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Suresh Natarajan

A MATTER OF HONOUR

'Biting the hand that feeds you' is a strong phrase, perhaps even a touch melodramatic. Unfortunately, though, it is reality in millions of homes across India.

According to a 20-city survey conducted by HelpAge India on the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June, nearly 31 per cent of silvers in our country face abuse in some form, ranging from neglect and verbal affronts to physical abuse. The problem is pan-Indian: Bhopal ranks the worst with 77.12 per cent of silvers facing abuse; other significant numbers are Guwahati at 60.55 per cent; Lucknow at 52 per cent; Delhi at 29.82 per cent; Mumbai at 29.46 per cent and Chennai at 27.56 per cent.

The most unfortunate takeaway from the HelpAge report is that most of the elderly abuse stems from the very unit that should sustain and nourish us all: the family. In fact, 56 per cent of respondents blame their own sons for the abuse—both physical and mental—while 23 per cent of the elderly hold their daughters-in-law accountable. Even more disturbingly, only 45 per cent say they reported the abuse to others (primarily other family members); an overwhelming majority of those who didn't report it cite 'family honour' as the reason.

This misplaced sense of 'honour' serves to bind entire families, indeed communities, in a conspiracy of silence that renders social mechanisms like help lines, NGOs and the police impotent. We are all quick to rage at a system we believe is not doing enough for our silvers. But for any system to work, it must be enabled and empowered by the people it serves. Such a system will stay inactive unless silvers themselves begin to raise voice against such abuse.

This suffering in silence must end. It's time to let the skeletons out of the closet; if you face abuse, or know someone who does, don't stay silent. Learn your rights and become aware of your options. You must explore every avenue of redress.

You owe it to yourself to live a life of dignity, to enjoy freedom from fear, to feel a sense of pride. That's where—ultimately—true honour lies.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Cover illustration by **Jit Ray**

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column one

A 100 is not a cricket hand-me-down. It's serious business everywhere. It spells struggle, experience and wisdom. When crossed, it's a milestone that shines like a diamond. A centenarian has a treasure trove to recount and relive; likewise for organisations, enterprises and institutions. Hindi cinema, or Bollywood (as it's popularly called), is riding into its own centennial celebrations in funk fashion ranging from bikinis to gang-war couture. And as millions relive the past and present in their own unique way, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*—two issues away from its own 100th—rejoices a life lived Friday-to-Friday on the silver screen. Hindi cinema buffs who jumped hostel walls to catch the opening show, those who went that extra mile to look like their matinee idols, those who rendered the charisma on hand-painted posters and fans crazy about every song and dance… on the cover this month, they all tell a story called "100 Years and Running".

The exhilarating feeling of looking back in time is a unique experience. The unending reserve of tales and anecdotes can sometimes make time look meaningless. This month, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's grandson Ali Madeeh Hashmi—in a book on the legendary Urdu poet's life (incidentally, it's Faiz's centenary year as well)—looks back at a loving father and grandfather and an indulgent husband. Silver photographers Hari Mahidhar ("His Best Shot") and Sharifa Khatri ("Picture Perfect") focus on their journeys thus far. And lyricist Neeraj breathes new life into his verses and couplets for fans. But don't mistake them for living in the past. While Faiz continues to be contemporary in forever new translations, for Neeraj science is the biggest religion. A big hurray to 100!

—Meeta Bhatti

I am a 76 year-old retired executive from the board of directors of MMTC (a public-sector undertaking) in March 1994. I still actively work in my son's factory as a consultant despite serious ailments for the past 40 years. I am a diabetic and insulin dependent (three times daily) for the past 40 years. Strict vegetarian diet control, a regular walk and not drinking or smoking, all help me control my diabetes. I have been suffering from a heart ailment since 1987 and have undergone open-heart bypass surgeries twice—in 1987 and 1995; two angioplasties in December 1988 and May 2012; and nine angiography investigations. I am also suffering from renal failure for the past five years—my kidneys are damaged and work only about 25-30 per cent. I have undergone dialyses twice recently.

Despite all these serious health obstacles, I have been able to lead a comfortable, active life—no doubt with heavy medication and proper periodic monitoring by expert doctors. I travel abroad even today, at least once or twice a year. Normally, senior citizens in this age group succumb to their ailments and are bedridden or live life with a support system losing their will to fight and give in to circumstances. I thought it fit to write about myself so senior citizens suffering from different ailments, like me, can fight with courage, conviction and will to live a healthy, self-reliant life.

S Kumar, *New Delhi*

Congratulations to you all at *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for achieving the eight-year milestone; I am sure you will grow from strength to strength. Thank you for the anniversary special issue with Bachendri Pal on the cover. We feel privileged to associate with your foundation in our own small way. We wish you the best with many more such milestones in future.

Bipin M Vengsarkar
President – Sales & Marketing Nobel Hygiene Ltd

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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

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INSIDE
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ORBIT

▶ FACE OFF

Beautree

Tree pulp may well grow a whole new anti-ageing trend. As part of a college project, Canada-based teenager Janelle Tam recently proved that **cellulose—found in trees—is a potent antioxidant** that can neutralise a host of harmful free radicals. When she bound nano-crystalline cellulose (NCC) particles, which are flexible, durable and strong, to nano-particles buckminster fullerenes, which are already used in cosmetic and anti-ageing products, the result was proven to be even more powerful.

"I envision it as an ingredient that would be added to existing formulations, so it could be added to tablets or band-aids for a wound dressing or, of course, to cosmetic cream," Tam told newspaper *The Globe and Mail*.

US of Anti-Ageing!

It may come as little surprise that **anti-ageing is something of an obsession in the US.** Here are some highlights from a recent survey by website *www.healthcare-global.com:*

- 67 per cent of women have engaged, or currently engage in an anti-ageing regime, compared to 32 per cent of men.
- When asked about their key areas of concern, 59 per cent of people cited memory, 54 per cent eyesight, and 53 per cent weight management.
- 53 per cent of Americans who earn $ 150,000 per year or more are spending money on anti-ageing regimes that include gyms, weight loss programmes, and procedures like Botox and liposuction.
- 50 per cent of women named wrinkles as their top age-related concern, compared to 21 per cent of men.
- 10 per cent of women said they had paid or would pay for laser skin resurfacing, compared to 2 per cent of men; 8 per cent of women said they had received or would consider Botox injections, compared to 1 per cent of men; and 4 per cent of women said they would consider facelift surgery, compared to 1 per cent of men.

Space JUICE

This is—truly—far out! Researchers at Utah University in the US have discovered that **a drink developed by NASA to protect astronauts from radiation can double as a potent anti-ageing product.** In their trial, the drink, called AS10, reduced wrinkles, blemishes and sun damage after just four months. The drink contains cupuacu (a Brazilian fruit from the cacao family), acai, acerola, prickly pear, yumberry, grape, green tea, pomegranate and vegetables. "The skin is the first body tissue to be exposed to UV rays and we know it is sensitive to oxidative stress," study leader Aaron Barson tells *The Washington Post*. "Our study shows it greatly benefits from a reduction in this stress. The effects of oxidative stress on the skin can be quickly modified and the skin can heal itself by drinking AS10. There is really no reason we shouldn't get this concoction on the shelves across the US."

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Astro-ageing

As spaced out as it sounds, a cosmic connection with astronauts could change our lives. Scientists at the Department of Biomedical Sciences in the University of Teramo in Italy have discovered an **enzyme that ages astronauts—5-lipoxygenase plays a key role in cell death in space**. Thus, inhibiting it is expected to lessen the severity of immune problems caused by spaceflight. "The outcomes of this space research might be helpful to improve health in the elderly on Earth," writes study leader Mauro Maccarone in the online edition of *The FASEB Journal*. "In fact, space conditions cause problems that resemble the physiological process of ageing, and drugs able to reduce microgravity-induced immuno-depression might be effective therapeutics against loss of immune performance in ageing people. 5-lipoxygenase inhibitors, already used to curb human inflammatory diseases, may be such a group of compounds." To this, Gerald Weissmann, editor-in-chief of *The FASEB Journal*, adds, "As humanity moves into space and potentially to other planets or asteroids, it's clear that we need to know how to secure habitable conditions, and how to secure our health. Fortunately, as we learn to cope with low gravity environments, we also unlock secrets to longevity back home on Earth."

91% **OF PEOPLE OVER 65 IN BRITAIN BELIEVE THEY CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE ADVICE TO THE YOUNGER GENERATION—BUT RUE THE FACT THAT THEY DON'T GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THEIR WISDOM.**

Four forever

The word for the day is 'epigenesis'—the chemical alterations that occur in our genes without affecting the underlying DNA sequence, switching them on and off in response to various factors. Now, researchers from London's King's College have **identified four genes–epigenetically switched off in later life–that may have a direct bearing on how well we age**. Initially, the team identified the epigenetic changes in the DNA of 172 identical twins aged 32 to 80. However, analysis of a set of 44 younger twins, aged 22 to 61, revealed that alterations can also occur in young adults.

Of the 490 epigenetic changes in their genes, four specific genes appeared to impact the rate of healthy ageing and potential longevity. "Changes to these four genes were linked to differences in cholesterol levels and lung function," writes co-author Dr Jordana Bell in journal *PLoS Genetics*. "We think they will be useful as potential markers of ageing. Understanding which genes are involved in ageing and how they are regulated may be the key to generating useful anti-ageing drugs." However, as she emphasises, the genes identified by this study may only be the tip of the iceberg.

REGRET NOT

How you deal with missed opportunities could determine how happily you age. According to neuroscientists from the University Medical Centre in Hamburg, Germany, **disengagement from regret determines the ability to remain emotionally satisfied**. For the study, young adults, depressed older adults, and emotionally content older adults played a computer game where they had to open a line of boxes containing either a 'gain' (gold) or a 'loss' (the image of a devil). They could take a risk and continue to accumulate gold or play it safe and withdraw—if they opened a box containing the devil, they would lose all their gold. After each round, they were shown how much they could have won if they had dared to continue. In subsequent rounds of the game, the researchers observed that these missed opportunities made the young adults and depressed older adults take more risks while the behaviour of the emotionally content older adults did not change.

This was underlined by MRI scans, which revealed that the young adults and depressed older adults showed activity in regions of the brain linked to regret and emotion regulation while there was no such activity in emotionally content older adults. Physiological studies of heart rate and skin conductance also echoed this difference. "It seems to be essential for our emotional well-being to not look back in anger but to focus on the positive when we are older," lead author Steffanie Brassen writes in US journal *Science*. "These findings open up new perspectives not only for the treatment of depression during old age but for prevention strategies to maintain emotional health as we age. This is even more important as we know that late-life depression is associated with cognitive impairment, dementia, diabetes and vascular diseases."

TAKE THAT! IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY, TWO SISTERS, AGES 94 AND 93, FOUGHT OFF A 27 YEAR-OLD MAN WHO TRIED TO ROB THEM OF THEIR CAR AT KNIFEPOINT. WHILE THE 94 YEAR-OLD BATTERED THE MAN WITH HER HANDBAG, HER SISTER REPEATEDLY SCREAMED FOR HELP, ATTRACTING OTHERS TO THE SCENE. THE OFFENDER RAN AWAY BUT WAS FOUND AND TAKEN INTO CUSTODY. FOR THEIR PART, OUR SILVER HEROES ASKED THE POLICE TO KEEP THEIR NAMES PRIVATE.

Reel memories

When memories return to us unbidden, they have the power to open up closed doors. With that thought in mind, the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA) has developed **a project called Memory Bank that uses old home movies to trigger the past of silvers with dementia.** Developed in conjunction with healthcare professionals, and experts from Age UK and the British chapter of the Alzheimer's Society, the project involves getting silvers to watch home movies shot in the Yorkshire area from the 1940s to the 1970s. Each six-minute clip features a different aspect of everyday life that they would have experienced themselves, from summer holidays to sports days, school events to trips to the supermarket. Even though these films don't feature the viewers themselves, they serve to unlock their own distinct memories. "One user said that it was like peeling back the years; the memories are still there, they just need a trigger," Sue Howard, director of the YFA, tells the BBC. "Reminiscence therapy and memory work play an invaluable role in improving a sense of personal identity and well-being, and stimulating communication and sociability."

Body-brain link

NEGLECTING YOUR BODY COULD HURT YOUR BRAIN. According to a government-sponsored study conducted at Konkuk University, Korea, **silvers with a high body mass index (BMI) are more likely to suffer from lower cognitive function.** Their study of over 250 silvers from 2004 to 2009 revealed a direct association between visceral adiposity, particularly abdominal fat levels, and poor brain health, which sharply increased with age. "Our findings have important public health implications," writes study leader Dae Hyun Yoon, in journal *Age and Ageing*. "The prevention of obesity, particularly central obesity, might be important for the prevention of cognitive decline or dementia."

GENE PULL

If they can make mice live longer with just one treatment, can humans possibly follow suit? That's the premise that scientists at the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre are working on. For starters, they claim to have **extended the lifespan of adult laboratory mice by using gene therapy**—the one year-old mice lived longer by 24 per cent on average, while the figure stood at 13 per cent for two year-old mice. What's more, age-related ailments like osteoporosis and insulin resistance were delayed even as neuromuscular coordination improved. The gene therapy was based on telomerase, which repairs the tips of chromosomes, known as telomeres. "This study shows that it is possible to develop an anti-ageing gene therapy without increasing the incidence of cancer," writes team leader Maria Blasco in journal *EMBO Molecular Medicine*. "Aged organisms accumulate damage in their DNA owing to telomere shortening. This study finds that a gene therapy based on telomerase production can repair or delay this kind of damage."

Gladrags!

When it comes to the chic quotient, silver does not automatically add up to frumpy. Three years ago, New Yorker Ari Seth Cohen began to celebrate the style of older women through a blog that won him admirers like designers Jacobs and Vera Wang. Now, the blog has turned book– ***Advanced Style*** (Powerhouse Books) **features street style photographs and interviews of striking silvers spotted on the streets of New York and style advice** for readers.

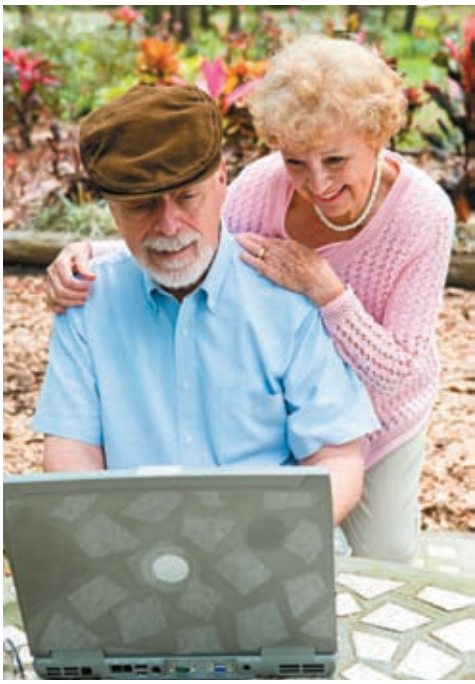
"My eyes have always been drawn to older people," the 28 year-old tells *The New York Times*. "From a style point of view, I find them more interesting because they are of an age where they don't have to impress anyone and can wear what they want. I was best friends with my grandmother while growing up, and was always inspired by her energy and wisdom. I wanted to show that creativity, style, and vitality advance with age, and hopefully help change people's ideas about getting older."

8.3 million (OR 14.85 PER CENT) SILVERS IN THE US FACE THE THREAT OF HUNGER, SAY RESEARCHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS. FROM 2001 TO 2010, THE INCIDENCE OF HUNGER AMONG SILVERS HAS RISEN BY 78 PER CENT.

Silvering Europe

Work longer. That's the message coming through loud and clear from the **European Commission's *2012 Ageing Report***. "Following the largest economic crisis in many decades, potential GDP growth has been revised downwards in 2010 and the surrounding years, compared with the baseline projection in the *2009 Ageing Report*," goes the report. "As a consequence, the fiscal impact of ageing is projected to be substantial in almost all member states, with effects becoming apparent already during the next decade. The current projection results indeed confirm, overall, that population ageing is posing a major challenge for public finances' sustainability." Here are some key findings of the report:

- With an increase of about 5 per cent, the total EU population will reach 526 million in 2040.
- The age group 15-64 will decrease from 67 per cent in 2010 to 56 per cent in 2060. People over 65 will rise from 17 per cent to 30 per cent of the population and people over 80 will rise from 5 per cent to 12 per cent.
- People over the age of 65 will almost become as numerous as the young population in 2060.
- The labour force will go up slightly until 2020 as more women are joining the workforce, but after that a decline of almost 12 per cent will be recorded by 2060, or 27.7 million less.
- As women are having less than two children on average and life expectancy goes up, the pensioner-to-worker ratio will rise from 39 per cent in 2010 to 71 per cent in 2060. The lowest rate—55 per cent—is projected in Denmark, the UK and Ireland.



Net gains

For the first time, in April 2012, **the percentage of American silvers using the Internet crossed the 50 per cent mark, a milestone in technology uptake** in a constituency traditionally dismissed as 'behind the times'. Here are some of the highlights of the latest edition of the Pew Research Centre's *Internet & American Life Project Report:*

- 53 per cent of adults over the age of 65 regularly use the Internet and email.
- Among them, 70 per cent use the internet on a typical day.
- 86 per cent of them use email, with 48 per cent doing so on a typical day.
- 34 per cent of them use social networking sites such as Facebook, and 18 per cent do so on a typical day.
- 69 per cent of adults over the age of 65 report that they have a mobile phone. Even among those over the age of 76, 56 per cent report owning a cell phone of some kind.

Choc-tech

To apply the word technology to one of the world's purely sensory pleasures may seem bizarre but that's exactly what engineered anti-ageing chocolate is all about. While researchers have been in agreement that the antioxidant flavanols found in cocoa carry powerful health benefits, they were concerned that achieving these benefits required a person to eat lots of chocolate—from 30 to even 100 g per day—with the attendant calorie tag. Now, British biotech company Lycotec is in the process of developing **'chocolate technology', called CocoLycosomeTM**, which protects cocoa flavanols in the digestive tract, increasing their absorption and efficacy about 10 to 20 times more. The benefits, according to a media release, are a quantifiable improvement in metabolic, vascular, skin and muscle parameters. The chocolate will be ready for the market after the ongoing final phase of trials, insists company founder Dr Ivan Petyaev. We have only one question: how good will it taste? Go to *www.lycotec.com* to learn more.

Call me

The past couple of months saw the launch of two phones designed uniquely for silvers:

● **Pal (TM) by US-based Clarity**, a division of Plantronics, is an easy-to-use phone with amplified sound, including boost and tone control buttons. Other features include a large, illuminated dial pad; large, vivid display; zoom-in viewing for phonebook; talking caller ID; talk-back number reader; vibrating and flashing ringer; and a one-touch emergency button. The best part: it is hearing-aid compatible. Cost: $ 99.99; *www.claritypal.com*

● **Swedish company Doro's PhoneEasy 740** is a smartphone for silvers that features a large keypad, loud volume and user-friendly interface. In addition, it offers a touch screen, a powerful camera, Internet browsing and a variety of apps to choose from, like any regular Android phone. USP: apps tailored to silvers like Doro Friends, which converts your Facebook account into a simplified version. Cost: $ 99; *www.doro.com*

It was a rush to the finish line as over 1,000 silvers participated enthusiastically in the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run held in association with the TCS World 10K on 27 May 2012 in Bengaluru. The participants showed an infectious camaraderie at the run as famous Kannada actor Sri Murali cheered them on. The run ended amidst much jubilation and a clarion call: 'Long Live Harmony'

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SMART SCHEME

Technology is going to work for silvers in Tamil Nadu. The Madurai district collector's office has begun distributing **biometric smart cards for pensioners** through Canara Bank in 22 villages. The smart cards will enable them to draw their pensions directly, rather than waiting for despatch from post offices. The system also gives them the option of drawing what they want and retaining the rest as savings rather than receiving the whole amount at one go. By the end of July, all 157 villages in the district are expected to be covered under the scheme. The good news is that the Kerala government has also promised to follow suit with smart cards for pensioners across the state.

Troubleshooters!

We speak often of the potential of silvers to make a difference to the lives of others—here's the perfect example. **As part of the Vadodara city police's 'Police Vadil' initiative, elders are being brought in to intervene in petty disputes and aid in their resolution.** In Kishanwadi police station, designated the pilot, 18 cases of petty disputes were solved within a month of the project's institution with the help of three volunteers: realtor Shankar Soni, 52; hosiery trader Kapila Tadvi, 50; and rickshaw driver Nazirbaig Mirza, 52. The trio continues to visit the police station every evening to review any old or new disputes that may crop up. "This is our way to contribute to society," Soni tells media.

"When we find time to go through the applications and meet the parties, we realise so many issues can be resolved by people among themselves without going through a legal process." The police is happy too. "Earlier, we spent a lot of time on such applications and petty issues," says Kishanwadi police inspector P L Chaudhary. "Now, our burden is reduced. And the disputants are happier because they find it easier to communicate with such mature people."

Senior space

Recognition that the senior living sector in India is at the cusp of an epic start has prompted the formation of the **Association of Senior Living India (ASLI).** An initiative of Mansoor Dalal, CMD, Oasis Senior Communes, with the support of Ankur Gupta, joint managing director, Ashiana Housing, and creator of Senior Homes under UTSAV, and Steven Vicks, director of Assisted Living Federation of America (ALFA) and CMD of Signature Senior Living LLC, ASLI

ASLI
Association of Senior Living India

is a national voluntary membership association for developers, service providers and corporate houses that operate in the senior living industry. The aim of the association is to safeguard the interests of silvers and act as an interface between them and the service providers operating in the senior living space in India. Going forward, ASLI will work towards becoming a voluntary accreditation body to senior living providers by helping draft and implement guidelines and development control rules relevant to the industry to create consistently high-quality senior living projects, as well as setting up training programmes for holistic care and arranging tie-ups with recognised institutes and universities offering programmes on human resources for aged care. Go to *www.asli.org.in* for more details.

Counsel Gen-Next. Use your expertise to advise the youth on their career path. Here's the perfect home-grown example: last month, the Chandigarh Senior Citizen Association organised a lecture for students of grade X and XII conducted by seven retired engineers. "I always wanted to join electrical engineering but I didn't know much about the field," says Amisha Pathania, a X grader who was in attendance. "Now, after the counselling session, I am sure about the field." Your turn now.

Then: Wine Cork
Now: Plant Tags

Monsoon is here—the perfect time to get those green thumbs into action. Make yourself a plant tag to keep a check on your garden.

Wipe an old wine cork to clean the wine stains around it. Using a sharp knife, slowly drill a hold in either side of the base. Do not go all the way, stop midway. Simply push a stick through the hole till it fits inside. Write on the cork with markers or sketch pens. You can use paint if the tag will be used in an open garden in the monsoons.

You can also colour the whole cork to brighten up ordinary green plants. Use the plant tag by digging it into mud.

FACTS

» There are about 2,200,000 hectares of cork forest worldwide; 32.4 per cent in Portugal, and 22.2 per cent in Spain. Annual production is about 300,000 tonne; 61.3 per cent from Portugal, 29.5 per cent from Spain, 5.5 per cent Italy.

» Cork is known to be so strong as a material that it has been used in the form of bricks to build a house in Portugal.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. SLIT THE CORK IN HALF AND USE AS A DOOR STOPPER. YOU CAN ADJUST THE LENGTH AND BREADTH ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF THE DOOR PANE. 2. DRILL A HOLE IN 7-8 CORKS AND STRING THEM STRAIGHT ON A THICK, STURDY STICK. USE THIS ROD OF CORKS TO STORE YOUR BANGLES.

Take the STEPS

According to a unique study conducted recently by Delhi-based Arthritis Foundation of India Trust, about 85 per cent of people aged 60 or above staying in apartments without the facility of elevators suffer from bone and joint ailments. Authored by the trust chairman Dr Sushil Sharma, the study analysed 1,300 residents in the Delhi-NCR region on floors other than ground or first and who had to take the stairs, which they avoided for fear of falls and pain. During the study tenure, about 600 people in Delhi and 400 in NCR were regularly questioned about their problems and ailments. To get accurate estimates, each patient was evaluated based on age, floor of the apartment building, occupation, medical history and type of joint or bone problems. They were also categorised on the basis of gender and financial and mental support. Other factors that played a role included their doctor's specialisation, types of drugs prescribed or consumed, and gels or creams used for pain relief. After intensive tracking and questioning, **the restrictive activity of people on higher floors was cited as the cause for joint problems.** Dr Seema Sharma from the trust adds, "Several respondents had consulted a doctor about their pains; it means there is awareness, but people are very scared to undergo surgery and prefer being on medicines or using ointments." The study also revealed that of all the problems, backache came first; arthritis coming in a close second.

IN ABOUT A MONTH, KARNATAKA PLANS TO LAUNCH A FREE MEDICAL CONSULTATION HELPLINE CALLED HEALTH INFORMATION HELP LINE (HIHL), WITH A PRESCRIPTION SENT FROM A DOCTOR ON SMS. THE NUMBER FOR THE HELP LINE WILL BE 104. STARTING WITH 100 CALLS, THE HELPLINE WILL SOON BE EXPANDED TO HANDLE 300 CALLS AT A TIME. CONDUCTED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE, IT HAS BEEN MODELLED ON A SIMILAR SUCCESSFUL SERVICE IN ANDHRA PRADESH.

Shake me!

A group of neurological researchers at Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago have redeveloped a study that underscored **the use of a 'vibrating chair' to relieve the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.** Jean-Martin Charcot, a celebrated 19th century neurologist, developed the chair to attain visible improvements in Parkinson's patients. However, before he could prove and publish his study, his demise halted the experiment. In Charcot's study, patients noted that long train journeys or carriage rides lessened the painful symptoms of the disease and the effect lasted for quite some time. In order to replicate the jerking movement felt in a train or carriage, Charcot designed a vibrating chair. Rush University restarted the research to either confirm or deny the original conclusions. For this new study, 23 patients with acute symptoms were selected; of these, a few were given the vibrating chair treatment, while the others were asked to sit on a normal chair. Both groups were made to hear nature sounds for 30 minutes every day for four weeks. The findings of this new study—published in the *Journal of Parkinson's Disease*—have confirmed Charcot's observation, but failed to prove the accurate effect of vibration on Parkinson's symptoms. Although patients listening to just nature sounds without the vibrating chair showed significant improvements, the group that underwent vibrating treatment showed remarkable changes in their sleeping patterns, fatigue, anxiety and depression.

INDIA HAS 3.7 MILLION PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA; THE NUMBERS WILL IN ALL PROBABILITY DOUBLE BY 2032, SAYS THE LATEST WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REPORT. ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE FOUR GLOBAL LEADERS WORKING ON THE REPORT, DR ENNAPADAM S KRISHNAMOORTHY, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF NEUROLOGICAL SCIENCES AT CHENNAI'S V H S HOSPITAL, THE TREND OF NUCLEAR FAMILIES WILL MAKE CARE-GIVING FOR DEMENTIA PATIENTS MORE DIFFICULT.

Hearty 100

Venue: Harmony Senior Citizens' Run at TCS World 10K, Bangalore

Photographs by **Prasad Durga**

Participating in the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run was a celebration of life for 104 year-old T Krishnaiah Shetty. "I am blessed to have my hair turn grey and my laughter etched in the grooves on my face," he says. "So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair turned silver." The secret of Shetty's longevity is his holistic view of life, spirituality and exuberant spirit. "In many ways, we are happier when we are old than when we were young because growing older gives a feeling of completeness," says the freedom fighter, adding that laughter is the best medicine.

His sister Subba Lakshmi Ammal, 102, also participated in the Run. Ammal, who is deeply rooted in traditional values, says her love and nurturing attitude has kept her happy and healthy. "Let your life go with the flow, be happy with what God has given and always give your best," says this simple yet wise 'young' lady. Ammal spends her time reading and listening to audio spiritual works like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Sharp as a tack, she never forgets a birthday and has a wicked sense of humour that keeps everyone in splits.

—Chayanika Sen

BIRTHDAYS

- Singer, dancer and former American Idol host **Paula Abdul** turned 50 on 19 June.

- **Lionel Brockman Richie** (left), the multifaceted American artist—he is a songwriter, singer, musician, actor and producer—turned 63 on 20 June.

- Oscar-winning actor **Meryl Streep**—she has won the iconic award twice and been nominated 16 times—turned 63 on 22 June.

- Exiled Tibetan spiritual leader **The Dalai Lama** turns 76 on 6 July.

- Beatles drummer **Ringo Starr** (born Richard Starkey) turns 71 on 7 July. As part of the iconic band, he called himself the "basic offbeat drummer with funny frills".

- Nobel Peace Prize-winning former president of South Africa **Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela** turns 93 on 18 July. He lives with his wife Graca Machel in Johannesburg.

MILESTONES

- Kannada cinema actor and journalist **Raavi Kondala Rao**, 80, received the Inturi Memorial Award on 15 June in Vijaywada. At the event, he spoke about how people once learnt the language from newspapers, and how cine magazines today have lost their way.

- The Union Minister of Science and Technology awarded the J C Bose fellowship to **R K Kohli**, head of the Botany Department of Punjab University, for his work on plants in our neighbourhood that cause allergic reactions in humans and disrupt the ecosystem. The fellowship is worth ₹ 1 million and will support Kohli in his research in the field.

OVERHEARD

"I am appalled that the term we use to talk about ageing is 'anti'. Ageing is as natural as a baby's softness and scent. Ageing is human evolution in its pure form. We are in the chain of our ancestors, like it or not. These are truths to be celebrated and in other countries they are. The term older and wiser is actually in play everywhere but here. In America, we celebrate youth and all youth's indiscretions and follies. We cling to the shiny new thing; we stare at altered photographs and wonder why we don't measure up. There are plenty of things to be anti about. Let's try to stop ageing as being one of them."

***—American actor Jamie Lee Curtis, 53, in the* Huffington Post**

IN PASSING

- Tamil cinema comedian **'Kaka' Radhakrishnan** passed away on 14 June in Chennai. It was after his role in film *Mangayarkkarasi* that he earned the title of *'kaka'* or crow. He was 86.

- The 'King of Ghazal' **Mehdi Hassan** died after a prolonged illness on 14 June in Karachi. He was 84.

- **Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, Saudi Arabia's heir apparent who was appointed crown prince by Saudi King Abdullah in October 2011, died in Geneva on 16 June after a prolonged illness. He was 78.

- **Kambel Chulai**, inventor of eco-friendly crematoriums and winner of a Harmony Silver Award in 2008, succumbed to a prolonged illness in Shillong on 17 June. He was 73.

- Eminent orthopaedic surgeon **Balu Sankaran** died after a brief illness on 20 June. Sankaran set up the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation in Kanpur in 1972 and was awarded the Padmashri for it. He was 85.

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*Qualitative research by Quantum, followed by a large scale quantitative study by IMRB, with 3600 people, across 10 cities.

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Association of Indian Magazines

Taking stock

MANJEET CHAUDHRY, 80, DELHI

"Each time my circumstances changed, I carved a new path for myself"

I am a religious person and life has strengthened my faith in God. I know He is guiding me and I will be successful as long as I put in my share of hard work and am willing to learn. This has allowed me to build a new professional path for myself, every time my circumstances changed.

I was born to wealth, married early and led a good life, never having to work for a living. Life took a turn when my husband passed away in the year 1970. I was 40 then. My sister Mohanjit inspired me to join her garment business in Paris. In the year 1973, I started working in her garment store. I worked during the day and learnt French in the evening. This gave me the confidence that I could do anything if I put my heart into it.

Once, a French gentleman approached me and suggested we start a handicraft business together. After visiting Jaipur, Orissa and Muradabad, I started an export enterprise in India. My married daughter Rita also joined me in this venture.

I learnt to drive so I could independently visit the government offices for necessary approvals. I was a very

Anju Mohan

shy person, though. I remember, once when a consignment was not getting cleared even though all the paperwork was complete, I was too shy to go and ask the officer concerned. My business partner said that if I couldn't speak, I should play with a doll instead. I resented it at the time, but it was another turning point for me. I managed to get the consignment passed without paying a bribe.

I remarried in 1978. After my husband's retirement, we moved to a farmhouse in Gurgaon. I decided to shut shop as commuting daily was not a feasible option. I soon adapted to my new life. I loved living on the farm and started overseeing the sowing of crops. Involved in all aspects of running the farm, I even went to the *mandi* to sell the produce.

At the same time, I started managing my family's real estate—giving out properties on rent, buying and selling them a little later at a profit. I kept records of all the transactions and filed income tax returns for the entire family. In 2001, at the age of 70, my husband and I sold off the farmhouse to move back to the city. Reluctant to sit idle, I wondered what I would do next. I contacted a stockbroker to buy shares for me. I normally buy blue-chip, infrastructure-related shares once a week. However, I hold these shares for at least a year so that I don't have to pay capital tax on the profit. I don't believe in day or short-term trading. While my husband finds solace in reading and socialising with friends, I like to work.

At the same time, I started investing in mutual funds. The relationship manager at Standard Chartered Bank visits me regularly and informs me about good mutual fund schemes. After analysing carefully the past three year's performance of the funds, I choose the funds I want to invest in. Not only do I manage my own portfolio, I also do it for my son, daughter-in-law, grandson and granddaughter. For insight, I discuss political and monetary situations with other guests at the India International Centre, where I go regularly. This helps me make an informed choice.

My day, therefore, starts with reading *The Economic Times*. Then I watch CNBC till about 2 pm. As long as one does not enter the share market to make short-term gains, it is actually possible to make regular profits. It is not a time-consuming occupation; though I like doing it for my family, I am not sure I can do it for anybody else.

—As told to Anju Mohan

SELLING **A FUTURE**

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am not very active but want to spend my time doing something useful. I'm thinking of working with direct selling companies such as Amway and Oriflame where I can earn money by selling their products. How do I go about it?

Being a consultant for direct selling companies is the best job for those who cannot be bound by time and need flexibility in their schedule. In fact, many people are earning a huge income by selling these products. Though marketing skills are not mandatory, a little basic research comes in handy. Owing to various categories of products available, it is necessary to understand the type of audience to target for different kinds of products. Another skill that can be useful is advertising. It is important to promote your products and let everybody know these products are available with you. You should target family, friends, friends of family and family of friends. Your outreach will increase your income. Reaching people across the country has become very easy with the help of social networking sites. Be tech-savvy, understand how these sites work and connect with people. Your income depends on how many people you target. It can vary anything from ₹ 2,500 to ₹ 100,000 per month. You can also target malls and parks where, generally, there are many people around. Be friendly and natural instead of putting up a façade as you want them to come back to you for products.

—Jashmi Waghela is a senior manager and consultant at Oriflame, Ahmedabad

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

A 'PROFITABLE' LIFE

Sharing joy has added meaning to Patel's life

If there's one lesson I've learnt from a very eventful life, it's that the desire to be bigger, better and wanting more can lead to ruin. And it hits you when you least expect it.

It all began at an early age, when I felt a constant and burning desire to excel. I was the first person in my village in Junagadh in Gujarat to graduate and that gave me just the boost I needed. I landed a job with a reputed fertiliser company and soon got married. God also blessed us with children, and life was picture perfect. Then, in the early 1990s, my friends introduced me to the stock market. Although I did not give up my job, I invested all my savings and even borrowed money to play the market. A life of luxury beckoned and I was very excited.

But that was not to be because the fateful Harshad Mehta scam in 1992 soon wiped me out, and the money I had left was not even enough to cover our monthly expenses. Life was nothing short of agony but I didn't give in to despair. Moreover, my wife stood by me like a rock and encouraged me to get my life back on track.

I somehow raised the money to buy a truck, and I leased it to a transport company. I used the money I earned from that to buy an auto-rickshaw and got my unemployed brother to ply it. My family took up contract farming and kept a cow in our backyard, so we didn't have to spend on milk. I also worked overtime and earned a little extra money from incentives. Finally, I repaid all my debts and we even began to save some money.

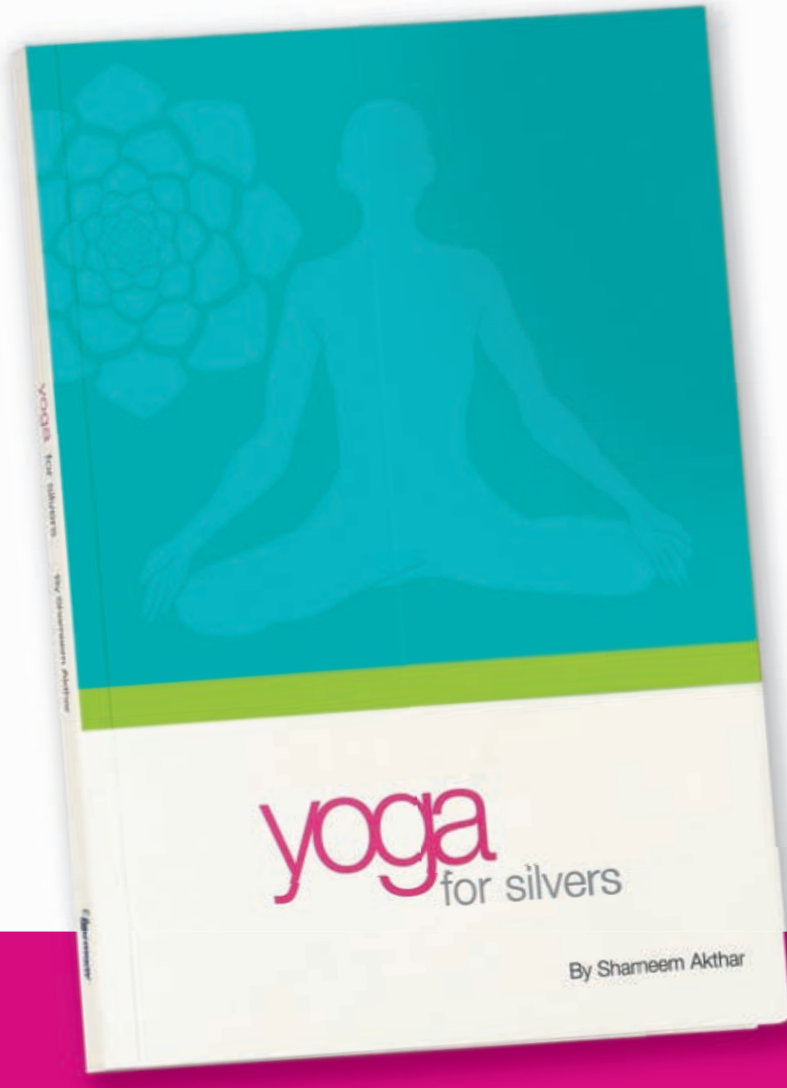
When our kids left home for higher studies, my wife and I began to feel the pangs of the empty nest syndrome. Although I was still working, I made use of my business acumen to convert small opportunities into profit.

But as the saying goes, 'What profits a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?' I began to feel that unless I did something that satisfied my soul, my life would have little meaning. So, after I retired in August 2011, my wife and I identified areas where we could be instruments of support. We began with a local orphanage, where we spend a lot of time and energy helping out.

I am now close to 62 and haven't lost a bit of my zest and enthusiasm. On the contrary, retirement has opened new doors for us to do things we couldn't when I was working. So we travel a little, try new activities and, in doing so, have even grown closer as a couple. On the health front, we practice yoga, cycle and take long walks.

Life in its sunset years couldn't have been any better, and it pains me to see some of my old friends fading into oblivion owing to inactivity. My own experience has taught me that entering our senior years is not about cruising to the end but beginning a new chapter.

—Raju Patel, Junagadh



yoga for silvers

Yoga shiromani and acharya **Shameem Akthar** urges the elderly to heal body, mind and soul with ancient yogic habits that are easy to learn. From the philosophy behind practices and poses to step-by-step instructions with illustrations, this is a comprehensive guide written especially for Silvers.

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EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Gut feeling: Eat right for healthy digestion

I am a 60 year-old working woman. I have noticed that I get tired easily and have difficulty in digesting heavy food. Please suggest an appropriate diet that will taste good but won't be too heavy on my system.

Health complaints that cause discomfort in older adults range from impaired immunity to digestive distress and nutritional deficiency. All these can be trailed to a key underlying factor: poor digestive health. Every system in the body changes with age. The defective functioning of digestive organs, poor or ineffective secretion of digestive enzymes, and a poor diet can further contribute to age-related digestive problems.

Everything we consume directly impacts our body–from the skin to the digestive system. Common complaints like low energy and digestive problems are a result of our dietary habits. Our body uses food as fuel. However, in the absence of antioxidant-rich food, our system slows down and we start feeling weak and tired. The possible causes of digestive complaints could be insufficient fibre intake, inadequate raw food intake, or heavy and greasy foods that your body is unable to digest.

The gut can be completely detoxified with the help of diet and herbs. Foods that heal are sprouts, almonds, beans, nuts, lemons, sesame seeds, green leafy vegetables, fruits, carrots, celery, cabbage, and garlic. Food allergies can also be managed by eliminating irritants from the diet. Foods rich in magnesium—almonds, cashews, sesame seeds and beans—help prevent allergies. Once toxins and chemicals are eliminated from the body, a feeling of well-being and vitality can be re-established.

Here are some simple and useful tips to ensure you're on the right track:

Increase water intake: Insufficient water intake is a primary cause of digestive complaints. Drink 8-10 glasses of water daily. Water is a great neutraliser. Start your morning with a glass of lukewarm water with a few drops of fresh lemon juice. This gives your digestive system a gentle jumpstart and contributes to better functioning of the digestive system.

Increase dietary fibre: Fibre increases the ability of the body to soften the stool, increase its bulk and shorten the time food normally takes to go through the tract. Good sources of dietary fibre are raw fruits and vegetables; dried fruits like dates, figs, and prunes; and beans and legumes. Ground flaxseeds are rich in fibre and Omega-3 fatty acids. These help fight chronic constipation, irritable bowels and inflammation. Sprinkle ground flaxseeds on juices, soups, salads, or any other meal of your choice.

Avoid excessive consumption of simple sugars and fats: Minimise the intake of sugar, refined foods and deep fried foods. High intake of sugar will increase blood fats, which will speed up the process of ageing.

Include aloe-vera to improve digestion: Aloe soothes inflammation in the digestive tract, coats the inflamed lining of the intestines and helps foods move safely through for elimination. It is antimicrobial and is effective in treating a great number of intestinal problems that hinder proper digestion. You could also take a pro-biotic supplement everyday for at least 10 days every month for three months; this will improve the gut flora and consequently improve digestion.

Practice mindful eating: Eat slowly, while savouring every single bite. Be aware of the quantity of food you are consuming. Eat till you are three-fourth full. Try to avoid overeating as this taxes the digestive system and usually results in improper digestion.

Eating simple meals that do not overstep the body's enzymatic limitations is of utmost importance. Food enzymes, like digestive enzymes, enable the body to digest food by breaking down various nutrients into smaller particles

Address food sensitivities and allergies: Food sensitivities are behind many digestive disorders. Avoid foods that produce symptoms like heartburn, gas, bloating, and cramping. Most common food allergens include milk proteins, wheat, soy, some shellfish, and peanuts. Eliminating foods to which you are intolerant or allergic can help provide a healing environment in the small intestine. Foods rich in carotenoids (a precursor to Vitamin A), Vitamin C and Vitamin E are important antioxidants that support intestinal healing. Include fresh vegetables; fruits; whole grains like barley, millet, brown rice; and easily digested proteins such as *mung dal* or lentil soup in your diet.

Use spices: Spices like cumin, fennel seeds, ginger, aniseeds, basil and bay leaf aid the digestion process. During a bout of indigestion, peppermint tea or ginger tea can be excellent remedies.

Manage stress: The intestine responds negatively to stress and leads to less effective absorption, as your body is unable to selectively take up the nutrients it needs. Chamomile tea in such situations has a calming effect on the body.

Be aware of food combinations: Good digestion depends on a number of factors. Eating simple meals that do not overstep the body's enzymatic limitations is of utmost importance. Food enzymes, like digestive enzymes, enable the body to digest food by breaking down various nutrients into smaller particles. They are derived from raw fruits and vegetables. You can increase the intake of raw vegetables by taking raw vegetable juices.

Mixing certain foods together also interferes with digestion: Eating starches and proteins together neutralises digestive juices. Consequently, your meal will take much longer to digest. Separating foods like bread, pasta, rice, potatoes from proteins, meat, eggs, fish, and pulses improves digestion and speeds up metabolism.

Here's a menu suggestion:

Breakfast
One small bowl of high fibre cereal like bran flakes, muesli, wheat porridge and 200 ml skimmed milk; or two steamed *idli* with green chutney; or bean sprouts with onions and tomatoes—with tea/coffee

Mid-morning
Mint and coriander juice with lemon and cumin powder

Lunch
One or two *jowar* chapattis, a bowl of mixed salad (cucumber, tomato); any green vegetable, a cup of *mung dal*, half a bowl of brown rice, a small glass of buttermilk

Evening
A fruit bowl (pear, pomegranate, papaya)

Dinner
One or two *jowar* chapattis, any vegetable (slightly cooked), spinach *raita*, a bowl of mixed salad

By following these simple tips and ensuring you are consuming the right foods and enjoying a balanced diet, you will significantly reduce the chance of experiencing digestive problems.

***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**

READERS ASK

I have heard that we should cut back on our trans-fats intake, but I am confused about what trans-fats are and what foods have them.

Trans-fats are rare in living nature, but can occur in the industrial food production process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid. Another name for trans-fats is partially hydrogenated oils. Trans-fats increase total cholesterol levels and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and reduce HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Trans-fats also appear to interfere with the body's usage of Omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for heart health. Always check the list of ingredients before you buy any product for hydrogenated vegetable oil, partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, vegetable shortening and margarine. Food sources for trans-fats include cakes, cookies, biscuits, confectionery products, fast food and restaurant foods, *farsan*, street food, spreads, packaged foods, toppings and dips. They can also come from your frying pan while deep frying foods at high temperature. Ordinary vegetable oil converts to trans-fats at high temperature. However, the rate of conversion is low at domestic level.

WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

Face lift: Anytime exercises to tone up your face

I am a retired woman with a thyroid problem. Though I exercise regularly to stay fit, I feel I am putting on a lot of weight on my face. Are there any exercises to keep facial muscles active and toned?

Exercises are meant to tone up the muscles, flex them, relax the body and increase blood circulation. Similarly, facial exercises help tone up facial muscles and keep them relaxed. If done properly for a few minutes every day, facial exercises can help reduce stiffness and dullness from the face and decrease wrinkles. Other benefits: better elasticity of the skin and preventing early ageing (in fact, better than many expensive cosmetics).

You can do these exercises any time during the day; unlike the general workout, you don't have to wait for your stomach to be empty or partially filled. You can also do them while taking a bath, reading the newspaper, driving or watching television.

Jaw line exercise
Place a hand on your neck, right under the jaw line. Now, slightly open the mouth, keeping it open throughout the duration of this exercise. Your hand will be able to feel the muscles working. Then, pull down the corners of your mouth, remembering to keep the mouth about halfway open. The move is subtle, but you can feel the muscles just under the jaw working. This will firm the jaw line and reduce the chance of sagging skin and jowls, or tone the area where you have already noticed sagging.

Jowl exercise
Sit or stand comfortably and look slightly upward towards the ceiling. Keep your lips together but don't press them closed. While keeping the head tilted upward, pretend you're chewing gum. This exercise, which was developed by Jack LaLanne, can be done while sitting at a desk. Maintain this position while you pretend to chew about 20 times. Do this several times during the day and you will notice the muscles just under the chin (sternohyoid) and the jaw muscles (masseter) toning and firming. This exercise is good for reducing unsightly looking jowls and will help reduce the problem of double chin.

Mouth exercise
The area around the mouth loses tone, causing sagging around the jowls. The corners of the mouth over time tend to droop downwards. The California Dental Specialty Group has created a facial exercise to help reinforce facial movement and muscle tone. This is a smiling exercise. It will firm and tone the area around the mouth and give you greater control over your smile.

This exercise should be done in front of a mirror. Start by relaxing the facial muscles. Slowly smile by stretching the corners of the mouth laterally. Keep the lips together and hold for 10 seconds. Next, smile wider exposing the edges of the teeth, hold for 10 seconds. Smile wider, increasing muscle tension and exposing the upper teeth. Make sure to keep the eye area relaxed. Hold for 10 seconds. Finally, smile as wide as possible using lateral tension and exposing all the upper teeth without showing the gums. You should feel a slight burning in the cheek muscles at this point. Hold for 10 seconds and relax.

The second half of this exercise uses the index fingers for gentle resistance. Smile wide and place the index fingers at the corners of the mouth. Start relaxing your smile, but keep resistance on the corners of the mouth and hold for 10 seconds. Try to close your mouth while keeping resistance, hold for 10 seconds and relax. Repeat this exercise five times.

Double chin lift
A double chin is one of the biggest signs of ageing. You can reduce the look of one or make it disappear altogether by performing a simple exercise. Lie on your back, then lift your head off the floor so your chin rests on your chest. Then, bring your head back to the floor. Repeat this several times, but don't overdo it. If you feel pain or too much tension in your neck, stop.

Cheek and chin tone-up
You can tighten your facial and neck skin by performing a smiling exercise in front of the mirror. Place your bottom lip firmly over your top lip and try to smile as wide as you can. Then, lift your head up so your chin is pointed upward, and hold. After staying in this position for about 10 seconds, relax your face. Repeat five times. You can do this exercise in the morning and at night for a toned neck and cheek muscles.

Firmer cheeks
Perform this exercise while sitting in a chair with your head back and your three main fingers gently on the centre of your cheeks. Raise your cheeks by smiling as hard as you can, while simultaneously applying gentle resistance in a downward motion with your fingers going against the smile. Relax and repeat 10 times.

Eye area
The delicate skin around the eyes can start to lose tone, causing drooping eyelids and sagging around the corners. To tighten the area, try this yoga exercise from Annelise Hagen, author of *The Yoga Face*, who teaches facial yoga in New York City.

Sit with your back straight and smile. Place your index fingers on the corners of the eyes where crow's feet form. Next, maintaining resistance with your fingers, pulse your lower lids against the resistance. Do this by contracting the muscle in the lower lid, trying to close the eyes. Move the lower lid up as far as possible without actually closing the eyes. Relax and repeat. Do not move any other facial muscle. Do three sets of 20 repetitions.

Crow's feet lift
You can avoid crow's feet by toning up the skin around the eyes. To do this, close your eyes and use your thumbs to move along the skin from the corner of the eye to the temple. Repeat several times. This will firm up the skin over time and prevent that familiar nest of wrinkles that sprout out from the eyes as you get older.

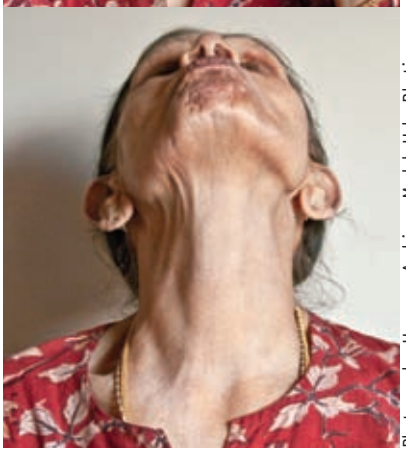
Eyelid lift
The eyelids are the first to show age on the face. However, you can keep them from sagging by simply using your index finger to press on the skin just below your eyebrow. While holding this skin, push upward and close your eye to stretch the eyelids. By doing this several times each day, you firm up the skin in the area and reduce sagging.

Lower-eyelid strengthener
The orbicularis oculi muscle is firmed up with this exercise. This area is just under the eyes, in the area that forms the hollows. Place your index fingers at the outer corners of your eyes and your middle fingers at the inner corners, and apply light pressure. Roll your eyes up, and squint with the lower eyes while lightly holding the corners of your eyes. Tighten and release for 10 repetitions. On the 10th tightening, hold for 40 seconds. This exercise is from Carole Maggio, the author of *Facercise*.

Temple dancer eyes
This yoga exercise works the oribicularis oculi, the muscles that circle the eyes. It helps prevent sagging skin and crow's feet and is a favourite eye muscle exercise of fitness expert Jack LaLanne. Sit with your back straight and your head facing forward. Look to your right, then ahead, then look left and back ahead. Do not move your head, and keep your face relaxed. Next, reverse the direction. Repeat about four times, then close your eyes and look down.

Brow-lifter
This exercise firms the brows and lifts the upper eyelids. It is ideal for eyelids that are starting to droop. Sit facing forward, with your spine erect. Widen your eyes as far as you can. Make sure not to wrinkle your brow, and focus on a point in the distance. Hold for five to 10 seconds. Repeat four to five times. You should feel a flush in your forehead from the circulation.

Face-lift exercise
The face-lift exercise is recommended by the California Dental Specialty Group to keep facial muscles toned. One reason muscles sag is because of lack of use. This exercise works the quadratus labli (a sheet of muscle from the side of the nose to the upper lip), strengthening and firming them. Open your mouth slightly, flare your nostrils, and wrinkle your nose while drawing your upper lip as high as you can. Relax. Next, place your index fingers on the top part of your cheeks, just under your eyes. Open your mouth slightly, curl your upper lip, hold for 10 seconds, then relax.



Photographs: Harmony Archives; Model: Usha Bhatia

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The gift of quiescence: Achieve inner stillness with yoga

People often mistake sitting still as a good way to create inner stillness and, through that, inner silence. In a manner of speaking, that may be true. But often, even when sitting still, the mind's cyclic ramblings never end: a chaotic mind is a biological inevitability. When the mind runs off into loops it will choose patterns it is used to, which usually include anxiety, hyperactivity, planning, seeking control, etc. When you make meditation part of your yoga practice, you wake up to this aspect of the mind's struggle to run off from enslaving patterns.

Often, because the patterns are so entrenched, people even avoid meditation because they hate being so fully exposed to these loops of fear or anger or other negative emotions. As patterns subsist on negative emotions, most people hate doing yoga meditatively or meditating before or after a practice. But to create calmness inside and inner silence that is healing, it is important to force this aspect into your practice. In pure yoga, the sitting still means not just sitting in a posture but a mental 'seatedness', quiescence inside. This is exciting, because once you train yourself in that fashion, you can remain mentally calm and centred even if you are physically active.

To do this, it is important to hold your poses for long. You can choose just a few poses, around 10 or a dozen, and take over a hour to cover them, holding each for two or three minutes. This requires tremendous physical stamina. But it creates that elusive inner silence. It is important to include calming breathing exercises (*pranayama*) like alternative nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) and humming bee (*brahmari*). Equally important is the need to start the practice with a short meditation and wind it up with a longer one. This renders a structure that creates that special quiescence. All poses that challenge you physically and you learn to hold for long will lead you to this special aspect of yoga. However this needs a dedicated daily practice as it will take you a few weeks or even months to acquire this stamina.

Your warm-ups, like sun salutation (*surya namaskar*), can be fast or slow. But the other poses must be held for long, particularly the grounding and calming ones like shoulder pose (*sarvangasana*), seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*) and standing forward stretch (*uttanasana*). Leg raises are powerfully meditative too and extremely challenging physically. A large component of your practice must involve leg raises of different variations if you seek to create a meditative temper that is healing.

YOGIC MOVES

Plank pose, advanced variation (*setuasana*)

Lie on your right side. Bend your arm at the right elbow, placing elbow on ground. Ensure the body is in a straight line. Inhale. Pushing with the elbow, and the edge of your right foot, lift hips off the ground as shown. Then, move into the second stage of the practice. With an exhalation, lift the left leg slightly high, as shown, to hold for a few seconds. The left hand is at the waist. Breathe normally throughout. Inhale and exhale to lower your hips back to the ground. Do a few times initially, holding only for a short time. Later, you can extend the duration in the final pose and hold it just once. Also, you can move into the second stage slowly, after gaining expertise in the first stage through regular practice. Lie on your back. Repeat for the opposite side. Avoid if you have shoulder problems.

Model: *Anil Achrekar, Harmony Interactive Centre*
Photographer: *Haresh Patel*

***Shameem Akthar is a Mumbai-based yoga* acharya**
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SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET INA AND BHOLANATH TALPADE, BENGALURU

An engaging series about life, love and food that unites hearts

Mr Bholanath Talpade, 77, showed us around the house filled with craftwork made by his wife Ina Talpade, 75—patchwork on bedspreads, embroidered sheets and saris, a magazine in which her recipes have been featured, and a book with all her published stories. We were there to meet both of them, but somehow each reply of theirs brought her into focus.

When we asked them what each of them liked about the other or one change they would like to see in their spouse, they both seemed amused. "Does one ever think of such things?" his expression asked. They seemed to have lived their lives taking many such things for granted. Getting along together and nurturing each other seemed like the very matrix of their existence.

As we spoke to them, trying to find loopholes in their seemingly peaceful coexistence, we found our doubts getting quelled; we realised that harmony and affinity still exist in good measure.

Curious, we researched their community, 'Pathare Prabhu', and came to know that it is known for its broad outlook and social reforms such as education for women and widow remarriage. Sitting in their sprawling bungalow in Bengaluru, we talked about marital expectations, changing times, notions of equality and understanding, and a lot more. Here are some excerpts of our conversation with them.

Tell us about your roots.

Bholanath Talpade: We are Maharashtrians and belong to the Pathare Prabhu community. Both of us are from Mumbai; born and brought up there. After retirement, we moved cities as our son and daughter-in-law, Vivek and Trupti, live in Bengaluru.

Ina Talpade: We are enjoying our life here as we have found some good friends.

What were your fields of work?

She: He used to work in State Bank of India, Mumbai. I worked at the 'welfare centre' (HRD) in Air India.

He: After retirement, she taught at various workshops in schools during summer vacations.

Ina*ji*, we have heard that you always keep busy. Do you have many hobbies?

She: Oh yes, stitching, knitting, crochet and such other craftwork; I enjoy all these things. I have also been a writer and dramatist.

He: Her short stories have been published in *Lalit Sahitya*, a Marathi magazine. The first page carries a full page write-up about her. Here is a lovely letter she received from an unknown admirer about her stories.

We can see how encouraging you are of all she does. So, was yours a love marriage?

He: No, it was an arranged marriage. But we knew each other from childhood. You must understand that ours is a very small and close-knit community. Our parents were friends and that is how we knew each other well. We were married in 1965.

Was your family prepared for a working woman as daughter-in-law?

She: Of course. In fact, all the women in their family used to work except my mother-in-law. We stayed in a joint family for 25 years.

He: My mother was a very encouraging person. I lost my father at the age of 10, but my mother managed very efficiently and never allowed us to worry.

That is indeed admirable. Tell us what you liked in each other when you were married.

[Both smile indulgently.]

He: One never thought of these things. We just got along naturally.

She: To tell you the truth, I never really thought about marriage. I was more interested in all the things I wanted to do.

He: She was very interested in dramatics and I was happy to see her pursuing it.

She: Life was always busy—housework, office work, and then my hobbies and going for rehearsals. In the midst of all these activities, I also took some time to learn Japanese craft, attended cooking classes and did a nursing course.

He: In fact, she has helped many women and empowered them economically.

Who was the inspiration behind your interests?

She: My parents, especially my father, encouraged me a lot. He was employed as the treasurer in RBI. As I was attached to the welfare office, I taught employees' wives simple things like stitching the borders of cloth napkins, which they would pack neatly and supply to the offices of Air India. This helped them earn some money. Before retiring, I also set up a system for them to make and supply chapattis to office canteens.

He: She has also done voluntary work with SOSWA (Society for Service to Voluntary Agencies).

She: Yes, that was good work. They train volunteers to work in NGOs

"When we married, all of us at home managed both office work and housework, and managed the kitchen quite easily as well"

Haresh Patel

and schools for underprivileged and handicapped children.

Do you share responsibilities in housework?

He: Yes, of course. I wake up at 6 am, boil the milk and prepare the tea decoction. I don't cook but I help in keeping the house clean.

Spotless and beautiful, you live in a lovely house. What makes you so broad-minded?

He: My job allowed me to meet people from different walks of life. This always helps broaden one's outlook. If a man wants a woman to work outside the house, all the more reason he should help with the housework.

She: When we visited my brother who lives overseas, the deal was that if we women did the cooking, the men did the cleaning.

What would be your advice to youngsters about marriage and commitment?

She: The first criterion is understanding. Make an effort to understand each other, and never try to dominate.

He: There should be equality; by this I mean one must not compare. Is he more educated than me, is she earning more than me? One should not think along these lines.

She: Married couples should pool in their finances in the running of their homes and lives. It should not matter whose earning it is.

Thank you for bringing this point to focus. You are right—the notion of 'me' and 'mine' needs to be changed to 'ours'. In that sense, life was surely simpler and humbler earlier.

She: When we married, all of us at home managed both office work and housework, and managed the kitchen quite easily as well.

"Married couples should pool in their finances in the running of their homes. It should not matter whose earning it is"

Do you think times have changed with regard to cooking at home? What are your favourite foods?

She: At home, we prefer Maharashtrian food, but he is not at all fussy.

He: I have no preferences really. She enjoys cooking and prepares delicious food. In fact, talking of changing times, I believe the prevalence of fast food has reduced the younger generation's interest in cooking. Both of us also enjoy eating out occasionally. And I must tell you about how she used to prepare chapattis for the entire family when we were married; she did it untiringly and perfectly. In fact, I think you must feature the *khakra* recipe made in our homes—a childhood favourite for all of us.

FROM TALPADES' KITCHEN

Maharashtrian Khakra

Khakra or crisp chapattis are popular in Gujarat, but as Bholanath Talpade explains, their forefathers came from Gujarat, so their cuisine had some similarity with Gujarati cuisine. However, this *khakra* is a Maharashtrian recipe from the Pathare Prabhu community. He says this was their staple food and his mother used to prepare it every day.

Ingredients

- Wheat flour: 2 cups
- Rice flour: 1 cup
- Oil: ½ cup
- Ghee for roasting the *khakra*
- Salt to taste

Method

Mix a little salt into wheat flour in a plate with rimmed edges. Traditionally, a plate with broad rimmed edges known as *paraat* is used to knead dough. Heap the flour in the centre and make a well in the middle. Pour oil in this well and gently mix into the flour. Mix thoroughly and patiently. Knead it into soft dough. Divide into eight equal portions and roll into smooth balls. Take the first ball, flatten it gently and roll using a wooden board and rolling pin. Roll into a circle of five-inch diameter. Apply 1 tsp ghee on top evenly using a spoon. Sprinkle 1 tsp rice flour over it and fold into half. Again, apply ½ tsp ghee and sprinkle ½ tsp rice flour. Fold into half. This will now look like a triangle. Roll it again, using light and even pressure, into a thin circular chapatti of approximately 12-inch diameter.

As you roll, keep on patting rice flour on both sides to prevent it from sticking to the board. Gently and deftly, transfer the rolled chapatti on to a preheated skillet (*tava*). The entire cooking must now be done on low flame. Within a few seconds, when the colour begins to change slightly, flip over. After half a minute, smear a little ghee and flip again. Using a spatula, begin to gently press down, all the while allowing the chapatti to move in circular fashion so that it does not stick to the skillet. Apply ghee, flip over and repeat. The *khakra* will become evenly brown and crisp. It will take about three minutes. Fold into a triangle, remove from the skillet and allow it to cool. Enjoy with a side dish, *dal*, pickle or even *aam ras* in summers. You can also store these in an airtight container for up to a fortnight.

***Jigyasa and Pratibha are authors and publishers of two award winning books* Cooking at Home with Pedatha *and* Sukham Ayu. *They specialise in documenting culinary traditions. Visit them at* www.pritya.com**

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We make movies and, reciprocally, they make us. The stories, the songs, the dialogues and the sheer spectacle that bring a movie alive on screen are not merely avenues of escapism; instead, they reroute us to our own innermost fantasies and lost dreams. In the two hours that we stay glued to the silver screen, we seek as much as we let go. As Hindi cinema celebrates its centenary this year, **Rajashree Balaram** goes back in time with silvers to see how movies wrought magic and madness in their lives.

Illustrated by **Jit Ray**

100 years... and running!

We only know him as Irfan*bhai* from Jodhpur. And though we have never met the man, we know that he has Meena Kumari written all over his heart. For many years now, every few months, Irfan*bhai* commissions a hand-painted poster of Meena Kumari from Mumbai, arranging the whole transaction through a middleman based in the city. "Three months ago, he asked for a poster of Meena Kumari in a *Pakeezah* get-up," says S Rehman, the last of the once-flourishing tribe of Bollywood billboard painters. "I have made several posters for him and sent it through his middleman. I have never had a chance to meet Irfan*bhai,* but I am always surprised by his devotion towards Meena Kumari." Irfan*bhai* is not an exceptional case of a fan gone 'mad'. There was a septuagenarian from a small town who purportedly had a framed picture of Madhubala lying next to his bed as he battled with a life-threatening ailment. And there are perfectly sane men and women, otherwise leading normal mundane lives, queuing up outside movie halls for 24 hours before the release of any Rajinikanth movie.

A fan's maniacal bias can never be leashed by logic. However, there has been a steady waning in the shroud of unimpeachability that people endowed cine stars with earlier. Although the content on our screens may not have changed much in the past 100 years—romance, songs, melodrama, good-versus-evil—the audience viewing the fare has had a perceptible mental makeover. Movies in the past were populated by people whose actions adhered to our socio-cultural ideals. The hero's valour was almost always balanced by the heroine's chastity and decorum. Invariably, the characters seemed to borrow their behaviour from the godly protagonists, Ram and Sita, of our great epics—think *Dil Ek Mandir, Mother India, Sangam*. Movies then showed us what we were *expected* to be, and now increasingly so, hold up a mirror to who we really are. It's no longer sacrilegious if the hero places his personal motives above humanitarian concerns, or if the heroine pursues the voice of her own desire instead of the one drilled into her by her traditional upbringing. Take a look at *Delhi Belly, Murder, Gangs of Wasseypur, Metro*; empathy and acceptance have gained currency like never before.

As writer Maya Jayapal points out, "Movies have been divested of their larger-than-life aura. Earlier, watching movies was an event. As a child, I remember getting all dressed up to go to the theatres. I used to wear my long silk *pavadai* [skirt] and blouse, my mother would don her best sari, and my father would wear his formal jacket; when I look back, all of this seems ridiculous." A trenchant columnist known for her refreshing observations on society and human behaviour, Jayapal admits being "a shameless fan of filmy gossip magazines". "I have always enjoyed reading them and, till recently, my 89 year-old dad and I would never tire of speculating who was discreetly dating whom!" The Bengaluru-based silver remembers watching many movies as an adolescent in small towns like Salem in Tamil Nadu, where her father was posted as a police officer. "The theatres there had separate elevated enclosures for women that were shrouded in heavy velvet drapes, much like the *zenana* cubicles of the Mughal court."

All old theatres in India, in fact, offer an insightful study into colonial architecture. Sadly many have shut down bowing to ruin and neglect, forever taking with them the haughty grandeur that once spoke of the stiff British upper lip. A few surviving antique theatres are fortunate enough to be propped up by a fresh lease of life. Mumbai's Metro Theatre, built in 1938 by Hollywood studio Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, is today a heritage building, rechristened as Metro Big Cinemas after its takeover by the Adlabs Cinemas endeavour. Though the outer Art Deco shell and much of its interior opulence—marble flooring, chandeliers, heavy drapery and ornamental murals—remain intact, it has made room for a swanky multiplex with six screens, complete with a special lounge and reclining seats. Gone are the ushers who once wore suits;

Hyderabad-based Shyamola Khanna remembers her struggle to keep the 'Sadhana cut' with bouffant and long plait. "We didn't have the option to buy clothes off the rack; we spent long hours with the *darzi* to make him understand the desired snug fit of our shirtwaists."

now they are replaced by T-shirt-clad jaunty young boys far removed from any of the formal solemnity befitting the colonial era.

The 132 year-old Capitol Cinema, in Mumbai's eternally busy Fort area, was one of the favourite haunts of the British elite who used to gingerly step off their horse-drawn carriages in anticipation for an evening show of charming British dramas such as *The Flag Lieutanant*. Even the 103 year-old Royal Opera House in Mumbai, which is now being restored by the Maharashtra government after three decades of humiliating dilapidation, basks in its luminous past. Inaugurated by King George V, it had cherubs on its pinnacle, large crystal chandeliers in its foyer and a specially designed frontage for horse-driven carriages. Much has changed indeed, including the terms used to categorise seating—Orchestra, Dress Circle, First Class—that have crumbled away like the paint on the walls of these theatres.

Similarly, although premiere nights at movie halls are covered with rapacious vigour by the media today, the bombastic—yet highly riveting—drama with which they unfolded earlier is conspicuously absent. During the premiere of *Mughal-e-Azam* in 1960 at the Maratha Mandir Theatre in Mumbai Central, Dilip Kumar rode in with dashing nonchalance on a horse, even as a large gathering of elephants greeted the audience at the venue! Not far behind in the scale of theatrics is the Edward Theatre at Dhobi Talao, opened in 1914 and named after King Edward. In 1974, after the release of the feminist mythological drama, *Jai Santoshi Maa*, many women were often seen in the theatre, carrying a *thali* and *diya* to offer *puja* to the screen and sharing *prasad* with the audience. Today Edward barely manages to keep its pulse running by screening world cinema gems of Jean Luc Godard—the audience for which is at a dismal low in the city.

More heart-wrenching is the story of Mumbai's Alfred Talkies, which started out as Rippon Theatre in 1880. A century ago, the theatre staged spectacular plays that had elephants and lions prowling on stage, much to the delight of its enchanted audience of British officers and their arm candies. Today, although its architecture remains true to its aristocratic past, the theatre has resorted to soft-porn movies to keep its devoted following of late evening migrant workers hooked.

In many ways, the baroque architecture and aura of old movie halls were much inspired by royal courts. Consequently, the movie-watching experience couldn't have remained a mere casual thrill in such privileged spaces. Mumbai-based Khadija Khatri, 67, remembers movies as exclusive experiences that could only be enjoyed in large groups, mostly family members and friends. "Our elders decided if a movie was fit to be watched by the younger members of the family," she says. "Even a hero and heroine embracing lovingly in the rains on screen a little too long was a criterion for prohibition."

"It does good things to your ego, watching your favourite hero wearing the same uniform as you," says Colonel Nirmal Mahajan, who as a young Army officer couldn't grow his locks as long as Rajesh Khanna so compensated for it by wearing kurta over pants after duty hours

Khatri, who comes from a conservative Muslim family from Mumbai's old Bhendi Bazaar area, recalls the buzz around movie halls such as Roxy, Bombay Talkies, and Taj Cinema on Friday evenings. She tells us of the noisy crowds that gathered around the nearby Metro Theatre, where almost all movies had their premiere nights. "We were not allowed to step out late in the evening, but one could hear all about it from our male cousins and uncles." For Khatri, the hushed excitement of lazy afternoons when she and her cousins gathered around the radio to catch their favourite songs are more cherished. "We used to lap up every word uttered by Ameen Sayani," she says. "It was a sweet world where we were happy with simple pleasures."

She recollects secretly writing down songs, and simultaneously jotting down her own inspired *shaayri* (poems) in the same journal. "Everything was carefully tucked away from the watchful gaze of our parents as film songs were considered nothing short of blasphemy in Muslim circles back then." However, the men and women who towered on the screens and people's imagination could not be so easily ignored. The ruling stars whom she discreetly checked out in her mother's Urdu film magazine, *Shama* ("kept under lock and key"), stepped out of those pages one day. "There was a natural calamity that had occurred in some part of the country when I was an adolescent," she recalls. "It was common for film stars to come out on the streets in their open cars back then and urge citizens to donate generously for a cause. I will never forget the chaos that broke out on the streets of Bhendi Bazaar when Raj Kapoor and Nargis arrived in their gleaming Impalas. They waved at everyone. And everyone who loved and hated watching the movies was elbowing through the crowd in balconies and rooftops to wave back at the screen gods."

In contrast, today's stars have—as part of sharp PR stratagem—breached the divide to entrench their presence in their audience's social space. We know where Priyanka Chopra is shopping right now for her Jimmy Choo shoes, if we just care to check Twitter or Facebook. The competition for eyeballs, even off-screen, is not without reason. The blitz of film promotion and publicity before a film's release, which greets us at malls and during reality TV shows, is blurring the distinctive identities of actors in our minds. We are seeing too much of them too often to really discern the characteristic difference in their persona and voice anymore. Where actors preferred to stay in their gilded towers earlier, today the tinsel tribe is not exactly averse to inviting us for a tantalising glimpse into their daily proceedings. "I feel actresses back then, even if they were largely uneducated, had a sophisticated mystique to them," says Jayapal. "Actresses now are amazingly articulate and media-savvy, but also very accessible and far too visible on my daily radar. I may like them but I am not in awe of any of them."

In delightful irony, the *tawaiyuf* (courtesan)—the on-screen antithesis of the chaste heroine—who today seems

LOST, AND FOUND

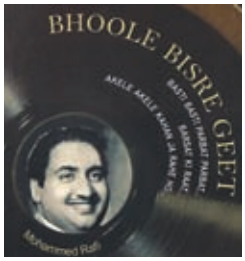
Old songs are still as good as gold, and always will be—as long as groups like Bhoole Bisre Geet are humming them with collective zeal. BBG, as the group is known among members, is an online group of 40,000 men and women who share a passion for old Hindi songs from the 1940s, '50s, '60s and '70s. Started by B K Birla, an ardent Hindi film buff, and high-flying corporate man, BBG is only two years old.
Members don't just discuss and argue over songs on Facebook (*www.facebook.com/BhooleBisreGeet*), they often meet up

like a mythical creature was part of people's immediate world back then. "It was not uncommon for wealthy families in the neighbourhood to invite a *tawaiyuf* over for a performance," says Khatri. "The song-and-dance routine would often last till late in the evening. As a 10 year-old, I used to sit near the window and listen to the songs filtering in from the distance and write them down in my book." In a melodramatic gesture, not very different from the stoic heroines of that era, Khatri tore her beloved book of songs before she got married. "It was frowned upon...the patriarchy didn't allow women such pleasures," she tells us with the touching softness of one whose greatest strength is a dignified acceptance of circumstance. Ironically, her marriage to an ardent film buff made sure things changed, and yet remained the same. "My husband took me out to the movies every Friday, and cheerfully supported me when I wanted to do my hair up or wear a tightly wound sari like Mumtaz, but strictly disapproved of me singing any film songs in a family gathering especially with male members present."

Though it appears as if even mild female impudence was not forgiven easily in those days, mischief and madness are prized traits not easily surrendered by youth. Jayapal still remembers how she used to jump over the compound wall of her hostel in Bengaluru's Mount Carmel College after coming back from an evening show. "Very often, we girls would curse the nuns, as we ended up missing the last scene of the movie to run all the way back from the theatre to our hostel to slip in before the curfew hour of 6.30 pm," she says with a gleeful chuckle. Patriarchal authority followed women all the way to the theatre right up to the screen. Women were rarely ever allowed to watch late evening shows, much like the '*izzatdaar gharano ki ladki*' on screen. Just as the demure Mala Sinha or Saira Banu apologised fervently to their onscreen fathers for any show of defiance against curfew hours, the women who watched them in the theatres too kept an anxious eye on their wrist watches as the evening show came to an end. Unless, of course when they were escorted by the mandatory chaperone: the protective brother or male cousin.

Thankfully enough, if movies stuck to traditional gender bias, they also carried a promise of romance. "Some days when we could manage a late afternoon show, we would have an ice-cream from the nearby soda fountain and walk back along one side of the pavement of Brigade Road back to our hostel and, at the very same hour, boys from Central College swaggered on their way back from the movies to their hostel on the other side," says Jayapal, her laughter carrying a trace of faded blush. Covert glances were exchanged and often dismissed by the women with a haughty toss of their heads. "Sometime back, I met this elderly man at a party who walked up to me and told me he knew me from somewhere," reminisces

in various cities too. So far, BBG has held gatherings in Ghaziabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad, and have gatherings in the UK and the US in the pipeline. There are no membership criteria—all you need is a heart full of songs. Besides getting together and spending long evenings singing old numbers, BBG encourages members to shed their stage fright. Recently, many pooled in money as a contribution to veteran playback singer Mubarak Begum of *Hamari yaad aayegi* fame, who is struggling to make ends meet these days. If you have a song to sing, discuss, or simply know more about....sign up and become a member. Here is one place where the old stays forever new. Write to: *bkbirla@bhoolebisre-geet.in*



the septuagenarian. "As we chatted and delved further back into our memories, we realised that he was one of those 'boys' who had paraded with his gang up and down Brigade Road after the movies!"

Most silvers agree that going for a date to the movies was mostly unheard of in those days. As 66 year-old Ashok Lal says, "When I got engaged and asked my wife out for a movie, I also had to take my sisters-in-law and other cousins along with me." Delhi-based Lal looks back at the movies as a leisurely family experience. "We could never imagine booking just two tickets for ourselves; the whole brood of cousins, nephews, uncles and aunts was a stipulated must. Our regular haunt was the Regal Theatre in Connaught Place, where we would take the 'family box', put our feet up, watch the movies and chat among ourselves without disturbing the others." The camaraderie usually swelled during the intervals that were much longer back then. "A standard Film Division documentary was mandatory viewing during the intervals," adds Lal. The messages in these grainy short films mostly revolved around social responsibility and reform—dowry, secularism, hygiene, etc. Today there is mildly amused murmur of surprise among the audience on the rare occasion when a social documentary film springs up (mostly before the movie begins). The social sermons have moved away to other platforms that were missing earlier, primarily the Internet.

Other key elements associated with an evening at the movies have also undergone a change. "Unlike the smorgasbord of 'munch' options available outside theatre screens today, we made a beeline for the coffee and biscuits of the Standard Coffee House below," says Ashok Lal, who remembers watching Raj Kapoor's *Sangam* with 24 other family members and family friends. "After the movie, I was in awe of Rajendra Kumar. I copied his hairstyle with the centre part, which my father hated and one I was told to immediately rectify!" A point worth noting was the homogeneity of identities on screen. All heroes, villains and character actors had the same swept-back hairstyle and pencil-thin moustaches, while all heroines, their friends and maids held on faithfully to their bouffants and long plaits. Actors then did not clamour for a unique 'look'—or for that matter a six-pack midriff—as they do now. Style trends didn't change easily. They much preferred to have a signature drawl or a tremulous twitch of their lips to mark their identity. Stars today are restless with the joy of being trendsetters, an effort that is also necessary to set them apart in their overcrowded pantheon.

Interestingly, half a century ago, movie stars were our greatest fashion icons. Today, fashion has been increasingly democratised. According to filmmaker and writer, Paromita Vohra, "Earlier, only the elite had access to the images, trends and resources that went into creating new

VINTAGE BY CHOICE

If you want to own a piece of Bollywood history, young entrepreneur Hinesh Jethwani's online store *www.bollywood-filmposter.com* is a good place to shop. A paradise of sorts for passionate poster collectors and antique lovers, the portal offers rare vintage Bollywood movie posters, synopsis booklets, movie song booklets, old movie brochures, magazines, black-and-white movie photo stills, vintage movie tickets and several other memorabilia on sale. Painstakingly catalogued, the collection contains rare gems, such as the last few remaining

fashion, today many people do. And people have a great deal more self-confidence in performance. The ability to craft your own fashion works in parallel to the fact that more people are able to stake a claim to the performance space through either mainstream contests like *Sa Re Ga Ma*, or more independent spaces such as those offered by the Internet. These fashions feed back into the screen." Vohra also notes, "What we call couture, or the fashion industry, does not feed so much into fashion—which is what people wear—but into films. And, of course, people are still compelled by film fashion. Salman's *Tere Naam* haircut or Rani Mukherjee's *Bunty aur Bubli* collared *kurta* and *jhola* were a big hit when they appeared on screen."

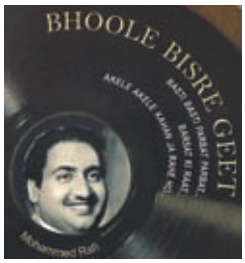
However, fashion statements were not as transient or fickle then as they are now. "We had a tough time making the transition from the drainpipe pants to the bellbottoms as the 1960s ended and the hippy 1970s rolled in," says Lal. "Anyone who held onto the drainpipe pants was booed in college." Hyderabad-based Shyamola Khanna echoes the anxiety, remembering her struggle to keep her 'Sadhana cut' with bouffant and long plait in place. "We didn't have the option to buy clothes off the rack like kids do today, so we spent long hours with the *darzi* to make him understand the desired snug fit of our *kurtis* and shirtwaists," says the 61 year-old. As a teenager, she wore Mumtaz-inspired hipster saris to make the 'right impact' on the young son of her parents' American friends when they were visiting India in the summer of 1965. And though she admits to "salivating" over actor Biswajeet, she is not quite willing to surrender her soft spot for Rajesh Khanna. "Maybe because I met my pilot husband in Srinagar in 1972 while I was a teacher on a school expedition, just the way Sharmila met Rajesh in *Aradhana*," shares the vivacious silver.

Stars are indeed mythic creatures. They represent whatever the ideals of a particular time may be—the gestalt of that time. Through them we imagine a narrative for ourselves in a constantly changing world. For some of us, the romance shown between our stars on screen unfolded in our lives too in a similar pattern. For Delhi-based poet Amit Dahiyabadshah, 59, an old Hindi movie song is inextricably woven with some of his most romantic memories, and, therefore, has a sanctity all its own.

"When I was courting my wife we used to meet at 4.30 in the morning and go for a long walk every day, come winter, summer, rain or storm for seven years—this, while we were waiting for our parents' approval to marry," he reveals. "My wife and her mother were great fans of singer Hemant Kumar, and I couldn't sing to save my life. We used to walk to a beautiful tomb from the Lodi dynasty, where every morning we would light a fire and I would sing *Yeh nayan daray daray, yeh jaam bharay bharay, zaraa peenay do*...from *Kohra*. The tomb had a great echo

lithographic Bollywood movie poster prints in the world. If you like things with a twist, Jethwani also owns Indian Hippy (*www.hippy.in*), which offers coveted Bollywood poster art on a different canvas, at affordable prices. By hand-painting vintage images on everyday products, including fashion accessories, clocks and furniture, Indian Hippy attempts to give the last few remaining Bollywood poster artists a platform, while simultaneously giving people an opportunity to own a piece of this timeless art.

Recently, Jethwani held an auction at Sotheby's. However, some things are not for sale. "I am the only memorabilia collector in the world who has handbills of 25 Hindi movies released in the 1930s," says Jethwani, "and there is no way I am going to part with that."



that would make even a lovesick tom cat's caterwauling sound halfway decent. And halfway decent was enough, for my wife has these beautiful eyes and sweet ears that forgave every tone deaf fragment. Between her patient [read brave] listening and my fearless attempts to sing, she was won over. Of course, the credit needs to go to the haunting melody and the cadence that was the hallmark of that beautiful song and that vast body of great music that is fading away as graciously as it appeared in our lives. There is very little music that has appealed to me after the plagiarists and the 'technos' took over Bollywood in the 1970s."

Plagiarism is a battle-scarred soldier. Vohra feels originality is a fraught concept. "Old Hindi film songs, as much as new ones, borrowed rather freely from Latin, Middle-Eastern, East European and American pop, which, in turn, had borrowed and reinterpreted the folk and classical traditions of the subcontinent," she says. "Like a fingerprint, there is nothing that is original, but there is such a thing as unique work, one which combines the existing cultural threads into a weave that is very personal. I think Hindi film songs from the 1940s-1960s saw a fantastic coming together of very diverse talent and diverse music into genuine urban folk that expressed the emotional life and many movements and migrations that comprised a new sub-continental experience, and hence expression, post-colonisation."

One also had great Urdu poets—Kaifi, Sahir, Shakeel Badayuni—who wrote song lyrics as well as truly modernist lyric writers like Rajendra Krishan who used metaphors of modern machines like telephones (*Mere piya gaye rangoon*) and civil services like the post office (*Aankhon ka daak khana, nazron ke taar hain*) that reflected what was going on around us.

It is undeniable that in movies, we subconsciously seek a reflection of our own lives, and a reaffirmation of our actions. Dehradun-based Colonel Nirmal Mahajan, 66, ranks the Dev Anand-starrer *Hum Dono* as one of his favourite movies. "It does good things to your ego, watching your favourite hero wearing the same uniform as you," says Mahajan, who as a young Army officer couldn't grow his locks as long as Rajesh Khanna so compensated for it by wearing *kurta* over pants, *a la* the dimpled Khanna, after duty hours. As a young cadet, Mahajan watched many movies in the large movie theatre in the National Defence Academy campus in Khadakvasla, near Pune. "They screened Hindi movies twice a week and Hollywood films once. Once, a cadet whistled lustily at the lovely Helen as she was dancing on screen. The whistle didn't go down too well with our supervising officer, and the whole gathering was hauled up to identify the whistler. Of course, in typical 'man's honour' code, none of us revealed the name and all of us were asked to front roll from the movie theatre to our mess, which was a good 400 m away!"

1960s

Shohini Ghosh, professor at mass communications wing of Delhi's Jamia Milia Islamia University says, "Westernised vamps like Helen can either be read as an 'objectified' and 'degrading' figure dancing for the pleasure of men or be seen as a sexually affirmative performer who provides viewing pleasure cutting across genders. Women in Bombay cinema can be understood in many interesting ways. If we are attentive, we will find that women in Bombay cinema are complex creatures who cannot be defined singularly as either agents or victims."

Speaking of the luscious Helen, any discussion on Indian cinema can never be complete without an acknowledgement of that exotic creature of the 1960s—the vamp. Vamps and 'cabaret women' reclined with sultry splendour in our heads back then, because of the rare opportunity to witness brazen female behaviour otherwise. Shohini Ghosh, professor of AJK MCRC, the mass communications research wing of Delhi's Jamia Milia Islamia University says, "Westernised vamps like Helen can either be read as an 'objectified' and 'degrading' figure dancing for the pleasure of men or be seen as a sexually affirmative performer who provides viewing pleasure cutting across sex and genders. Women in Bombay cinema can be understood in a number of interesting ways. If we are attentive and open to multiple readings, we will find that women in Bombay cinema—whether in the past or in the present—are complex creatures who cannot be defined singularly as either agents or victims. In a largely male-dominated industry, they have been inventive in pushing the boundaries of transgression. To this end, they have successfully used certain well-established tropes and conventions of Bombay cinema of which the most popular has been the song-and-dance sequences."

In a similar vein, 77 year-old Nirmal Puri feels we make too much out of 'skin'. The Hyderabad-based non-conformist doesn't care much for the docile Hindi film heroines of her youth as she felt they were over the top with their make-up and clothes. "I admire the heroines today who dress well, are articulate and fit. And if you have it, why not flaunt it?"

Though everyone may have differing opinions on their experiences related to the movies, most silvers are united in their stand against the DVD. "It's convenient, sure, but what about the largeness, the spectacle and the grandeur a theatre screen offers?" asks radiologist Dr Brijesh Chauhan, an ardent movie fanatic who could never bear to miss a single Friday evening premiere in his MBBS days. Now 65, the Noida-based Chauhan says, "The only movie I enjoyed watching in recent years was *Baghban*. It had a story, emotions, feelings, honesty and simplicity. They don't make movies like that anymore, do they?"

Chauhan's words are merely a refrain that every generation will have to endure as long as the show goes on. The nostalgia induced by old movies often make us yearn for the years gone past, probably stoked by a subliminal desire to recapture our youth. When we look back, life does seem so much simpler then. Afternoons were spent embroidering muslin *dupatta*, and evenings getting the knob on the radio to behave, or weaving one's way back home on a bicycle after work. It seems like a world devoid of any bling or bang. It's also true that our cinema has always been a mirror to our world, then as well as now. We are the movies that we make. Let's celebrate the movies—they are a celebration of our lives after all.

PAINTING THE PAST

VETERAN BILLBOARD PAINTER S REHMAN LOOKS BACK ON A COLOURFUL PAST AND GRACEFULLY ACCEPTS THE FUTURE OF HIS FADING ART

JUST as they don't make hand-painted billboards anymore, we could also say they don't make men like S Rehman anymore. Painting movie billboards at the ageing Alfred Talkies in Mumbai's Grant Road area for over 52 years now, Rehman is Bombay's last remaining flag-bearer of an art form that has faded away with nary a trace. The 66 year-old took over the legacy from his father Shaikh Rehman, who was one of the most prolific hoarding painters for Hindi cinema as well as theatre in the 1930s.

"My father had painted the billboards of many of Mehboob Khan's movies," says Rehman. "I joined him when I was just 10, after seeing him labouring alone in the studio." He learnt everything about lending brooding eyebrows to angry heroes and a seductive sheen to coy heroines from his father. At 14, he had already mastered the art "without any hi-fi diploma from J J School of Art".

"Some of my first assignments were the best; *Mughal-e-Aazam*, *Ganga Jamuna*, *Mother India*," Rehman's voice rings softly in his studio, a dull backroom on the ground floor of Alfred Talkies—the space once occupied by his father. Small tubs of paint are almost glued to a table over years of repeated use. One sees faces from forgotten times—Nargis, Madhubala, Dilip Kumar, Meena Kumari, Raj Kapoor, Nanda... Alfred Talkies screens only old movies—classics, garish *masala* plots of the 1980s and 1990s, and, yes, B-grade thrillers.

When we meet Rehman, Bobby Deol and Twinkle Khanna smile down at us from a freshly hoisted billboard of the 1995 chocolate romance *Barsaat*. Incidentally, in the past, Rehman was commissioned to paint the billboards for another movie with the same title—the Raj Kapoor-Nargis blockbuster. "Earlier, I ended up sleeping in the studio for days, as there was no time to go home," says Rehman. These days, he comes to Alfred at 4 pm and leaves at 9 pm. "My sons assist me sometimes, but one is a videographer and the other works with a private firm—they have their jobs." Rehman takes up four to five days to paint a large life-size hoarding.

"Earlier, studios would send out plot books and stills as references for us to understand the right expression and background we needed to bring to the canvas," he reminisces. "In fact, I am so steeped in expressions that I can immediately discern when a newcomer is trying to mimic an

REEL FASHION

According to filmmaker and writer, Paromita Vohra, "Earlier, only the elite had access to the images, trends and resources that went into creating new fashion, today many people do. And people have a great deal more self-confidence in performance. The ability to craft your own fashion works in parallel to the fact that more people are able to stake a claim to the performance space through either mainstream contests like *Sa Re Ga Ma*, or more independent spaces such as those offered by the Internet. These fashions feed back into the screen."

old star. I took one look at Shah Rukh Khan when he came on screen for the first time and knew he had been observing Dilip Kumar closely all his life."

In his youth, Rehman would sometimes visit the sets to see actors at work. "I followed Shammi Kapoor all day through Girgaum and Marine Lines when he was shooting the song *Govinda aala re* for *Bluffmaster*. I walked back to the studio and got working all night. The next day, I had Shammi Kapoor in a wet black shirt and slick hair staring at me from my canvas. The publicity guys were thrilled to see it." Kapoor was Rehman's favourite actor. "I shaved off my moustache after seeing *Tumsa Nahin Dekha*. My father never quite forgave me for that," he says with a chuckle. According to Rehman, fan mania was of a different order back then. "After seeing Dilip Kumar as a journalist in *Footpath*, every young guy was suddenly carrying a jute bag around and prices of those *jhola* went up for a while!" Rehman remembers seeing a few actors at Alfred Talkies when they had come to catch a late evening show in their trademark dark sunglasses. "The craziest day was when I saw Helen getting out of her car and the men simply fell over each other to see her." Ironically, Rehman doesn't watch movies anymore.

"I stopped watching movies at the theatre after ticket prices were upped to ₹ 50. Now I watch them on CDs." With the advent of digital technology, hand-painted hoardings have become merely an ignored remnant of our memories. When asked why he didn't switch over to computer-generated billboards when he had the chance, Rehman simply says, "It doesn't bring the same magic to your heart." He realises that old movie posters are now valued as kitsch art. "Some people commission a few small posters to hang on their walls. I charge a few hundreds or thousands depending on their size. "Work apart, he loves painting old film stars 'just for time-pass'. Sometimes, he conducts workshops and art classes for eager students of nearby art schools. A few years ago, he was invited to Malaga by a Spanish film delegation to paint hoardings for an Indo-Spanish film festival. He shows us the pictures of his foreign trip proudly, all preserved in the cellophane covers of a small paint-streaked album. On his cupboard in his studio is a picture of him with M F Husain. "He too was a billboard painter once," he tells us, with a solemn pride and wonder in his voice and then pauses to reveal, "I feel sad now, when people ask me if I could come over and paint the walls near railway tracks to discourage people from urinating on the walls."

SINGH'S SONGS

AROUND 45 YEARS AGO, A FEW SONGS AND BOUNDLESS CURIOSITY SET KANPUR-BASED HARMANDIR SINGH ON A LIFELONG JOURNEY IN WHICH HE ROUNDED UP MORE THAN 45,000 SONGS

HARMANDIR SINGH is a modest man in no hurry to talk about himself. Anyone who has spent more than half his life compiling background information on 45,000 film songs would—rightfully—want fair mileage. Singh, though, is more keen on getting Hindi film songs the credit they deserve. "In the late 1960s, when I was in my teens, I spent a lot of time in front of the radio and realised that I was more fascinated by the songs of my earlier generation [the 1940s and '50s] than my own," says Singh. "I couldn't get enough of Radio Ceylon [now Radio Sri Lanka]." One of the most popular programmes in those days was the *Vakya Geetanjali*, in which they announced a meaningful sentence of seven or eight words, and asked listeners to send in Hindi film songs beginning with each word. As Singh noted down songs in his notebook, he also started hunting for the names of the music director, singer, lyricists, etc.

His hobby slackened a bit in his college days when studies took up all his time. "Yet I wrote a letter that was published in *Madhuri* magazine, asking for coordinates on some songs." Another reader wrote to him, suggesting he look up *Indian Filmography* by Firoze Rangoonwala. Though Rangoonwala's book had abundant information on films, it didn't offer much on songs—information such as singers, lyricists, record numbers and disc numbers. "That's when I decided to start the project on my own," says Singh, who then had no clue about the magnitude of work involved. "Thank God, ignorance is bliss," he adds.

He started by publishing a monthly news bulletin *Radio News* (now the quarterly *Listeners' Bulletin*). Through word of mouth, the bulletin became popular among avid radio listeners in India. Radio fans started writing in with information, but it was still a tiny trickle. Meanwhile, Singh found a job as an officer with the State Bank of India. As the years fled, he made repeated appeals to radio listeners everywhere to make available any information including song booklets or information catalogues of Gramophone

India. “Some music lovers were generous. A couple of them, such as Vijay Singh Chandel and N D Prakash of Patiala shared information on thousands of songs, while some others were understandably possessive.” A benevolent gentleman from Ajmer even sent him rare song books published in the 1930s by Sangeet Karyalaya that had been carefully preserved by his father.

In 1974, Singh made a trip to the National Film Archive of India in Pune and spent days holed up among the dusty archival records, noting down information from 1,500 song books, with the permission of the curator.

Indeed, the universe conspires to make your wish come true when you really want something. “I got information even when I was not really looking for it.” At an old bookseller’s stall in Indore, Singh found hundreds of abandoned song booklets of the talkies era. “Many music lovers helped me along the way till I finally conceived the *Geet Kosh* Project,” says Singh. “I realised that in every decade—of the four decades that I intended to cover, from 1930 to 1970—around 1,200 Hindi films were released. Considering the vastness of the effort, I decided to split it into four volumes.”

The 61 year-old realised that if pursued in chronological order, Volume 1 (1931-41)—the oldest songs—may not sell too well and may financially inhibit the publication of other volumes. So in 1980, after a decade’s worth of research and consultations with curators of archiving institutions, lyricists, writers, artists, and people at music companies and institutions, he published *Geet Kosh* Volume 3 (1951-61), songs from the popular era, funded by his father. The book sold in average numbers—800 copies in four years—as there was no advertising to back it up. His second volume (1941-50) with an index of 11,000 songs was launched with much fanfare in 1984 by music director Naushad. “Even rival song, enthusiasts, who were collecting information like me, helped me out,” says Singh. “Veerbhadra Jhala from Ujjain was one such person who gave me his entire treasure of gramophone records and compilation sheets.”

Singh, who has now retired from banking, has published five volumes so far, covering over 45,000 songs, including a compendium of songs from censored films, apart from two books on filmography. “I learnt so much about films and film songs along the way,” he tells us. “During one of my memorable meetings with yesteryear music director Hans Raj Behl, he told me that in the 1950s, the competition was so fierce and healthy that many music directors used to prepare 10 tunes for just one song!” No doubt, Singh knows all about his songs. And the radio still plays in the background.

Shilbhadra Datta

Voice vibes

Gautam Bhimani shares his love for cricket and commentating with his father **Kishore Bhimani**

I watched my first Test match when I was five years old; went for my first overseas Test at the SCG [Sydney Cricket Ground] between Australia and West Indies at 11; watched the World Cup in 1983; and saw India win it on my 13th birthday on 25 June. Then on, I spent five consecutive summers watching international and county cricket in England—all thanks to my father Kishore Bhimani.

Though I am said to have thrown tantrums to be with *Baba* on his trips, I was never like that. The only time I was a cause for worry was in 1978 at the Test between India and West Indies at Eden Gardens. *Baba* had taken me there, but soon realised there was no one to look after me as he had to be in the television commentary box. I finally watched the match sitting inside the dressing room, with Anshuman Gaekwad and Dilip Vengsarkar keeping a close watch on me.

I would listen to him on radio whenever he was travelling. I would often pick up a good old-fashioned tape recorder and record his commentary, and then put in a blank cassette to tape my own mock commentary. I never imagined I could ever do what he did, but I found it great fun playing with the then technologically advanced machine called a cassette player. This was the mid-1970s! I probably would not have had such a passion for sports, especially cricket, had it not been for my father watching and discussing it with me since I was a toddler.

Those were unforgettable moments for me. I would listen to him not just across the seas but also across the *maidan* while he was giving commentary for a Calcutta league football match featuring Mohun Bagan, East Bengal or my favourite team Mohammedan Sporting. And then he would head off to the race course for what appeared to be a near impossible task… rapid fire commentary as horses raced to the finish line. Identifying them with their owners was not as easy as it seemed.

My dad has always been my role model; and later Harsha Bhogle. He knew I had commentary in my genes so he never felt the need to give me advice. However, whatever I know of the game is because of him.

He threw me at the deep end by sending me alone on a trip to Sharjah to cover the 1994 Australasia Cup for Bengali daily *Pratidin*. He sacrificed his own trip so I could carve a niche for myself and not be known as Kishore Bhimani's son. Of course, being his son had its own merits that can't be written off. I have had the rare privilege of meeting great sports icons like Garfield Sobers, Farokh Engineer, Salim Durani, Tiger Pataudi, Tony Greig, Clive Lloyd, Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev at home with *Baba*.

> Sometimes one has to try harder to keep the flag flying. It is not as tough off-field than on-field. I have always maintained that in sports, it is almost impossible for a legend to produce another legend

There was never a need to assess *Baba*'s contributions. I have seen him at close quarters and more often than not I am reminded of it when I meet people around the world who refer to him as India's Neville Cardus and bemoan the death of quality cricket literature. I have myself been writing ever since I can remember. I started writing a novel when I was a little over seven. I have written columns for several publications, both dailies and magazines like *Outlook* and *GQ*. I have also spent seven years working as a copywriter in J Walter Thompson advertising agency. Recently, I published my first book, *Reverse Sweep*, a racy anecdotal travelogue about my cricket experiences.

I am charmed by Baba's sense of humour, his warmth and affection, and his ability to make a person feel good. What's more, he never lets anything get in the way of a good story. His is a hard act to follow.

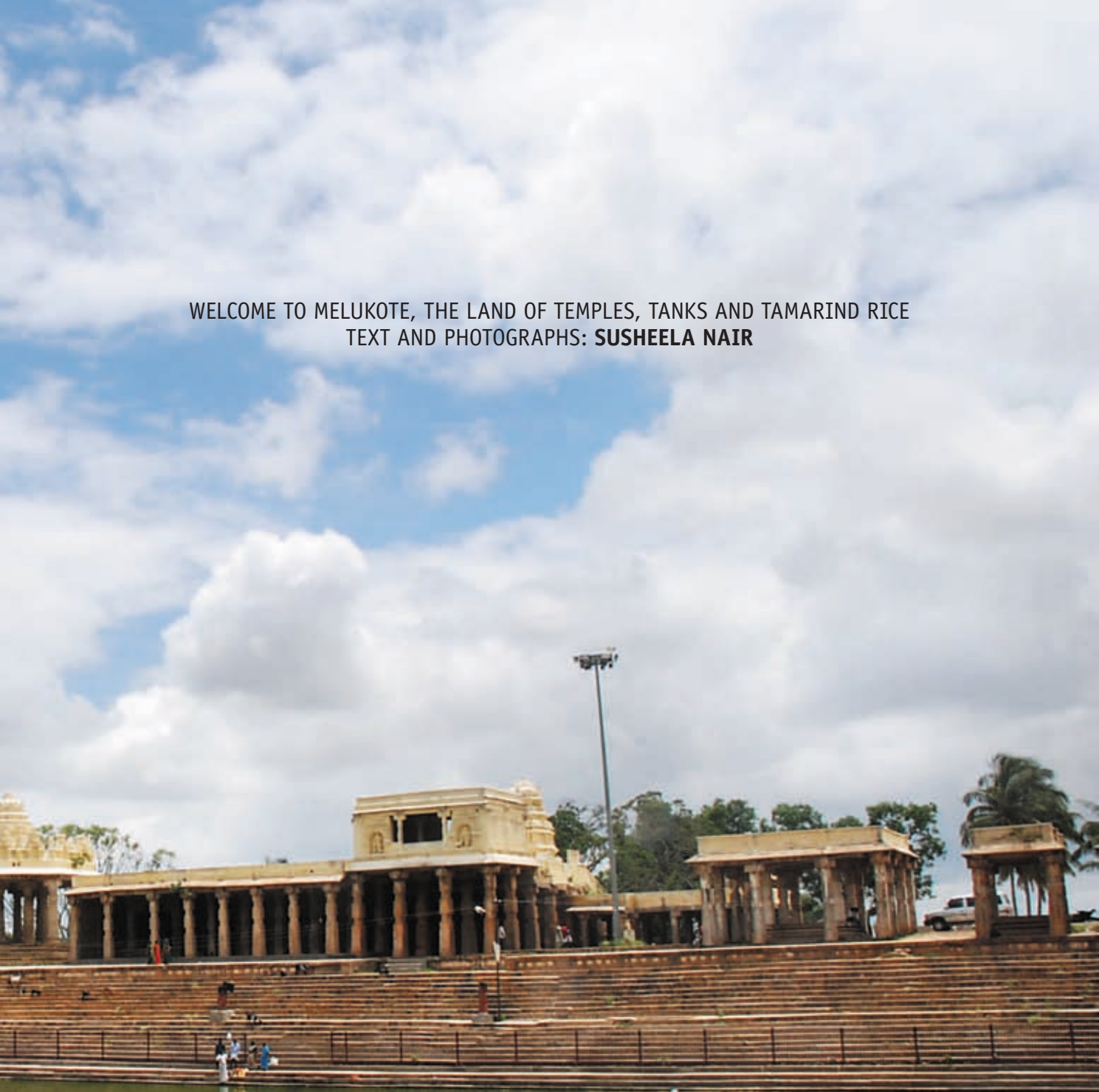
It is always tough following in the footsteps of an illustrious parent; especially when the last name is a giveaway. Yes, sometimes one has to try harder to keep the flag flying. It is not as tough off-field than on-field. I have always maintained that in sports, it is almost impossible for a legend to produce another legend who is a direct descendant… Rohan Gavaskar, Jordi Cryuff and Liam Botham are three examples that come easily to mind.

—As told to Partha Mukherjee & Priyanka Mukherjee

Where time **stands still**

WELCOME TO MELUKOTE, THE LAND OF TEMPLES, TANKS AND TAMARIND RICE

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS: **SUSHEELA NAIR**



As we ambled along the narrow, winding lanes of the temple town of Melukote in Karnataka, we were catapulted into another portal where time stands still, a realm replete with a quaint charm. The typical Iyengar touch was palpable in the architecture of the simple and humble dwellings of orthodox Hindus whose ancestors have resided here for centuries. The tiled row houses with verandas overlooking the narrow lanes, and their faded ochre and blues, huge pillars of solid teak, and tall coconut palms in the backyard all exude an old-world feel.

We found women clad in traditional nine-yard saris drawing intricate *kolam* in front of their houses at the break of dawn. We stumbled upon Iyengar priests chanting Sanskrit *shloka* and reading religious books seated in their verandas. Deeply involved in continuous service to the temple, they lead a peaceful, contented life. These Mandyam Iyengars, a sect of Brahmins whose roots date centuries back, lend their own distinctive charm and flavour to the place. The typical traditional Iyengar is distinguished

with his forehead adorned with holy ash and the mark of Vishnu (a long and thin central vermillion line running from the root of the nose disappearing into the hairline).

Although Melukote was apparently plundered by the Mughals in the 14th century, and subsequently by the Marathas in 1771 AD, it has withstood the test of time, retaining its Vaishnavite identity. In traditional Kannada literature, this small town—sprawling over a hilly countryside—sports several names ranging from Yadavgiri, Narayangiri, Jnanamantapa, Dakshina Badarikaashram, Yadusaila, Vedadri to Melukote or Melkote. Melukote is intricately linked with famous Vaishnava saint and philosopher Ramanujam, who established the temple and its associated monasteries here. Legend has it that he was the one who discovered the idol of the god Thirunarayana in an anthill amid dense vegetation and streams. This led him to establish a major pilgrim centre in the town. These religious institutions have been supported by successive Hoysala, Vijayanagara and Wodeyar kings: they are still active today.

Melukote is intricately linked with famous Vaishnava saint and philosopher Ramanujam, who established the temple here

We began our temple sojourn with an arduous climb up a flight of steep steps to the ancient Yoganarasimha temple perched atop a hill. The climb can be daunting for the faint-hearted; it would be prudent to hold on to the railings. It is believed that Prahlada himself installed the Yoganarasimha idol here. Built later, this temple is said to be a Hoysala creation. Watch out for monkeys along the way eagerly waiting to grab a banana or coconut. One of them tugged at my camera bag presumably mistaking it to be a snack bag.

Two bronze doors at the entrance herald a welcome. Inside the sanctum sanctorum is the charming idol of Lord Yoganarasimhaswamy seated in the yoga *mudra*. An ambulatory around the sanctum sanctorum has small windows that offer dramatic views. We had sweeping views of the entire town punctuated with temples, tanks, *mantapa*, shadowed recesses, moss-grown masonry walls, green fields, water bodies and the stunning Kalyani pond. The walkway is guarded by a high wall, the hill beyond which drops right down. It is said that on a clear day, one can have a view of the famed Gomateshwara of Shravanabelagola from here. I wished I could see the Bilaswarga cave below the temple where a huge drum donated by Tipu Sultan and a massive bell by Prakalamatha are kept. But sadly the cave is not open to visitors.

The ancient Yoganarasimha Temple sitting atop a hill

(Clockwise from top): An Iyengar Brahmin wears a religious mark; panoramic view of Melukote; a villager blowing horn at the tank

From the temple foothills, a winding lane led us to the Kalyani, almost synonymous with the identity of the town. We came across some pilgrims who had come there to tonsure their heads while others indulged in their ritual baths. A nadaswaram player was at the steps ready to apply the holy ash for a fee. The breathtaking beauty of the long corridors on all four sides held together by magnificent stone pillars and *mantapa* built all around, and the steps leading to the water of the Kalyani have formed the backdrop of many romantic interludes of various commercial movies, including Mani Ratnam's blockbuster *Guru*. The octagonal Bhuvaneshwari *mantapa*, which stands prominently along the Kalyani, has also been captured on the silver screen.

From the Kalyani, it was a short walk to the famed Cheluvanarayanaswamy temple, which enshrines Vishnu, the principal deity of Melukote in the form of Cheluvanarayanaswamy—'Cheluva' means charismatic. Even today, life in Melkote revolves around this temple atop Yadavgiri hill. Near the entrance is the high *gopuram* built beautifully in brick and stucco. This fine statue depicts Lord Vishnu holding the *shanku* (conch), *chakra* (a disk-like weapon) and a *gadha* (mace). As we walked around the temple, we stopped by to admire the parapet wall of the temple, decorated with stucco images of different forms and incarnations of Lord Vishnu. In the centre is the sanctum in which is the beautiful and radiant deity.

The temple consists of a *garbha griha* enshrining the statue of Cheluvanarayana, a pillared *ardhamantapa*, a *mahamantapa* with 16 pillars, and a *rangamantapa* with 44 ornately carved pillars showing various forms of Lord Vishnu, and scenes from the epics. We walked around gazing in wonder at the hall columns intricately worked with cut-out pilasters, jewelled garlands, miniature animals and figures, and mythological scenes. To our dismay, photography was not allowed. Lakhs of devotees and visiting relatives congregate at the temple during March when the village plays host to the spectacular Vairamudi festival; the time when the image of the deity is adorned with the

FACT FILE

GETTING THERE
From Mysore (50 km), take the Srirangapatna-Pandavpura route to reach Melukote. From Bengaluru (140 km), drive down the Mysore Road to Maddur. Turn right after Maddur, at the Mandya circle. Proceed another 30 km to Melukote. KSRTC buses ply to Melukote from Mysore.

What to buy: Homemade *Puliyogare*, *sakkarapongal*, *chutney* powders, pickles.

Where to eat: Annapoorneshwara and Subbanna are two good, clean eateries.

diamond-studded crown and other jewels belonging to the former Maharaja of Mysore and taken out in procession.

No trip to Melukote is complete without savouring the original Iyengar *puliyogare*, a delicacy made with rice, tamarind and spices. Full of tangy flavour with a rich aroma, it is a signature dish of the Iyengars of the temple town. This divinely tasting rice is also offered as *prasad* for the Gods. We found numerous authentic food carts sprinkled around the temples, selling fragrant and spicy Iyengar fare. But we chose to have a relaxed lunch at a typical Iyengar eatery. The compelling aroma of the *puliyogare* assailed our senses as we walked into Annapoorneswara eatery.

After fortifying ourselves with a meal of spicy *puliyogare*, sweet *sakkarapongal* and buttermilk, we walked up to the tanks, which are also essential components of the town's historic persona. There are a few records at the Cheluvanarayanaswamy temple that state that Melukote was punctuated with 29 ponds, 73 *mantapa* and 19 gardens. But today, it is difficult to locate them. The most well-known among these are the twin tanks beyond the main temple, popularly known as '*Akka Thangai*' (elder sister, younger sister) tanks. While one of them is dirty, the other one has the sweetest water in town. In fact, some of the songs in Rajnikanth's Tamil blockbuster *Dalapathy* were shot here.

From these tanks, it is a hop, skip and jump to the town's old, colossal, unfinished gate at the summit of a rocky rise. The passageway is interesting for its doorway pillars, with maidens standing on *makara* and guardians leaning on clubs. The chambers on either side have columns with sculpted divinities on the shafts; crouching figures and striding elephants are seen beneath.

From the Unfinished Gateway (or Raya *gopuram*), we walked down to the Academy of Sanskrit Research. Indeed, this temple town has some of the oldest *patashala;* this one was established in 1853 and even today it imparts education in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy and has successfully retained the cultural heritage of the area. The scent of citronella (lemongrass) oil wafted through the air as we entered the Academy's reference library, which houses an amazing collection of nearly 30,000 titles on different subjects. We were bowled over by the meticulous care taken to scientifically preserve, digitise and catalogue the 10,000 palm leaf and paper manuscripts.

A tough climb to Yoganarasimha Temple

We culminated our temple sojourn with a visit to Dhanushkoti, a rocky peak where Rama is said to have shot an arrow that brought forth a spring of water to quench Sita's thirst. If you have time, trek into the wild in this temple town. Deciduous shrubs dominate the area. To protect the wolves in its natural habitats, the Melukote Temple Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1974. The fauna of the region also includes jungle cats, wild pigs, leopards, langurs and many species of birds endemic to this region. And if you are truly lucky, you can see some magnificent peacocks strut their stuff.

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INSIDE
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His best shot

At 70, ace photographer Hari Mahidhar is still climbing cranes to achieve greater heights, discovers **Sai Prabha Kamath**

Lights fascinate and capture his attention. And he wants to tell a story through every single photograph he clicks. "I eat, drink, sleep and dream photography. Owing to different types of lighting, I see things in different forms, shapes and colours, and that tempts me to photograph," says Hari Mahidhar, one of the country's most distinguished photographers. His recent solo exhibition titled *3 Hours*, at Mumbai's Jehangir Art Gallery, was inspired by legendary filmmaker Raj Kapoor's famous song *Yeh circus hai show teen ghante ka...* (a circus show lasts three hours but the show must go on...).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Through his exhibition, the ace photographer pays tribute to circus performers. "As a child, I was always mesmerised by their flawless precision and graceful teamwork. I have transformed this awe into portraits from a child's point of view," muses Mahidhar, whose pictures are in black and white as they intend to create nostalgia.

He says he likes to capture historic moments but avoids "negative pictures", such as natural calamities and mishaps. "I enjoy a photo shoot at Dharavi, where I see happy people everywhere." Another work he is proud of is called *Balancing* Act,

where inanimate objects ranging from office clips to blades and soft-drink bottle caps and scissors transform into amazing sculptures. "It portrays a perfect harmony of abstract, inconsequential arrangements converted into mystical art," he explains.

With a finely honed sense of observation, Mahidhar conducts workshops across the country and teaches photography to budding photographers at his studio in Ghatkopar, Mumbai. "I teach them the art of seeing. Nowadays, photographers are not

acquainted with the basics and cannot even take an accurate passport photo. I also want to teach photography to villagers at a concessional rate," says Mahidhar, who seems to be getting there; a workshop he conducted in Ahmedabad three years ago drew 750 participants!

To raise money for his first camera, Mahidhar traded a diamond chain with his father-in-law during his wedding in 1964. In 1978, he sold a new house he had bought to buy a Hasselblad camera—a must to bag good assignments. Today, Mahidhar is well-settled and has a supportive wife and two sons and daughters-in-law.

From a journey that began as a press photographer with *Nai Duniya*, a Hindi daily, Mahidhar has explored the landscapes of London, Paris, Singapore and the UAE. He has also documented the different moods of the Narmada River.

Age has not slowed this passionate photographer, who at the age of 70 shot photographs for an infrastructure company from atop a crane. "Age is just a state of mind. I feel young and I will retire only when I'm tired." Till then, the legendary filmmaker's famous song will continue to inspire Mahidhar, for whom 'the show must always go on.'

PICTURE PERFECT

Sharifa Khatri, an intrepid photographer, turns a gift from her daughter into an abiding passion. **Radhika Raje** reports

Being a wife, mother, grandmother and business woman was not enough for Sharifa Khatri, so she decided to wear a new hat. And thus emerged an intrepid and enterprising photographer. "Life got way more exciting after I started clicking pictures," laughs the energetic sexagenarian from Mumbai.

Khatri's passion for capturing nature at its flamboyant best blossomed last year, when she enrolled with the Photography Society of India (PSI). "They taught me everything I needed to know about photography, from cameras to angles to computer software techniques." Armed with a wealth of information, Khatri decided to put herself to the test on a recent trip to Turkey. The result: Her very first exhibition, which was arranged by PSI.

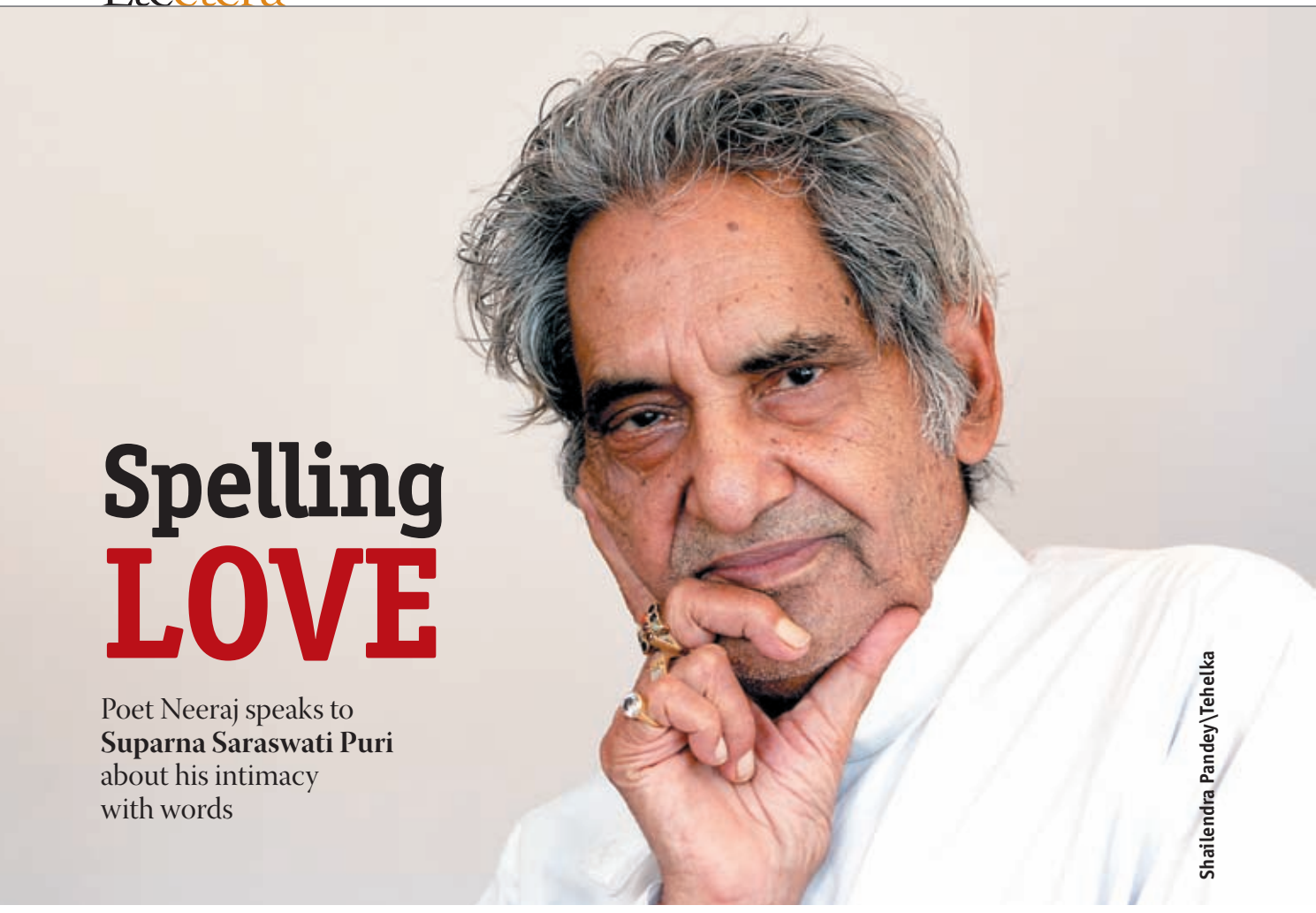
"The unplanned, impromptu trip presented a delightful landscape to capture. It opened my eyes to the dome and minaret-filled skyline and ancient ruins, which make this Mediterranean place so beautiful," she says. The trip was meant to help Khatri recuperate after knee-replacement surgery. "My family was too busy to spend time with me. So I approached a travel company, which put together an itinerary and I took off, just like that!"

The exhibition, titled *Journey of Turkiye with Sharifa Khatri*, was not only a milestone for Khatri, it was also unforgettable for her daughters and husband. "It was a great feeling to see my mother's work on display. After watching me and my sisters perform on stage so many times when we were kids, it was lovely to see her up there. I knew exactly how she must have felt during those times. It was a feeling of pride mixed with love and admiration," says Roohi, Khatri's youngest daughter.

Before she took the plunge into photography, Khatri used to look after the family business. But she decided to sell out to chase other passions last year. "We had a small-scale manufacturing concern that my father started with his brothers. When my uncles retired, I was left holding the reins," she reveals, adding that she was backed wholeheartedly by her family, who suggested that she spend her time in pursuit of happiness.

So she took up a camera and began clicking away. Her first camera was an average digicam gifted by her daughter Huma. Soon, passion turned into a love affair and progressed to photography. When she realised that she could make something of her talent, Khatri bought a Canon 60 D, and there was no looking back. "The colours and layers that can be observed in each photograph are astounding," says the budding photographer.

With her first exhibition already behind her, Khatri is dreaming of becoming a professional. "I have planned many trips this year and will focus on photography. I look forward to selling my pictures some day."



Spelling LOVE

Poet Neeraj speaks to **Suparna Saraswati Puri** about his intimacy with words

Shailendra Pandey\Tehelka

One rarely comes across a person whose creative aura shines on his face as '*noor*'. Despite being wheelchair-bound, Gopal Das Saxena 'Neeraj' (or Niraj), the legendary Hindi poet, stands tall on an illustrious career that spans over half a century, during which his literary gems for Hindi cinema have become classics. A meeting with the octogenarian opens up one's mind to an all-new world, one lit by the poet's spectrum of ideas and imagery.

Author of many a noteworthy publication, Neeraj's earliest brush with creative writing took place when he was in 12th grade. "One day while hearing Balbir Singh 'Sukhbir' recite his poetry, I felt I could write better. Not only did I write but I got it published in *Jagran*, a popular literary magazine at the time. I was so excited I held the publication for six months just like a mother holds her child," he recollects with amusement.

Famous for his lucid style and elegant use of Hindi and Urdu in a manner that accentuates the perfection of the blend, the poet traces it to his childhood in a small village in Etawah in Uttar Pradesh. "I have had a very sad life," he reveals. "I stayed away from my parents and siblings, bereft of their love, for 10 years and these years made me introspective, which is why in my poetry you will find traces of spirituality and philosophy. It is said that readers of philosophy are readers of poetry, but for me there's no poetry without philosophy."

Philosophy, he says, is not about answers, it is about questions. While the world is confused with control and chaos, Neeraj is candid about matters that contribute richly to confusion. "I do not believe in any religious sect or God. If God is *niraakaar* (omnipresent), how has such a *sakaar* situation come to be? In today's world, the biggest religion is science."

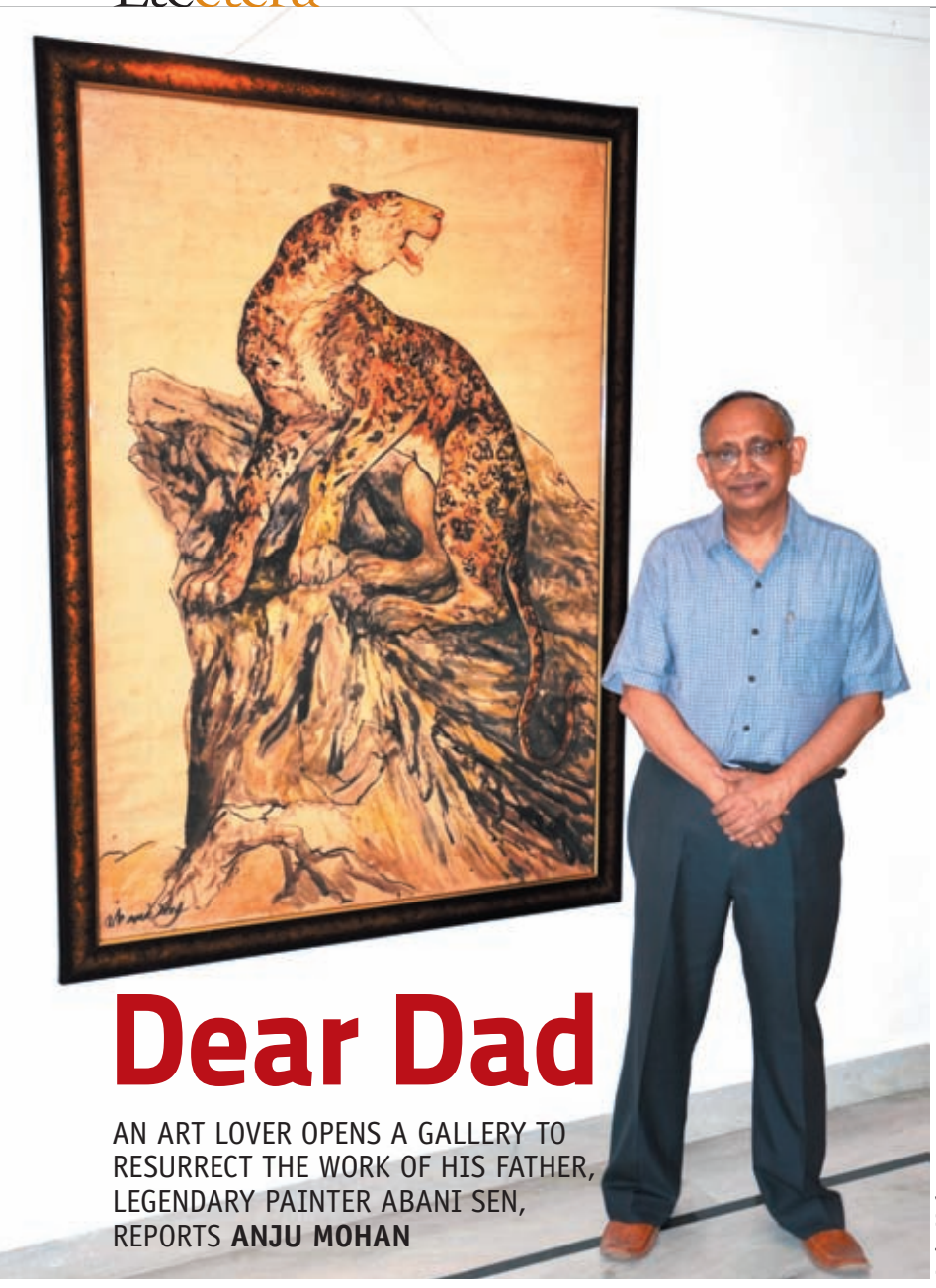
POETRY

"*Jyotish laiye brahmaand ki dhartisard samaan,*
Udgand par adhyatma hai sangampar vigyaan"

Neeraj is also convinced that India's existing complexities are essentially because the country's post-independence era did not witness a *sanskritik andolan* (cultural revolution). "While political movements were aplenty, one dedicated to culture was absent. Politics has entered all spheres of our lives, but without culture, life itself is incomplete. Politics may have given the country roads, food, water, electricity, but it is culture alone that lends a soul to the land."

"In the race for employment opportunities, most people are equipping themselves with MBA and IT qualifications; but who studies literature, much less Hindi *sahitya*?" he continues. "Yet to those [aspiring writers/poets] fascinated

with a road less traveled I say:
"*Lekhnee ashr ki siyahi mein dubokar likho*
Dard ko pyaar se sirhaney bithaakar likho
Hindi sangreh kitabon mein nahin miltee hai
Dhoop mein jao, paseeney mein nahaakar likho."
Ready with a couplet for every emotion and ideology, Neeraj feels that in times when means of communication are far too many, words and language have become pivotal for an effective understanding and, perhaps, offer better solutions than economic remedies. "*Shabd ka matlab vichaar hai. Shabd hee Brahm hai*. Every word has a personality, but with every thought, language changes."
No wonder then, when asked whether he is a Hindi poet or an Urdu poet, Neeraj says he is a '*prem kavi*'.
"*Apni baani prem ki bani*
Ghar samjhe na gali samjhe
Hindi nahin yeh, Urdu nahi
Yeh hai piya ki pasand
Iskee siyahi aankhon ka paani, Jadd iski qalam
Laagey kissi ko misree se meethi,
Koi namak ki dalee samajhey isse
Apni baani prem ki bani."
For Padma Bhushan Neeraj (and the president of the Writers Forum of India), a song is language, expression and environment and it changes with the requirement that invites him to write a song. "When Raj Kapoor wanted his 'joker' to sing a song, it was evident that a poem or *qawwali* was not a possibility but whatever the clown says is the truth with pun intended because he is the mender of the soul. Hence the song *Ae bhai zara dekh ke chalo* was written in blank verse for the first time ever in Hindi film industry," recalls Neeraj. In fact, each of Neeraj's all-time Hindi cinema favourites—*O meri sharmilee*, *Megha chaye adhi raat bairan ban gayee nindiya*, *Aaj madhosh hua jaayere*, *Bhanwarey ki gunjan*, *Shokhiyon mein ghola jaye*, *Rangeelare*, *Likhe jo khat tujhe* and *Dil aaj shayar hai*—had a story to tell.
Despite compelling family circumstances shaping most of his early and adult life in a less ordinary manner, Neeraj made the best of what was handed to him. A prolific writer, for almost two decades he taught Hindi literature in Meerut and Aligarh, the latter being his home now. Laurels and titles followed him through his travels to the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and Europe, but it's the familiarity with the self and the journey within that have been and continue to be paramount.
"*Zindagi maine guzaree nahi sabhi ki terhan*
Har kissi pal ko jiya main poori ik sadee ki terhan
Aandhiyaan waqt ki mujh ko na bujhaa pain
Har andherey se main guzraa hoon roshanee ki terhan
Tum mujhe sun to sakoge, na samajh paoge
Meri awaaz hai kaanhaa ki bansuri ki terhan."



Anju Mohan

Dear Dad

AN ART LOVER OPENS A GALLERY TO RESURRECT THE WORK OF HIS FATHER, LEGENDARY PAINTER ABANI SEN, REPORTS **ANJU MOHAN**

ART

In an art gallery in a basement at Delhi's Chittranjan Park, the work of one of India's early modernists comes to life. Contrasted with pastel walls and bathed in soft light, paintings in watercolours, pastels, oil and charcoal stand out beautifully and recreate the era of a legend.

The exhibition, *Stylization From Life & Living*, which showcases the best of Abani Sen, has been mounted by his son Prabir. "Mother had a dream that we should have a gallery to showcase my father's work so that budding artists can learn from it," he shares. "So, while building my house here, I turned the basement into a gallery. It may have taken a few decades to make my mother's dream come true but I am certain she is happy it has materialised."

A daring experimenter and a dedicated teacher, Abani Sen was a pre-Independence painter who broke through colonial academic painting and revived vital elements of Indian tradition in his art. The founder member of The Young Artist Union and later Art Rebel in Calcutta, he also joined the Calcutta Group in 1947. A legendary teacher as well, Abani Sen taught at schools in Delhi and has groomed painters such as Manjeet Singh Bawa and Ramnath Paricha.

For almost half a century, this priceless archive—now on display—was preserved by Prabir and his siblings and included works in media such as oil, watercolour, gouache, ink and wash. Prabir, who watched his father work with sheer reverence, recalls the atmosphere at home back then. "Our home in Bhagat Singh Marg was always full of artists, dancers, musicians...an open house. Most artists had a studio but ours was the only home where one could practise, and discuss art and history. Artists like Jagdish Dey and Umesh Verma would hold lengthy discussions on art."

Recalling his father's love of nature, Prabir adds, "*Baba* believed in God's creation and was spiritually inclined. So he used to take classes in public parks. We often went on picnics, where students were trained to observe nature and draw anything; a flower, a bird, a tree."

Now, Prabir intends to create an archive of old photographs, published papers, drawings and other material belonging to his father. "Unlike my brother Ranjan who turned out to be a painter, I did not make a career of it. I became an engineer but took premature retirement from NIIT to promote my love of art." He has also launched a website *www.artndecor.in* to help budding artists sell their work.

It seems this son's tribute to his father is already achieving its goal, as many of Abani Sen's students and owners of his paintings have voiced their support to popularising their mentor's work. Indeed, they have offered to spend time at future exhibitions to explain and interpret the master's craft. And thus the legacy of Abani Sen lives on.

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

IN THE CENTENARY YEAR OF FAIZ AHMED FAIZ, ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR URDU POETS, HIS GRANDSON ALI MADEEH HASHMI HAS RELEASED A BIOGRAPHY: *FAIZ AHMED FAIZ: HIS LIFE, HIS POEMS—THE WAY IT WAS ONCE* (HARPERCOLLINS; ₹ 499). THE TRIBUTE INCLUDES HIS FAMOUS POEMS, TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY HIS SON-IN-LAW SHOAIB HASHMI. HERE ARE SOME GLIMPSES INTO A CELEBRATED LIFE

Khalal pazeer bo-ad har binakay mi beeni
'Every foundation is faulty, I saw'
–Hafez Shirazi

The year was 1962. The Lenin Peace Prize had to be awarded to Faiz in Moscow. Since Faiz was still under surveillance by the military government, the only way he could travel to the USSR to accept the award was by the permission of the president. Fortunately, the military government of Ayub Khan was, at this point of time, experimenting with a slightly more non-aligned foreign policy, more in line with Pakistan's national interest and less subservient to the US. Faiz received permission to travel to Moscow. His doctors were less sanguine and forbade him to travel by air. Faiz thus went to Moscow by train to receive his award.

Faiz was accompanied on this journey by his elder daughter, Salima. Alys [Faiz's wife] and Faiz had decided to say goodbye to Pakistan and Alys was to take their younger daughter Moneeza to London, where Faiz and Salima were to join them after returning from Moscow. Since his doctors had forbidden him to travel by air, they were to go to Karachi, then to Naples by ship, then by train to Rome and onwards through Czechoslovakia, Poland and to the USSR. Salima smiles as she remembers the journey: '*Abba* [father] had no idea how long the journey was going to be; he assumed it would be a few hours, maybe a day or so.' The first obstacle was boarding the ship at Karachi since Faiz was on the exit control list and even though he had a special permission letter from the president, he was stopped, questioned, allowed to board the ship, then questioned again. At one point, he instructed the young Salima on what to do if he was taken off the ship. She was to go on to Naples and meet her mother there and they were to travel to Moscow to receive the award. A terrified Salima was relieved when he was allowed to travel.

(Opposite page) Faiz with Vice-President Dr Radhakrishnan and High Commissioner of Pakistan Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan at a *mushaira* in Delhi in 1955; (above) with his family on his last birthday in February 1984 in Lahore—grandson Ali, wife Alys, Faiz, daughter Moneeza, son-in-law Humair Hashmi, and grandson Adeel; (below) Faiz was accused of hatching a conspiracy against the Ayub Khan government in collaboration with his friend Sajjad Zaheer (extreme left)—also seen in the picture is Faiz's interpreter and Urdu scholar Lyudmila Vasilyeva

(Clockwise from top) Faiz with Alys, and daughters Salima and Moneeza in Lahore in 1961; with other writers at an Afro-Asian writers' conference in Tashkent in 1978; after doing his MA from Government College, Lahore, 1933

(Above) Atal Behari Vajpayee greeting Faiz at a reception given in the poet's honour in Delhi in 1981; Faiz with Chilean poet Pablo Neruda at Sochi, on the Black Sea in Georgia in 1962

Words' worth

To celebrate our 8th anniversary, we present an extract from "Journalism", an insight into 'wordsmithy' in a bygone era by English author-teacher-journalist James Runciman (1852-1891)

When the mystic midnight passes, the bustle of Fleet Street slackens; but on each side of the thoroughfare hundreds of workers with hand and brain are toiling with eager intensity. In tall buildings here and there the lights glitter on every floor, and throw their long shafts through the gloom; not much activity is plainly visible, and yet somehow the merest novice feels that there is a throb in the air, and that some mysterious forces are working around him. Hurrying messengers dash by, stray cabs rush along with a low rumble and sharp clash of hoofs. But it is not in the street that the minds and bodies of men are obviously in action; go inside one of the mighty palatial offices, and you find yourself in the midst of such a hive of marvellous industry as the world has never seen before. On one journal as many as 450 or 500 men are all labouring for dear life; every one is at high pressure, from the silent leader-writer to the fussy swift-footed messenger. In that one building is concentrated a great estate, which yields a revenue that exceeds that of some principalities; it is a large nerve-centre, and myriads of fibres connect it with every part of the globe; or, say, it is like some miraculous eye, which sees in all directions and is indifferent to distance. Go into one quiet, soft-carpeted room, and certain small glittering machines flash in the bright light. 'Click, click—click, click!""—long strips of tape are softly unwound and fall in slack twisted piles. One of those machines is printing off a long letter from Berlin, another is registering news from Vienna, and by a third news from Paris comes as easily and rapidly as from Shoreditch; subdued men take the tapes, expand and make fluent the curt, halting phrases of the foreign correspondents, and pass the messages swiftly away to the printers. From America, Australia, India, China, the items of news pour in, and are scrutinised by severe sub-editors; and those experts calculate to a fraction of an inch what space can be judiciously spared for each item.

If Parliament is sitting, the relays of messengers arrive with batches of manuscript; and, when an important debate is proceeding, the steady influx of hundreds of scribbled sheets is enormous. A four hours' speech from such an orator as Mr Gladstone or Mr Chamberlain contains, say, 30,000 words. Imagine the area of paper covered by the reporters! But such a speech would rarely come in late at night, and the men can usually handle an important oration by an eminent speaker in a way that is leisurely by comparison. The slips are distributed with lightning rapidity; each man puts his little batch into type, the fragments are placed in their queer frame, and presently the readers are poring over the long, damp, and odorous proof-sheets. There is no very great hurry in the early part of the evening; but, as the small hours wear away, the strain is feverish in its poignancy. There is no noise, no confusion; each man knows his office, and fulfils it deftly. But such great issues are involved, that the nervousness of managers, printers, sub-editors—everyone—may easily be understood. Suppose that a very important division is to be taken in Parliament; the minutes roll by, and the news is still delayed. Some kind of comment must be made on the result of the debate, and an able, swift writer scrawls off his column of phrases with furious speed. Then that article must be put into type; a model of the type must be taken on a sheet of papier-mâché, the melted metal must be poured into the paper mould, the resulting curved block must be clamped on to a cylinder of the waiting machine, and all this must be done with strict regard to the value of seconds. A delay of half a minute might prevent the manager from sending his piles of journals away by the early train, and that would be a calamity too fearful to be dreamed of. In one great newspaper-office 10 machines are all set going together, and an eleventh is kept ready in case of accident. The ten whizzing cylinders print off the papers, and an impression of a quarter of a million is soon thrown out, folded, and piled ready for distribution. But imagine what a loss of one minute means! Truly the agitation of the officials at an awkward pinch is singularly excusable, and many a hard word is levelled at pertinacious talkers who insist on thrusting themselves upon the House at a time when the country is waiting with wild eagerness for momentous tidings. The long line of carts waits in the street, the speedy ponies rattle off, and soon the immense building is all but still. Comfortable people who have their journal punctually handed in at a convenient hour in the morning are apt to think lightly of the raging effort, the inconceivably complicated organisation, the colossal expense needed to produce that sheet which is flung away at the close of each day.

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The clay of life

We have the power to craft our own spiritual future, writes **Gulab Kothari**

The first ingredient of human happiness lies in a person's ability to live a complete or whole life.... Life's broad aspect is the collective spirit as well as the parochial or narrow aspect in the form of an individual. Life can be lived by a fragmented view as well as by being in harmony with nature. It can also be lived by dedicating it completely to a cause. There are people who live by doing karma. There are others who are fatalists and live by leaving everything to destiny.... One can live a principled life or a life given to wantonness and free will.... But it is also imperative for us to know why he wants to live. The meaningfulness of life is hidden in the word 'why'. In the absence of an answer to this question, the very contrast between life and death will disappear. We cannot call that life worthy of living if it doesn't have a purpose or its basis is not a desire to do...or be something.

In Vedic philosophy a basic principle that runs parallel to other beliefs is that all that exists in this creation is in the form of *purusha* or man, there isn't anything like male-female. Both *purusha* (man) and *prakriti* (nature) regulate this universe and life jointly. One is *shakti* (power) and the other is *shaktiman* (powerful) but both are one. It alone is called a form of *ardha narishwar* (half woman and half man). The ingredients of the creation are not distinguished by any gender. In the latter commentaries many different aspects were added. Every aspect symbolising *purusha* (man) is connected with the creation as power in the form of nature. Since *naari* herself is basically a form of male, she is inevitably connected with power.

To understand this journey of life the second important stair is to reach the *avyaya* that lies within. The body has in it the mind, heart (Brahma, Vishnu, Akshar Purusha symbolising Indra). In the *Gita,* Krishna declares, "It is me alone who is *avyaya*. All living

"If a man wishes he can live like a human being, if he wants he can also live as a beast. Whatever way he chooses, he will get the next birth accordingly"

being are my parts. As an individual removes his coverings, *avyaya* reveals itself. That alone is Krishna. That is my real form."

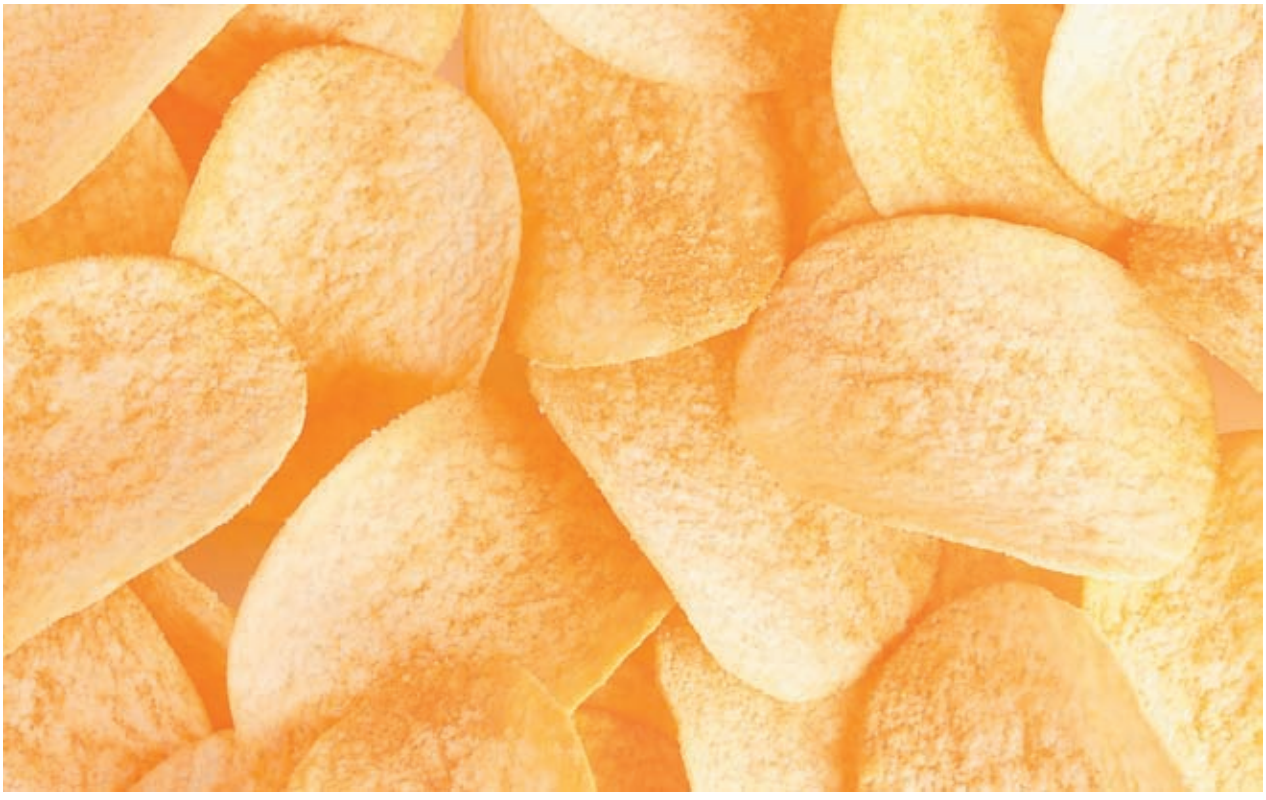
If a man wishes he can live like a human being and even try to attain a state of divinity. If he wants he can also live as a beast. Whatever way he chooses to live, he will get the next birth accordingly. If he wishes he can also come out of the cycle of birth and death. He can even attain the state of godliness. He can become Narayan. He can move forward to achieve his ultimate goal of *moksha*. The final goal of our *purusharth* (pursuit) is also *moksha*. Can one live a meaningful and successful life only by means of *purusharth*? No, it is not possible. If it were possible, why would anyone curse his karmas and fate, why would he blame time? Indian literature is replete with sutras (maxims) of failures and successes but science and nescience have been considered the basis of all these sutras. Both of them are the different aspects of *maya*.

It has been explained to us that *dharma,* knowledge, detachment and prosperity are the results of *vidya* (wisdom). In order to attain them *purusharth* also begins with *dharma.* Fortified with the other four components, i.e. *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha,* it changes the directions and results. Fate is the ripening of our past karmas. *Nimitt* (instrument) is such an excuse that it changes the direction of our work. The result changes according to time.

The basic cause is inherent in these activities. What we have to analyse is to find out how strong is our resolve, how much we are involved, how deep are our sentiments of faith and dedication. We have also to find out whether our attitude is neutral, whether we are connected with the present act or are hemmed in by *sankalp-vikalp* (a state of indecision). We have also to see whether we are living in the past and the future and whether we are doing the work for ourselves or just for a show or whether we are doing it with a sense of dedication....

Extract from the preface of Stepping Stones to Spirituality *by Gulab Kothari (Patrika Publications; ₹ 495; 494 pages). Kothari is chief editor of the Rajasthan Patrika Group; president of the Pandit Madhusudan Ojha Institute of Vedic Studies; and Chairman, Jai Mangal Charitable Trust*

WHAT'S YOUR FLAVOUR?



They are possibly the most beloved—the calories and fat be damned—snack in the world: potato chips. Known as crisps is Britain and wafers in India, these crunchy wonders have an interesting tale behind them. Apparently, in Saratoga Springs, New York, as far back as 1853, a customer at a restaurant was unhappy with the size of his fried potatoes and kept returning the dish back to the chef. Tired of trying to please the diner, the frustrated chef cut a potato into extremely thin slices, fried them and sent them to the table. To the chef's surprise, the client was ecstatic with the dish, and the potato chip was born!

A profusion of companies soon began to manufacture potato chips, which were served in plastic bags, first by themselves and then with a sealed pouch of salt/seasoning to tweak the taste. However, it was not until 1962 that the first-ever flavoured chips came to the market in both Ireland and the US; the first flavours were cheese and onion, and salt and vinegar. Today, of course, there are as many flavours of potato chips as there are manufacturers around the world, a veritable delight for inveterate snackers. And as the ad-line famously goes: no one can eat just one!

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JULY 1962

- On 10 July, the world's first communications satellite Telstar was launched into orbit and activated the next day.
- On 17 July, the King-Anderson Bill, which aimed to provide free medical care for people over 65 in the UK, was rejected in the Senate.

Tweet Seats

n. A section in a theatre set aside for people who want to tweet during a performance.
Example: "Tweeting is so natural for theatre," said Michael Yawney, an associate professor of theatre at Florida International University. That's one of the reasons why the Palm Beach Opera began offering **tweet seats** in December for a performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Kravis Centre for the Performing Arts in West Palm Beach .
—Johnny Diaz, "South Florida arts lovers can tweet from their theatre seats", Florida Sun Sentinel, *20 February 2012*

UNSOURCING

Pp. Transferring company functions from paid employees to unpaid volunteers, particularly customers on social networks.
Example: Unsourcing, as the new trend has been dubbed, involves companies setting up online communities to enable peer-to-peer support among users. Instead of speaking with a faceless person thousands of miles away, customers' problems are answered by individuals in the same country who have bought and used the same products. This happens either on the company's own website or on social networks like Facebook and Twitter, and the helpers are generally not paid anything for their efforts.
—"Outsourcing is so last year", Babbage (The Economist), *11 May 2012*

Macaroon Technique

n. The technique used for the sandwich-like French macaroon pastry.
Example: He used PowerPoint to impart what he calls the **macaroon technique**. This can be applied to most products (including, presumably, a Xerox machine) and goes something like this: "Madam, this timepiece (or diamond or handbag) comes from our finest workshop and it has a value of $ 10,000. If you buy it, your children are sure to enjoy it for generations to come."
—Christina Blinkley, "How to sell a $ 35,000 watch in a recession", Wall Street Journal, *4 August 2009*

"Imagination is stronger than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, imagination encircles the world.
—Albert Einstein

Parclo

n. Partial cloverleaf exchange.
Example: The Ontario Ministry of Transportation designed a modification to the original cloverleaf to address its shortcomings for the 400-series highways. The redesign creates more room for acceleration and deceleration and avoids the notoriously dangerous weaving lane. The **Parclo** has been embraced throughout the world as one of the most popular freeway-to-arterial interchange designs.
—Joe Clark, "Partial Cloverleaf Interchange (Parclo)", The Canadian Design Resource, *24 September 2009*

Ghost Shift

n. The shift that happens very late at night when a rogue worker enters the factory and runs the production machine off the books.
Example: Very low serial numbers, like very low MAC ID addresses, are a hallmark of the **ghost shift**. Significantly, ghost shifts are often run using marginal material that would normally be disposed of but were intercepted on the way to the grinder.
—"On MicroSD problems", Bunnie's Blog, *16 February 2010*

SHTICK LIT

n. A writing genre in which the author undertakes an odd or stunt-like project with the intention of writing about the experience.
Example: Now, in his third book, he spends two years eating, exercising and researching his way to becoming 'the healthiest man in the world'. A J Jacobs remains the current heavyweight champion of **shtick lit**.
—Douglas Bell, "The king of shtick lit strikes again", The Globe and Mail, *24 April 2012*

"All of us love our own children. It is satisfying to share the same kind of love with underprivileged children"

N R Venkitachalam, 72, Mumbai, for organising musical concerts to raise funds for differently abled and street children

Haresh Patel

It was only after retiring as a marketing professional from a multinational company that I started living my life the way I always wanted to," says Mumbai resident N R Venkitachalam, who now pursues two of his biggest passions: music and social work. At 61, when Venkitachalam decided to give back to society by working for children, he realised how difficult it was to get funds. He struck upon the idea of holding auditions of fresh talent and choosing performers for music concerts that he organises, the collections from which are forwarded to NGOs helping differently abled and street children. His partners in action are friends who have retired from similar corporate jobs. Now working as Klub Nostalgia, Venkitachalam organised his first musical concert at IIT- Mumbai's festival 'Mood Indigo'. And the first organisation he extended his support to was GODS (Groups of Disabled), founded by Meenakshi Balasubramanian, a Harmony Silver Award recipient in 2009. "I realised the power of music when my slot was extended from one hour to three hours! And I knew I was on the right track." While he pays performers anywhere from ₹ 10,000 to ₹ 20,000, his collections from each concert vary between ₹ 20,000 and ₹ 100,000. Klub Nostalgia regularly visits NGOs and talks to the management as well as children before deciding who to support. Venkitachalam's wife Geetha, who also teaches underprivileged children with him, says, "It's a very noble act and earns us mental peace."

—Radhika Raje

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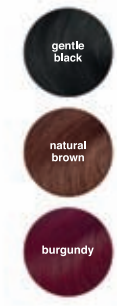

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