—and yours.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—January 2011 Volume 7 Issue 8

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Shobhaa De, photographed by **Jit Ray**

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A dignified solution for senior citizens, coming up in Bhopal.

Senior Citizen Correspondent

■ www.theaakritigroup.com

BHOPAL: As a bird grows, it has to go, to learn to fly high in the open sky. And this is the circle of life that one cannot deny. In today's scenario willingly or unwillingly the kids have to move away from their parents. Sometimes it is the increasing professional aspirations, sometimes a choice of a nuclear family and sometimes a desire for materialistic lifestyle. This change in priorities has resulted in a lonesome life for senior citizens who seldom wish to leave the comfort & coziness of their home and peer group.



"I felt the need to do something for the senior citizens."

Hemant Kumar
CMD, Aakriti Group.

Considering this fact, Mr. Hemant Kumar, CMD Aakriti Group realized a dire need for an alternative commune for the senior citizens. With an aim to provide a protected independent life to the elderly young at hearts, the Aakriti Group launched a unique project, "NEST, a commune for senior citizens". A one of its kind project, situated at Aakriti Eco-city, central India's

first township in Bhopal to be built over 45 acres on the principles of environmental conservation. The NEST is a well planned alternative commune for Senior Citizens who wish for a peaceful, dignified life. It is a perfect abode where all the facilities and comforts are tailor-made to ensure complete physical, mental and psychological well being of the elderly. The NEST also provides assurance of its resident's well being to those who have to move away from their parents.

The commune offers a combination of studio, 1 BHK and 2 BHK apartments. The units range from 575 sq.ft to 1390 sq.ft and are located within the proximity of the city. The apartments can be booked by anyone without age-bar but can only be occupied by individuals above the age of 55 years.

The NEST is a part of the ongoing development scheme which houses residential complex as well as club, mall, multiplex etc. It also offers special facilities such as payment of bills, housekeeping, laundry service, a central kitchen & canteen, guest accommodation & concierge services, a well stocked library, separate recreation & meditation room, computer room. Along with these facilities the complex is outfitted with handrails at strategic locations, the flooring is

laid using anti-skid tiles, a handicap friendly access, emergency alert systems, cable TV connectivity, EPABX, normal & stretcher elevators, centralized gas pipeline, landscaped



terrace. For house keeping and maintenance The NEST has an association with a special Facility Management Company that will provide assistance for management of all utilities such as electrical, plumbing and mechanical consumables within the apartments.

Apart from these facilities there would be special amenities such as physiotherapy room, a medical room with a standby ambulance and a doctor on call for round the clock emergency help. An O.P.D clinic and pharmacy on premises to support the small medical needs of an individual. The NEST also has a tie-up with a reputed hospital in Bhopal to provide medical support in case of an emergency.

The commune is proposed to be governed by a Trust, "The Aakriti Senior

Citizen Homes Trust". The Trust would assist in maintaining checks and balances in the routine running of the complex and for roping in various social agencies, NGOs for conducting

cultural & social activities for entertainment of the residents.

the
NEST
senior citizen homes

For more details, please contact - 9977851277, 8959908020, 8959908041 or SMS AAKRITI <space> your name to 54567.

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ADVT

column one

Our resolution is to continue bringing you an evolved magazine and, with it, voices, opinions and philosophies that help shape our present and future. The January 2011 issue is all new in look and ideology for the next decade. And endorsing the cause of change are 10 incredible silvers and their views on life, success and the future. Leading the brigade, and on the cover ("Resolutions: 1.1.11"), is the stunning Shobhaa De. Her views on longevity, empowerment, love and sex will help you cultivate a new world around you. Read between the lines and choose your own road to happiness.

The bigger heroes this issue are parents of Indian martyrs, keeping alive the memories of their sons. Engrossed in causes close to their and their children's hearts, they are giving back to society what they never received themselves: the love and company of their sons who sacrificed their lives for our country. In "The Legacy of the Brave", we get a glimpse of their inspiring larger-than-life campaigns. To mark Republic Day, this feature is *Harmony's* tribute to a whole generation that is helping shape our future.

This year, Shameem Akthar, our in-house yoga expert, promises a new series on emotional culturing with yoga—this month it's happiness ("Cultivating Laughter"). Sometimes one finds happiness by looking back in time, sometimes it's in the changing times and at other times in looking ahead at the brighter side of life that has been alien to us. Enjoy columnist Timeri Murari's take on denims ("It's in the jeans"), his own and how they fit on others' bottoms. Indeed, the little extras in the magazine in this issue will spice up your reading the whole month. A very Happy New Year!

—Meeta Bhatti

I am 70 years old and a reader of *Harmony* since its inception. I wait for the magazine eagerly every month. After working in Rotary District in different positions for more than 28 years and having understood the importance of social service to society, I sometimes feel God has given me a second life. In 1992, when I had a massive heart attack and did not get an ambulance in time, I went into a coma. I presume I was saved to serve society.

This incident prompted me to start an EMS service project, Pune Heart Brigade, as there was no EMS in Pune till 1999. In fact, you covered this service in your February 2007 issue. I then became associated with the Borderless World Foundation, which provides shelter and education to more than 160 orphan girls in Kupwara, Beerwa, Anantnag and Jammu (September 2009; *Harmony*). In October 2009, I started my third project, The Dialysis Fund, where I provide free dialysis to the poor. I have formed a personal corpus for this service and I am confident of raising ₹ 5 million. The total number of patients served has just crossed 75 and I am confident of crossing the 1,000 mark in the years to come. However, when I read about the service rendered by your 10 winners, I feel my work is just peanuts! There is certainly much more to be done for society and I thank *Harmony* for bringing this to our attention.

Mohan Audhi Pune



Your cover feature on silver-friendly hospitals ("The + Factor") in the December 2010 issue of *Harmony* was illuminating, informative and educative. We all know that India is now home to over 100 million silvers, 90 per cent of whom have no social security in terms of health. All Indian hospitals woefully lack silver-friendly facilities; a few have some but they are not qualitative or sufficient. India's megalopolis and financial capital Mumbai does not even have a single exclusive geriatric ward equipped with geriatric medicines and gerontologists. Disgracefully, all hospitals in the city lack separate queues and concessions for seniors. While it may not be feasible to start a new venture on the lines of Canada's Royal Jubilee Hospital, which is

designed only for elders, we are confident that the chairperson of Harmony for Silvers Foundation can bring about the establishment of an exclusive geriatric ward at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai at affordable rates.

Mohan Siroya Mumbai

I write this letter with reference to your feature, "The Other Side" (December 2010). In my opinion, Section 498(a) (the anti-dowry law) that seeks to protect women from domestic violence is not needed at all. Personal and family matters must be kept away from public view as should man-woman relations. Even without such a law, the aggrieved party (female or male)

Do you know what goes in your Mouth?

Important things one must know before choosing the material for dental restoration.

Before going to a dentist, here are some homework tips to make it easier for you to choose the right dental material for replacement of your teeth, replacement that gives you a natural smile.

Know your materials for dental restoration

Materials for dental restoration swings around many options based on which your dentist takes a decision. The first option is the popular 'Metal Restorations' evidently made of metals. The very use of metals in its manufacturing gives away the aesthetics and physical properties and 'metal' by its nature is bound to get perforation because of metal erosion or aggravates allergy.

The second option available is called PFM Porcelain Fused on Metal using ceramic and metals otherwise known as partial ceramic replacements. Porcelain Fused on Metal are made of metal from inside and given a ceramic-like finish on its outer surface. Over a period of time when the ceramic coating outside the metal tends to give way or chip off the worries begin and gets worse with time.

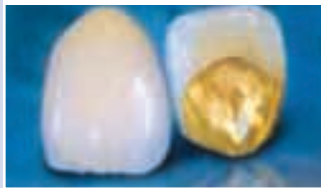
Zirconia – the most ideal material for dental replacement.

“How many of us know that the radioactive properties of a low-quality ceramic can induce cancer? Sounds alarming?”

Metal Frameworks



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can leave the house and get justice. Once personal relations are strained and made public, it becomes impossible for the people concerned to live together again. Further, it is known that many women do take undue advantage of this law for personal gain. The government must take cognisance of this fact.

Mahesh Kapasi *New Delhi*

The October 2010 issue of *Harmony* had some very inspiring stories about the winners of the fourth annual Harmony Silver Awards, one of whom was Prof A Ranganatha Rao. I have not had the pleasure of meeting him but have corresponded with him on our common hobby: solving chess problems. In fact, one of my pen pals is among his closest disciples and visits him



every Sunday. I have learnt a lot about this great mathematician through my friend. At his request I had composed a special problem for inclusion in the special issue of a Gujarati mathematical magazine on his centenary. He richly deserves the honour bestowed on him. In fact, *Harmony* has been honoured by its association with such a great centenarian.

Suresh M Mody *Mumbai*

The memories of Protest Day on 16 August 2010 are still fresh when hundreds and thousands of elderly men and women in every nook and corner of our great country

walked in silent processions unmindful of their physical disabilities, only to exhibit our disappointment at the insensitivity of our rulers towards our problems. Whether that countrywide demonstration made any impact on our state and central governments is yet to be seen, but fortunately the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken note of the situation. It has constituted a core group on the protection and welfare of the elderly persons. The following terms of reference of the Core Group speak of the purpose of this very welcome step on the part of NHRC:

- To review existing government policies, laws/rules/orders etc and other material from the human rights perspective and make an assessment of the current status of enforcement of the rights of the elderly in different states/UTs in India
- To identify voids and gaps in the policy framework for implementation and to suggest measures to fill the same
- To identify important human rights issues concerning the elderly and suggest measures as appropriate for better protection of their rights
- To suggest a plan of action for enforcement of rights of elderly persons
- To examine best practices in India and abroad dealing with the care of elderly
- Any other issue considered relevant to the subject by the group.

Dr S P Kinjwadekar, Prof Suman Bhatia and I have been nominated as members of the Core Group representing the All India Senior Citizens' Confederation (AISCONN). Mr K R Gangadharan, who has recently joined us as our advisor, has also been nominated as a member of the Core Group in addition to nine other eminent senior citizens. I request you to contact me (rnmital@gmail.com) if you are aware

of any situation where the human rights of senior citizens have been violated or any matter that would fall in the purview of the above terms of reference. It will enable us to prepare ourselves for a meaningful discussion in the Core Group and effective representation to NHRC.

R N Mital *President, AISCCON*



AN INVITATION FROM *HARMONY*

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

- You had an experience related to money
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren ...and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'

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INSIDE

P10: Hi-tech walking aid

P18: Karaoke king Dr KC

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



► FACE OFF

The mole TRUTH

Don't hate that mole—it could be a marker of delayed ageing. According to research by a team at London's Kings College and Dr Veronique Bataille, a dermatologist based at Hemel Hempstead General Hospital, **the cells of people with many moles on their skin have properties that enable renewal.** As the BBC reports, their first study showed that people with large numbers of moles appeared less vulnerable to some of the effects of skin ageing, such as wrinkles and blemishes. (Most people have between 30 and 40 moles, but some have as many as 600.) A subsequent study suggested that these people were also less affected by age-related reductions in bone density—those with more than 100 moles were half as likely to develop osteoporosis compared to those with 25 moles or fewer.

"Moles are a visible product of the underlying system that controls body ageing," says Dr Bataille. "When you have a patient with lots of moles, we noticed they tended to age better. But tinkering with this system to produce an elixir of youth is bound to prove tricky." Complicating the issue is the fact that more moles have been linked to a higher rate of cancer, both skin and other types—that concern is next on the team's agenda.

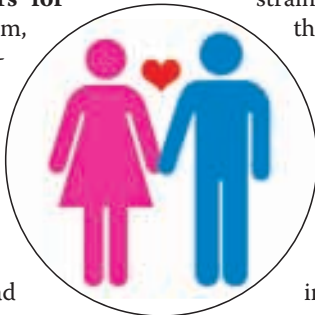
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PRESET NUMBERS IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY. THE HANDSET
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RELIGHT THE FIRE

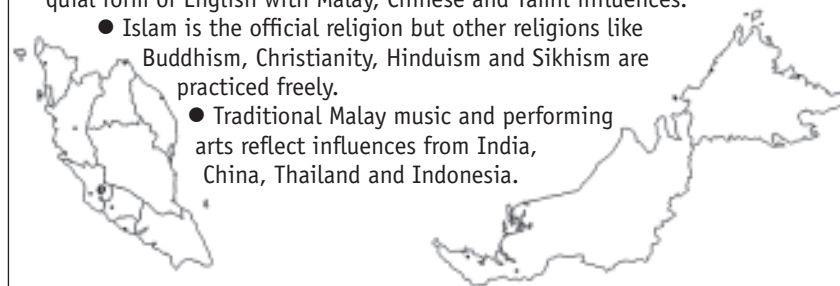
Sex-ed is not just for teenagers. The northern Malaysian state of Terengganu has started weekend sex education seminars for silver couples. The aim, as news agency AFP reports, is to bring back the joy of sex and show elders how to restore their partner's libido. "Many elderly couples sleep in separate bedrooms and are not intimate," says Mohamad



Shafaruddin Mustafa, head of Terengganu's Family Development Foundation. "This is unhealthy as they can still have vibrant intimate relationships, especially with all kinds of therapy and health supplements available. Because of the lack of intimacy, the couples who are already in their twilight years get more agitated and tense and this strains their marriage badly to the point of divorce. This can be avoided with simple tips on how to keep things exciting." We salute this remarkable initiative—especially considering that sexuality is a topic that's seldom discussed openly in the country.

More about Malaysia

- The word Malaysia is derived from the Sanskrit term *Malaiur* or *Malayadvipa* that can be translated as 'land of mountains', the word used by ancient Indian traders when referring to the Malay Peninsula.
- The official language is Bahasa Malaysia, a standardised form of the Malay language. Other popular languages include English and 'Manglish', a colloquial form of English with Malay, Chinese and Tamil influences.
- Islam is the official religion but other religions like Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism are practiced freely.
- Traditional Malay music and performing arts reflect influences from India, China, Thailand and Indonesia.



The way AHEAD

With the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and in collaboration with the International Longevity Centre - India, NGO Janaseva Foundation held a **National Consultation on 'Active & Healthy Ageing'** from 24-26 November in Pune. The objective of the event was to find ways to empower silvers to lead a participatory life of good health, dignity and quality. Delegates included representatives from the Ministries of Social Justice & Empowerment of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Maharashtra, Punjab and Assam. Each state made a presentation on its policy on older persons, demographic profile of silvers, and the status of implementation of the Maintenance and Welfare of Senior Citizens and Parents Act 2007.

Also present were NGOs Harmony for Silvers Foundation, HelpAge India, Dignity Foundation and Silver Innings, as well as leaders of Federation of Senior Citizens Organisation of Maharashtra (FESCOM), All India Senior Citizens' Confederation (AISCCON) and Association of Senior Citizens of Pune (ASCOP). The issues and concerns of silvers in the areas of gender issues, health, economic and social security were extensively discussed—the recommendations emerging from the consultation will be submitted to WHO and the Government of India.

Rewind

Old bodies for new? What sounds like an outrageous proposition may well become possible, as new research by scientists at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical College in Boston suggests. Focusing on a process called telomere shortening, they were able to **'regenerate' the bodies of old and ailing mice and transform them into healthy animals.** Telomeres are protective caps at the end of our cellular chromosomes; every time a cell divides, they are cut shorter until—over the years—they eventually stop working leading to cell death in a process called 'senescence'. An enzyme called telomerase stops telomeres from getting shorter, thus prolonging the process of natural ageing.



The researchers first bred mice without telomerase, leading them to age prematurely and develop a variety of ailments. Then, they gave them injections to reactivate the enzyme. To their surprise, this repaired damaged tissues and reversed the signs of ageing. "What we saw was not a slowing down or stabilisation of the ageing process but a dramatic reversal, which was unexpected," writes study leader Ronald DePinho in journal *Nature*. "This could lead to strategies that enhance the regenerative potential of organs as people age."

telomerase

After its discovery in the 1980s, telomerase gained its reputation as a fountain of youth. Chromosomes have caps of repetitive DNA called telomeres at their ends. Every time cells divide, their telomeres shorten, which eventually prompts them to stop dividing and die. Telomerase prevents this decline in some kinds of cells, including stem cells, by lengthening telomeres; researchers hope activating the enzyme can slow cellular ageing.

SILVERS AT WORK: Senior Citizens Bangalore, a charitable group comprising retired silvers, has launched a rural development programme for women and children in Karnataka's Hoskote village. This includes donation of books, shoes, textbooks, toys and chemistry sets to schools in the village, and free corpus loans to women to set up cottage industries and small-scale business units.

33%

OF AUSTRALIAN SILVERS AGED BETWEEN 75 AND 95 REMAIN SEXUALLY ACTIVE. AMONG THEM, 57 PER CENT ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR SEX LIFE.

SHORT TAKES



NEW VISAGE: Nivea has recently launched its first anti-ageing products in India—Nivea Visage DNAge day and night creams promise to increase surface skin renewal and protect the skin from external damage for firmer looking skin. Price: ₹ 799.

OUR WINNERS: At the three-day second Senior Citizens Carom Tournament (Greater Mumbai level), held in November 2010 at Manav Seva Sangh, Sion, 11 silvers (six men and five women) from Harmony Interactive Centre participated for the first time. Ujwala Pingle and Shreekrishna Gokhale, both from Harmony Interactive Centre, won the ladies' and men's tournament respectively!

Best foot forward

FORMER IIT-MUMBAI ALUMNUS PRAGATI KAPUR HAS DEVELOPED A WALKING AID THAT MAKES THIS SIMPLE, EVERYDAY ACTIVITY A PLEASURE FOR SILVERS, DISCOVERS **DHANYA NAIR SANKAR**

Here's a promise by a young innovator to take the 'disability' out of walking and turn mobility into a near-effortless activity. Twenty-five year-old Pragati Kapur, a graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology – Mumbai, has designed a walking aid that uses scientific ergonomics and safety features to put the pep back in your step. She designed her version of the walker as part of her project while earning her master's in industrial design at IIT's Industrial Design Centre.

"I felt the walkers currently on the market had several lacunae and wanted to develop one that could help seniors walk more, walk better and walk confidently, without help and without any stigma associated with ageing," says Kapur. She spent five months designing the aid: three at IIT and two at the IT University of Copenhagen. "The project was categorised as Product Development for the Elderly by the Government of India's Department of Science and Technology, and a fund of ₹ 75,000 was provided for the prototype research, development and testing," she reveals.

What sets Kapur's product apart is its ability to allow



Pragati Kapur



WORLD VIEW

In the US and Europe, the rollator, a walking aid designed to lend additional support to maintain balance and stability while walking, is very popular. This wheeled walker comprises a pivotal front frame, front wheels and a solid rear. Most modern rollators are height-adjustable and come in various designs; for instance bariatric rollators, which are wider than standard ones, have been designed for overweight/obese individuals.

the user to stand up, hold the aid and walk with little or no assistance. It therefore demands less effort from the user and ensures better usability.

The walker, which can be adjusted according to the user's height, provides better stability and weight redistribution, and is easy to handle. It has two front wheels that facilitate manoeuvrability vis-à-vis the standard U-shaped walker, which needs to be lifted and pushed. It also has a seat, which means the user can pause to rest.

For safety purposes, Kapur's walker has hand brakes, missing in Indian versions. It also has a pair of rear wheels, which improve traction and prevent skidding, and supports that help users hoist themselves. What's more, it looks good too!

To get the ergonomics right, Kapur studied the mobility of silvers who used walking aides in Mumbai and Copenhagen. She generously calls silvers "co-designers" of her project.

"Prototypes built at different stages of the project were tested with elderly people who already used a walking aid," she explains. "Their feedback was insightful in shaping my

DESIGN FOR DEMENTIA

Intelligent and thoughtful design can go a long way in improving the quality of life of people suffering from dementia. Take the work of 29 year-old Irish designer Gregor Timlin, who has recently completed a two-year project focusing on a **"dining room with a difference"**, as *The Irish Times* reports. After spending months in care homes across the UK, observing and interviewing residents and staff, he developed a series of products, including coloured tableware to ensure food contrasts with the plate; handles and plate edges designed to accommodate people with arthritis; a high-lipped design on tableware to help residents with limited dexterity keep food on the plate; and cups with a neoprene layer allowing them to be gripped when hot. He has also designed special dining tables that can accommodate wheelchairs,



and adjustable lights to compensate for visual impairment. "The aspiration was to improve the lives of older people with dementia in care, and use design, even in the smallest way, to help them live at the highest level of their ability," says Timlin.

design. I visited rehabilitation centres in Denmark where therapists collaborated with me."

Kapur intends to test it on more silvers to tweak it further if required. It was showcased by the Department of Science and Technology at an exhibition at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre on World Elders Day, 1 October 2010. "Considering the growing population of the elderly, and the rise in walking disabilities, my aid definitely has scope," she says.

Mumbai-based Saraswati Menon, 72, who underwent knee surgery recently, would definitely agree. "I needed to use a walker for a while and used the standard model with wheels in front and a solid rear," she shares. "Though it helped, I still needed assistance while getting up or sitting and sometimes while walking on smooth surfaces. I was obviously very apprehensive while using it. It would be wonderful to have a walker that can be used without assistance."

HERE'S AN AMERICAN TWIST on the caretaker robot prototype so beloved to the Japanese: **Nao, the ethical robot.** The brainchild of philosopher Susan Anderson of the University of Connecticut and her husband, computer scientist Michael Anderson of the University of Hartford, Nao is the size of a toddler but empowered to make some very adult decisions: when

to remind his silver wards to take their medication, when to notify an overseer in emergencies and, most intriguingly, when to stay on the sidelines and give them space. "He represents a combination of basic ethical principles, machine learning techniques and artificial intelligence science," Susan Anderson tells *Los Angeles Times*.

The project, which is still in development, is featured in the October issue of

Scientific American.



Robo CARE



3 GOOD!

HOLLYWOOD A-LISTERS JANE FONDA, 72, SUSAN SARANDON, 64, AND SIGOURNEY WEAVER, 61, HAVE CRANKED UP THE OOMPH WITH SULTRY POSES IN VARIOUS STAGES OF UNDRESS—ALBEIT DECOROUS—FOR V MAGAZINE'S DECEMBER 2010 ISSUE. THE THEME, RATHER APPROPRIATELY IS, 'WHO CARES ABOUT AGE?' HERE'S WHAT THEY TOLD THE MAGAZINE....



WEAVER: "I never worry when they say 'there are no roles' or whatever. As long as people are telling stories, there will be great roles for all shapes, sizes, sexes—and ages."

FONDA: "There are fabulous things about being older. The older people get, the less scared they are. I love being productive. I'm always coming up with new things, whether it's making a DVD or a book, or making movies. I always want to exteriorise what's going on inside of me."

SARANDON: "I wouldn't want to be 20 now. I'm much more comfortable in my skin, saggy as it is! Life is too short to be constantly worrying about looks. It's really important to surround yourself with things that get you excited, so you don't feel life is passing you by."

Behind the wheel

How long should silvers continue to drive? American photojournalist Shaleece Haas cuts to the heart of the matter in short film *Old People Driving*, where she documents her 97 year-old grandfather Milton Cavalli and his friend Herbert Bauer, 99, as they struggle to decide whether they should continue driving. Over 25 minutes, you hear their stories behind the wheel interspersed with news, statistics and research. The film shatters many myths about silvers

and their safety record on the road. "Never in history have we had this many older people on the road," Haas tells *The San Francisco Chronicle*. "I wanted to capture the richness of my grandfather's driving lore and blend it with the broader issue that is affecting so many families. I would like to see the film used as a conversation starter in families; with caregivers; and in senior centres."



To know more, go to
www.oldpeopledrivingmovie.com

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"Insurance is subject matter of the Solicitation"

JUST DO IT—with music! Exercising to music can help silvers improve balance and reduce falls, according to new research by Dr Andrea Trombetti of University Hospitals and Faculty of Medicine of Geneva, Switzerland. Her team noted a 50 per cent reduction in falls when people over the age of 65 exercised to music for an hour each week over six months. The benefits were still apparent six months later. The study is published in journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*.



Then: Sweater Now: Leg Warmers

Brace yourself for a cold winter with a pair of easy-to-make leg warmers. Cut out the sleeves from an old sweater. Hem both ends. Weave a ribbon or embroidery through both ends. Pull on and tie the ends of the ribbon to ensure your leg warmers don't slip off.



MORE IDEAS... 1. Make a colourful wine bottle cosy with the sleeve of a sweater. 2. Make a woollen bookmark by cutting a rectangle from an old sweater and decorating it with trimmings. 3. Make a stole out of an old shawl by simply cutting out a rectangle from the centre of the shawl and sewing ribbons on the four sides.



FACTS

- » Recycled wool is also called 'shoddy', as recycled wool has seen some damage and lost its natural sheen to a large extent.
- » Recycled wool is ideal for children's knitting experiments.
- » Australia is the world's largest producer and exporter of apparel wool, producing about 28 per cent of total world production, which is used for making clothes and knitting yarn.
- » Most wool used for clothing measures between 15 and 24 microns in fibre diameter, the rest is used for textiles such as blankets, insulation and furnishings.

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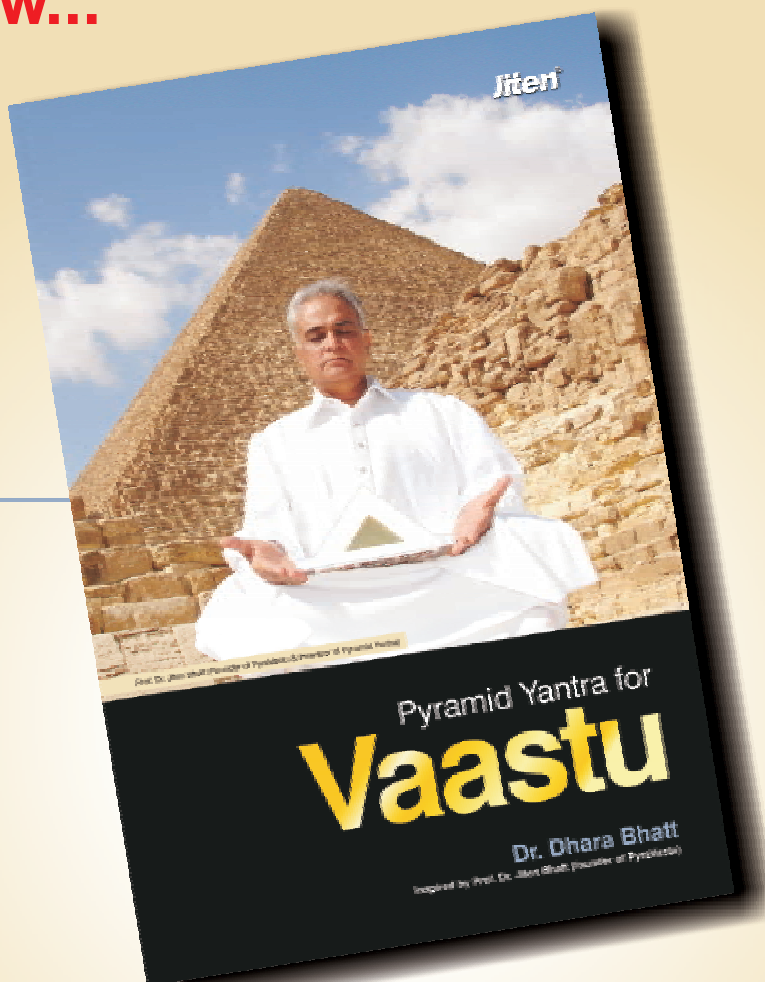
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TALKING HEALS

CONSISTENT SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION THERAPY promotes cell growth in the brain of stroke patients and helps them heal faster, according to leading cardiologists in the country. "In a stroke, blood supply to the 'speech centre' in the brain gets affected. As a result, patients lose their ability to communicate and get understood. Guidance under an experienced therapist helps restore this imbalance. The therapy increases the brain's capacity to distinguish information," Dr B K Goyal, chief cardiologist at Mumbai's Bombay Hospital, tells *Harmony*. Stroke patients often suffer from various disabilities—confusion, anxiety, depression and difficulty in reading and speaking. "Speech therapy is one of the fastest ways to cure a patient; it has a 50-75 per cent success rate in bringing patients back to normal life."

16%

THE FASTEST SELLING ANTI-OBESITY DRUG SUBUTAMINE WILL SOON BE BANNED IN INDIA. IN A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE INDIAN PHARMCO

VIGILANCE COMMITTEE, THE DRUG—ALREADY BANNED IN THE US, CANADA, CHINA AND EUROPE—INCREASES THE RISK OF HEART PROBLEMS AND STROKES BY ALMOST 16 PER CENT. A GLOBAL SURVEY SHOWED THE SAME RESULTS. INTRODUCED IN INDIA IN 1999, THE DRUG IS MANUFACTURED BY SEVERAL INDIAN AND FOREIGN PHARMACEUTICALS AND IS POPULAR AS IT PROVIDES QUICK FIXES IN SHEDDING EXCESS FLAB.

Breakthrough

There is **new hope for people suffering from cancer of the liver**. The Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, will soon start **intra-arterial radio nuclear therapy**, an unconventional treatment to counter cancer of the liver. This procedure offers the



combined benefits of hepatology, radiology and nuclear therapy in fighting cancer and is especially beneficial for seniors or people whose cancer has reached an advanced stage. Expert radiologists will then guide the nuclear medicine doctors through the procedure. "A selective arterial catheterised radio level material will be passed to specifically target the site of the cancer," Dr B R Mittal, head of the nuclear medicine department at PGIMER, tells *Harmony*. The procedure will especially help seniors as most advanced cases of liver cancer are found among them. This method is yet to be used in India but is widely practised internationally. "Though no cancer is 100 per cent curable, this is certainly one of the better options available to fight the disease," adds Mittal.

Move it

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a chronic, inflammatory disorder that affects the synovial joints, could lead to substantial loss of mobility. It is also characterised by fatigue and general malaise. Though several doctors have shied away from prescribing exercise as therapy, according to a new French study, **cardio-respiratory aerobic exercise is safe for patients with stable RA**, even though many might not feel up to it. In fact, patients who exercised regularly had improved function, less joint pain, and greater quality of life. "In RA patients, bones and muscles become very weak and can be strengthened with exercise," Dr Sharath Kumar, orthopaedic



and sports medicine consultant at Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad, tells *Harmony*. "It also reduces stiffness, thereby improving mobility of joints. RA patients are also at a greater risk of developing depression, diabetes and hypertension. Regular exercise helps keep these conditions at bay."

However, the exercise should be done under the guidance of a physiotherapist and the patient must pay attention to the body. If any joint becomes inflamed owing to exercising, it should be rested. Twice-a-week sessions of aerobic exercises are normally recommended for such patients.

EYE SORE



According to leading eye specialists in the country, an **increasing number of cataract patients now belong to the 50-55 age group**. This is a definite change in the trend as even five years ago the problem was seen to be common among

people above 65 years of age. On one hand, medical experts insist that an increasing number of 50 year-olds are being diagnosed earlier than before. On the other, lifestyle diseases like obesity, diabetes, poor nutrition, family history, long-term exposure to

radiation and previous eye inflammation or injury are being cited as triggers. "Use of eye drops containing steroids can also be a reason for this trend change," Dr Vishal Kenia, founder of Kenia Hospital in Mumbai, tells *Harmony*. Doctors suggest lifestyle changes can delay the onset of cataract as there is no prevention for the condition. A diet rich in protein and vitamins, exercise, wearing sunglasses to protect against UV rays, and regular eye check-ups could go a long way in delaying cataract.

₹5

THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO LAUNCH INEXPENSIVE BLOOD SUGAR TESTING STRIPS TO ENSURE QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR THE POOR. THESE STRIPS WILL COST ₹ 5 EACH; CURRENTLY, STRIPS COST ₹ 35. THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF MEDICAL RESEARCH IS ALSO WORKING ON A STRIP THAT CAN TEST FOR DIABETES WITH A SMALL SALIVA SWAB.

Karaoke king

Shah Rukh Khan is a fan, Abhishek Bachchan tweets about him, and award-winning English writer Patrick French is penning his biography. Such is the fan following of Delhi-based **Dr K Chaudhry**—or Dr KC as he is known—a 66 year-old retired medical practitioner, who has uploaded over 1,500 songs on *YouTube.com* and has over 2.5 million viewers around the globe, all thanks to his webcam, microphone, and dauntless zeal.

Dr KC began by posting his renditions of Indian and English songs on *YouTube.com*, and later drifted to remix numbers. Today, he also writes, composes, and sings his own numbers. “Almost 7,000 people log in to watch my videos every day,” he says happily. Owners of Delhi-based eatery chain Big Chill even waive his bill when he comes over to compose music and entertain fans at the restaurant.

Truth be told, Dr KC’s singing abilities are far from perfect. His renditions of James Blunt, Michael Jackson, Justin Timberlake and Sir Cliff Richard, though earnest, can leave you in splits. Nonetheless, his exuberance and simplicity have won over many hearts all over the world. As the high-spirited septuagenarian reveals, “I get more hate than fan mails. They make me feel important. Praises please me, abuses amuse me. I feel indebted to everyone who spends his prized time in assessing me as good or bad.”

Author of a dozen medical books, Dr KC has also received offers to compose for movies and soaps, besides an offer to

act in a Pakistani movie. He is also a webhost, astrologer, author of medical books and brand ambassador of the upcoming Synergy Games 2010, a national-level sports event that is expected to have participants from all over India in various segments: corporate sector, individuals, schools, universities, sports academies and sports clubs.



Lovejeet Alexander

MILESTONES

- Twenty-five years after she petitioned for equal rights in family property for women of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala, educator and rights campaigner **Mary Roy**, 77, mother of Booker-winning author Arundhati Roy, has finally triumphed over the many hurdles that blocked her campaign. Though Roy won the case in the apex court years ago, her case got entangled in the sub-court amid her brother’s objections. Recently, a sub-court in Kottayam, Kerala, executed a decree implementing the verdict.

IN PASSING

- **Irwin Kershner**, director of *Star Wars* sequel *The Empire Strikes Back*, died on 27 November. He was 87.
- American actor and comedian **Leslie Nielsen** passed away on 28 November. He was 84.
- Fitness expert **Rama Bans** passed away on 4 December. She was 86.
- American healthcare activist and best-selling author **Elizabeth Edwards** passed away on 7 December. She was 61.

BIRTHDAYS

- Business tycoon **Vijay Mallya** turned 55 on 18 December
- American director **Steven Spielberg** turned 64 on 18 December
- Former PM **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** turned 86 on 25 December
- Industrialist **Ratan Tata** turned 73 on 28 December
- Actor **Rajesh Khanna** turned 68 on 29 December
- Welsh actor **Anthony Hopkins** turned 73 on 31 December

I love baking and find it very therapeutic. Tell me how to start my own baking class.

If you can bake everything from cakes and brownies to breads, this is an ideal option. You can start a class at home with a few students. The area you designate should be clean and clutter-free. You need an investment of about ₹ 75,000 to ₹ 100,000 to buy a bigger oven and supply of baking products. Usually, every such class charges ₹ 500 to ₹ 1,000 per student depending on specialisation. Spread the word through pamphlets and advertisements in your local paper. The popularity of your class will depend on what you can offer and how well you connect with your students.

—Nirmala Saraf runs a baking class in Mumbai

I am a teacher retiring next month. I would like to become a freelance travel photographer. Please help.

There is a huge demand for photographers but this line of work requires patience. It can take months, even years, to build a reputation. You also need to network well with media people. A basic camera and lens are enough to start with. You can invest in different lenses later. First, make a portfolio showcasing your work and technical knowhow; while it is good to specialise in an area of interest, you must be flexible too. Start your own website or blog. Also post your pictures on sites like Flickr and Facebook. Success will depend on how much your work gets noticed. An amateur can charge between ₹ 3,000 and ₹ 5,000 for an assignment.

—Ranjan Sharma runs photography website, www.lightzoneindia.com, from Delhi



Sanjay Kurl

MAJOR GENERAL (RETD) J S MANN, 67

"I'm a farmer's son and farming remains my passion"

From the rigours of the battlefield to developing an agribusiness on his ancestral farm, Major General J S Mann is the quintessential son of the soil. As we stroll past rows of pumpkin creepers on his 250-acre property in Kotla Ajmer near Khanna in Punjab, Mann speaks of his career in the Artillery Division of the Indian Army.

Among his high-profile postings were the Bangladesh War of 1971, a "top-secret mission" in what is now West Germany in 1982, and the Sri Lanka operation of 1987. But there was one enduring sentiment. "I am a farmer's son and farming remained my passion. I couldn't wait to get back to it." Mann's wish came true when he took voluntary retirement in 1994 at the age of 53. "My mother took ill and after she passed away 18 months later, I decided to develop my ancestral land."

Today, Mann helms a ₹ 20 crore business, which had its roots in floriculture and potato cultivation. "I started supplying to companies like Pepsi for their chips and French fries." He moved on to cauliflower, carrots, white onion, capsicum and exotic veg-

etables. "While in the Army, I never missed an opportunity to upgrade my knowledge," says Mann. "I even earned a master's in defence science with distinction from Madras University."

It came in handy when he set up Mannsfield and helped him reap his first bumper harvest in 1997. He diversified into frozen vegetables, which he supplies to chain stores. With his children in the US, Mann runs his business with his brothers, nephews and wife, "an equal partner in charting out this success map".

To keep up to date, he networks with scientists from the Central Potato Research Centre in Shimla and its regional centre in Meerut. And he believes in giving back: he has hired 60 poor women; improved healthcare facilities and schools; and plans to build an orphanage in the neighbouring village. "I would have felt useless as a retired general, reading the paper and gossiping in clubs," says Mann. "Now, every morning greets me with new beauty and challenges. I enjoy every minute of life."

—As told to Vandana Shukla



Cultivating laughter: Using *has* yoga to heal

Vishwanathan Anand once said the best chess brains were actually intensely comic. Evidently, comic relief is perfect foil for intellectual work. It is established that by reaching crucial hormones to the primitive part of our brain (the amygdala, which is usually difficult to control), laughter establishes a sort of lateral neuronal link that allows intuition to shimmy up to the forefront. A good laugh squirts feel-good hormones like dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, setting off a cascade effect on creativity.

A good guff aw...

- Strengthens the immune system

- Reduces blood pressure by managing stress
- Fights respiratory ailments and improves lung capacity of those suffering from asthma, bronchitis
- Releases feel-good hormones like endorphins and enkephalins
- Improves stamina
- Fights stress, fear, anxiety
- Helps with snoring.
- Is a pain-killer (read bestseller *Anatomy of an Illness* by Norman Cousins to understand the healing power of laughter)
- Helps treat insomnia.

How yoga can help

Certain poses that scrunch the face are said to release emotional tension,

like the lion-roaring pose (*simhaharjasa*). Yoga also helps you lose inhibitions that prevent you from enjoying a good laugh. Yoga games called *kreed* yoga (we give you a few versions below)—now experiencing a revival thanks to some entrepreneurs trying to bring back local traditions—are the easiest route to laughing your way to health. Further, standing balancing poses are particularly helpful to loosen emotional inhibitions that bind us. Some good, playful, one-legged balancers include the half-lotus prayer pose (*ardha padma pranamasana*), the dancing Shiva pose (*natrajasana*) and the difficult pose (*sankatasana*). Arm-balancers like the crow (*kakasan*) are also powerful tools.

YOGIC MOVES

1. Kreed yoga, 'Ha Ha' game

This is a group practice. Sit in a circle. The first person says 'Ha!' forcefully with a straight face. The second person says this twice, and so on. The number of times each person says 'Ha!' depends on where they are in the circle. When you say 'Ha!' you must keep a straight face and not smile. This is extremely difficult; most people will usually burst out laughing or at least smile broadly. Any person who does that is out. Then, they can hang about and try and make the other player laugh. This adds to the playful tension in the game (referred to as 'eustress'). Then, the circle begins saying 'Ha!' again. Benefits: The game releases tension and enables group bonding. Also, when you try and keep a straight face, the emotional culturing of control is brought into play. This practice helps develop inner strengths.



2. Has yoga practice 1

This simple trick should help you tide over any stressor. Imagine yourself doubled over with laughter. Feel the laughter bubble inside you, your face crinkling. But keep a straight face. This can be done anywhere, any place, without your dignity being compromised. This internal cracking up unwinds the 30 facial/neck muscles, relaxing them

entirely, and sets off an 'all-is-well' message to the brain.

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



WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

Mood elevator: Exercise to feel good

I have been living alone after my husband's demise. Of late, I have been feeling lonely and unhappy. My doctor tells me these are signs of depression. Can you suggest exercises that could help me deal with my condition?

Depression drains you, making every task seem monumental. Part of moving past it includes putting on your workout clothes. Keep your routine simple and doable—it will make it easier for you to get started.

- **Set simple goals.** It doesn't take much exercise to lift your mood, so you don't have to train for a marathon. Promise yourself you will walk around the block at least three times one day. The next day, walk more.
- **Go easy on yourself.** Try to feel good about what you can do. Whether you get out and work in the yard, take the dog for a walk or go up and down the stairs a few times, it all counts. This is not the time to kick yourself.
- **Do what you usually enjoy.** When you're depressed, it's hard to enjoy anything. But think about what you normally like to do. If yoga makes you feel good, spend a few minutes on a few simple poses. If you like fresh air, go for a walk. Even a small change in your mood can make a difference.

Regular exercise has been proven to:

- Reduce stress
- Ward off anxiety and feelings of depression
- Boost self-esteem
- Improve sleep

Exercise also has these added health benefits:

- It strengthens your heart
- It increases energy levels
- It lowers blood pressure
- It improves muscle tone and strength
- It strengthens and builds bones
- It helps reduce body fat
- It makes you look fit and healthy

Types of exercise to combat depression

- Biking
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Golf (walking instead of using the cart)
- Jogging at a moderate pace
- Low-impact aerobics and strength training
- Tennis

- Swimming
- Walking
- Yoga

Sample yoga *asana* to fight depression

This 10-minute stretch offers a gentle routine perfect after a workout or on its own for relaxation. The stability ball offers extra support and, for some moves, the added balance challenge. You may need to adjust your position if you have a larger or smaller exercise ball.

- Warm up with light cardio or do this workout after your regular workout
- Complete each exercise, modifying when necessary
- Do as often as you like for flexibility and relaxation

High Lunge to Warrior II and Side Angle

Get into a lunge position on the ball, right leg forward, the left leg straight out behind you. Square the hips forward and sweep arms overhead and slightly back. Hold for 3-4 breaths and then lower the arms and turn the body to the side, stretching through the arms. Hold for 3-4 breaths. From there, take the right arm down and place the hand on the floor while stretching the left arm straight up. Hold for 3-4 breaths. Repeat series on the other side.

Side Child's Pose

On the knees, roll the ball out, relaxing the head and stretching your chest. Shift hips to the right and gently roll the ball to the left, stretching your back; repeat on the other side. Hold each stretch for 15-30 seconds.

Hip Stretch

Lie on the floor with the right foot on the ball, knee bent. Cross the left foot over the right knee and use the right foot to gently roll the ball in to stretch the right hip. Hold for 15-30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

Whole Body Stretch

Lie face up on the ball and roll down until your back is fully supported. Relax your hips and head and let arms fall to the sides for a front body stretch. Hold for 3-5 breaths.

*Madhukar Talwalkar is chairman of Talwalkar's, one of India's largest chain of fitness centres with 78 branches across major cities.
Website: www.talwalkars.net
If you have a question for Dr Talwalkar write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org*



Between meals: Snacking options on the market

The market is full of several varieties of low-fat snacks. How different are they from usual snacks? Can their benefits be categorised for different age groups? I am in my mid-50s. Please suggest some healthy snacks that won't make me put on weight.

A common perception is that snacks are not healthy. However, there are many food items used as snacks between two meals that are also healthy. Snacks are mostly perceived to be items like potato wafers and sugary cookies that health-conscious people tend to avoid. However, differentiating the right kind of snacks from the wrong ones will help us select a healthy source of nutrients and satiate us between two meals.

CHOOSING HEALTHY SNACKS

The market is indeed flooded with 'light', 'low-calorie', 'low-fat', 'fat-free', 'sugar-free' and 'zero-calorie' foods. While choosing snacks, select a product low in oil, sugar and other fat increasing content. Choose items that include complex carbohydrates like wholegrain breads and cereals and combine them with protein-rich snacks like peanut butter and low-fat yogurt. Avoid products with trans-fats. There is a variety of packaged snacks available like:

1. Chips: Chips are generally deep-fried. Recently, though, certain low-fat chips have been introduced in the market. These are essentially baked or roasted instead of deep-fried and seem to have a lower fat content.

Analysis: Low-fat potato chips have fewer calories than regular potato chips. They contain zero cholesterol and trans-fats. Regular potato chips are thin slices of potato, deep-fried in hot cooking oil that has reached a temperature of 350-375°. Lower fat versions can either be baked or roasted. Usually, baked potato chips have a lower fat content than regular deep-fried chips.

2. Biscuits: Options like whole-wheat cookies, multigrain biscuits and oat biscuits are also available on the market.

Analysis: These are free from cholesterol, harmful trans-fats, artificial preservatives,

colours and flavours in comparison to regular confectionary biscuits that are high in sugar and calories. In production of biscuits, vegetable fats or hydrogenated fats are added in high quantities and baked at very high temperatures, resulting in production of trans-fats. Avoid rich bakery foods such as donuts, sweet rolls and muffins that contain more than 50 per cent fat calories. Once in a while snacking on sugar-free cookies and chocolates can satisfy your sweet tooth without adding calories to your diet.

3. Low-calorie drinks: Best available options are buttermilk, soymilk, vegetable and fruit juices, probiotic drinks.

Analysis: All these options are lower in calories and are healthy compared to aerated and fizzy drinks, which are full of sugar, artificial colour, flavours and chemicals.

Choose items with complex carbs like wholegrain breads and cereals and combine them with protein-rich snacks like peanut butter and low-fat yogurt. Sugar-free cookies and chocolates can satisfy your sweet tooth



4. Diet *namkeen*: A wide range of wholegrain and dal-based roasted snacks are available—*jowar* puffs, *chana jor*, soy nuts, roasted sprouts and *khakhra*, which are among the best low-fat snacks (non-fried, crispy and easy to digest).

Analysis: The regular *namkeen* are deep-fried and full of saturated and trans-fats. Regular intake of such fried foods may increase risk of obesity and heart ailments. Roasted snacks are free from cholesterol, trans-fats, and low on fat and calories. They are crunchy, tasty and easy to digest.

Snacks are not a replacement of your main diet and should always be taken in limited quantities. Small, wisely chosen snacks promote good health and add flavour to life. Snack with variety, balance and moderation in mind.

Here are some more healthy snacking options:

Sweets: Fruit chat, oat biscuits, *anjeer* (figs), fruit shakes, *kishmish* (raisins)

Dry *bhel* (rice puffs, *chana*): Corn and wheat mix (corn-flakes, wheat flakes, curry leaves and a few peanuts), roasted *chana jor*, roasted *mung dal*, baked *puri* (*papdi*), soy nuts, roasted sprouts

Home-made snacks

- Soy *dosa*: Made of soy flour, *urad dal* flour, rice flour and semolina
- Green chutney: Made from mint, coriander leaves, chillies and salt
- Whole-wheat bread sandwich
- *Mung dal idli*
- Whole-wheat bread pizza with low-fat cheese
- Whole-wheat pasta

As with everything, moderation is the key to healthy snacking. People who eat regular meals and healthy snacks are less likely to overeat and gain weight than people who skip meals or go without food for long periods and then binge on junk food. These snacks can be consumed by all age groups. But choose the ones that are easy to digest and do not cause gas and acidity.

*Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health related disorders. Visit www.health-total.com
If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org*

promotion

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Q1. I have no teeth and wear dentures. My dentist wants to place implants [tooth root substitutes] in my jaws surgically, but I am a little apprehensive about the procedure. Is there an alternative?

Yes, fortunately today we have minimally invasive techniques for placing implants [tooth root substitutes]. This is done with the help of CAD/ CAM design. First, a CT scan is taken with the help of Nobel Guide Procera software. This software reproduces an exact 3D image of your jaws on a computer. We then place the implants on the virtual jaws in the exact position that one desires. With the help of this information, a stent is manufactured in Sweden. Along with the stent, even the new teeth are designed and made in Sweden. With the help of this stent we can accurately place the implants in your jaw without opening up the gums. The surgical part is very minor with no need for even sutures [stitches]. The implants then form a base for the teeth on top.

Q2. Is the Nobel Guide procedure complicated and painful?

On the contrary, the 3D mapping makes the procedure simple and precise. There is minimal or almost no pain, swelling, very little bleeding and no stitches need to be given. These are all the advantages that come from the procedure being minimally invasive.

Q3. My dentist has recommended dental implants to replace my missing teeth but can I have the new teeth on the same day?

The biggest advantage of Nobel Guide comes from the fact that the teeth can be placed on the implants on the same day! The teeth are pre-designed and manufactured in Sweden. Even the back teeth can be replaced all in one go. Therefore, you can walk out with that wow smile almost straight away.

Q4. Is it possible to do this in India?

This service is being successfully done in India for the past few years. In fact, in 2006 November, I performed a live surgery on television demonstrating the concept of Nobel Guide and 'teeth in an hour'.



It's in the jeans!

The other evening I went to a friend's 60th birthday party. He's a Sikh and one of the most stylishly dressed men I know. He is always immaculate, right down to his polished shoes. At the party he wore a black turtleneck shirt and a black Nehru jacket. But—and it is a big 'but'—he wore blue jeans. Naturally, they had knife-edge creases as nothing less could be expected from my friend. I still haven't gotten over that sight. "Why jeans with such a smart jacket?" I asked. "Why not?" he shot back. "It's party time, my friend, so half of me is casual."

Jeans were invented by Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss, tailors to blue-collar Americans, back in 1873. The word 'jeans' comes from the French phrase *bleu de Gênes*, literally 'blue of Genoa'. Levi made his jeans for the gold miners of California and added copper rivets as the pockets kept falling apart. Back then a pair of jeans cost \$ 1.50. Today you can buy a pair for a few hundred dollars, if it has the right fashion label on the back; the jean industry is worth \$ 20 billion annually.

India has embraced jeans without reservations for any and every occasion. I've been to so-called posh weddings where some of the male guests wore jeans, and at cocktail parties where men turn up in jeans while the others are formally attired. Our movie stars virtually live in jeans; every time I spot one in a television interview or gossip magazine, the man or woman has jeans on. I admit it took me many years to buy my first pair of jeans as I dismissed them as a slovenly style of dress. I stooped to khaki chinos if I wanted to be truly, casually fashionable. But then, the pressures of the jean-wearing world wore me down and I bought my first pair a decade back. I wasn't about to make a fashion statement and settled for ordinary Levi's. To my surprise the moment I slipped them on it was instant seduction. I could laze around all day in them without worrying about creases, wrinkles or even tears. Now, I wear them whenever I'm travelling, trekking or wandering around a wildlife reserve.

Jeans are asexual too and leap across the gender barrier. Women wear jeans as comfortably, and more stylishly, as men do but I am grateful they don't turn up at weddings and cocktail parties in them. Although when I see a young woman passing by I do wonder how on earth she managed to get into something so skin-tight. It must have taken half the morning to squeeze her shapely butt into it. That doesn't bother the young, who have rebelled against tight fitting or even comfortable jeans.

They wear jeans to reveal the shape of their butts and flaunt the designer labels of their underwear. Recently, in London, I noted that even in a bitterly cold winter, young women wore micro, see-through panties under their jeans, which were perfectly placed just about mid-bottom. An inch lower and the jeans would slip down off the curve. Any higher and I wouldn't see their beautiful underwear. Sadly, I couldn't read the designer label as I had on the wrong spectacles.

So far, those styles have yet to reach the subcontinent. No doubt they are on their way here. I made an in-depth study of this latest fashion over the last month in London. I wonder whether our young men and women have the right shapes for those bottom-revealing jeans? The bottom has to be pert enough for the top of the jean to just hang lightly mid-way on the curve. If the young person has a flat bottom,

the jeans would effortlessly slip off and end up around the ankles. A too big bottom and the person would lose the whole *raison d'être* to wear such a fashion item—the jeans would be too high up to reveal one's designer underwear and beautiful bottom.

When I was young, I was no less fashion-conscious and only worried about the creases in my trousers and a neat shirt. Today it's a big strain on one's young bottom to keep up with the latest fashion trends. Those muscles have to be constantly clenched to keep them in perfect shape.

Timeri Murari, 65, is an author and screenplay writer living in Chennai



It took me many years to buy my first pair of jeans as I dismissed them as slovenly. To my surprise, the moment I slipped them on it was instant seduction

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THE CREATOR

I've always had a burning desire to work with my hands creatively—painting, pottery, music, carpentry—but destiny decided otherwise. It was a time when medicine and engineering were the only two 'respectable' careers and my parents packed me off to the UK to study medicine. Thankfully, World War II intervened and I returned to Mumbai.

It was 1939 and, rather reluctantly, I tried my luck at getting a 'job'. So there I was, with almost no qualifications, ready to enter the 'corporate world', although the term was still to be coined! Unilever hired me but on my own terms; that I work for six months without remuneration. They would confirm my appointment only if they found my work satisfactory and pay me with retrospective effect. They agreed. I thus joined their sales team and, as fate would have it, I worked with the company for 34 long years.

But the creative urge was overwhelming. So I opted for premature retirement and began working with stained glass. It gave me something really beautiful to work on besides giving me the satisfaction of creating some-

thing that people could look at and say, "How lovely!" As my craft grew, I hired two people to help me, and in 1983-84, I taught my first batch of students.

Ten years ago, I moved to Bangalore after my wife passed away. Then my son spread the word about my work on the Internet and it brought in a trickle of students. Why, even my Man Friday Murali learnt to work with this difficult medium!



Patel indulges his creative impulse

Over the years, I taught 200-odd youngsters this craft and learnt to make murals out of metal strips. My Bihari cook Shyam helped me work out the finer details. For instance, the wealth of detail on a panel from the *Mahabharata*—which still hangs over the piano in my sitting room—owes its beauty to his meticulous eye.

I am 92, I live alone and my eyesight and hearing have dimmed considerably but I continue to teach with help from Murali, who is now quite an expert at cutting glass. What really keeps me going, though, is interacting with students. If not for this, my home would be very quiet and lonely.

We've now graduated to working with castoffs and discarded material. For instance, I have a wooden bust on my terrace that was discarded by some people who were demolishing their old home. One of my students brought it here and we made an installation with plants and glass pieces.

Thus life goes on, and through it all, I also make my own music to fill the lingering hours. Yes, the keys of my piano often come alive to old pop and classical tunes.

—Vinayak Patel, Bengaluru

TRIP OF A LIFETIME

I had travelled overseas before but a trip I took a couple of years ago was nothing short of liberating. This trip followed another one, where my husband and I along with a friend had travelled to Paris and the South of France. From there, our friend returned to the UK and my husband and I flew to Kiev in Latvia to visit our son. Seven months later, my husband passed away quite suddenly, leaving an empty space in my heart.

I am in my late 60s and I felt I had lost everything. Then, about a year later, our friend suggested I make a similar trip that would help me work through my feelings of grief and loss. I was very reluctant because as I had never been an 'independent career woman', it would mean planning and executing the trip myself, something I had never done before. I replied with a simple "let's see" but the more I thought about it, the more convinced I was that I should say "yes". "Just say yes, be courageous... the rest will fall in place," I told myself.



Maheshwari on her empowering trip

So I put my best foot forward and began to sort out the details. How long would I be away; how many days should we spend in each country; when would I leave; and when would I return? Many emails and telephone calls later, the fog cleared. I would travel for two weeks: first the UK, followed by Rome and then on to Kiev to visit my son. I would leave in late August when the weather was still warm there. Once the plan was in place, I felt much better. Taking the help of a steno who works in my daughter's office, I went ahead with the bookings and I breathed another sigh of relief. All I had to do now was prepare myself mentally and emotionally, and of course get down to the nitty-gritty of packing.

My trip went off exactly as planned. The journey had been wonderful and magical, and in many ways it was a very special trip. Most important, I had proved to myself and family that I could plan and execute a vacation like this all on my own. So rather than wish the holiday hadn't ended, I felt a warm glow of satisfaction surge through me as I unpacked my bags.

—Sandra Maheshwari, Bengaluru

BEYOND TEACHING

Although I was a teacher for a long time, something always told me my true vocation lay elsewhere. It was a long journey to finding out what that really was; one that began in Kolkata, where I was born in 1947.

We lived in Tollygunge, where there was a family where every member was disabled. The eldest daughter Sarbojaya and I became close friends and I still speak with her over the phone from Guwahati, where I now live. We moved to Asansol when I was eight. I enrolled with Loreto Convent there and was exposed to the work of the Mission sisters, especially an Anglo-Burmese nun, Sister Margaret, who had fled to from Burma to India during World War II.

I continued my studies at St Joseph's Convent, Patna, and finally earned a master's degree in English from Gauhati University. It was time to get married and teaching was an obvious career choice. But even as I taught at B Borooah College, I discovered all was not well with a large number of women and children around me.

In 1981, I met Anjali Barua, then secretary of the Assam branch of the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW), who asked me if I could help them. That was my real beginning, my calling to reach out to those who needed me. For many years after that, I served in several senior positions with the organisation.

Though my work load at college distanced me from the ICCW, social work continued to beckon, and by a quirk of fate, I was introduced to Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam, an NGO engaged in spreading literacy. I began by doing some translation work for them but grew increasingly involved. After I retired from my teaching job in 2006, I became president of the Samiti. Working with the NGO, I was amazed to discover an irresistible urge, especially among rural women, to become literate. It was also a learning experience for me and took me to training workshops at the national level.




Medhi finds her true vocation

I also head Procheta, a project that has created 2,934 women's self-help groups in 14 districts across

Assam. Finally, life came full circle a couple of years ago, when I was introduced to Sishu Sarothi, which works with children afflicted with cerebral palsy. It reconnected with my friendship with Sarbojaya and her family!

Sishu Sarothi's young wards have taught me many lessons: little Tamanna cannot speak but communicates fluently through sign language; Victor has motor problems but excels at academics; and Madhav cannot write but uses a mobile phone to send text messages. Thus, helping these children develop their faculties has gifted me a new perspective on life.

—Madhabi Medhi, Guwahati


 Jobs

JUST POST IT!

Launched by a college grad in Vadodara, India's first job portal for silvers takes guard for its own Second Innings. Student and mentor discuss their virtual plans with **Dhanya Nair Sankar**

What's a group of silvers doing on a college campus on a hot afternoon? Battling the inclement weather at Vadodara's MS (Maharaja Sayajirao) University, they're here looking for work. Bagging their resumes and years of experience, they have queued up to meet teacher-student duo Shivani Mehta, 25, and Dr Avani Maniar, 41, who started India's first job portal for senior citizens keen to work post-retirement.

Aptly called 'Second Innings' (www.jobsforelderly.in), the portal is in its third year and has facilitated at least 1,000 silvers through its virtual doors. "The mind is the only thing that restricts silvers from leading an active and financially independent life after retirement," says Mehta, who developed this site as part of her dissertation while earning her MSc degree from MS University's Department of Extension & Communication, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences.

"In 2006, I had submitted my dissertation on television viewing habits of elderly," recalls the 25 year-old. "I realised most seniors watched TV merely to kill time and that many were yearning for a chance to lead an active life. They wanted a platform to make them independent."

The idea inspired Dr Maniar, who was mentoring Mehta as the project gathered momentum. So they set about understanding the needs of silvers. "It

was a noble cause because India's silver population is growing and it was heartening to know that a portal like this could open doors for them. I also felt it would reflect well on Shivani as I had never seen a youngster take up something for elders. Of course, it was going to be a challenge to bring the Internet and the silver population together," smiles Dr Maniar, assistant professor, Department of Extension and Communication, Faculty of Family and Community Sciences.

The first challenge was to understand why silvers wanted to work. "We prepared a questionnaire and distributed it among groups of senior citizens in Vadodara," explains Dr Maniar. "It

assessed their interests and qualifications, and asked them whether they wanted to work after retirement."

The response was tremendous and revealing. "It yielded one group who had money but wanted to contribute to society and a second that com-

"It was a challenge to bring the Internet and India's silver population together. But a portal like this can open doors for them"

Dr Avani Maniar, 41

prised silvers who needed to be financially independent," says Mehta. Fortunately, benefactors came forward with funds to kick-start the portal. "We used the media to get the word out," recounts our young and intrepid social entrepreneur. "Only weeks later, Larsen & Toubro said they could fund

"Most seniors watch TV merely to kill time. They yearn to lead an active life. They want a platform to make them independent"

Shivani Mehta, 25



Photographs by Samir Pathak

us as part of their corporate social responsibility programme. TVS Central helped us register our portal."

Second Innings was finally launched in 2007 and has seen healthy growth in its database, from 80 in 2007 to 100 in 2008, 200 in 2009 and over 554 in 2010. Contributing to its popularity is its simple model. The only thing users need to do is register and upload their profile even as employers registered with the site pick up candidates after viewing resumes on the site. The portal thus develops a network between employers and silvers, who can also use features such as forums, a message board and other resources.

When Mehta and Dr Maniar started out, they faced the inevitable: silvers apprehensive of using the Internet. "While some upload their profiles directly, there are those we personally assist," says Maniar, which explains the queue outside the university department. "We also counsel them on the benefits of using the Internet."

But Jayant Pathak needed no assistance. "I retired as an accountant and soon grew uncomfortable with the time on my hands," says the Vadodra-based 61 year-old. "At the time, there was no platform to help me engage with society. But in 2007, when I heard about this website, I jumped at the chance. I landed a job as a consultant accountant. I believe working after retirement prevents grey hair from greying further!" he adds.

Parul Dave, 66, a retired senior faculty member from MS University, owes her present post as founder-director of the Centre of Behavioural Sciences and Counselling with a private medical university to Second Innings. "A lot of us want to utilise our post-retirement life in a better way contributing to society," she iterates. "This website has made that happen."

Topping the list of sectors most sought after by silvers are accounting, translation and NGO work. Mehta is



"A lot of us want to utilise our post-retirement life in a better way contributing to society. This website has made that happen"

Parul Dave, 66

confident that silvers make for better employees than their younger counterparts. "The elderly are warm and have years of experience, which is a great asset for any employer," she says, brimming with enthusiasm.

Mumbai-based Amit Parikh heartily agrees. "Today's 60 and 70 year-olds are blessed with good health and have a wealth of knowledge, experience and values," says Parikh, managing director of Trends Pharma, which is currently recruiting silvers in Mumbai. "It benefits a company to channel these qualities and use their potential." The breadth of territories from where silvers are showing interest in the portal is also widening, with silvers from Hyderabad, Delhi and Mumbai signing up. No wonder Mehta and Dr Maniar have received requests to open franchises in Hyderabad, Kolkata and Bengaluru.



"Through this website, I got a job as a consultant accountant. Working after retirement prevents grey hair from greying further!"

Jayant Pathak, 61

What about competition from similar portals? "We pioneered the concept," says Mehta. "When we started out, our motive was purely academic and not profit-driven. Now private players are doing good business because they have the technology and money." Adds Dr Maniar, "The difference is the satisfaction we receive from knowing that our site is boosting the morale of seniors. You can't put a price on that."

With Silver Innings in auto-pilot mode, is Mehta ready to open a new innings of her own? "I am currently working on my doctorate on the problems and exploitation faced by silvers at the workplace," she explains. Meanwhile, next up on Silver Innings are sections on counselling, second marriage proposals, health tips and much, much more. As Mehta says, "We want to develop a holistic and interactive site for seniors." ❀

A man with dark hair and a beard is in a shower, looking up with his eyes closed. A hand is on his shoulder. Water is spraying around him.

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RESOLUTIONS

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Every New Year is like a brightly wrapped gift box, full of unseen opportunities, new discoveries, untold pleasures waiting to be savoured. It is also the perfect time to rewrite your life, right wrongs, take the road you turned away from last year. What are your resolutions for this New Year—indeed, New Decade? Some remarkable silvers tell Dhanya Nair Sankar what 2011 will mean to their lives....

SHOBHAA DE

COLUMNIST, AUTHOR

A *man or woman can look and feel good at any age*

I strongly object to the words 'at your age'. Men and women can look—and more important, feel good—at any age. The whole point of writing my book *Shobhaa at Sixty* was to underline just that. I can safely say I was born into the right gene pool. Also, as I began modelling at a very young age [17], I have always been aware of basic health and beauty routines that I continue to follow.

Jit Ray

I feel the sixth decade is a great time

The sixth decade is a huge bonus—provided you see it as one. I certainly do. It's when you share your experience with the next generation. Women today are eating smart and living smart. If you feel energetic and fit, there is no reason to slow down or cut back. On the contrary, you can afford to take chances and attempt the impossible!

There is sexism and ageism; we have to deal with it

Sexism, ageism and several other 'isms' thrive. But that's life. I have discussed coping techniques in my book, and I have addressed common anxieties associated with growing older. Women are promptly put on the shelf when they hit 40. But whether to turn invisible or not is in your hands. Low self-esteem is the biggest killer.

At times, I feel urban India almost dreads ageing

We do live in youth-obsessed times. In India, 70 per cent of the population is below 30. For women, it is double the challenge as there is tremendous pressure to look 'hot', which is such an annoying word! But if a woman's attitude remains upbeat and positive, she shouldn't let any of this get to her. Be yourself—that is the only real mantra.

The 'superwoman' tag associated with women is such a Western concept

It was a superficial tag invented in the West and we didn't have to buy it. All it implied was that career women were expected to work doubly hard in the office and then come home and work even harder. The only reward such a woman received was to be called a 'superwoman'. In India, our mythology celebrates women in every avatar. The Devi cult recognises a woman's inherent power. All we have to do is tap into it and remind ourselves of this tradition and legacy. And leave 'superwomen' to Hollywood movies.

Does anyone want to age 'disgracefully'?

I simply don't understand 'ageing gracefully'. Who wants to age 'disgracefully'? If 'ageing gracefully' means looking like a sack of potatoes, forgetting glamour, pulling out those knitting needles and sitting on a rocking chair minding the grandkids, forget it! Accepting age is one thing, surrendering to it is another. Women and men should continue to take an active interest in every aspect of life—appearance is just one such preoccupation.

Youth is a time for insensitivity and old age for wisdom but a little bit of recklessness can help in active ageing

Youth is about selfishness and self-absorption. You remain focused on your own narrow goals and frequently miss the larger picture. I should have spent more time with my mother; I would have liked to study at a foreign university; travel... so many things. Have no regrets. I have led a full life with all its highs and lows. Recklessness can add colour to life even in old age. Do a few mad things before you call it quits. Throw caution to the winds and live!

***Feminism in India has moved on from the Western Sex-and-the-City syndrome but we still have a long way to go***

Ours is a very complex society, full of crazy contradictions. Feminism is not about promiscuity. That's a very dumb interpretation. It's about empowerment and self-realisation. That can only be achieved through education and financial independence for our rural women. We are a long, long way from achieving those goals.

An older man having sexual relationships with younger women is accepted but not for an older woman, who is dubbed a 'cougar'. Sexuality is not age-bound

These double standards exist across the world. Look at Berlusconi in Italy! Can you imagine the world being as indulgent towards, say, Hillary Clinton if she declared she was having an affair? Sexuality is not always age-bound. There are women who lose interest in sex at 30 and others who remain sexually active in their 70s. Several studies show that sex is closely linked to a sense of security and love, especially for senior citizens. If you are fortunate enough to be in a stable relationship with your partner, there is no reason to give up on sex—at any age!

Indian television is certainly getting more depressing but our cinema is certainly getting noticed

When I penned the scripts for *Swabhimaan* and *Kitty Party*, it was a nice change. But trends change. This is the age of

in-your-face reality shows dominated by Bollywood stars. Soaps have degenerated into regressive melodramas set in Rajasthani *haveli* and featuring overdressed child brides! I am not in sync with such depressing material. I'd be happy to write a woman-centric soap with attitude. Cinema here is certainly coming of age. But that depends on what you mean by 'come of age'. We have all sorts of films these days. But there is nothing to beat our typical *dhoom dhadaka* Bollywood formula film—my personal favourite. I hope we never move away from this delicious mix. Nobody does it better than us!

New-age journalism is most entertaining

I don't call this journalism; I call it pimping. It is sickening and shameful. But the Radia revelations have served as a wake-up call for journalism. Perhaps it will lead to a much-needed clean-up in our industry. Something good may come of the mess, after all.

It is disheartening to see marriages breaking up on flimsy grounds

It depends entirely on how high the institution of marriage rates on your list. I advise my children to get into marriage only if they believe in it and are ready to commit. One cannot treat marriage as an 'experiment'. Right now, marriage is under threat in India because young people are somewhat confused, scared and unsure. Too many marriages collapse these days; the grounds are flimsy, even frivolous. I fully empathise with the 30-somethings who are still sitting on the fence.

Motherhood certainly gives you a complete feeling

Motherhood has been glorified in every culture for centuries for one reason alone: it symbolises continuity and rebirth. For me, it remains the single, most fulfilling aspect of my life. Nothing and no one is more important to me than my children. Every career decision I have ever taken after the birth of my first child has been based on my priorities as a mother. Motherhood changed me irrevocably and, dare I say it, for the better!

Year 2010 has been truly blessed

The biggest gift was discovering I was going to become a grandmother. I also have my own imprint, a huge honour in the publishing world. I will now be able to locate writers I admire and get them on board with books I enjoy. Two of my own titles were published this year: a 'tween' book called *Sandhya's Secret* and, of course, *Shobhaa at Sixty*.

I have great expectations from 2011 but no idea where I will be 10 years from now

I look at each New Year as a massive door opening up and ushering in new challenges. I remain an incorrigible optimist. But don't ask me where I see myself 10 years from now. I live life spontaneously and rarely draft a plan for the future.



The year 2010 was one crazy ride

I travelled like a gypsy and it felt as if 2010 had only six months. My second film as a composer, *Chikku Bukku*, released and was a hit. I built and completed my recording studio, In the Mix. I received a National Award and my inaugural song [*Swagatam*] opened the Commonwealth Games.

I would like to explore different genres of music next year

I plan to devote half my time to composing for films and to basic albums in Sufi, ghazal, thumri, etc. I also have scores of concerts lined up.

Ten years from now, I see myself older and wiser

I started my career in 1977. My secret is to always stay with the present sound and do music that is ahead of its time.

Time is a tricky concept

The relativity of time is a strange phenomenon and I am not perturbed by the clock ticking away. Time is a manmade concept. If the creative juices keep flowing, time and ageing are of no concern.

I don't make New Year's resolutions any more

Every day is a new beginning.



BHARAT DABHOLKAR

THEATRE MAVEN, ADVERTISER, FILMMAKER, ACTOR

HT

The year 2010 was a busy one

I had my hands full with several theatre productions I had conceptualised in 2009. It was a great year.

2011 will be a year of opportunities

The theatre scene in India is definitely improving. I think in the coming year, more young directors will experiment with this craft. I have written 30 plays. I am planning to write another one next year.

In the next decade, I want to see the theatre scene in India change dynamically

As it is a live medium, it is more challenging than, say, television. But we should keep reinventing ourselves. We

can't expect the audience to watch the same thing again and again. We should also catch audiences in smaller towns and cities. I hope to be part of this change, somehow.

I don't feel I'm ageing at all

With each passing year, I am getting younger, not just mentally or emotionally but physically as well. I am fastidious about certain things: I don't smoke, I am a teetotaler and I exercise every morning. It keeps me mentally fit as well. I also don't get bogged down by failure.

My New Year's resolution is to learn to say 'no'

I can never say 'no'. I've always wanted to change that. Let's hope I can next year.

SONAL MANSINGH

DANCER



2010 was great but I am looking forward to 2011

2010 was a great year with all its ups and downs. Being a total optimist, I feel 2011 will surely be my best year yet.

I really have the urge to reach out to the younger audience like never before and become adept at the latest technology

I have been creating new repertoires on contemporary issues for the past five decades. But now, the emphasis will be on contemporary ideas and the demands of Generation Next. I also want to take my Centre for Indian Classical Dances in new directions. I want to learn to use technology to propagate my ideas. I must learn to use the BlackBerry!

I want to dedicate the next decade to travelling and spreading my wings

I see myself travelling more and more; I want to share the beauty, energy and joy of dance through which people can view the world and their own life, and comprehend the majesty and secret of creation.

Honestly, I never think acutely about ageing

There is a thirst to do more and a curiosity to learn about the mysterious things abundant in life. 'Ageing' is a concept for the lazy and weak!

Every New Year brings fresh opportunities

There is time to do much more than you envisaged but I can only accomplish this with gratitude to God, my gurus and society.

HT



SAKTI BURMAN

ARTIST

HT

The year 2010 went off very well

I spent most of my time in France with my children and grandchildren. Professionally, I paint with more peace and confidence.

Next year, I intend to do more

I want to work with younger artists and see Indian art reach the global scene. I also wish we could rise above petty politics and be a true superpower ahead of China. As an artist, there is always a 'struggle' within. But as long my creative thirst is alive, it will keep me going.

The next decade will be the best for Indian art

When I studied art in Paris, Indian art was much talked

about, though with a slight negative connotation. We have a huge pool of talent and I hope Indian artists take notice of that and paint from their heart.

I think ageing is just another experience

Ageing is but another phase where I can innovate and develop myself. Ageing can be a positive experience if you're productive. You are your natural self, regardless of how many candles are on the cake.

I am upbeat about every passing year

I just hope to be working on something I love and getting the love of my close friends and family. Yeah, it would be great if my paintings sold like Goya!

2010 was very fulfilling

I performed at the United Nations and had memorable concerts with [sons] Amaan and Ayaan in the US and Europe. I also did some recordings that will have a spring release.

I have great expectations for the country and myself in 2011

US President Barack Obama's visit is significant for a friendship that will be experienced only in 2011. My landmark sarod concerto, *SAMAAGAM*, with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, releases in 2011 along with an album of American folk songs.

It's the beginning of a new decade and I hope for humility and grace

I can only hope that with me, Amaan and Ayaan will reach out to the world with humility and grace so that people realise the depth of the sarod.

I am becoming sensitive to ageing but there is so much more to accomplish

The audience expects more as an artist grows older. By the grace of God, I have discovered so many new dimensions towards my technique with the sarod.

I receive happiness from seeing others happy

My father, my guru, said that adjustment, with two or 10 people, is the greatest prayer and *ibadat* [worship]. I am happiest when everyone around me—my cook, driver or secretary—is happy. Also, Amaan and Ayaan have become role models for the younger generation.

USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN

SAROD MAESTRO



11

JOGEN CHOWDHURY

ARTIST

2010 was an exciting year

We opened an art centre connected to Santiniketan to spread Indian art and remove the elitist tag associated with it. What's more, it also received recognition from the state Department of Culture.

I want to dabble in writing in 2011

I hope to see more youngsters in the field of art. I also want to write a book on my work and some Bengali literature.

I really hope to improve the art scene in India in the next decade

It is difficult to say how the art scene in India will shape up. And although some interest has been generated with paintings of big names being picked up, we are still lag-

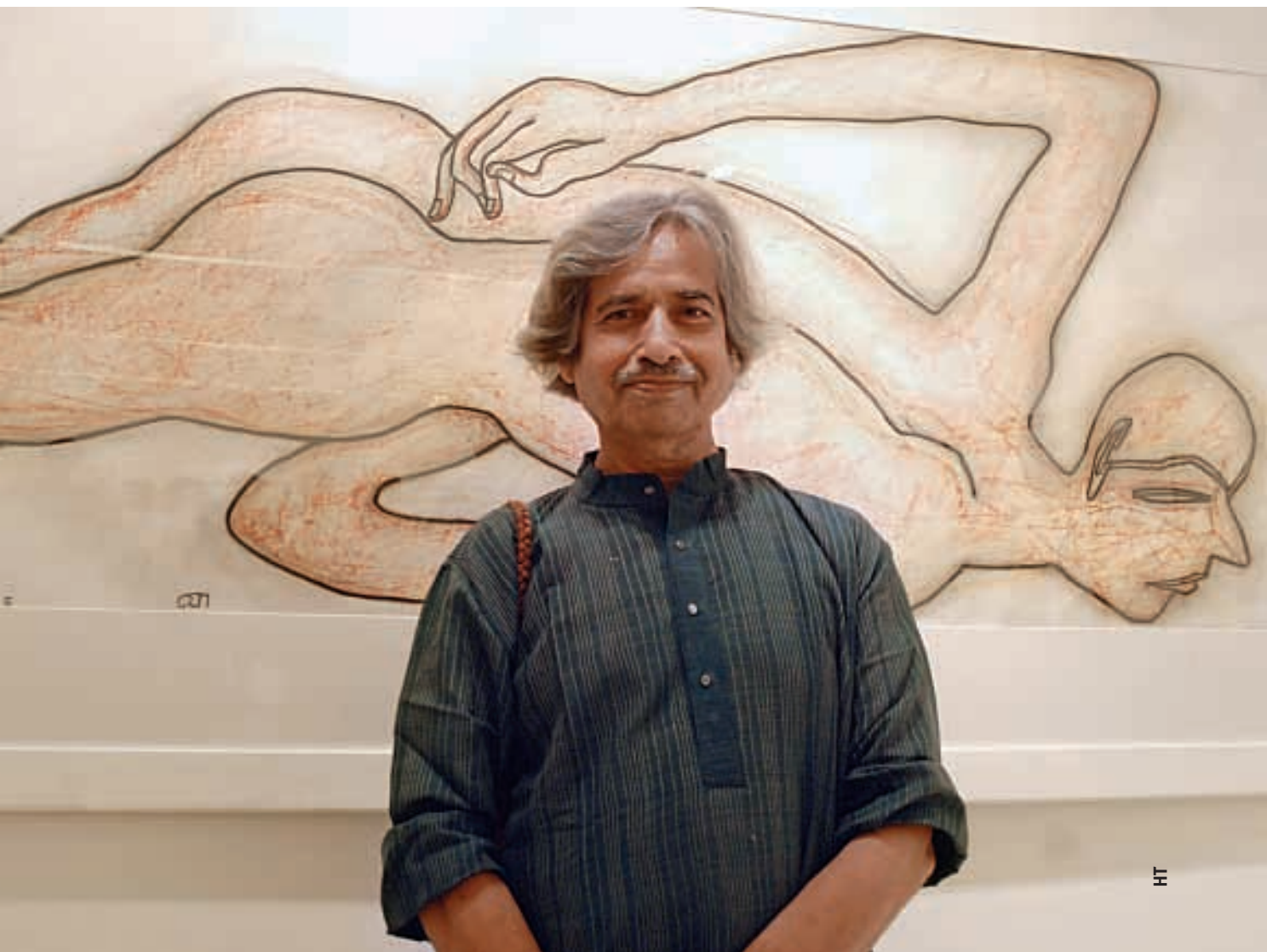
ging. This is de-motivating to youngsters and I want to change this trend.

I don't really think of ageing

When you're busy developing yourself emotionally, physically and spiritually, there's no time to brood over old age!

My only promise to myself is to be true to myself and my craft

Earlier, I would paint to exhibit my work but I gradually realised that art cannot be produced for art's sake. It has to come from within. It must reflect your passion and your character. I hope I continue to do that. That's my only New Year's resolution.



HT

2010 was a year of doing something different

I opened my own boutique called Apna in South Delhi. It was great to shift my focus from social causes to business and fashion. It was a challenge to style all types of women, especially plus-size women, who think fashion and looking good are not meant for them.

In 2011, I want to reach out to more people

I want to help a variety of people through my business as well as social causes. I want to create a platform where I can fight for causes I have been identified with like education, food distribution, clean drinking water.

In the next decade, I want to be actively involved in policy making

I see myself in Parliament, working towards cleaning up the political system and various causes.

Age has been very kind and generous to me

I only notice the ageing process when I look in the mirror. It should not stop you from living life fully. With each passing year, another door of opportunity opens with the potential of changing your life for the better.

Like everyone else around me, I too have New Year's resolutions

As I am getting older, I find it difficult to shed the extra kilos! I don't get the time to go to the gym regularly but I am determined to change that. It's a promise to myself.

NAFISA ALI

ACTOR, SOCIAL ACTIVIST, ENTREPRENEUR



Ronjoy Gogoi

CHO RAMASWAMY

PLAYWRIGHT, HUMORIST, COLUMNIST, LAWYER



The Hindu Photo Archives

The year 2010 was an extremely busy year

Three big scams in India—2G, CWG and the IPL—kept media men like me busy. It was indeed remarkable to see how news shaped public views. It's evident that our politicians and their 'work' can keep us busy for the rest of our lives!

I don't really plan ahead

I can't honestly say that I have anything concrete lined up for 2011. But dreaming is certainly everyone's birthright and I hope each day that passes brings dreams closer to reality.

It's the beginning of a new decade and I hope I'm around to see it

I am already 77 years old and by the end of this decade, I will be 87. In 2020, I really don't know if I will be here or in another world—heaven or hell. I hope it is heaven.

I must confess that I am more sensitive to ageing than I was earlier

Once you're born, your journey towards death begins. As you age, you are more aware of this. As long as your faculties are working, make life worth living.

The media in India will continue to thrive; still, it definitely needs to check itself

There is a lot of competition in the Indian media and it keeps everyone on their toes but a lot of negativity has crept in. We need to make sure we remain watchdogs of democracy and not high-class PR agents of corporate houses or the polity.

2010 was a fulfilling year

I finished my book *The Difficulty of Being Good*, which has been very well received. That made the year sweeter.

I want to focus on writing even more

In 2011, I will work on a couple of books.

I have dedicated the next decade to yet another ambitious book

I want to complete the *Artha* and *Dharma* triplet by writing a book on *Dharma*. That would take another five years. I also want to finish some modest books. And I will be busy editing a 16-volume series on Indian economy and finance.

I must confess that I don't really like 'growing up'

I don't think anyone wants to grow old. But because I am involved with so many different things, I don't feel the signs of ageing. That's the secret to being happy with this natural process.

I am really anxious about the economy unravelling in the next decade

This year, we saw several big corporate scams. I hope it makes us reform our policies across the board. Only then can we be the super-power we hope to be. The media should also wake up and clean up.

I usually don't make New Year's resolutions but my wife insists

I run a tight schedule and am very fastidious about it. Hence my wife feels I should make relaxing my New Year's resolution.

GURCHARAN DAS

WRITER, PHILOSOPHER, FORMER CEO



The Hindu Photo Archives

THE PATRIOT

Holding political and judicial office, teaching and practising at the bar are much more than most people achieve in a single lifetime. Yet “the oldest man in Guwahati” says life blossomed only after retirement! **Tapati Baruah Kashyap** meets the delightful Bholaram Das



Photographs by Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

When the governor of your state graces your birthday party, you've got to be special. And Bholaram Das is. "I can boast of being the most elderly person in Guwahati," he smiles, fresh from celebrating his 100th birthday in grand style at Cotton College auditorium on 16 October 2010. And even though the city was flooded owing to a downpour the previous night, the hall was packed to capacity with family, fans and well-wishers.

Almost two months later, Das enters the room, smartly turned out in a red tie and equally bright smile. "Sit down, sit down," he says energetically, explaining that he had deliberately asked his aide to seat us in the dining room "because it is better to make notes when you have a table". The dining room in question is located on the first floor of a three-storey building belonging to his son Dr Bhupati Kumar Das, chairman and managing director of Numaligarh Refinery Ltd, with whom our centenarian lives. For the next couple of hours, he draws you into a sepia-tinted era peppered with personal stories of patriotism, passion and politics as he cut an intriguing path as a Gandhian, Congress activist, Vishwa Hind Parishad supporter, teacher, lawyer and judge.

Born in 1911 in Bohori Satra, a village in Assam's Barpeta district, Das is the eldest of eight siblings. His father was once a leading businessman in the locality and "though he was one of the wealthiest persons in the village, he was totally illiterate". Growing up at a time when the freedom struggle was at its peak, Das got involved with the movement early. "It got me and many other boys expelled from high school," recalls Das, almost a teenager again! "Thirteen of my schoolmates were arrested and jailed in Guwahati, among whom Mahendra Mohan Choudhury went on to become chief minister of Assam and governor of Punjab." Another illustrious contemporary was Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi, who later not only became Assam's first chief minister after Independence but was also instrumental in authoring the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.

After he matriculated from Barpeta Vidyapeeth, a school set up by locals after most of the students were expelled from the government high school, Das pursued a colourful academic life, switching from science to arts and finally earning a master's degree in commerce. "At the same time, I also pursued a degree in law," he says.

Das recounts anecdotes of the time he spent in Calcutta, where he travelled for further studies. "Thirty rupees was more than enough to cover monthly expenses at the Hardinge Hostel, where I stayed. The hostel fee was only ₹ 7," he says. But his voice quickens with excitement when he recounts a meeting of the Indian



National Congress that he attended. "It was when Subhash Chandra Bose was removed from the party's presidency and was undoubtedly a very significant historical event."

At the age of 30 marriage beckoned and Das returned to his village. He accepted a post as teacher in Sarthebari High School but quit two months later to teach commerce at M C College in Barpeta (for ₹ 40 a month) and practice law. Given the politically charged atmosphere, he was drawn to the freedom movement. "Taking part in the Quit India Movement was an experience today's generation cannot even imagine. I was elected to the Barpeta Local Board as a Congress nominee, and simultaneously appointed secretary of the district Congress committee," says Das.

His tryst with public office had only just begun, and in 1948, he was appointed rural development officer, a job he quit two years later to return to the bar. "However, in a couple of months, I was appointed extra assistant commissioner in Mangaldoi. Being a freedom fighter and a young Gandhian, I refused to wear a suit and tie, and instead attended office in *khaddar kurta-pajama* and Gandhi cap. That's why people called me a 'Gandhi *hakim*' [a magistrate is still referred to as *hakim* in Assam]," adds Das, his face lighting up again.

Over the next two decades, this Gandhi *hakim* served in different districts in various posts to finally retire as district judge in Guwahati in 1971. It was only the beginning,

"I don't have friends of my age. My grandchildren are my best friends. But I have a lot of well-wishers"

as Das reveals. "My post-retirement life has been the most exciting. Practising law at Guwahati High Court, teaching law at J B Law College and the Northeast Judicial Officers Training Institute, heading the governing body of Arya Vidyapeeth College, becoming an active member of the Harideva Sangha and the VHP, and setting up a college in my ancestral village... there is no end to it," he laughs.

A self-confessed "Jack of all trades", Das has an interesting take on his own life. "When I look back, I realise I did most things as a part-timer, except the magistrate's job, which lasted 20 years," says Das, who prides himself on awarding "many life sentences but never the death sentence." "Instead, when I was a member of the Assam Jail Reforms Commission in 1979, I initiated several steps to improve the living conditions of prisoners. It was this commission that ensured prisoners were provided with mosquito nets." Ask him whether the judiciary was beyond reproach then, and pat comes the reply, "Believe me, there was a certain amount of corruption in the judiciary in our time too. But I don't have much to say about this."



In contrast, Das is more than forthcoming, even a trifle apologetic, on the family front. "It was difficult running a family with three kids on a paltry sum of ₹ 300 when you also had to pay house rent of ₹ 25 because in most towns, there wasn't official accommodation for junior magistrates," he explains, adding, "As I was busy doing so many things, it was my wife who took care of the children." If he has one single regret, it's this. "Lying on her deathbed, my wife rued that she did not get the required love and affection from me as a husband. I could not afford to buy her expensive silks and take her around. Now, 22 years after she has left this world, I still regret it," he says with a candour that forces tears to well up.

Quickly changing the subject, Das turns the spotlight on another 'achievement': all his six children are very well settled. Three of his five sons are engineers and two are doctors, and his only daughter is a bank officer. "And my daughters-in-law are also jewels," he says, eyes twinkling.

Das loves spending time with his family and is the darling of his 10 grandchildren. "What generation gap? My grandfather uses a mobile phone and other modern gadgets," chuckles Nivedita Baruah, a student of Assam Engineering College. Grandson Spondon Jyoti Das owes his excellent higher secondary final examination results to grandpa. "He helped me understand Assamese poetry better," smiles Spondon, now a student at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar.

The adulation doesn't stop there. Once in a while, Das loses himself in a felicitation volume brought out by friends and admirers in 2005, re-reading his many achievements during his long and amazing innings. The book was compiled and edited by Shoneet Bijoy Das for whom "editing a volume that comprised articles about him written by different people was a privilege and pleasure".

Looking up from the sturdy book, he suddenly says, "Friends? I don't have friends of my age. All my friends are dead and gone. Today, my grandchildren are my best friends. But I have a lot of well-wishers," says Das, an eternal optimist.

He has other virtues as well. "My father has a peculiar quality," reveals his son Dhrubojyoti Das, an engineer. "He is so straightforward that he sometimes comes across as rude. He simply refuses to be diplomatic. But that's because he's so honest and truthful." To this, his only daughter Nizara Das, an officer with the Cooperative Bank, Guwahati, adds, "He still gives us valuable advice on various matters. I often visit him and enjoy spending time with him in the evening."

So what's the secret of our centenarian's longevity? "His tension-free and pleasant attitude," reveals eldest son Nikhil Kumar Das, who retired as chief engineer with the Assam Board Electricity Board. Ask his dad the same question and he replies, "Peace and a sense of satisfaction." ❀

the legacy of the brave

Though we all shed tears when we hear of our soldiers giving up their lives for our country, most of us forget them before the wreaths have dried up. To mark Republic Day this year, Harmony introduces you to parents of eight martyrs who have lost their sons but have found a way to keep them alive. Destiny may have broken their hearts but they haven't let it break their spirit, choosing instead to dedicate themselves to a greater, common good

GEETA AND HARISH KAPADIA, MUMBAI
parents of Captain Nawang Kapadia

On 11 November 2000, 24 year-old Captain Nawang Kapadia of the Third Gorkha Rifles died fighting terrorists in the jungles of Kupwara in Srinagar—just 72 days after joining the Indian Army. Nawang's parents, 65 year-old Harish Kapadia, a retired cloth merchant, and 60 year-old Geeta, an artist, are well-known mountaineers. In fact, they have just returned from a six-week expedition in Arunachal Pradesh when we meet them. Years ago, on one such trek through the snowy mountains along the Indian border, Kapadia was accompanied by young Nawang. "We met many soldiers who were deployed there to guard the borders," remembers Kapadia. "That was when he decided to join the Army."

Kapadia does not regret his son's decision. And while it's natural to feel hostile towards people responsible for his death, he prefers to root for peace. Two years after Nawang's death, he climbed the summit in Leysin, Switzerland, with Captain Sher Khan from the Pakistan army and Pakistani mountaineer Nazir Sabeer. "We exchanged notes on our culture, films, politics and even pulled each other's leg," he says. Kapadia is also in talks with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, a global environmental network, to build a peace park in Siachen. And between

expeditions, he delivers lectures in universities, and national and international forum on the Siachen conflict and its implications on the environment. "There are more than 45,000 shells littering up there," he informs us. It's the same ability to look at the larger picture that drove him to write *Siachen Glacier: The Battle of Roses*. The book, published in 2010, covers both the history and environs of the glacier as well as its military importance. Wife Geeta too holds on to everything that mattered to Nawang. She often visits the Army Paraplegic Centre in Pune and networks with his colleagues and parents of other martyred soldiers.

The tears left behind by Nawang's absence are often dispelled by the smile he is still able to evoke on his parents' face. "I have yet to meet a person who could eat like him," says Kapadia with a fond smile. Adds Geeta, "Once, we were on our way to meet him at the military academy in Chennai, when he called to tell us that he and his course mates were famished after going through some rigorous punishment. He asked us to bring along at least 20 parcels of Chinese food. When we reached the place, he and his three friends polished everything off!"

The spirited couple gave the *Harmony* team a badge in Nawang's honour—a tiny *khukri*, or the curved dagger emblematic of the fearless Gorkha warriors. It's a precious gift that reminds us of the debt of gratitude we owe to the soldiers who fight for us everyday.

—Rajashree Balaram

"I WISH PEOPLE
DIDN'T FORGET
SUCH HUGE
SACRIFICES
SO EASILY"



"SANDEEP WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN HAPPY IF WE JUST SAT HERE AND MOURNED"

DHANALAKSHMI AND K UNNIKRISHNAN, BENGALURU
parents of late Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan

When you meet K Unnikrishnan, what strikes you instantly is his uncanny resemblance to his son, the late Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan, a flinty commando who fought off terrorists during the 26/11 attack on Mumbai's Taj Mahal Hotel. On that fateful night—in an operation aptly named Black Tornado—the nation lost a valiant hero. And a simple, humble couple lost their son, friend and confidant.

When we meet the two at their neatly kept house in Bengaluru, they appear surprisingly untouched by the rigours of their month-long cycling tour from Delhi to Mumbai on the second anniversary of 26/11. "It was a tribute to my son and the other martyrs of 26/11," says the 62 year-old. "I want people to remember the sacrifices of these great men. The cycling tour was one such gesture." The expedition was flagged off at India Gate in Delhi and culminated at Gateway of India in Mumbai. Along the way, Unnikrishnan—with Dhanalakshmi tailing him in a car—passed through many villages and towns, where they spread the message of peace and unity.

The event was well covered by media. We ask Unnikrishnan if he feels civilians still need to be more sensitised to life in the forces. "Many people cannot relate to men in uniform because they have not interacted with them," he says. "However, what disturbs me is the popular prejudice that a career in the forces requires only brawn and not brains." The retired ISRO officer candidly admits he never wanted Sandeep to join the forces: "I was afraid of the sheer uncer-

tainty and danger, but Sandeep was clear he wanted to give something back to the nation. His passion won me over."

The couple has discovered that the best way to deal with their grief is to keep busy. "We are in touch with Sandeep's friends and peers, and we also network with other families who have lost their loved ones to conflict." They also plan to plant saplings in his memory; they already have one in their garden dedicated to him. "We can feel him holding our hands," says Unnikrishnan. "His spirit will always inspire us to transform our grief into a positive force." The two are now helping poor widows of martyrs to get their pension. "Many of them are not even aware of the exact regiment where their husband was working," says Unnikrishnan. "Sandeep would have wanted us to help them."

—Dhanya Nair Sankar



Prasad Durga



"I SEE MY ABHIJIT
IN EVERY PILOT"

Hemant Patil

KAVITA AND CAPTAIN ANIL GADGIL, PUNE
parents of late Flt Lt Abhijit Gadgil

As the founder of Jeet Aerospace Institute, she is not expected to cook for her students. But Kavita Gadgil often dishes out a generous feast to those who are learning to conquer the air at the swanky flying institute. To her, such convivial gatherings only bring back happier memories of the times when she used to visit her son late Flt Lt Abhijit Gadgil at his various postings, tiffin boxes crammed with delicacies for him and a dozen other colleagues. "If your stomach is happy, you are happy," she says.

The 60 year-old has eyes that well up with emotion, but a gaze that refuses to bow down. Abhijit died on 17 September 2001 in Suratgarh, Rajasthan, when the MIG-21 he was flying crashed and went up in flames after an 'operational readiness platform' duty. Though Abhijit's demise wrung out a lifetime of tears, it also infused his mother with the courage to help prevent such disasters. Gadgil set up the Abhijit Air Safety Foundation (AASF) in 2002 to gather public voice against MIG-21 crashes and urge aviation authorities to raise the bar on air safety standards. Her ceaseless correspondence and meetings with the then president of India, defence minister and chief of Air Staff finally galvanised a movement of sorts that impelled the powers-that-be to focus their attention on MIG-21 crashes. The

government's increasing investment in sophisticated 'advanced jet trainers' is a reassuring move.

In 2005, Gadgil and her husband Captain Anil Gadgil opened the Jeet Aerospace Institute to guide and train young pilots and amateur enthusiasts. The institute offers basic courses in flying; airline preparatory courses for people with a pilot's licence and looking for a flying job; and Directorate General of Civil Aviation-approved jet orientation course for trainee pilots, all with special emphasis on air safety procedures. Recently, they have also put in place an aviation career counselling programme. "During vacations, we offer a two-day workshop for enthusiastic novices above the age of 15," says Gadgil. "In the past three years, over a hundred pilots have availed of the excellent simulator facility from Jeet Aerospace." Anil Gadgil, 63, who has an experience of 20 years as an IAF pilot and another 23 as an Air India pilot, is an instructor at the institute.

The couple is in close touch with families of pilots who have lost their lives in MIG crashes. "I started out not with the aim of fighting against the IAF or the government," says Kavita. "I just wanted to save as many lives as I could. At the end of the day, in every pilot, I see my Abhijit."

—Khursheed Dinshaw

"I WANT TO SPEND MANU'S ENTIRE INSURANCE MONEY TO DO SOMETHING GOOD"

COLONEL SANJAY AKHOURI, RANCHI
father of late Flt Lt Manu Akhouri

The students of Bhalaiana Government Senior Secondary School in Punjab now have new desks, benches and books, thanks to Colonel Sanjay Akhouri. This army officer posted in Ranchi has also instituted a scholarship for the best performers in classes X and XII. But more than the gifts and philanthropy, the school owes a deeper gratitude to the colonel—for having borne a fearless son who gave up his own life to save the school from destruction.

On 10 September 2009, Colonel Akhouri's 25 year-old son Flt Lt Manu Akhouri was on a training sortie when his MIG 21 aircraft caught fire and he lost communication with air traffic control (ATC). In trying to swerve away from the school where the burning aircraft was headed, he got delayed ejecting and hit the ground too soon.

Today, the Bhalaiana Government Senior Secondary School has been rechristened Flt Lt Manu Akhouri Senior Secondary School along with a bus shelter. A stadium under construction will also soon be inaugurated under Manu's name. Villagers in Bhalaiana want to do everything

they can to immortalise their relationship with Manu. And so does Colonel Akhouri. To motivate the children of the village, he sponsors their annual sports event and has promised to bear the expenses of any child who clears the NDA entrance exam. He visits the school with generous donations; in February, on Manu's birthday, and in September, the day the accident occurred. The 56 year-old hasn't forgotten Manu's parent squadron either. He has set up three scholarships for children of non-combatant employees, and for the best students of classes VIII, IX and X.

A poised Akhouri is firm in his belief that the Indian Air Force should replace all obsolete aircraft with modern ones and hopes his son's sacrifice will be recognised by the organisation. But rather than succumbing to depression, he believes parents like him should help people morally. "We voluntarily let our children choose a profession fraught with danger; now is the time to put up a brave face and show the world we are proud of their sacrifice." The steel in his voice is formidable, showing us precisely where Flt Lt Manu Akhouri inherited his courage.

—Priti Salian



Malay Kumar



"I PROMISED
VINU I WOULD
KEEP HIM ALIVE
TILL I DIE"

Utkarsh Sanjanwala

ANURADHA GORE, MUMBAI
mother of late Captain Vinayak Gore

For the past 15 years, the better part of every day in Anuradha Gore's life has been dedicated to keeping her son late Captain Vinayak Gore alive in public memory. Vinayak, who was part of Operation Rakshak, was hit by a missile while guarding the border at Kupwara in Jammu & Kashmir in 1995.

A former teacher and principal of Parle Tilak School in Vile Parle, Mumbai, Gore has been conducting special discourses in various schools about the heroism, challenges, camaraderie and adversity of life in the Army. The 62 year-old has already authored a Marathi book on the Indian army, *Waaras Hou Abhimanyauche* (Let's become the heirs to Abhimanyu), and is now busy finishing the manuscript of another which is scheduled to be published in May. "The book is based on my interviews with war veterans and soldiers from all over Maharashtra," she says. The radio series on armed forces, *Waaras Hou Abhimanyauche*, she scripted for radio channel Asmita Vahini has been nominated for AIR's annual pick of best radio programmes. And her thrice-a-week columns in Marathi newspaper *Sakaal* on life in the Army have been drawing plenty of fan mail for over 12 years. "A school student from Bhivandi once told me he distributed photocopies of the column to his classmates," she says with a smile.

Gore is luminous and appears even more so when she talks about her 'Vinu'. "He shared everything with me, though he was always tight-lipped when it came to his life in the Army," she says. She misses the thoughtful little ways in which he expressed his love. "Whenever he used to come home on leave, he would come by on his bike to drop me and pick me up from school," she reminisces. "He loved life and I want to lead my life the way he did, meaningfully."

With her daughter settled in the US and her husband having succumbed to a prolonged neurological ailment last year, Gore lives alone. As her husband wanted her to spend the assets and savings entitled to Vinayak on charitable causes, she donates generously to Sainik Kalyan Kendra in Nasik and the Army Paraplegic Home in Pune; she is also a frequent visitor to both places.

Just before we leave, she offers us cappuccino. "Vinu used to always wait for me with a cup of coffee when I returned from work," she says, slipping into nostalgia. "Some days we used to chat, and some times he'd quickly finish his coffee and rush to play cricket with his friends." Gore's eyes have a faraway look. We know she receded into a moment she shares with no one but her Vinu.

—Rajashree Balaram

"OUR TEARS WON'T BRING BACK OUR SON, BUT WE CAN DO SOMETHING TO BRING A SMILE TO SOMEONE'S LIFE"

**SUBBALAKSHMI AND
S RAMACHANDRAN, MUMBAI**
parents of Captain R Subramanian

There are many pauses in our conversation with the Ramchandrans—silent spells filled with tears that refuse to be blinked away. One tries for composure by looking away only to feel awed by photographs of their son, late Captain R Subramanian. They dominate almost every wall in their cosy drawing room.

"He was a bright child who was good at both extracurricular activities as well studies," says Ramchandran, a 66 year-old retired senior quality control manager from Indian Oil. The couple had high hopes from Subramanian who was only 24 years old when he was killed fighting militants in Kupwara in June 2000. "He never wanted to be anything else but a soldier," says Subbalakshmi, 58, as she shows us his medals and trophies.

The brutal blow shattered all their dreams. It took them more than two years to emerge from their grief. "Motivated by our spiritual guru, we started volunteering for social causes and today those activities bring us enormous satisfaction and peace," says Ramchandran.

The two are part of Anam Prem, an informal group of people who spread joy by making ordinary citizens feel special. They give roses and chocolates to bus conductors; serve breakfast to eunuchs; distribute packets of laddoo to hospital nurses; or gift sweets to station masters and auto rickshaw drivers. "Sometimes, a small thoughtful gesture can bring out the best in people," says Subbalakshmi.

The Ramchandrans are in touch with Subramanian's friends and peers. Many of them often come over to stay when they are passing through Mumbai. Subramanian's 'gang' from the Army was also present at their daughter's wedding five years ago. Eight years ago, Ramchandran



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

wrote to senior officers in the Army seeking an amendment to a rule that allowed a martyr's leave to be encashed only if he had five years of service. "I thought it was an unfair rule," he explains. "Thankfully, by 2004, the Army revised the encashment rules accordingly." The two are also part of another NGO, Sumati Gram Human Rights Forum, and have helped set up a boarding school for mentally challenged children of poor families. "We spend time honing their talents in dancing, drawing and craft," says Ramchandran. The couple knows there is no greater joy than the joy of giving. After all, they are parents to a son who gave up everything for the country.

—Rajashree Balaram

"MY PAIN IS NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT MY SON WENT THROUGH"

VIJAY AND DR N K KALIA
parents of late Captain Saurabh Kalia

In May 1999, a soft-spoken Army officer, Captain Saurabh Kalia, of the 4th Jat Regiment posted in the Kargil sector, volunteered to check the infiltration of militants from Bajrang Post in the Kaksar area at a height of 13,000 ft. After the ceaseless firing that ensued against the Pakistan army, Saurabh and his five colleagues ran out of ammunition and were captured as prisoners of war (POW) on 15 May 1999. Twenty-two days later their bodies were handed over to the Indian army—eyes gouged out; bones broken; teeth knocked off; and cigarette burns covering their skin.

It triggered a huge uproar, and then died away with the passage of time. But the scream lodged in Saurabh's parents' hearts only gets louder. Dr N K Kalia and his wife have approached all leading human rights organisations to lobby for severe action against countries that perpetuate crimes against POW. They ran an online campaign that amassed 15,000 petitions, 155,000 emails and 42,000 handwritten letters. "The response from the human rights organisations has been disheartening, but the affection we have received has been unprecedented," says Dr Kalia.

A decade later, Kalia, 62, a retired scientist from the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, and his wife, Vijay,

58, a former employee of the Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University, continue to get their message through to human rights organisations. Their pain, however, hasn't insulated them to that of others. The couple has donated the entire compensation and incentives they received after Saurabh's martyrdom. They gave ₹ 2 million to the Vivekanand Medical Trust in Palampur for an upcoming nursing college to be built in Saurabh's memory. And they have set up the Saurabh Welfare Foundation that sponsors the expenses of the children's ward in the Government Hospital in Palampur; adopts orphans whose parents have been killed in terrorist attacks; sponsors poor patients in Civil Hospital in Palampur; offers financial help to poor families to get their daughters married; and has instituted a 'best recruit' trophy in Jat Regimental Centre, Bareilly.

The Kalias run a LPG distributorship granted in honour of Saurabh by Indian Oil Corporation in 2001. In their quiet moments of togetherness, the couple can still hear their son's parting words before he left for Kargil: "*Ma, tum dekhna ek din aisa kaam kar jaoonga ki saari duniya mein mera naam hoga.* (Mom, someday I will do something so great I will be known all over the world for my deeds.)

—Rajashree Balaram



Shailesh Bhatnagar

"HOW CAN I REGRET HIM TAKING UP A CAREER THAT GAVE HIM SO MUCH JOY?"

SUDHA AND COL (RETD) K K K SINGH, NOIDA
parents of late Major Uday Singh



Lovejeet Alexander

When Major Uday Singh was in school, his principal told his mother, "Your son has tremendous leadership qualities." At the time, Sudha Singh was more familiar with his mischievous side. "He could spend an entire afternoon bouncing on the sofa," says the 60 year-old. "He was adventurous and independent."

But it was not restlessness that motivated Uday to switch to a career in the Army while he was a management trainee at a five-star hotel. "He felt stifled in the rarefied environment and aspired to join the Army's Special Forces," shares Sudha. The move cost Uday his life. In 2003, he died at the age of 29, fighting militants in Kashmir. However, Sudha and Col (retd) K K K Singh, 65, prefer to cherish the honour their son left as his legacy rather than yield to tears.

In 2004, they set up the Uday Public Charitable Trust that sponsors the education of 11 children studying in Army Public School in Dagshai; PRTC School in Bengaluru; DAV

School in Alampur, Himachal Pradesh; and Ryan International Public School in NOIDA. There are six other trustees besides donors, their "wishing angels". The Singhs are both employed—Sudha works with Italian media service Rai Radiotelevisione, while her husband works with a golf course in NOIDA.

The Singhs are also in touch with families of other martyrs and people whose lives Uday touched. "He had a sensitive side," says Sudha. "When one of his cousins lost his parents, he said, 'Mom, please hug him, he will feel good.'" The gregarious, affectionate child grew into a private soldier, who never discussed anything about his life in the Army. One who, when he came on leave, hankered for his mother's mincemeat and vegetable pies and cakes. "He could have any amount of cold coffee and Domino's pizza," says Sudha, her expression softening into an imperceptible emotion. It's been seven years since he passed away, yet Uday's warmth clearly continues to touch his parents' lives.

—Rajashree Balaram

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Face VALUE

Asha Bachanni tells **Rajashree Balaram** how making faces can keep you looking youthful

Asha Bachanni has often been told she doesn't look her age. Her warm smile bears a carefully restrained smidgen of pride when she asks us to guess the number. We stare at her face and zero in on 40. "I have a married daughter—and no, it was not a child marriage," she quips. "I am 48." Bachanni credits her youthful appearance to what she has been preaching and practising for the past seven years. Founder of India's first and only facial exercise gym, Face Gym, Bachanni helps people tone their facial contours through a rigorous drill of exercises.

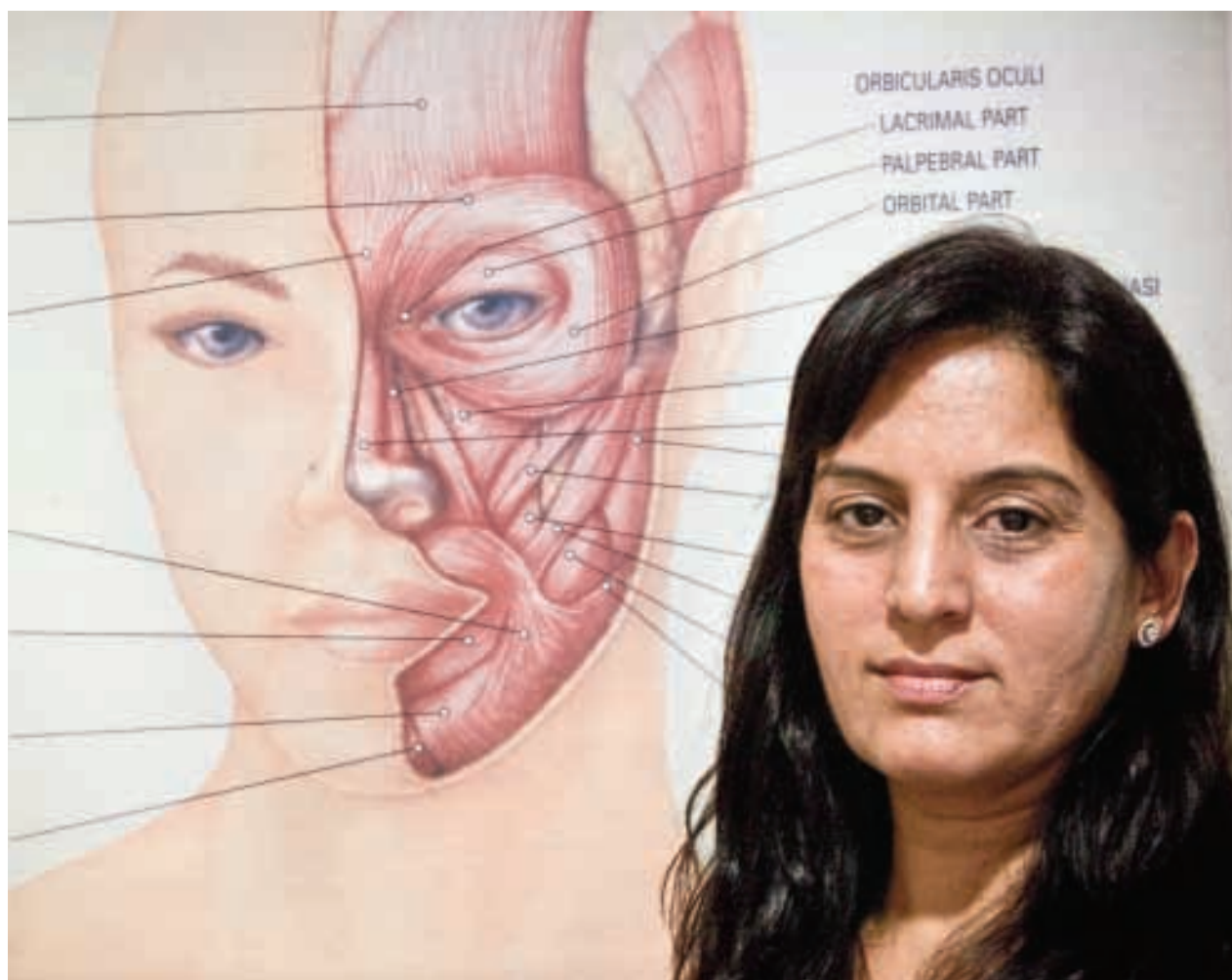
A former film and television actor, the 48 year-old decided to switch over to a unique career in beauty and fitness when she studied the signs of stress on her face. "I used to spend long hours under the harsh studio lights and I was getting worried about the consequences on my skin," she says. "I was also restless to switch over to another career. And being a microbiology student there was always that dormant itch to do something related to science and health."

An article in *Reader's Digest* on the benefits of facial exercises finally steered her towards facial gymming. On a holiday to Birmingham, Bachan-

ni signed up for a three-month course in facial exercise. Later she completed a diploma in nutrition and cosmetology from Australia. "Initially I started teaching my relatives, friends and neighbours, who were amazed at the results," she says. Inspired by the feedback, Bachanni set up a clinic in 2005 in her apartment at Khar's tony 16th Road. Ever since, she has had a steady clientele of actors, flight attendants, models, housewives and silvers. She has trained over 1,500 people so far. "Though I have nothing against Botox injections or peels, I am sure there are many men and women out there like me who would prefer non-invasive procedures," says Bachanni. Indeed, her clientele includes many men in their 60s, 70s and 80s.

"Facial exercises don't just delay the signs of ageing but are scientifically proven to reverse the process by about 40 per cent," reveals Bachanni. "Our face has more than 10 bones and 12 muscles complemented by a fine network of arteries, nerves and veins that feed the skin. Facial exercises stimulate blood circulation and help tighten sagging muscles." Bachanni quotes a variety of factors that hasten the ageing process: exposure to sun rays; pollution; hormonal changes; water retention; hereditary lack of skin tone; and depleted collagen





Photographs by **Utkarsh Sanjanwala**

production. Along with exercises, her three-month facial exercise programme also teaches you to avert the effects of lymphatic drainage. When lymph fluid, containing bacteria and debris, is transported through the bloodstream, the bacteria and debris is sieved by lymph nodes. Facial exercises help eliminate these toxins and facilitate lymphatic drainage.

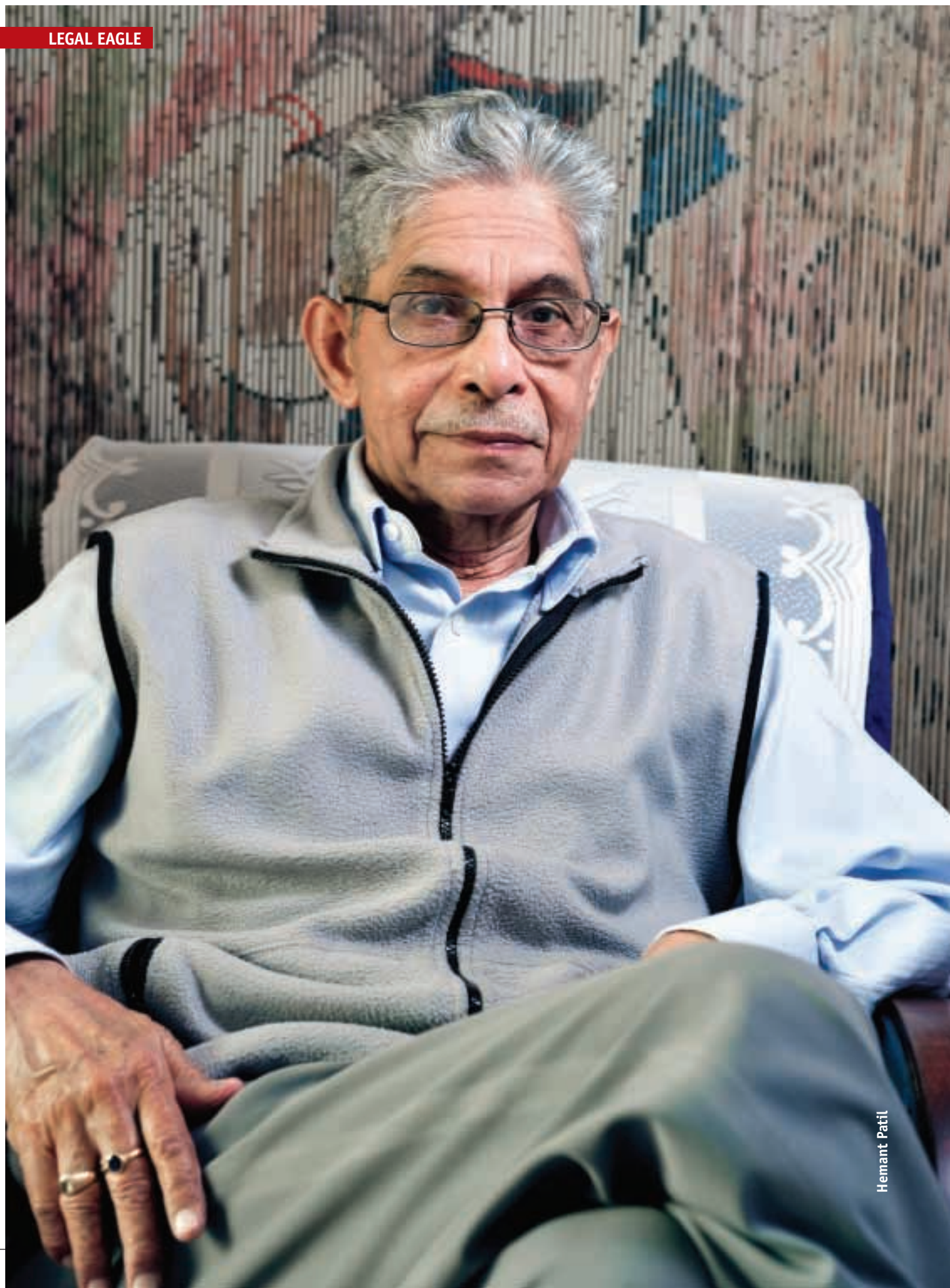
In fact, many doctors in the West even suggest facial exercises to treat TMJ syndrome. This chronic inflammation of the joint that connects the mandible to the skull is characterised by intense pain—and even impairment—in the jaw muscles, and headaches.

Though information on facial exercises is available online, Bachanni offers a word of caution. “It’s very important to do facial exercises in consultation with an expert or you can end up pulling a muscle or dislocating your jaw,” she insists. If done correctly though, facial exercises can be surprisingly effective. One of Bachanni’s clients who had a droop at the corner of her right lip because of an erroneous cosmetic surgery procedure was able to rectify the fault in just three months. Another client with deep grooves around her mouth owing to an endocrinal problem also experienced remarkable improvement in her facial contours after the programme.

Bachanni: best face forward

Bachanni customises every exercise programme after identifying individual problem areas. She conducts one-on-one classes and schedules fortnightly follow-ups to monitor her clients’ facial movements as they perform the exercises under her supervision. Then, based on their performance, she recommends improvements and new exercises. She also offers packages with a combination of facial exercises, skin-enhancing facials and radiofrequency skin therapy. Bachanni’s facial exercise programme costs ₹ 8,000. “It’s worth investing time and thought in your skin, starting today,” she says. ✨

Bachanni is a facial exercise specialist and cosmetologist. Contact her at (022) 65008486 or email facegymindia@gmail.com



Hemant Patil

Clean-up drive

MAJOR GENERAL (RETD) S C N JATAR LEFT AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER IN THE ARMY TO CRUSADE AGAINST CORRUPTION. ARMED WITH THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT, HE IS ON A MISSION TO REPORT THE LACUNAE IN PUBLIC OFFICES, REPORTS **KHURSHED DINSHAW**

A challenging switch followed for Major General S C N Jatar after an eventful career in the Army in the Corps of Engineers. In the 1980s in Assam, there was an oil blockade in Oil India Ltd, a joint-sector company of the Government of India and Burmah Oil Company, UK. When then prime minister Indira Gandhi came to power, she wanted the blockade ended. There was a leadership issue because all the non-Assamese officer staff (which was in the majority) had left owing to the agitation against 'foreigners'. Jatar became Oil India's chairman and managing director in 1984. The first thing he did was to recruit local people as working staff; for officer staff, he recruited the meritorious regardless of race or community. "I have also been the chairman and MD of ONGC overseas [Videsh] Ltd," says the 78 year-old bachelor of civil engineering and a fellow of the Institution of Engineers.

In 1995, Jatar retired and went back to his home in Pune. He joined the Express Citizens' Forum for social work. Even before the RTI Act came into being, under the aegis of Nagrik Chetna Manch, Jatar (now its president) started seeking information from the state government. In the "often corrupt bureaucracy", they found honest people who were willing to give information. "Today when we ask for information, in most cases it is sent to us either by email or they ask us to come and collect it. This is because the officials know we won't misuse it; they know we will use RTI for the general good of the public," explains Jatar.

Nagrik Chetna Manch calls for transparency in governance and aims to

eradicate corruption. The Manch has played a proactive role in finalising the note on a transport policy and mobility plan for the Pune Metropolitan Region and has had representation on the Traffic Advisory Committee of Pune Police and Steering Committee for Development Plan. Its members have also succeeded in prevailing upon the Pune Municipal Commission (PMC) to curb misuse of official vehicles, especially for leisure.

By invoking the RTI Act, the Manch has taken up public interest litigations

says, adding that he feels bad when officials don't help villagers who do not know their rights, speak only Marathi and can barely read. "The order says no format is required for RTI," he explains. "A citizen can write on a piece of paper, put a ₹ 10 court fee stamp and give it to any official, even if it does not pertain to his department. But instead of accepting the RTI application and passing it on to the department concerned as mandated by the RTI Act, officials sometimes palm it off or throw it back saying it is not their problem. We help such citizens."

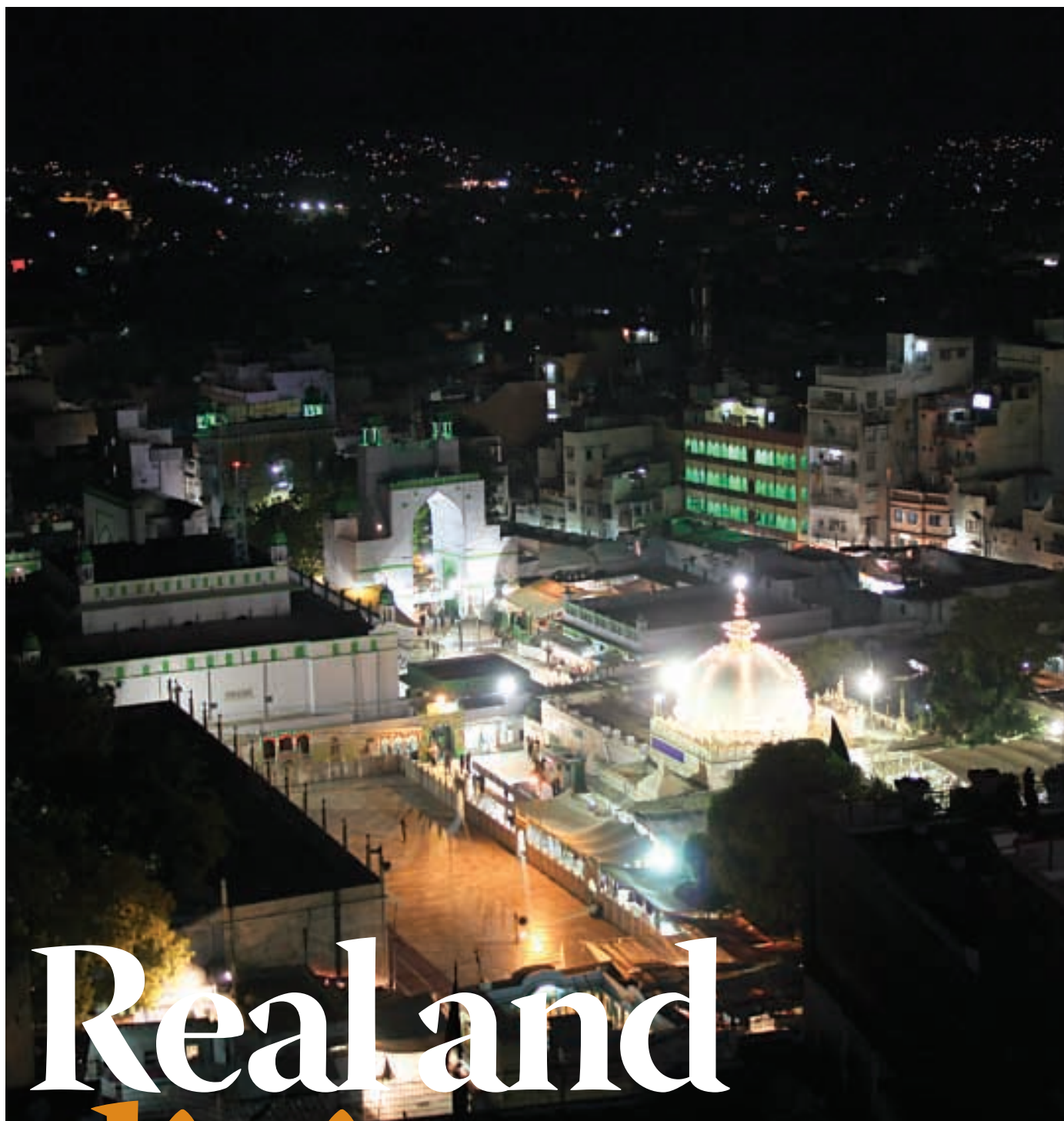
"RTI is headed in the right direction. What we need, though, is a follow-up 'service act' where there is investigation after reforms have been implemented"

against holiday tours conducted under the guise of study tours; the construction of Bal Bharati-Paud Road on the hill top; misuse of transfer of development rights at Kothrud and conversion of forest land into residential area. The last was Jatar's toughest challenge where information had to be obtained from many sources, including the collector's office, the commissioner's office, the forest department and the courts. "Either the courts have stayed the illegal activities or our PILs have prevented further misuse," says Jatar who has filed close to 150 applications and around 50 appeals.

Having conducted workshops aplenty to generate awareness about RTI, Jatar is happy that people know what the Manch stands for. "There are disappointments as well, however," he

Jatar says he has not been threatened—but has been 'advised'. There was also a time when someone would ring him up and call him to secluded places at odd hours, under the guise of seeking his help but probably with the intention of assault. These episodes have not deterred Jatar, or his 74 year-old wife Sarala.

For his part, he insists he is not on a warpath with PMC. "My grievance is against corruption in government offices." Though he believes RTI is headed in the right direction, he feels "we need a follow-up 'service act' where authorities should investigate further after judicial reforms have been implemented." He also rues the fact that common people are tolerant of inefficiency and corruption. "That needs to change first," he says. ✨



Real and divine

There's no place quite like Rajasthan, discovers **Shilpi Shukla**, as she takes in the charms of Kishangarh, Ajmer and Pushkar



Photographs by Lovejeet Alexander

KISHANGARH

We were hardly half an hour's drive away from Ajmer when we decided to take our last break. And this is how serendipity brought us to Kishangarh. This

small, sleepy town, 27 km from Ajmer, owes its name to its founder Maharaja Kishan Singh, who built it in 1611 AD. The best thing about Kishangarh is that it's unexplored. My husband Jeet and I learnt, however, that the quiet town was once a bustling city under the rule of the mighty Rathores in the medieval period.

A view of the magnificent Kishangarh Fort is awe-inspiring. One of the unconquered forts of Rajasthan, and undisputedly the most impressive, its lavish carved interiors reportedly speak volumes about the lifestyle of the Rathore rulers. "Majestic quarters, courtyards with stone-carved water fountains and numerous other embellishments enhance the magnificence of the fort. And the castle is a paradise for bird watchers," shares Premlal, a local resident who was kind enough to march us to the fort. We were so excited to visit this 'majestic castle'; if only we had wings. However, luck chose not to chance upon us again. We were barred entry as the fort was under restoration till February. "After restoration, the world will take notice of its grandeur," said one of the guards. The tall sentry sounded like a loyal-to-death *sipahi* guarding his royal fort from an enemy ruler's attack.

Another attraction is Phool Mahal. Located near Kishangarh Fort, this 18th century palace of flowers has now been converted into a heritage hotel. Surrounded by beautiful gardens and bewildering wall murals, it offers a breathtaking view of the fort and Gundalo Lake, where rare migratory birds flock from time to time. Painted on the background of pristine environment and verdant landscapes, the Bani Thani paintings of Kishangarh further beautify this princely abode. Having seen the charismatic beauty of Phool Mahal, we knew what visual delight and royal stateliness awaited us inside the Kishangarh Fort. Adding to its appeal is the Navgrah (nine planets) temple, with the sacred Saraswathy flowing under the desert region of Kishangarh.

Indeed, the Bani Thani style of miniature painting is the most unique aspect of this town. The 18th century rulers patronised the Kishangarh school, further embellishing the cultural fabric of Rajasthan. The paintings depict Radha and Krishna as divine lovers and lay emphasis on subtlety, not exaggeration. "We portray Radha and Krishna in courtly surroundings with a massive backdrop compared to the figures themselves," Vithal, a senior artist at the Shree Krishna Art Centre in Kishangarh, tells us.

Life here is what we call typically rural. Zigzag lanes, beautiful huts, royal *haveli*, ethnic wear, modest living and very warm people... coming to Kishangarh is like visiting the sets of Ramgarh of *Sholay*. Unlike the hustle and bustle of most tourist spots, this is a place for peaceful contemplation.



AJMER

Sand dunes, wooded hills and amazing lakes; royal palaces and rugged forts; men and women in colourful turbans and *ghaghra-choli*; bustling towns and quiet villages; leisurely camels and swift horses; harsh sunlight and the cool evening breeze—a trip from Kishangarh to Pushkar offers all this and more.

Upon reaching Ajmer, we dumped our luggage in the hotel and headed to Dargah Sharif. Walking past the bustling Dargah bazaar, a high gateway with intricately carved silver ornamentation makes way for the serene mausoleum of the great Sufi saint Hazrat Moinuddin Chisti. We prayed—I am a Hindu, and Jeet Christian—at the Dargah, and surprisingly experienced a sense of divine relief. Never before did Kahlil Gibran's words make more sense to me: *I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion, and it is the spirit.*

For hours we admired the architectural friezes that adorn this celebrated



Grandeur and artistry: (clockwise from top) the exquisite Phool Mahal with Kishangarh Fort as backdrop; senior artist Vithal making a Bani Thani painting of Radha; Taragarh Fort in Ajmer

monument. The main tomb at the Dargah is screened by a delicately carved marble partition. There is a special prayer hall that was constructed by Shah Jahan for the women of his empire. We paid respect to the tombs of Bibi Hafiz Jama (daughter of the departed Sufi saint) and Begum Chimni Begum (daughter of Shah Jahan).

It was now time to admire the Indo-Islamic architectural skill of the fascinating Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra. This wonderful relic of an old mosque is said to have been designed and built in two days. We then toured the formidable Taragarh Fort. With its six gates, the splendid monument stands guard over the entire city. Though inaccessible, most impressive are the tunnels that interweave through the whole hill.

Other must-see spots include the ornate Akbar's Palace and Ana Sagar Lake. Constructed in 1570 AD especially for Emperor Akbar who stayed here during his Ajmer tours and pilgrimages, the palace has been converted into a museum showcasing an amazing display of military armour and weaponry, antiques, artefacts, sculptures, miniature paintings and archaeological finds from Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Ana Sagar is an artificial lake named after then ruler Anaji Chauhan. With a beautiful sunset view, this 12th century lake has on its shores marble pavilions (also known as Bardari) built by Shah Jahan to facilitate his long stays in Ajmer.

The Solahkhamba, Jhulelal Mandir, Badnor Fort, Mahadev Mandir, Man Mahal, and Mangliyawas are other historically delightful time warps. Our only displeasure came from witnessing the utter negligence on the part of government and public in preserving

and maintaining these architectural masterpieces.



PUSHKAR

Located in the heart of the Aravalli Hills, the town of Pushkar rises in grandeur amid natural surroundings. Popular for its camel fair held in November-December, it's also known as the world's largest cattle fair. "There's something about it that makes you feel at home," said Jeet. Indeed, the people are ingenuous and the vibe peaceful. The essence of Rajasthan can be found in the food, dress, lifestyle and culture of this town. While public transport is a rare sight, cycles and motorbikes can be hired at ₹ 200-300 per day—but you could cover it all on foot as we did.

Situated 11 km off Ajmer, the most prominent aspect of Pushkar is the Brahma temple in marble; the floor is decorated with silver coins, donated by pilgrims. It is believed that when Lord Brahma dropped a lotus flower on earth, this town floated to the surface. Legend also has it that Brahma performed penance here for 60,000 years to get a glimpse of Lord Vishnu. This 14th century temple houses a life-size statue of Lord Brahma.

As many as 52 *ghat* encircle the mystically magnetic Pushkar lake, around which the whole town is built. In fact, in this pond-sized town there are about 400 temples, each representing a different era and built in a unique style. Devout Hindus believe it is essential to visit Pushkar and take a holy dip in the lake, at least once in a lifetime. Here too, priests threaten you with the many curses that would befall you if you don't perform *puja*. If you wish to worship with the help of a priest, it's best to fix a price first lest he haggles with you later.

The prayer and *arti* ceremony at Varah Ghat was most serene. When in Pushkar bear in mind: no alcohol, no eggs, no non-vegetarian food, and certainly



SHOPPERS' PARADISE

You can buy real and sometimes rare handicrafts, jewellery and textiles in Kishangarh, Ajmer and Pushkar. Kishangarh is known for its handicrafts and, of course, Bani Thani paintings. It is also a large centre for marble and granite. Other highlights are lac bangles, curios, contemporary gold and silver jewellery, colourful tie-and-dye saris and fabrics, and embroidered *juti*. Ajmer offers a beautiful display of colourful handicrafts at the annual Urs fair.

QUICK BITES

Though Ajmer has a range of multi-cuisine restaurants, go for Rajasthani delicacies with their spicy, tangy flavour. We loved the *bhang lassi* in Pushkar. The mint tea is quite a hit as well here. And *malpua* and *motichoor laddoo* don't come tastier. Finally, the spicy and crunchy *daal pakora* of Kishangarh are worth every bite.

no public display of affection. "Ours is a religious city. As our honourable guest, we request you to please respect our culture," a policeman was heard telling a foreigner couple.

We also enjoyed a memorable camel safari ride on the rippling sand dunes, where we witnessed the various hues of the rising sun and lush green meadows, felt the fresh cool breeze, and later basked in the shimmering beauty of the Aravalli Hills under the full moon. Just another day in fabulous Rajasthan. ✨

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Hemant Patil

Making the Maker

The Mukhedkars of Pune share a special rapport with Lord Ganesha, discovers Khursheed Dinshaw

The Ganesha idol sponsored by the Shreemant Dagadusheth Halwai Group in Pune draws a huge throng of devotees from all over the country every year during Ganesh Chaturthi. Devotees believe prayers and petitions made here are assuredly fulfilled. For Shridhar Mukhedkar, 75, and his family—son Raju, 45, and grandson Anupam, 25—it's a matter of great pride to be the official painters of the idol for the past 50 years. "I am blessed," says Shridhar Mukhedkar proudly. "Devotees flock to Him from all over the world. I get to touch Him, and repaint Him twice a year." (Most big *mandal* use their original idol year after year; some as many as a century.)

The family studio is a busy sprawl at Shaniwarwada near Daruwala Bridge in Pune. As the three painters also paint

and repaint the idols of many other major *mandal* in Pune, it is crowded with at least 150 idols before the festival. The studio is a riot of colours with cans of bright Asian Aqualite colours and an assortment of brushes and rags. A mound of golden dust glitters in one corner; it's a special pigment sourced from Rajasthan for the idol's crown.

LEGACY

Painting on the idols begins three months before the festival—a hectic time for the family during which they get by with just a few hours of sleep every day. While the patriarch is a specialist in repainting the intricate free-hand designs of the idol trunk, Raju paints the idol's eyes and Anupam specialises in eyes as well as the Lord's garments. "I learnt to paint from my grandfather when I was just five years old," says Anupam. A divine legacy indeed.

—Khursheed Dinshaw



Photographs by Shilbhadra Datta

“I am not very excited about the future of theatre in Kolkata”

THE NANDIKAR THEATRE GROUP HAS BEEN ORGANISING THE NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL IN KOLKATA SINCE 1984. A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE 27TH NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL STARTED ON 16 DECEMBER, THESPIAN RUDRAPRASAD SENGUPTA, HEAD OF THE THEATRE GROUP, SPEAKS TO PARTHA MUKHERJEE AND PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE ON HIS JOURNEY

For him, theatre is more than a source of entertainment; it's a platform to voice opinions on social issues. His dialogues, characters, stage, even lights all embody activism. When the septuagenarian says he is a radical theatre activist, he perhaps means that more than a cerebral performer, adapter and director, he is a dedicated soul to whom theatre is a struggle to turn the flame brighter to see the world more distinctly.

Living on tirelessly like a fakir, Rudraprasad Sengupta is dedicated to grooming a generation of theatre activists. “They are my own extension,” says the thespian. Sengupta began his career as a professor of English litera-

ture. “Prof RPS would bring scenes of *Macbeth* or *Riders to the Sea* of John Millington Synge alive before our eyes,” reminisces one of his students in Brahmananda Keshabchandra College in north Calcutta. “His impeccable diction, magic of histrionics and tremendous command over the language were a priceless gift to us. Those hours would soon go by in rapturous silence.”

THEATRE

Sengupta's leaning towards communism brought him closer to theatre; the young man thought it would help him nurture what he couldn't fully as a student. He joined legendary theatre group Nandikar in 1961. “I had no ambition to act or to direct,” recalls Sengupta. “In fact, necessity compelled me to perform.” In 1975, as a precondition for a particular grant, Nandikar

had to produce a second play. With Ajitesh Bandopadhyay, the founder of the group, opting out, Sengupta was asked to replace him. “My first choice as a director was *Antigone*,” he says. “The play acquired relevance with the ongoing political turmoil in India. It was a huge success though the state government tried to control the staging by censoring our advertisement in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*.”

So far, Sengupta has directed over 15 plays, most of which are his adaptations of classics. Productions like Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Football*, an adaptation of Peter Terson's *Jigger Jagger*, stand a class apart and have achieved success in India as well as countries like Bangladesh, Germany, Sweden, UK and the US. Indeed, Nandikar has witnessed a meteoric

rise to the level of an organisation that can execute a wide range of projects, like the annual National Theatre Festival. For his part, Sengupta's zeal never flags even when a production fails to earn positive reviews. Winner of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1980), he knows that while painting a picture, writing a poem, or sculpting a sculpture is a private act, theatre is always a combined effort of personal creativity and public sensitivity. No theatre production can ignore the box office. It is naive to look upon theatre only as an act of creativity—"it is a lot of administration, a lot of economics, a lot of nitty-gritty".

Sengupta has seen the audience changing in the past few decades. "The relationship between people and artists is very complex," he observes. "At times, the audience has to be groomed to appreciate our work; at times, it is they who call the tune. It might happen that once you have created the taste for a certain kind of presentation, the audience starts insisting on your giving just that, and nothing else. If you don't oblige, they turn against you; if you oblige, it might spell your own creative death. Witness Jabbar Patel's *Ghasiram*

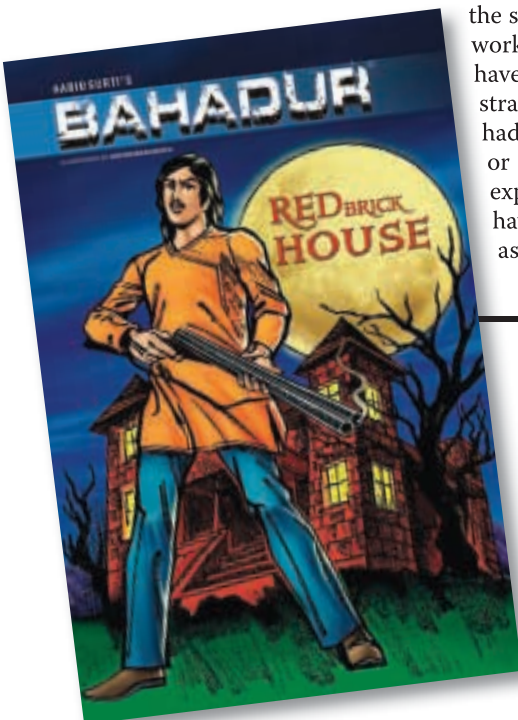


Kotwal. It is a great work, no doubt, but it had to become outdated some day. Moreover, you can't create great theatre every day. We have to change our marketing strategy. The taste of the audience has to be controlled so it doesn't tend to reduce the creative work into a consumer product."

The thespian is now on a searching spree, as old stars are fading from the sky one by one. "Even those who worked in the field a few years ago have to work under certain constraints," he acknowledges. "We had talents like Anamika Haksar or Moin Ali Beg but one cannot expect brilliant actors always; we have to carry on with whatever assets we have in our treasury."

Sengupta also believes no theatre can survive without subsidy. According to him, government grants are insufficient. This is why Nandikar has branched out and taken the initiative for other activities including projects that provide activists opportunities to work as professionals.

In candour, Sengupta affirms that he is not too excited about the future of theatre in Kolkata. He doesn't find "enough inspiration" around him—not only in theatre, but also in other art forms. "The problem is not sub-continental but global," he rues. "In this materialistic society, theatre activists have to compromise at every step. It's a hostile environment for nurturing art."



BAHADUR IS BACK!

The 1970s comic strip hero, Bahadur, is back in action—online this time. And where he fought dacoits and village ruffians earlier, he now knocks down terrorists with an AK-57.

Bahadur's maker Aabid Surti has launched a serialised version of the comic strip on www.bahadur.in



Words from ASSAM

At 73 years of age, Guwahati-based Alaka Buragohain is working on a new chapter in life—quite literally. After retiring as head of the department of library and information science, Gauhati University, the enthusiastic silver is now working on a Sahitya Akademi project called *The Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Literature*. This project is guided by Dr Nagen Saikia, renowned Assamese writer and former president of the Asam Sahitya Sabha. As part of the project, Buragohain will catalogue a brief description of Assamese books published between

1954 and 2000; she has already finished work on 5,000 books since she started the project in 2003.

The project, which forms part of the National Bibliography of Indian Literature, will cover books on philosophy, religion, folk and tribal literature, mythology, linguistics, arts, cultural history, biography and science. Every entry will have a brief note on each book in addition to other information like name of the author, publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price. “On completion, the catalogue will be accessible both in book form as well as on the Internet,”

LITERATURE

says Buragohain. The Sahitya Akademi project includes a descriptive catalogue on books in all Indian languages—the one on books in Malayalam has been published recently.

—Tapati Baruah Kashyap

FULLY BOOKED THE TAMIL SECTION OF THE ANNA CENTENARY LIBRARY (ACL) AT KOTTURPURAM IN CHENNAI IS NOW OPEN—READERS CAN BROWSE THROUGH 100,000 BOOKS. THE LIBRARY WILL SOON ALLOW ONLINE ACCESS TO A NETWORK OF 32 DISTRICT CENTRAL LIBRARIES IN TAMIL NADU. THIS WILL ENABLE MEMBERS TO ACCESS INFORMATION ON ALL DISTRICT CENTRAL LIBRARIES AND THEIR CATALOGUES.

CINEMA

500 PEOPLE

still visit the home of late Tamil superstar MG Ramachandran—or just MGR—every day, two decades after his death. The house in Chennai’s posh T Nagar has medals, movie props, plaques, letters and pictures of the flamboyant actor-turned-politician as well as his famous green Ambassador car. The place is open to the public every day except Tuesday, free of charge.



WINNING STREAK

Sindhutai Sapkal, one of the 10 winners of Harmony Silver Awards 2009, continues to inspire the world. Director Ananth Mahadevan has made a biopic on Sapkal’s life, *Mee Sindhutai Sapkal*, which was screened at the London Film Festival held in October and opened to rave reviews in Maharashtra. The movie has set the festival circuit abuzz. We salute Sapkal—again.

INDIA

GIFT-WRAPPED



Lovejeet Alexander

Much to the delight of art and handicraft connoisseurs, the National Museum Shop at the National Museum in New Delhi has been revamped. A storehouse of artefacts sourced from craftsmen from across the country, the highlights are its reproductions of pre-historic art forms: Chola sculptures in bronze; paperweights resembling the Harappan seal; Gupta-era coins; Mughal paintings depicted on crockery; magnets and T-shirts.

“What look like intricately carved stone sculptures are actually moulded figurines made out of a unique mixture of stone dust and other materials,” says S K Kalra, assistant marketing manager of the National Museum, crediting the classy revamp to a collaboration between the National Museum administration, four experts—Malvika Singh, Mohini Menon, Lalita Phadkar and Neha Prasada—and the Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation.

SHOPPING

With an exquisite array of art—papier-mâché plates and bowls by Kashmiri artisans, replicas of pietra-dura works in marble from Agra and ethnic Bidri ware by Bidar’s artisans comprising flower vases, daggers and ink stands—the National Museum Shop truly lives up to its name. The tastefully designed shop also boasts of a collection of handbags, clutches, jewellery boxes, posters, notebooks, diaries, mugs, pencils and pen stands. The section with antique ornaments, silver jewellery, Jaipuri pillows, Kashmiri shawls, and ethnically designed stoles and scarves from various states has already proved to be a hit among women shoppers.

With each item so richly embellished with Indian art and craft motifs and yet so reasonably priced, this shop is a must-visit.

—Shilpi Shukla

Child woman

Author Dheera Kitchlu, 60, is out with her new book for children, *Ouch! Cried Planet Earth*, a book that uncovers our assault on the planet's resources



Do you think grandparents can play a role in enhancing eco-consciousness in their grandchildren?

Yes. I believe grandparents are free to spend quality time with their grandchildren and can make them aware of how they can save the environment. All of us can and must do our bit in our everyday lives, by saving electricity, water, separating garbage, and not littering. All this must be imparted to children by the significant adults in their lives; and mostly the significant adult who is free and willing is the grandparent, as parents are so busy with other preoccupations.

Have you tried to instil such awareness in your grandchild?

I have a five year-old granddaughter.

I try to make her aware by setting an example myself. Children learn best by osmosis—not so much by being preached or instructed.

Was there any incident in particular that triggered the book?

Global warming and tigers facing extinction are now household issues. As children are the future of the world, they must be made aware, so that change can start from their level and grow upwards and outwards. I believe in child power, so the book not only addresses the issues but suggests participation and solutions too.

Is writing more an exercise in spontaneity or discipline?

I am a full-time writer and illustrator

of books. So, for me personally, writing is like going to the office for others. I write in a very disciplined way, every day. Every task is laborious, but words make me happy and I enjoy writing immensely.

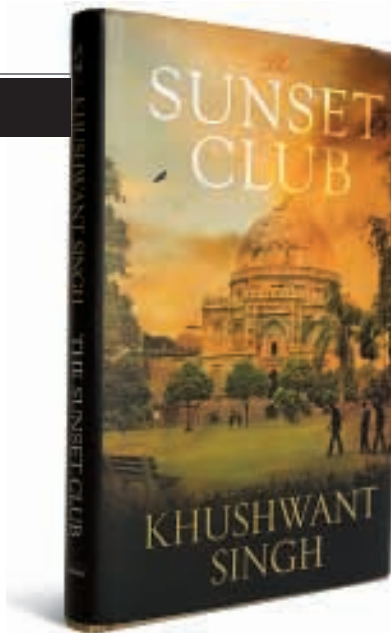
What are your future plans? What will you write next?

The next book has been in the writing for several years. It is called *No Dogs Please!* It traces the history of our pet Dalmatian, Spec, who lived with us and lit up our lives for 11 years. But what I am really working hard on is a book of short stories for adults that should be completed by the end of 2011. It will be my first work of fiction for adults.

—Rajashree Balaram

THREE OFA KIND

Pandit Preetam Sharma, a Punjabi Brahmin; Nawab Barkatullah Baig Dehlavi, a Sunni Muslim; and Boota Singh, a Sikh, comprise **THE SUNSET CLUB** (Penguin Viking; ₹ 399; 216 pages). The three octogenarians meet every evening at Lodi Gardens in Delhi; sit on the 'Boorha Binch' (a bench for old men) facing Bara Gumbad ("resembling the rounded bosom of a young woman") and discuss Varun Gandhi's anti-secular speech; Jarnail Singh's shoe hurled at P Chidambaram; the Delhi High Court's verdict on gay sex; the general elections; earthquake in Haiti; and their own past sex lives and current guttural problems. A blend of **Khushwant Singh's** 2009 diary, lessons on history, geography, sociology and religion (some enlightening ones), and tasteless sexual escapades, the book flips between 'Beating Retreat' (with which it opens) and 'bedroom retreat'. "Stocky with a paunch, snow-white unshorn hair clad in cotton or woollen cap... higher education in England and served with Indian missions in London and Paris..." Boota Singh is probably the author himself, at his lurid best. At one point in the book, after Boota



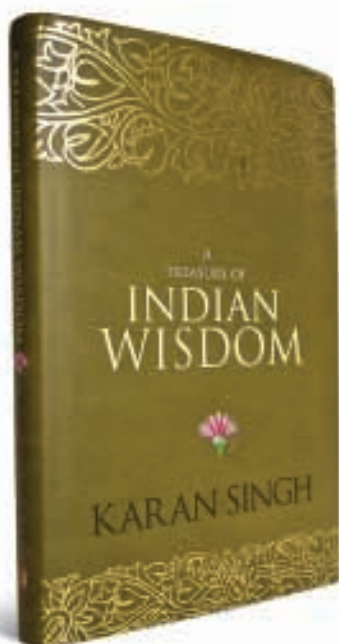
favours "buggery and prostitution" during a discussion, the author says, "Only Boota is pleased with himself. He must polish up his ideas and put them across in his columns (a columnist of sorts). He loves to provoke his readers and make them react by writing letters to the editor—double publicity." Publicity apart (it's ascribed as Singh's last book), there is no reason why anyone should pick up *The Sunset Club*, which is worthy only in sections where the three protagonists discuss breaking news and the changing face of India. If it were written based on 2010's scam-full news breaks, it would have probably gone down in the history of scandalous India.

—Meeta Bhatti

MUST READ

Train to Pakistan

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* earned him laurels in the 1950s. The horror of Partition comes alive in this epic. Mano Majra, a village living in its own world on the border of India and Pakistan, becomes the epitome of hawkish Hindu-Muslim rivalry. Juggut Singh, in love with a Muslim girl and under suspicion for murdering a money-lender, ultimately bears the peace-keeping torch. Singh not only gets under the skin of his characters in this simple and short book, but also brings forth the human psyche and multiple intense emotions of people at the time.



From the ancient splendour of Vedic hymns and the purity of Buddhist teachings to the riveting words of contemporary philosophers like Osho and J Krishnamurti, India is home to myriad thought-streams. Padma Vibhushan and statesman **Karan Singh** seeks to merge a sampling of these into a forceful river in **A TREASURY OF INDIAN WISDOM** (Penguin; ₹ 450; 212 pages). Delve into it for spiritual succour. Here's a sampling:

Prayer for Long Life

This hymn from the *Atharva Veda* divides the hundred years of

human life for various functions in the world:

For a hundred autumns may we see,
For a hundred autumns may we live,
For a hundred autumns may we know,
For a hundred autumns may we rise,
For a hundred autumns may we thrive,
For a hundred autumns may we be,
For a hundred autumns may we become,
Aye, and even more than a hundred autumns.
Atharva Veda 19.67
(Translated by A C Bose)

DEAR GOD!

If you like your mythology true to type—staid, reverential and time-tested—Ashok K Banker's juicy, epic potboilers may not be for you. But there's something to be said for learning all you can about the gods who walked our land as men and then telling their story with a rambunctiousness that has the power (every once in a while) to leave the reader gasping. After six ripping books on Rama, the journalist and columnist turns his pen to India's favourite cowherd with the first book in his 'Krishna Coriolis': **SLAYER OF KAMSA** (HarperCollins; ₹ 250; 330 pages). The action begins from the word go; the first chapter is a riveting tableau of a peace treaty signed between King Vasudeva and King Ugrasena, "sovereigns of two of the wealthiest herding



YOU
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ALSO
LIKE

**Ashok K Banker's
Ramayana series:**
Prince of Ayodhya (2003)
Siege of Mithila (2003)
Demons of Chitrakut (2004)
Armies of Hanuman (2005)
Bridge of Rama (2005)
King of Ayodhya (2006)

nations in the great land of Aryavarta", which ends with a dance of destruction wrought by Ugrasena's son Prince Kamsa. There's something not quite right about this young lad; as the book progresses, we learn exactly what that is—so does Kamsa himself, under the tutelage of the wicked King Jarasandha of Magadha. Pitched battles; episodes of introspection and soul-searching; romantic interludes featuring Vasudeva and Devaki, Kamsa's sister; tantalising hints of debauchery and sexual escapades; miraculous happenings in the light of day and the dead of night; voices and visions aplenty... and Krishna's not even in the picture till the last chapter! We'll be back for the next instalment—*Dance of Govinda* will be out this spring.

—Arati Rajan Menon



DOG-GONE IT

Even a simple phrase can spawn a story—if you get to the heart of it. Take artist-turned-author **Rebecca Hunt**, for instance, who has taken Winston Churchill's famous description of depression as a 'black dog' and fashioned a funny yet deeply moving story out of the metaphor. Set over five days in the summer of 1964, **MR CHARTWELL** (Penguin; ₹ 900; 217 pages) brings together the lives of the former British prime minister, who is dreading his retirement from

Parliament after a lifetime of politics, and Esther, a young clerk at the House of Commons library, who is yet to get over the suicide of her husband two years ago. The glue that binds them is Mr Chartwell aka Black Pat, a huge, clumsy, loud and smelly black Labrador; he stalks Churchill through his country estate and takes up as a lodger in Esther's converted box room, terrorising them one moment, intriguing them the next, calling himself "a freelancer who provides specific services for varying lengths of time to specific individuals". Yes, he talks. And a few pages in, it won't strike you as odd anymore, so effortless are Hunt's storytelling, her wit and humour, and the emotions she conveys through her characters despite the farcical framework of this piece of magic realism. Can Esther and Winston free themselves of Mr Chartwell even as he insinuates himself into their lives and their thoughts? Can they seize control of the rest of their lives? How? The

answers to these questions form the kernel of this book, and its lesson of hope and renewal in the face of crushing depression.

—Arati Rajan Menon

AUTHORSPEAK

"I didn't want the dog to be a punch line or a trick—it was the vehicle by which to discuss something very internal. It's fantastical on the surface with its heart in reality. Depression is very hard to talk about. It's very isolating. Some people I knew well seemed to have darker days. I did too. I wanted to describe how it was. Black Pat is my interpretation of it but he needed to be engaging; he couldn't be just a cuddly pet, or too much of a monster. He had to be dangerous, but also charismatic. Writing about him took me to places I didn't expect to go."

—Rebecca Hunt, in an interview to London newspaper The Telegraph

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Rewriting journalism

It was one of the first newspapers in India to bring some colour—literally—to the drab world of business reporting. Launched in 1961 by editor-founder P S Hariharan and published by Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd, *The Economic Times* enjoys a daily circulation of over 620,000 today, making it one of the world's top three English business dailies. Characterised by its salmon-pink colour, it comprises news of the markets from India and overseas; prices of major commodities; and insightful features on the world of finance. *ET*, as it is popularly known, has also left no stone unturned to strengthen its brand image, with innovative quiz competitions like the Brand Equity Quiz on advertising and marketing that attracts big corporate names, and the ET in the Classroom quiz for undergraduate and postgraduate students from across India. The newspaper is simultaneously published from Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh and Pune. In 2009, the newspaper launched its own business channel, ET Now.

Haresh Patel



THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JANUARY 1961

- On 1 January 1961, Australia became the second nation after the US to permit the sale of the birth control pill.
- On 6 January 1961, John F Kennedy was formally elected the 35th US president.
- On 9 January 1961, then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared that India is approaching a stage where it was possible for us to make atomic weapons.
- On 31 January 1961, Ham, a male chimpanzee weighing 17 kg, was rocketed into space aboard Mercury-Redstone 2, in a test of the Project Mercury capsule. The chimp's successful 16½ minute flight demonstrated to NASA that the capsule could successfully carry human astronauts as well.

RELUCTANT LANDLORD

n. A person who is forced to rent his house because he is unable to sell it.

Example: When Ray Frye put his Lewis Centre home on the market for \$245,000 earlier this year, he hoped to get offers for \$235,000.... Frye instead joined the growing club of **reluctant landlords**, homeowners who rent out their homes after failing to sell them.

—Jim Weiker, “No sale? Homeowners try renting,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, 3 October 2010

birthplace effect

n. The tendency for smaller cities to produce disproportionately more professional athletes than larger cities.

Example: A few years ago, sport scientist Jean Côté and his colleagues discovered a phenomenon they termed the **birthplace effect**. While poring over the statistics of over 2,000 US and Canadian athletes in the NHL, NBA, MBA, and the PGA, the researchers noticed something interesting—a relation between the size of the city kids grew up in and their likelihood of making it on the professional sports scene. It turns out that growing up in a smallish city such as Liu’s Smithtown and having the opportunity to sample different sports as Jim Liu did were better ingredients for sports success than specialising in one sport early on.

—Sian Beilock, “How to create a sports superstar,” *Psychology Today*, 2 August 2010

“Those who don’t believe in magic will never find it.”
—British novelist Roald Dahl

BIY

abbr. Purchasing the materials required for a repair or renovation that one has hired a tradesperson or other professional to perform. [From the phrase buy-it-yourself.]

Example: China’s new middle class tend to buy their new apartments as shells, and then kit them out themselves.... It is less DIY, however, than **BIY: Buy-it-Yourself**. New homes need fitting out from floor to ceiling, a job that only professionals can do.

—Malcolm Moore, “Orient Homes chief Li Fengjiang tools up for China’s DIY revolution,” *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 August 2009

THUNDERSTORM ASTHMA

n. An asthma attack that occurs during, and is caused by, a thunderstorm.

Example: Melbourne hospitals have had an influx of patients with respiratory problems to their emergency departments in a phenomenon experts have described as **thunderstorm asthma**. The head of the Alfred hospital’s allergy and asthma service, Associate Professor Jo Douglass said a rapid rise in humidity—which often precedes a thunderstorm—could cause pollen grains to burst in the air, releasing tiny particles that could be inhaled into the lungs and cause asthma.

—Kate Hagan, “Pollen, storms lead to surge in asthma,” *The Age*, 26 November 2010

competitive commuting

pp. Racing another cyclist while commuting to or from work.

—**competitive commuter** *n.*

Example: A recent article in *Good* magazine about **competitive commuting** has sparked lively conversation on cycling blogs and across the Web. Some cyclists cheered the notion, admitting to frequently speeding up to challenge others, while many, including racers and the die-hard all-weather commuters, thought the whole notion was laughable.

—J David Goodman, “Let’s race! If only in our minds,” *The New York Times*, 12 December 2010

flash crash

n. An extremely rapid decline in the stock market.

Example: While individual investors have yanked more money out of US stock mutual funds than they put in every week since the scary one-day **flash crash** 29 weeks ago, the pace of withdrawals is slowing.

—Adam Shell, “Some small investors buying stocks again,” *USA Today*, 29 November 2010

MUNICIDE

n. The economic or political death of a city.

Example: **Municide...** describes the death of cities through economic and political destruction. It is seen through budget deficits that are untenable, and bond ratings that make paying for city projects impossible.

—Kenneth Scortgen Jr, “Municide starts to accelerate as the city of Hamtramck seeks bankruptcy”, Examiner.com, 18 November 2010.

robo-signer

n. A person who signs a legal document without reading it or understanding the document's contents.

Example: Bank of America and several other institutions, including JPMorgan Chase and GMAC Mortgage, halted foreclosures in late September and early October amid a growing controversy over problematic documents, including so-called **robo-signers**—bank employees who say they signed foreclosure affidavits without reviewing the documents.

—Nelson D. Schwartz, “Foreclosures had errors, banks find”, The New York Times, 25 October 2010

toasted skin syndrome

n. A skin rash caused by lengthy exposure to a heat source, such as a laptop computer balanced on the thighs for an extended period.

Example: Balancing your laptop on your knees could cause permanent discolouration of the skin and, in rare cases, cancer, doctors have warned. The heat generated by the computers can cause a nettle sting-like rash—a condition named **toasted skin syndrome**.

—Fiona MacRae, “How the heat from a laptop can ‘toast’ the skin on your thighs”, Daily Mail, 5 October 2010

BUSY BRAIN

n. A mental state that includes racing thoughts, anxiety, lack of focus, and sleeplessness.

Example: In the neurofeedback training system that computer scientist Shane Dunne designed for his son, Sam, electrodes placed on the boy's head fed information about the electrical activity of his brain into an animated maze. Sam's levels of **busy-brain** (high beta) brainwaves, associated with anxiety, were initially too high.

—Anne McLroy, “Researchers explore how video game technology can treat brain disorders”, The Globe and Mail, 4 June 2010

“A man
is not
old until
regrets take the
place of dreams.

—American actor John
Barrymore



Escapades

As more and more silvers set out to explore the world, it's only natural the world takes notice of this brand new segment of enthusiastic travellers. Delhi-based Shireen Mehra runs Women on Clouds, a company that organises custom-made holidays for women, including those above the age of 60. Mehra plans to tailor packages for both men and women in their 70s and 80s. Recognising the special needs of silvers, a doctor will be available on call 24 hours, and everything from medicines to wheelchairs will be at hand. Her trips for silvers will not be crammed with too much frenetic sightseeing but will have a variety of activities to inculcate camaraderie among travellers to form bonds that last well beyond the holiday. Upcoming trips in January and February: Puri, Naukuchiatl and Andamans. Call 011-26851308 or email info@womenonclouds.com

“I am determined to fight for justice till I die”

Zaheer Zaidi, 65, Delhi



Lovejeet Alexander

Marine engineer Hasan Zaidi died under mysterious circumstances in 2005 while he was at sea. “For reasons unknown, your son jumped off the MSC Carmen when the ship was 65 km short of Mombasa port in Kenya”—that’s the message Hasan’s family received from officials of the shipping company. Hasan’s father Delhi-based **Zaheer Zaidi** refused to believe it. “My son would never have committed suicide,” he insists. “He was a champion swimmer and diver. It would have been difficult for him to drown even if he wanted to.” Zaidi suspected foul play and refused to accept the huge compensation the shipping company offered him. Later, he learnt that international maritime regulations did not allow India to send investigators to track a crime that occurred in international waters that have long been plagued by smuggling and piracy. Ironically, Zaidi who runs a small shipping agency himself, wasn’t aware of such norms till the inci-

dent happened. In 2009, Zaheer Zaidi decided to set up the Hasan Marine Foundation to help families of seafarers in similar distress and counsel youngsters who aspired to a career at sea. “Most families of Indian seafarers don’t have the technical or legal know-how of the trade,” he says. “My aim is to not dissuade youngsters but make them more aware of maritime laws and procedures. And I want to persuade the government to formulate desired legislation to safeguard the interest of Indian seafarers who are being used as disposable materials by the sea mafia.” As for his son’s death, Zaidi has hired reputed lawyer Ram Jethmalani to fight his case and is confident that justice shall be his some day. “Nobody can get us our son back,” he says. “The best the Indian judiciary can do for us now is to save others from such pain, trauma and loss by formulating more stringent laws against such injustices.”

—Shilpi Shukla

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3. Sahara India Life Insurance Company Limited is the only name of the Insurance Company and 'Sahara Utkarsh Jeevan Bima' is only the name of the unit linked life insurance contract and does not in any way indicate the quality of the contract, its future prospects or returns.
4. Please know the associated risks and the applicable charges, from your Insurance agent or the Intermediary or policy document of the insurer.
5. The various funds offered under this contract are the names of the funds and do not in any way indicate the quality of these plans, their future prospects and returns. In this Policy, the Investment Risk in Investment Portfolio is borne by the Policy Holder.

Insurance is the subject matter of solicitation.

Sahara India Life Insurance Company Limited

Corporate Office : Sahara India Centre, 2, Kapoorthala Complex, Lucknow-226 024

Ph. : 0522-2337777, Fax : 0522-2332683, Toll-Free No. : 1800 180 9000, Website : www.saharalife.com

IRDA Registration No. : 127

SAHARA
INDIA
Life
Insurance
Chiranjivi Bhava