

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

AUGUST 2012 ₹ 30



A prince
among men
Dr Karan Singh



KULDIP NAYAR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY • R K DASTUR'S MINIATURES

DESTINATION
BANGKOK:
SHOPPERS' PARADISE

FOOTSTEPS
POULAMI BOSE ON
HER ACTOR-FATHER
SOUMITRA CHATTERJEE'S
LEGACY

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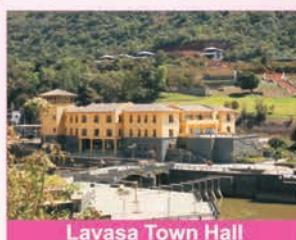
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FREEDOM'S SONG

What is true freedom? As we unfurl the tricolour with pride and honour this month, we remain aware that while 'independence' is a political reality, on a personal level it is a rather ephemeral notion that means different things to different people.

For silvers, independence translates into the ability to live one's best life. On a recent trip to the US, I keenly observed so many silvers—in their 60s, 70s, 80s—for whom age was a non-issue. They walk, talk, work, travel, engage with peers and across generations with consummate ease. They live, without fear of censure or marginalisation, expecting little from the next generation, worrying less about the 'empty nest' than the need to make that nest a safe and secure haven for themselves, realising that the power to make their lives better lies in their own hands.

Now, in my view, that is freedom. And it has been made possible thanks to an enabling environment that includes anti-ageism laws; ongoing and intensive research that analyses the problems of the elderly (from medical to financial and social) and offers sustainable solutions; a media that keeps the government answerable on issues related to silvers; and powerful advocacy groups driven by silvers themselves who are determined not to be driven into the fringes.

It's not a perfect world, of course. There is undoubtedly a sense of alienation and rootlessness in the social fabric, which is anathema to us as Indians, with our legacy of joint families and intergenerational bonds. Yet, this legacy apart, we too have not done well enough for our elders, with families being the worst perpetrators of elder



Suresh Natarajan

abuse. Perhaps, then, if we can't look to our own to give us comfort and succour, we must look to the system to bring the change we want to see. We must demand action and accountability from the social and political system we have been instrumental in establishing.

Don't wait for things to happen to you; make them happen for you. Our freedom as a country was not won lightly; it took years of struggle and toil, all grounded in immense self-belief in our power to overcome. Our true freedom as silvers will require the same level of commitment. There is no room for mute appeals and self-doubt, fatalism or dependency. Get out and vote and then demand action from your elected representatives; use every tool at your disposal from community meetings to writing 'letters to the editor', from petitioning your municipal authorities to invoking the RTI Act. Every month, the pages of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* resound with silvers who have done just that. Take a cue from them and sing your own song of freedom. Happy Independence Day!

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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column one

"It will take five to 10 years to mark a politician in India and he will, in all probability, be in his 50s when in power. Also, the young need to prove themselves." With these words, scholar-statesman Dr Karan Singh seals arguments against the elderly generation holding power in India and the logic behind the right time for passing the baton to the youth. Not swayed by his lineage and regency, he has stuck to his cultural and spiritual ancestry and lived a life seeped in intellectual, literary and artistic heritage. He swears by these outfitts of yogic existence and believes that they can help you rise above the subliminal attractions of power and money. On the cover this month ("The last regent"), he is the exemplar statesman—with his head and heart in the right place and feet dug in ethics.

Standing by one's convictions, staying true to one's traditions and looking beyond the commonplace marks a wise silver. Centenarian Dattaji Tamhane ("Nation first") is one of them—no wonder then, that he has been felicitated by representatives of varied political parties for his selfless love for the country and social occupation. This issue offers a glimpse into many such lives, including journalist and human rights activist Kuldip Nayars and RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawals. In her own personal way, Poulomi Bose, daughter of legendary actor Soumitra Chatterjee, also puts faith in her legacy. The line between self and social conservation is quite fine. Treading it is S Babu who has overcome a personal loss and turned it into a cause for destitute cancer patients in Thiruvananthapuram. It's all about preserving harmony between 'what went before' and 'what comes after'.

—Meeta Bhatti

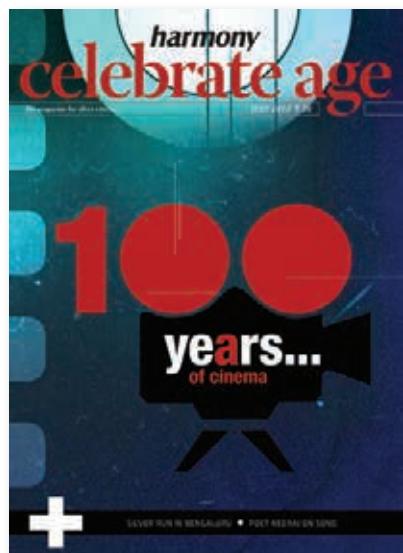
I am a former IAS officer in the Madhya Pradesh Government and a regular reader of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for the past five years.

Every morning, I read for a few hours. Thereafter, I draw out my pen and write my innermost feelings. I am passionate about academics and have managed to blend my love for writing with the duties of my career as an administrator. My life has taught me to look at the positive side of each event. I live alone but I am not lonely. At 67, I know that we are never really lonely as long as we tap into the creative wellspring that each one of us is blessed with. I really appreciate all the wonderful work that you are doing for the welfare of silvers.

Your 8th Anniversary Special was excellent and the article relating to Dr Pradip Kumar Sarmah from Assam (*Bank of Ideas; June 2012*) was truly inspiring. Jabalpur is a town of rickshaws and Dr Sarmah's thoughtful innovations will be very useful for the hard-working rickshaw-pullers of this town as well. I request you to please print the contact details of the persons you write about in the future.

Suresh Chandra Jain
Chairman, State Expert Appraisal Committee, Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Jabalpur

The cover on *100 Years of Cinema* (July 2012) was quite a refreshing read. In the times when we are losing our most-loved actors like Dev Anand and Rajesh Khanna and directors like B R Ishara, it felt good to take a trip down memory lane. Cinema was a very important part of my life during my growing up years; I used to miss college to watch films with my friends, save money or even work part-time to save enough money to go watch movies. The mention of Capitol



Cinema, *Mughal-e-Azam* and Meena Kumari in *Pakeezah* brought back a stream of memories that can only bring a smile to the face of an 83 year-old man. This is one of the reasons why I took to reading *Harmony-Celebrate Age* regularly. Thank you for not only introducing me to the contemporary ways of living, but also reminding me of all the good times I have had in my life.

Manohar Pandit, Mumbai

I am a 65 year-old retired person from the marketing field. Since my teens, photography has been my passion. Be it a simple get-together of friends or a grand wedding of someone from the family, I feel the urge to click pictures. As a result, I carry my personal digital camera wherever I go and start shooting impromptu, irrespective of good or bad light. Your article on an intrepid and enterprising photographer Sharifa Khatri (*Picture perfect; July 2012*) was truly motivating and stirred my interest to learn more about photography. Thank you for the coverage and keep up the good work.

Purushottam, Gujarat

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► MEDIA WATCH

Off the COUCH

Here's an instance where you win when you lose. Twelve silver couch potatoes from California get the workout of their lives in ***On the Move***, a new American reality TV show. Over six weeks, they walk, swim, salsa and samba their way to a leaner, meaner self, helped in no small part by exercise coaches, motivational gurus, doctors and chefs, as well as 'guest' visits from active silvers in their late 80s and 90s to serve as inspiration. "We want elder viewers to understand that there's no better route to ageing well than exercise," show creator and host Scott Kaiser, a geriatrician, tells *The New York Times*. "Exercise helps with your overall physical health, strength and balance that all become an important part of mobility and fall prevention. And, of course, it helps with your mental health and wellbeing."



Master strokes

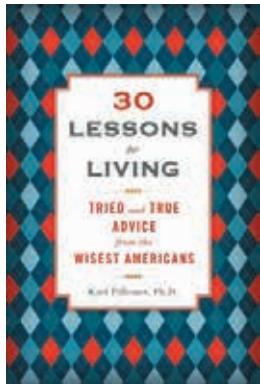


They've got game—and how! In July, cinema halls and care homes across the UK were treated to director Hugh Hartford's **inspirational documentary *Ping Pong***, which follows eight pensioners from five countries as they compete in the over-80s category of the World Table Tennis Championships in Inner Mongolia. As British newspaper *The Guardian* reports, our motley crew of heroes include 89 year-old Les D'Arcy, a British table tennis champion and Olympic torchbearer; Australian Dorothy DeLow, 100; Texan Lisa Modlich, 85; and German dementia patient Inge, 89; all united in a common crusade—to take home gold. "The film is meant to help elders realise their immense potential," says Hartford. Catch a glimpse of the film at <http://youtube/SMjTV3K5rEY>

Wise advice

Advice from silvers doesn't have to be pedantic and moralistic—it can also be refreshingly *avant-garde*. A case in point is ***30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans*** (Penguin), which features interviews of about 1,200 silvers on topics ranging from life and love, to money.

Targeted at young Americans at the crossroads of their destiny searching for direction, the book is a natural evolution of The Legacy Project blog (<http://legacyproject.human.cornell.edu/>), the brainchild of Karl Pillemer, a professor of



human development at Cornell University. In a nutshell, here's the five-point agenda that silvers throughout the book espouse:

- Take risks to avoid regret
- Make the most of a bad job
- Choose excitement over money
- Use your graduation gifts to travel
- Be an entrepreneur

"The take of the oldest Americans is amazingly relevant for today's college and high school graduates," says Pillemer.

Reality CHECK

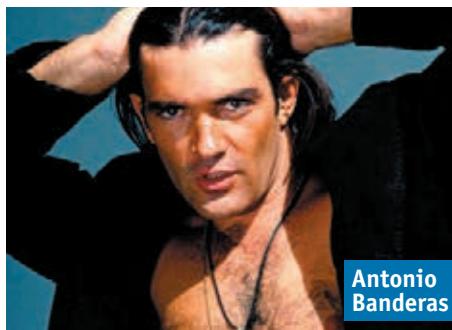
This summer, the BBC is turning its focus on Britain's silvery society with '*When I'm 65*', a series of shows that seeks to spread more awareness about the unique problems of Generation A. The season of programming includes:

- *When I Get Older*: Four celebrity silvers—actor and presenter Tony Robinson, newsman John Simpson, actor and broadcaster Lesley Joseph and singer and radio presenter Gloria Hunniford—each spend four days with an 'ordinary' silver, thus learning some harsh lessons on ground realities for British pensioners.
- *The Town That Never Retired*: A unique reality experiment modelled on hit TV show *The Apprentice* that sends 15 retired pensioners from the town of Preston back into the job market and tracks how well they fare.
- *Respect Your Elders*: With the belief that silvers in Britain are undervalued and deserve better from the system, popular TV soap star June Brown, 85, speaks to her fellow silvers in the care system and issues a rallying cry for empowerment.
- *How To Live Beyond 100*: This documentary meets centenarians across the UK who explain what it means to have watched the world change around them; how their own attitudes, thoughts and feelings have changed through the years; and what it has been like to grow older than old.

"This season brings together a range of powerful and thought-provoking programmes that explore the reality of life for many older people and the choices they face," says Danny Cohen, Controller, BBC One, in a media release.



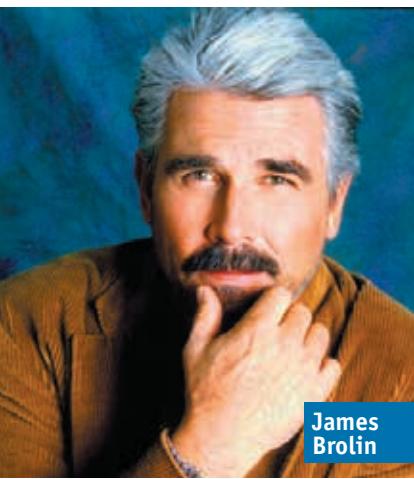
Brian Williams



Antonio Banderas



Colin Firth



James Brolin



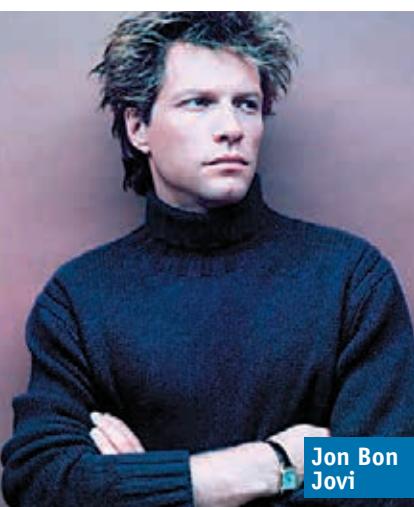
George Strait



Liam Neeson

Hot hunks

In a cover story that features the eternally hot Denzel Washington smouldering on its cover, *AARP magazine recently presented its 'Men on Fire' list of 21 heart-throbs over the age of 50*. Joining the 57 year-old on the honour roll are fellow actors George Clooney and Antonio Banderas, both 51; Samuel Jackson, 67; Viggo Mortensen, 53; Rupert Everett, 53; Colin Firth, 51; Scott Bakula, 57; Liam Neeson, 60; and James Brolin, 71; rock star Jon Bon Jovi, 50; cellist Yo-Yo Ma, 56; director Mario Van Peebles, 55; news anchor Brian Williams, 53; country singer George Strait, 60; novelist John Irving, 70; athlete Andy Mill, 59; politician John Huntsman, 52; TV executive Lesley Moonves, 62; environmentalist Robert F Kennedy Jr, 58; and palaeontologist Paul Sereno, 54. You don't want to miss this one, ladies.



Jon Bon Jovi



Mario Van Peebles



George Clooney



John Huntsman



Viggo Mortensen

PRIDE, NO PREJUDICE

India's rainbow coalition has found a distinctive voice. Solaris Pictures, in association with The Humsafar Trust and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), presents **Project Bolo**, a multigenerational oral history project that offers an archive of our country's Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) movement. Conceived and directed by Sridhar Rangayan from Solaris Pictures, the project traces the history of the Indian LGBT movement from the early 1970s through conversations with 20 eminent LGBT people across the country. "These interviews further the understanding of what it means to be a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or *hijra* in India," Rangayan tells media. "They also bring

to light the important milestones of the Indian LGBT movement, from the early efforts at forming groups in Mumbai and New Delhi and the first gay newsletter to various advocacy efforts leading to the historic Delhi High Court verdict decriminalising homosexuality. This project hopes to serve as an inspiration to the LGBT community." In fact, Project Bolo has been selected as one of the 25 'Projects for Change' from South Asia for the International Programme on LGBT Rights in Stockholm. To view a short version of the archive, go to www.youtube.com/user/Indianlgbt; to order a full version of the DVD, go to Amazon at <http://astore.amazon.com/projectbolo-20>; or <http://bit.ly/ProjectBolo>. For queries, write to projectbolo.india@gmail.com



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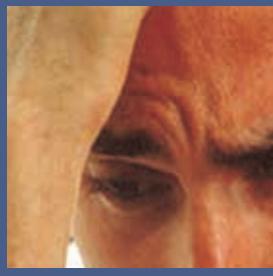
THAT'S THE NUMBER OF CENTENARIANS IN CANADA, ACCORDING TO DATA FROM THE COUNTRY'S 2011 CENSUS. THIS FIGURE IS UP BY ABOUT 1,200 SINCE THE 2006 CENSUS AND BY MORE THAN 2,000 SINCE 2001.

Diabetes & You

Are you sick and tired of constantly worrying about all the “long-term” diabetes complications?



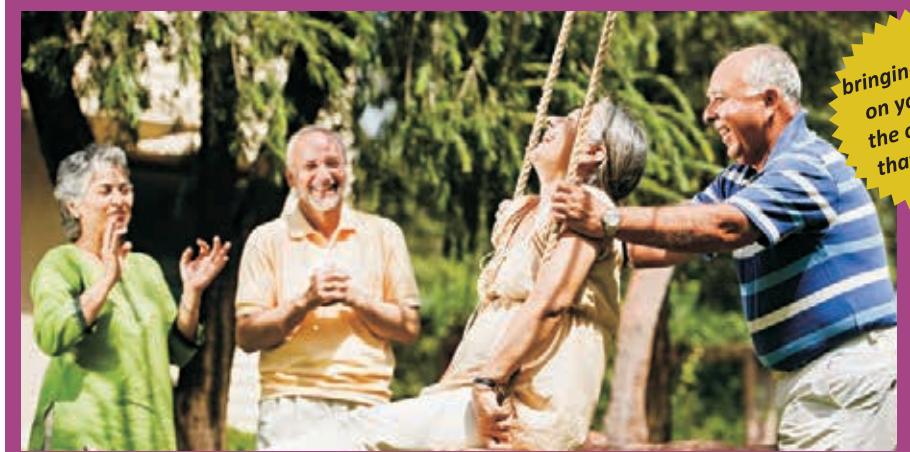
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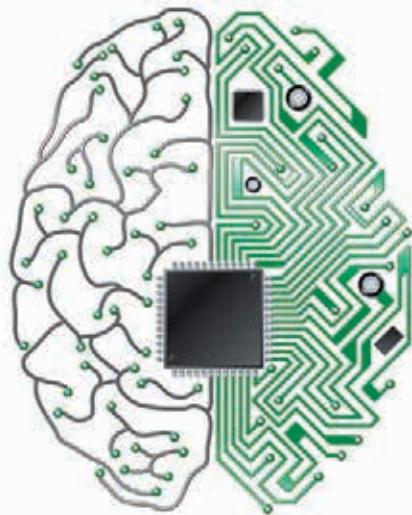
The skinny on longevity

The proof appears to be—so to speak—in the pudding as far as the long-believed link between longevity and caloric restriction is concerned. Researchers at the Institute of Health Ageing at University College London (UCL) have now established that **eating 40 per cent less food can extend your life by up to 20 years**. “If you reduce the diet of a rat by 40 per cent, it will live for 20 or 30 per cent longer,” lead researcher S Piper tells London newspaper *The Independent*. “So we would be talking 20 years of human life. We have shown this to be true for all sorts of organisms, even Labradors.” Going forward, the team has a very definite agenda, as Piper reveals: “If we discover the genes involved with ageing, we should be able to delay ageing itself.” His team’s research is being displayed at the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition in London.

CAN'T CRACK IT

WITH SILVERS often being derided as soft targets for criminals and scam artists, here’s a fact that has left many people gobsmacked: **the older you get, the more likely you are to have a secure password to your email account**. Indeed, as website www.newscientist.com reports, when Joseph Bonneau, a computer scientist at the University of Cambridge analysed the passwords of nearly 70 million Yahoo users, he found that the people over the age of 55 pick passwords double the strength of those chosen by people who are younger than 25. “This is a most interesting finding as it flies in the face of the belief that old people are lax when it comes to cyber-security,” says Bonneau. Go figure!

GOOD connections



IT MAY TAKE A LICKING, but your brain keeps on ticking. Two new studies on silver brain health attest to this. For starters, researchers at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland found that **older people with robust brain wiring processed information more quickly**. To put it simply, ‘brain wiring’ translates to ‘white matter’, or nerve fibres that connect different, distant brain areas. Thus, it is deterioration of white matter rather than ageing itself that causes cognitive difficulties in silvers, a crucial finding. The study was published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*.

Equally interestingly, an American study conducted at the Max Planck Florida Institute and Columbia University has made the remarkable discovery that **brain wiring is not fixed by adolescence**—undergoing highly sensory experiences throughout one’s lifetime can actually aid the process of rewiring, thus benefiting an ageing brain. This should be incentive enough for silvers to continue to push the envelope in terms of intellectual and creative pursuits. The study has been published in journal *Neuron*.

Scent of silver

We've all heard it, the rude sniffs about 'old people's smell' that puts us somewhere between musty books and pungent socks in the continuum of malodour. Now, here's a breath of fresh air in the form of a study by the Monell Chemical Senses Centre in Philadelphia that says that **while the elderly may indeed smell different, their body odour is neither particularly strong nor particularly unpleasant.** In fact, when participants smelt body odour samples from three age groups (young = 20-30 years; middle-age = 45-55; old = 75-95), they not only correctly distinguished them apart but rated the smell of the elderly as less intense and less unpleasant than the body odour of the young and middle-aged. "The notion that the elderly have a distinct smell exists in multiple cultures and usually the odour is said to be unpleasant," writes lead researcher Johan Lundström in journal *PLoS ONE*.

"But this probably has more to do with negative perceptions of old age, rather than with the odour itself. Having said that, it is evident that people's skin biology and chemistry change as they age, which may account for changes in the way their skin smells."

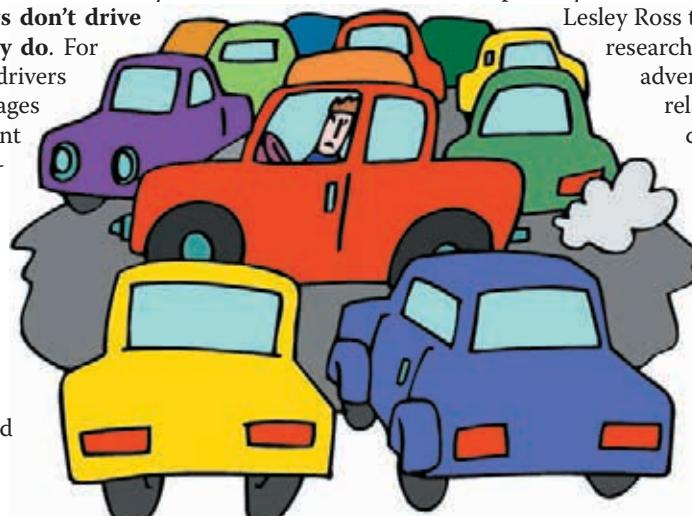


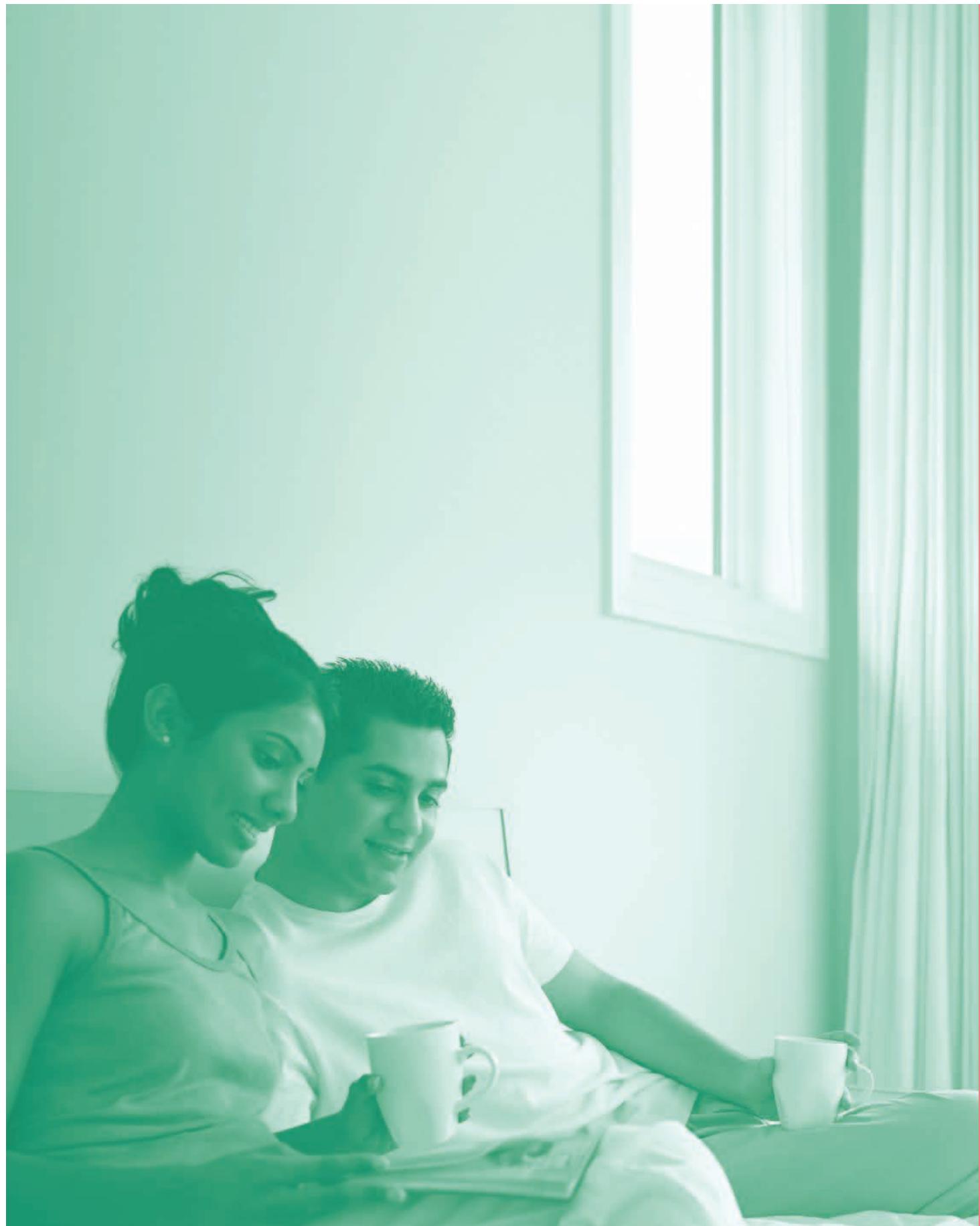
Road to danger

OVERESTIMATION can prove dangerous on the road—whether it's speed or ability to drive well. According to a new study conducted at the University of Alabama in the US, **silvers don't drive as well as they think they do.** For instance, out of 350 drivers surveyed between the ages of 65 and 91, 85 per cent rated themselves as 'excellent' or 'good' over the course of the previous five years. This, despite the fact that 25 per cent had undergone at least one crash in that period! And while less than 1 per cent rated themselves as 'fair', not even one rated

themselves as 'poor'. "A large debate in driving research is whether or not at-risk drivers can self-regulate, and thus possibly reduce their crash risk," study author

Lesley Ross tells news agency AFP. "This research indicates that a history of adverse driving outcomes has no relationship with self-reported driving ability, thus possibly indicating a lack of awareness with regard to driving abilities. That is a real danger." There were an estimated 32.3 million drivers over the age of 65 on the road in the US in 2008, a number that is expected to surpass 40 million by 2020.





APPARENTLY, PEOPLE ARE MOST LIKELY TO TURN TO MAGAZINES FOR INFORMATION ON CATEGORIES LIKE BEAUTY, FINANCE, LIFESTYLE, AUTOMOBILES AND SUCH. **(HOW WE'RE TEMPTED TO SAY, "WE TOLD YOU SO".)**

With information coming in at us, left, right and centre, picking the right and reliable source can be a challenge. Ditto, when it comes to brands. However, new research* indicates that readers actively seek information on brands and products when they read magazines. And more often than not, prefer magazines over other media for dependable product information. Visit www.aim.org.in to read more about the research findings.



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



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Eighty, and happy

They're happy, and they know it. Calling the 85-plus generation "much happier than perceived", ace gerontologist Tom Kirkwood and his team at Biomedical Research Centre in Ageing at Newcastle University recently unveiled some preliminary results of their groundbreaking 'Newcastle 85+ study' of more than 1,000 silvers. Some highlights:

- The 85-plus group is now the fastest-growing segment of the population in the UK. From 2.6 million right now, the figure is likely to jump to 4.8 million by 2030.
- This will lead to an 82 per cent increase in the demand for places in care homes, with an additional 630,000 older people needing accommodation.
- 80 per cent of people over the age of 85 rate their quality of life either good or excellent.
- Astonishingly, the same percentage—80 per cent—need little care from the system and are able to lead fairly independent lives.

"Although the 85-plus population is the fastest growing, it's quite extraordinary how little we know about what they are like," Kirkwood tells London newspaper *The Guardian*.



"It's a myth that they are bowls of misery, unhappy with their lot, and always going on about ailments." Another source of optimism, according to him, is the fact that life expectancy is increasing by about two years every decade.



Over-protected

WHILE it is now established that (safe) sex is good for silvers—emotionally and physically—many care-giving facilities still seem to be unwilling to accept the fact. In fact, a study conducted at the Australian Centre for Evidence-Based Aged Care argues that even **competent and healthy silvers are often denied privacy or separated from potential sexual partners at nursing homes**. This is done ostensibly out of concern for their safety or fear of disapproval from family members but the study argues that this is discriminatory and unfair. "It has been well-established that sexuality and intimacy continue to be important in later life and are central to an individual's health and wellbeing," the researchers write in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*.

Ageing Across Europe



**EUROPE AND AGE:
ACCORDING TO A NEW
SURVEY FROM AGE-POSITIVE
CHARITY WRVS CALLED
AGEING ACROSS EUROPE, THE
UK FARES POORLY COMPARED
TO COUNTERPARTS LIKE
SWEDEN, GERMANY AND THE
NETHERLANDS IN TERMS OF
WELLBEING AND HEALTH,
RESPECT AND LEVELS OF
LONELINESS.**

Rats remember

MICE may have it better than us—at least when it comes to memory. According to a study conducted at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, **elderly mice were able to match up to much younger mice in a series of memory tasks** when they were injected with extra amounts of an enzyme called DNA methyltransferase (Dnmt3a2). The enzyme is responsible for switching genes on or off in the brain. “We found they performed just like young animals,” study leader Hilmar Bading says in a report published on website *newscientist.com*. “If you have too little of the enzyme, your memory works less well.” Here’s the rub, though: “As yet, there is no drug that could boost levels of Dnmt3a2 in the human brain, but more of it gets made



naturally when the brain is active.” A clear reiteration of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*’s mantra when it comes to the brain: use it.

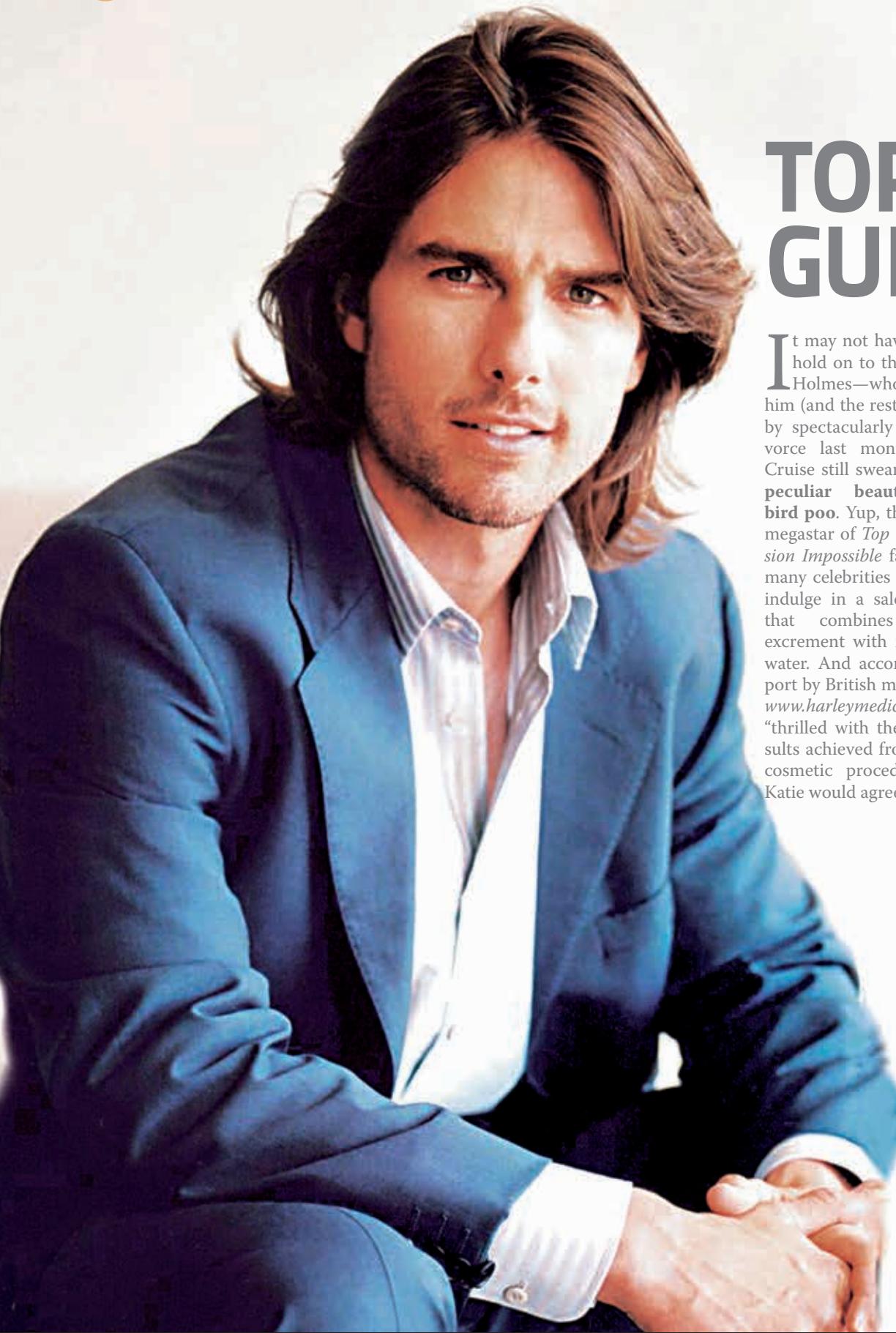
Bee smart

Reverse ageing is a reality for bees. Researchers at Arizona State University and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences discovered that **when ageing bees**

return to their nest to tend to their larvae, their brains actually rejuvenate. They proved this by reintroducing a set of foraging bees to their nest after removing all the younger bees



from the nest, leaving behind only the queen and babies (larvae). While some of the bees soon left to forage once again, others continued to remain to care for the nest; of these, 50 per cent significantly improved their ability to learn new things after just 10 days. “We knew from previous research that when bees stay in the nest and take care of larvae they remain mentally competent for as long as we observe them,” writes lead author Gro Amdam of ASU’s School of Life Sciences in scientific journal *Experimental Gerontology*. “However, following a period of nursing, they fly out gathering food and begin ageing very quickly. After just two weeks, foraging bees have worn wings, hairless bodies and, more important, lose brain function, basically measured as the ability to learn new things. Now, we realise this can be reversed. If we can pinpoint how exactly this happens, we may find a viable way to battle dementia.”



TOP GUNK

It may not have helped him hold on to third wife Katie Holmes—who blindsided him (and the rest of the world) by spectacularly filing for divorce last month—but Tom Cruise still swears by a rather peculiar beauty regimen: bird poo. Yup, the 50 year-old megastar of *Top Gun* and *Mission Impossible* fame is one of many celebrities who regularly indulge in a salon face mask that combines nightingale excrement with rice bran and water. And according to a report by British medical website www.harleymedical.co.uk, he is “thrilled with the fantastic results achieved from having the cosmetic procedure”. If only Katie would agree.

3-minute freezer

A recently launched treatment in India claims to relieve you from post-operative trauma, arthritis, chronic pain, spondylosis, asthma and even skin disorders. Whole Body Cryotherapy—being publicised as an invigorating treatment—was initially engineered in Japan in 1978; it was later researched and perfected in Germany by 1984. Following its phenomenal success, the treatment became popular all over Europe and is soon catching up in other countries. Now the German wonder machine has found its place in Soundarapandian Bone and Joint Hospital in Chennai. Patients suffering from ailments listed above step into a pre-cryo chamber clad in swimwear for maximum exposure, before going into the cryo chamber. While the pre-cryo chamber is cooled up to 60 degree Celsius, the cryo chamber is frozen up to 110 degrees. Altogether, the patient stays in the chamber for three minutes. Sunita Vikram, in charge of Cryotherapy Chambers at the hospital, says, "We are getting a good response; people come complaining about pains, but leave with a smile



on their faces." Post-treatment, the pain is reportedly minimised and there is dramatic reduction in medication intake as well. Vikram adds, "After the treatment in the cold chambers, brain starts releasing endorphins and some such compounds that boost energy levels. It also improves metabolism and blood circulation, which, in turn, reduces stress." A case of rheumatoid arthritis might need 15-20 cryotherapy sessions, while severe arthritis requires 30 sessions, with each costing about ₹ 2,000. Studies are being conducted to evaluate the exact role of Whole Body Cryotherapy in treating cancer.

A RECENT SURVEY CLAIMS THAT THERE ARE MORE THAN 500 MILLION PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM HEARING LOSS WORLDWIDE. OF THIS, A WHOPPING 65 PER CENT POPULATION TAKES OVER A DECADE TO BE DIAGNOSED WITH THE PROBLEM. IN RESPONSE TO THIS SURVEY, HEARING AID MANUFACTURER WIDEX HAS LAUNCHED SUPER, A PRODUCT THAT SERVES MODERATE TO SEVERE HEARING LOSS. SMALL, COMFORTABLE AND VERSATILE, WIDEX SUPER COMES WITH THE BRAND-NEW RITE (RECEIVER-IN-THE-EAR) TECHNOLOGY, A BOON FOR SILVERS.



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Sing out loud. It's never too late to find your voice. In fact, Los Angeles-based vocal coach Per Bristow—whose *Sing with Freedom* programme (www.TheSingingZone.com) is one of the most popular voice training programmes in the world—says he has witnessed a recent surge in the number of students over the age of 65. "I think it is absolutely wonderful that so many seniors have so recently embraced the mindset of wanting to learn and develop and engage in their passions," he says in a media release. "Singing is indeed for everyone and is such a fantastic activity for us to all engage in, whatever age we are at."



Then: Newspaper Now: Gift Bag

Apart from dispatching news, newspapers can be used in many more useful (and interesting) ways—for instance, *Harmony-Celebrate Age's* cute gift bag.

Place two sheets of newspaper on each other and cut out a rectangle 15.5" wide and 8.25 m long. Turn the paper in 1.25"

from the top and 2" from the bottom. Make five vertical folds to form the sides of the bag. Keep the front and back panel longer than the side gussets and leave 0.5" to glue in the sides.

Glue in the top, which is folded 1.25" to form the sturdy rim at the top of the bag.

Holding the bag upside down, fold the bottom 2" of the paper as you wrap a present. Fold the short sides inward and longer sides on top of it. Gluing the folds, hold the bag upright and push the fold from inside to secure it.

Cut a piece of a cardboard (size of the base) and stick it to the inside bottom of the bag to hide the folds and thicken the base. Punch two holes on each side on top of the bag and string a cord through it to form handles. Tie a knot on each end of the cord so that the cord doesn't slip through the holes.

Hareesh Patel



MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

KEEPING THE SIZE OF THE BAG BIGGER AND USING A CARD PAPER INSTEAD OF NEWSPAPER WILL MAKE YOU A STURDY CARRY BAG OUT OF PAPER



FACTS

- » Air pollution can be lowered by 73 % if paper is produced through recycling and not made from conservative raw materials.
- » It takes 24 trees to make 1 tonne of newspaper; recycling this one tonne can save 17 mature trees, 7,000 gallons of water, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, 2 barrels of oil, and 4,000 kilowatt hours of electricity.

BIRTHDAYS

- Director-producer **Kiran Shantaram**, chairman of the V Shantaram Foundation, turned 70 on 28 June. He was felicitated by filmmaker Shyam Benegal at an event attended by fellow filmmakers like Dr Jabbar Patel, Govind Nihalani and Sachin Pilgaonkar.
- American actors **Donald Sutherland** and **David Hasselhoff** of *MASH* and *Baywatch* fame turned 77 and 60 respectively on 17 July.



- Rolling Stones icon **Mick Jagger** turned 68 on 26 July.

MILESTONES

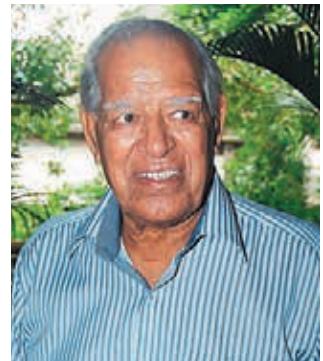
- Public health specialist and activist **Dr Binayak Sen** and **Bulu Imam**, the noted environmentalist fighting to save the upper Damodar Valley from coal mining, received the Gandhi International Peace Award at the House of Lords on 12 June.



- On 21 June, Vedic scholars **Jayanand Shukal**, **Bhagwatlal Shukal**, **Indravadan Bhatt**, **Laxmi Joshi** and **Mihir Upadhyay** were felicitated by Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi for their contribution to the traditional language of Sanskrit. Calling it the most-computer friendly language, Modi advocated its use for connecting culture to modern science.

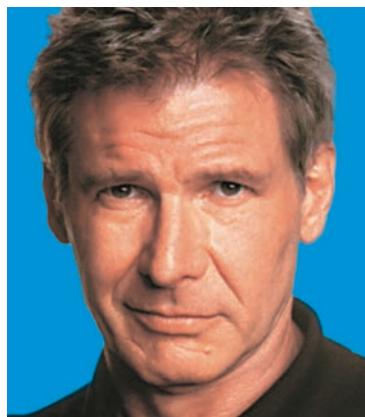
IN PASSING

- Rustam-e-Hind, wrestler-turned-actor **Dara Singh Randhawa** died of prolonged illness on 12 July. He was 83.
- Oscar-winning actor **Celeste Holm** of *The Gentlemen's Agreement* fame passed away in New York on 15 July. She was 95.
- Founder of rock band Deep Purple and co-writer of the legendary *Smoke on the water*, keyboardist **Jon Lord** died of pancreatic cancer in London on 16 July. He was 71.



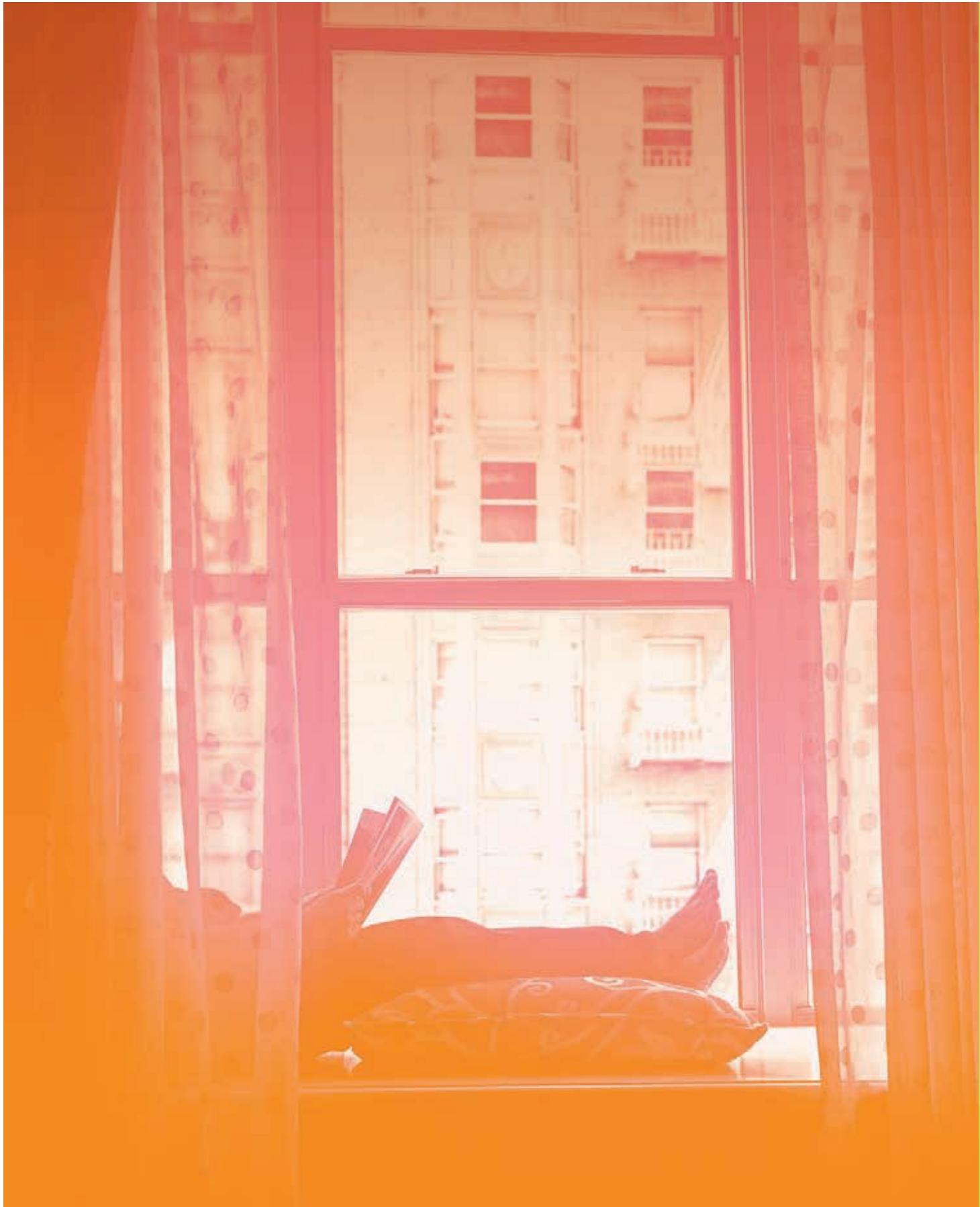
- Legendary superstar and heartthrob **Rajesh Khanna** died on 18 July. The 69 year-old actor had been ailing for long.
- Legendary country singer **Kitty Wells** died at her Nashville home at the age of 92. She had to her credit 81 charted singles and 35 Billboard Top Ten records.
- Socialist-activist **Mrinal Gore** died of cardiac arrest in Mumbai on 17 July.

Popularly called Paaniwali Bai, Gore was the force behind the water supply plan for Mumbai's suburbs. She was 84.

OVERHEARD

"Retirement is for old people. You may get real tired watching me, but I'm not going to quit. And I don't know about you, but I think I've got better with every birthday—better looking, more talented, wiser. Well, maybe not more modest!"

—Actor **Harrison Ford**, 70, to US TV show *Entertainment Tonight*



THREE AUDIENCE PROFILES MOST MEDIA BRIEFS INvariably OVERLOOK: RELAXED. ALONE. LOST TO THE WORLD.

In an age of shrinking attention spans and increasing media options, perhaps the answer lies in engaging with consumers at a far deeper level. Like magazines do. We read magazines when we're alone and relaxed. We take out time for them, and give them our undivided attention. They're part of high quality 'me' time. Perhaps, that's why magazines rated far higher than other media on engagement scores, in a recent study*. Visit www.aim.org.in to read more about the research findings.

68% readers read magazines when they're alone (the highest for any medium)

65% readers give undivided attention to magazines (twice as much as for TV)

66% readers turn to magazines when they want to relax (25% higher than the next medium)

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



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Natural resources

MAHESH CHANDRA BORA, ASSAM



Photographs by Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

Having spent over three decades amid black diamond—as coal is called—was more than enough. After experimenting with various post-retirement options for several years, I was suddenly attracted by a feature in an in-flight magazine on a group of people in Rajasthan making handmade paper from elephant dung. I thought if they could do it with elephant dung, I could do it by mixing rhino and elephant dung.

Getting a bank loan of ₹ 2 million was difficult because bankers refused to believe that a retired person would be able to repay it. But SBI came forward and gave me the loan, with which I not only set up my unit at the industrial estate in Chatabari, 75 km

off Guwahati, but bought equipment like a rag-chopper, a Hollander-beater to beat dung and chopped rags into pulp, a hydraulic press to drain water out of raw paper, a calendaring machine to smoothen the paper, and a cutting machine to cut the paper into specific size.

Procuring elephant dung is not difficult; there are over 5,600 wild and nearly 1,600 domestic elephants in Assam, with more than 200 of the latter variety around my unit at Chatabari. But getting rhino dung has been tough. While taking rhino dung out of Kaziranga or any other protected area is illegal, the state forest department refused to part with dung in the state zoo, saying there is no provision to let any private party

collect it. This has prompted me to collect rhino dung from villages near Kaziranga and Pobitora, where rhinos stray regularly in search of food. As it's not enough, I use elephant dung as well. We need 2,000 kg of dung (of which rhino dung is just about 5 per cent because of the difficulty in procuring it) and 275 kg of rag to produce 1,000 kg of paper. This apart, we also require 4,000 litre of water per day and electricity worth ₹ 3,000 every month.

Having started production in November 2011, the unit is still in its infancy. We produce about 500 sheets or 22 kg of chart-size paper every day. Whatever little we produce has been gradually getting us individual buyers from Mumbai and Delhi.

SPINNING THE WEB

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

HOW TO MAKE PAPER FROM ELEPHANT AND RHINO DUNG

"First, we wash the wet elephant and rhino dung thoroughly, boil it in water



and disinfect it, which helps remove the lignin (the glue that binds plant cellulose), leaving only cellulose. It is then thoroughly dried in the sun, following which it is pulped by mixing it with bits of clean cotton rags in water and some harmless chemicals. A washing drum cleans the pulp and drains the dirty water. Thereafter, the pulp is put into a masonry trough. A lifting mould (a mesh on a wooden frame) is then dipped in the trough, shaken evenly and lifted out, with pulp forming a sheet of paper on it. Once the sheet is formed, the wet paper is transferred on to a cloth like muslin or felt sheet to make a stack of interleaved sheets. A hydraulic press removes excess water and reduces the thickness of the paper, making it more compact. This also improves the physical properties of handmade paper and helps drying. The pressed sheets still contain 50-60 per cent moisture, which is removed by hanging them to dry in the sun. Coloured paper is dried in the shade to prevent bleaching of colour. The sheets are then placed between metallic plates and passed through spring-loaded rollers in a calendaring machine, which makes the paper smooth and increases its gloss."

I have also been experimenting with local flowers by using them to create prints on the paper. We pick these wild-flowers from the roadside and separate the petals and leaves before laying them in a random pattern before the sheets are passed through the calendaring machine. For value addition, I am also working on designs of products like lampshades, albums, bags, scrapbooks, gift boxes and wall-clocks.

Marketing my products is still a big challenge, especially because there is hardly any local market for these expensive items. I am now exploring the possibility of using bigger hotels and resorts in Guwahati and Kaziranga to catch the high-spending tourist. My son and two daughters help me track similar outlets in Mumbai and Delhi, and of course abroad. For her part, my wife Sheila, a retired professor of history from Dibrugarh University, calls it an "expensive hobby".

My five employees are school drop-outs, and I am teaching them the basics. I stay three to four days in the factory, and spend the rest of the week with my wife in Guwahati. My day starts at 5 am, when I teach my helper Nasiruddin to read and write as well as drive. Rajesh Boro is learning simple account-keeping. Ajit Kalita has already picked up the basic skills of an electrician-cum-plumber, and is now learning computer skills on my laptop. Nasiruddin also brings a few kilos of home-grown jute from his village every month, which we use to make ropes and strings.

At the end of it, one might ask, 'Why use elephant and rhino dung?' Not only does use of animal dung as raw material help reduce felling of trees for making paper, it also generates awareness for conservation of both elephants and rhinos.

—As told to Tapati Baruah Kashyap

I am tech-savvy and have a good knowledge of computers. I would like to start a website for online teaching. How do I launch it and what kind of monetary returns should I expect?

Online teaching is a complicated yet fast growing concept. Such jobs are widely available in institutions that offer online trainers. Some think that online teaching is easy as you do not have to face your learner, but that's what makes this job difficult. First and foremost, you need to acquire proper qualifications to be able to teach, even if it's online. You haven't mentioned the subjects you want to teach, but it is necessary to have a degree in that subject to offer your learners enough confidence. As they don't meet you personally, your papers and qualification are your only image. Targeting students in the early teens helps bring in good remuneration. You can also register with various agencies and institutions that offer online tutors—they have their own set of students. Starting your own institution will mean designing your website, publicising it and hunting for students. You can gather experience from existing agencies and opt for self-employment only when you learn how the industry works. Later, when you are ready, you can register an institute online and start your own services. For this, you will also need teaching software that helps active interaction with students.

—Shalini Sandhu is a retired teacher and a registered online tutor with WizIQ portal, Mumbai

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.

EMBRACING CHANGE

For more than three decades, I worked as a marketing and management specialist in the corporate world. This included being a partner in a trading company, marketing director of a garment accessories manufacturer and founder of a solar engineering company. But after a certain age, one's priorities tend to shift. So in 2002, my wife and I moved from Baroda to Delhi to be close to our children.

This meant I would have to reinvent myself professionally, so I decided to make the switch to the NGO sector. I figured I could use my excellent networking and management skills to make a real difference. I love a good challenge and as I am very adaptable, I approached this new chapter in my life with enthusiasm.

My initial experiment lasted only a few months and I felt like a fish out of water. Not only was the work culture different from what I was familiar with, financial transactions were not very transparent. Also, I found the consumer rights NGO I had signed up with had questionable ethics. So I quit but was determined to stick with the NGO sector. Next, I got in touch with a few friends of mine who ran a voluntary organisation in Baroda, called Safety Action Group, and revived the agency.

It gave me a foothold in the world of voluntary action. It was also a time when the world was waking up to global warming and there was a need to bring about a fundamental shift in the way goods and services were produced and consumed to avert an environmental crisis. I jumped on to the bandwagon, as I knew I could contribute to promoting sustainable consumption. It felt good to work with a vision as opposed to working with targets and balance sheets.

I soon acquired a grip in the unfolding scenario and found myself organising several national and international conferences on environment. These included the first Indian Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption & Production (SCP); the second Indian Roundtable on SCP in New Delhi; and the third India Roundtable on SCP focusing on agriculture, energy, waste management, water and consumption.

In 2010, after a decade of working in the field of voluntary action, I set up my own NGO called Society in Action Group. I partnered with the Bengaluru-based Centre for



Anju Mohan

Gandhi: Man with a mission and vision

Internet and Society to set up Privacy India in 2010, under the auspices of an international organisation called Privacy International. The organisation engages with policy makers, the public and sector experts about privacy issues in India. Privacy has become a growing concern with advances in technology, digitisation of data, introduction of e-governance and national security assuming prime importance.

The corporate world was all about deadlines, stress, troubleshooting and money, while the NGO sector is all about making a direct impact on lives and the way we live. Ever since I hung up my corporate suit and tie, I have worked in a spectrum of fields and am thoroughly enjoying the experience. Here's another plus: had I stuck with the corporate world, I would probably never have gained recognition as one of India's leading experts on SCP. How's that for a career change?

—Rajan Gandhi, Delhi



WINNER ALL THE WAY

I grew up in South Africa where non-whites or 'coloured' people, as we were labelled, bore the brunt of apartheid. I took solace in football—the closest it came to liberation in a country torn apart by a racial war. At 59, it's the only thing that still keeps me going and has taught me to live life with a smile.

As a South African brought up with Indian values at home, growing up was a mixed experience. I didn't understand why we had to live in separate settlements and struggle for basic necessities. But we took life as it came.

I played football in dusty lanes and it became a part of life simply because it gave me joy. Those were days when white people played in their own football league, where we were not welcome. I made my debut for a local side called Mamelodi Sundowns and made an instant impact on debut, scoring a hat-trick in the first 15 minutes of the game. I won a local fan following but, three years later, it led to an incident that had a deep impact on my life.

At 19, I was approached by an all-white club, Berea Park, and was able to play for them, thanks to my fair complexion. But 'Essop Moosa' was a dead giveaway on the team list so my coach rechristened me 'Arthur Williams'. Midway through the game, the crowd recognised me and started cheering, "Moosa, Moosa!" The police arrived at our home that night and warned me never to do it again and to "stay out of trouble". In that very moment, I truly realised what

Moosa: Life is a game, play it

it meant to be a non-white in South Africa and how your dreams could crumble in an instant.

My father was a die-hard football fan and he took me to England, where I was signed by Westham United. But although my coach placed great faith in me, the stint was short-lived due to a groin injury. I moved to Holland for a spell with the Go Ahead Eagles in an era when Dutch club Ajax enchanted the world with their 'Total Football'. After six appearances and a goal, I returned to England, only to be denied a work permit. I was shattered and had no choice but to fly back to South Africa, where I continued to play professional football in the top league till I turned 39. I had always dreamed of coaching one day, especially in India, which I feel is my spiritual home. So, five years ago, when I saw some Indian boys play at a youth tournament in Johannesburg, I knew what I had to do. When I heard of the Football Development Foundation and their youth development programme in India, I approached them. Over the summer, we had camps in Mumbai and Kochi, where I trained about 1,500 children. I keep visiting India to coach and I feel very satisfied.

Oddly, I finally feel liberated; to be able to indulge in football in a country where I have my roots and where I have no 'baggage'. Had I grown up playing football in India, who knows where the game would have taken me? But had I grown up in India, I would not be half the man I am today.

—Essop Moosa, Mumbai



EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Sweet sense: Diet control for diabetics

I am a partially active 60 year-old vegetarian man suffering from Type 2 diabetes. Please suggest a healthy meal plan.

Type 2 diabetes is a lifestyle disease most commonly caused by obesity. The good news is that it can be controlled and managed effectively. When you have diabetes, your diet plays a key role in controlling your blood sugar levels. Sensible selection of food and a disciplined lifestyle are the two prime factors on which the success of diabetic treatment depends. As a diabetic, the major goals you should try to achieve through your dietary habits are to balance your blood glucose levels, maintain a healthy lipid profile, and maintain a healthy weight.

Many of your nutritional needs as an older adult may overlap with your dietary requirements for staying healthy with diabetes. Dried beans, fatty fish, dark green vegetables, citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes, nuts and non-fat dairy products are the best options in your case. These foods contain calcium, potassium, fibre, magnesium and Vitamins A, C and E—calcium helps prevent bone loss; potassium regulates blood pressure; fibre promotes healthy digestion. Vitamins A and C help you resist skin and respiratory infections. Foods rich in protein—whole grains, legumes, soy and its products or dried beans—give your body the essential nutrients it needs to build new tissues and repair wounds.

The main food components that need to be monitored while planning a healthy meal are:

Carbohydrates: There's no need to eliminate carbohydrates completely from the diet, but make sure you select

the right kind. The carbohydrates we consume are either simple or complex. Complex carbohydrates are found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and starches and simple ones are found in table sugar and processed foods. For a diabetic, complex carbohydrates are considered healthier, as they are digested by the body slowly and provide a steady source of energy. They also contain valuable amounts of fibre. It is best to avoid simple carbs (as carbohydrates are popularly, and notoriously, called).

Fat: A high-fat diet contributes to diabetes and results in complications. But it does not mean you have to avoid fat totally. Eat healthy fats in moderation. Fats are an important part of a well-balanced diet. Like protein, consuming fat along with carbohydrates can help curb hunger. Fat found in margarine, butter, shortening, cream, cheese, gravy, mayonnaise should be avoided. While it is important that you include some fat in your meals and snacks, it is equally important that you make wise choices about the type and amount that you consume. Being diabetic puts you at an increased risk of heart disease and stroke, as diabetes accelerates the development of clogged and hardened arteries. The best choice of fat includes olives, olive oil and canola oil, rice bran oil, mustard oil and *til* oil.

Proteins: Compared to fats and carbohydrates, proteins are considered a safer choice for diabetic diets, as they do not raise the blood sugar level like carbohydrates or supply high calories like fats. Good sources include fish, legumes, grains, soy products, beans and dairy products.

Fibre: Vegetables, fruits, whole grains and nuts have a high content of healthy fibre. Although fibre is not directly responsible for providing your body with energy, it helps cleanse it by passing waste and water through the intestine



Being diabetic puts you at an increased risk of heart disease and stroke, as diabetes accelerates the development of clogged and hardened arteries. The best choice of fat includes olives, olive oil and canola oil, rice bran oil, mustard oil and *til* oil

to be removed as solid waste. Eating more fibre helps keep your blood glucose levels under control because it slows the rate at which carbohydrates are digested.

In addition to following a disciplined diet, there are other factors that can influence your dietary habits. For example, exercise helps burn calories, reduces weight and helps utilise sugars. Excessive exercise or less-than-required exercise may have a negative effect on your blood sugar. It can suddenly dip, causing hypoglycaemia; or increase at an alarming rate, causing hyperglycaemia. It is important to have foods and medication on hand to balance extreme variations in blood sugar. A minimum of a 30-minute brisk walk at least five times a week is the simplest and best form of exercise.

Another major issue for diabetics is weight control. As a result of uncontrolled blood sugar levels, diabetics often have to deal with weight gain. Losing weight helps reduce the blood glucose level. The glycaemic index is a good way to manage weight and sugar levels—it is a rating system that helps you know how certain foods affect blood sugar levels; accordingly, you could include or exclude foods from your diet. Eating low GI foods distributes energy that is sustained for longer duration. This eliminates the need to run for food every two hours.

Here's an eating plan that will support your overall health and prevent diabetes-related complications:

Early morning: Lukewarm water with 1 tbsp fenugreek (*methi*) seeds

Breakfast: A cup of tea; one whole wheat bread sandwich or *besan chilla* with green chutney or oats *poha* or two slices of toast with three egg whites (omelette or scrambled); one orange

Mid-morning: A glass of spinach and tomato juice

Lunch: One or two *jowar* chapatti, a bowl of vegetables (avoid potatoes, *suran*, *arbi*); any *dal* and salad

Mid-afternoon: A glass of buttermilk

I suffer from osteoporosis and the doctor has advised Vitamin D as a mandatory supplement. I am not exactly active and spend much of my day at home. Are there any Vitamin D-rich foods that can be a part of my diet?

Normally, our body takes in Vitamin D in the form of sun-synthesis through the skin. However, many of us spend long hours inside the office, home and shopping malls; our actual exposure to sunlight is limited. A mild lack of Vitamin D may not cause any serious symptoms but can cause general aches and pains. A more severe lack can cause serious problems such as rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults (softening of bones causing easy fractures). This makes it extremely important to have a diet high in Vitamin D or the need for Vitamin D 3 supplements. There are only a select number of foods containing Vitamin D naturally. Here are some good food sources:

- **Dried button mushrooms:** They are high in Vitamin D and rich in Vitamins B1 and B2.
- **Fish:** Salmon and mackerel infuse us with vitamins and essential omega-3 fatty acids that our body cannot produce on its own. A small piece of these can help meet 90 per cent of our daily requirement of Vitamin D. Sardines are one of the best foods containing Vitamin D. These tiny fish are also a great source for Vitamin B12, omega-3 fatty acids, protein and selenium.
- **Cod liver oil:** This is a rich source of Vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Eggs:** Eggs also contain Vitamin D in small amounts. One egg provides about 10 per cent of the daily requirement of this vitamin.

In case you are a vegetarian or don't eat fish, you can get the same benefits by taking supplements of Vitamin D or making sure you get plenty of sunlight every day.

Tea time: A cup of tea; 30 gm mixed nuts; a small bowl of papaya

Dinner: One or two *jowar* chapatti, a cup of vegetables (non-leafy); a cup of leafy vegetables; yoghurt or *dal* or soybean or low-fat paneer; sprout salad

Bedtime: A cup of skimmed milk

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



WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

Pain management: Simple stretches for the neck, shoulders and back

I have taken up a new job that requires me to sit in front of the computer for long hours. I am 50 years old and have been undergoing therapy for back pain. But in this new job, I have been suffering from neck and shoulder pain as well. Please suggest a compatible exercise plan.

Check if your work station is ergonomically sound. If your desk ergonomics is not favourable, your back and neck problems will persist. Along with good ergonomics, supervised stretching exercises and weight training will help you as well. Here are a few stretching and back strengthening exercises:

Stretching exercises

Stretch daily but don't push it hard; movements should be smooth and slow. Stretching can even be carried out for 5 repetitions with a 10-second hold.

Neck retraction stretch: Stand or sit for this stretch. Pull your head back as far as possible and down slightly. Hold the stretch. This targets your sternocleidomastoid (in the anterior portion of the neck) and splenius muscle (a broad muscle in the back of the neck).

Neck rotation: Stand or sit for this stretch. Turn head over shoulder to one side. Hold stretch. Repeat to other side. Head can be pulled towards the back. This targets your sternocleidomastoid and splenius muscle.

Neck side stretch: Bow head forward with jaw shut. Depress chin into top of the sternum. Slightly turn your head to one side and hold the stretch. Repeat on the other side. This targets your splenius muscle.

Deltoid stretch: Position your right arm across the chest. Place your left hand on the elbow and push the elbow towards the chest. Hold for some time before repeating with the opposite arm. Positioning arm on the upper chest stretches the rear deltoid.

Back deltoid stretch: Face a stationary bar and grasp it with your right hand at chin level. Rotate your body to the right so the upper arm is positioned across the chest. Hold and repeat with the other arm.

Triceps stretch: Put an arm overhead, with the forearm as close as possible to the upper arm. Grasp your elbow overhead with the other hand. Pull the elbow back and towards the head. Hold and repeat with the other arm.

Biceps stretch: Clasp your hands behind the back with palms together. Straighten your arms and rotate (inside down) with palms turned downwards. Raise arms away from body and hold the stretch.

Cat stretch: Kneel on a mat and place hands shoulder-width apart. Flex spine by hunching back up. Extend spine by arching back.

Gluteus stretch: Lie supine on a mat with knees bent. Cross right leg over the left thigh. Hold the left leg from behind the thigh with both hands. Pull the leg towards your torso. Hold this stretch for some time and repeat with the other leg.



Standing glutes stretch: Stand facing an elevated platform. Place the outside of your foot on the platform with knee bent out to the side. Lean by lowering the torso towards the thighs. Hold the stretch. Repeat with the second leg. Hands can be placed on elevated platform to maintain balance. Spine should be straight, though the pelvis may be tilted forward to intensify the stretch.

Quadriceps stretch: Lie prone on a mat with your right arm extended. Hold your left ankle or forefoot from behind with your left arm. Pull your left foot towards your left hip. Hold the stretch for some time and repeat with the right leg. A thickly folded towel can be placed under the upper hip if lumbar spine hyperextension is otherwise uncomfortable.

Hamstring stretch: Sit on a mat with legs straight. Reach forward and bring upper body toward the legs. Hold the stretch. Spine should be straight, while pelvis may be tilted forward to intensify the stretch.

Back strengthening exercises

Repetitions: 5; Sets: 2; Hold for 10 seconds

Glute bridges: Glute bridges also work your rectus abdominus, placing special emphasis on the lower muscle fibres. Assume the crunch position with your feet flat on the floor. Squeeze your abs to press your lower back into the floor as if you were doing a pelvic tilt. Maintain this contraction as you squeeze your glutes to lift your hips off the floor until your body is in a straight line from shoulders to knees. Lower slowly back to the floor.

Pelvic tilts: Pelvic tilts are a gentle version of crunches; like crunches, tilts work the rectus abdominus. For pelvic tilts, assume a crunch position with your feet flat on the floor. Squeeze your abs to flatten your lower back into the floor. Hold briefly, and then relax so that your lower back lifts slightly off the floor, back into its natural, neutral curve.

Planks: Position yourself facedown on the floor, supporting your weight on your forearms and toes. Squeeze your abs to hold your body straight from head to feet; don't let your hips sag down or lift up.

Alternating leg and arm raises: This strengthens the back, lower back and glutes. Lie on your stomach, arms reached out past your head with palms and forehead on floor. Tighten abs. Lift one arm (as you raise your head and shoulders) and the opposite leg at the same time, stretching them away from each other. Hold for five seconds and then switch sides.

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

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YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

The art of adaptation: This exquisite quality can be yours, with yoga

Though we all assume that adaptability keeps the community intact, we may do it on a superficial level but resent it subconsciously. This is often evident even in meditative centres like a yoga class or a meditation hall! In yoga, the idea of adaptability actually means not resenting from inside when we are required to adapt: this could mean standing patiently in a queue without jumping it, or accepting the temperance of a traffic signal. It may mean accepting a newcomer in a group, or being able to socialise in any group without discomfiture. This could mean a lot of things even in terms of health; if we resent having to adapt we create an inflammatory condition inside that is directly linked to high blood pressure, the flu, digestive disasters, ulcers and skin eruptions. It is interesting to note that even modern science is making the connection between the inflammation of the body and that of the mind.

The most exciting trend on the mat, therefore, is to practise poses that encourage adaptability inside us. The forward bends, leg raises and other poses that lay emphasis on flexibility help create this beautiful quality in us. The more you invest time in such poses, especially if you find yourself inflexible mentally, the more the lightness of spirit you will experience.

Some important poses that cultivate this aspect include the seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), standing extreme stretch (*uttanasana*) and bow (*dhanurasana*). Interestingly, some poses also seem to track inner inflexibility to lack of self-love, and open up that aspect to facilitate love towards the rest of the world, which is what essentially adaptability adds up to. They also ease our social life, and make us forgiving, generous and acceptable of not just other people's shortcomings but also our own.

Flexibility poses are initially daunting for many people. But actually they are far more easily achieved through regular practice. Age also does not appear to be a criterion here. Using the breath to enter these poses, learning to progressively increase the time in them is a great way to crack them! Another trick would be work on preparatory poses like the joint-releasing poses (*pawanmuktasana*) series to ready our joints and muscles for the demand of these tough poses.

When flexibility improves, some associated ailments that come from a stiff body get naturally removed or controlled; these include all digestive problems, spinal issues, knee and other joint pains, and diabetes, to name a few.

YOGIC MOVES

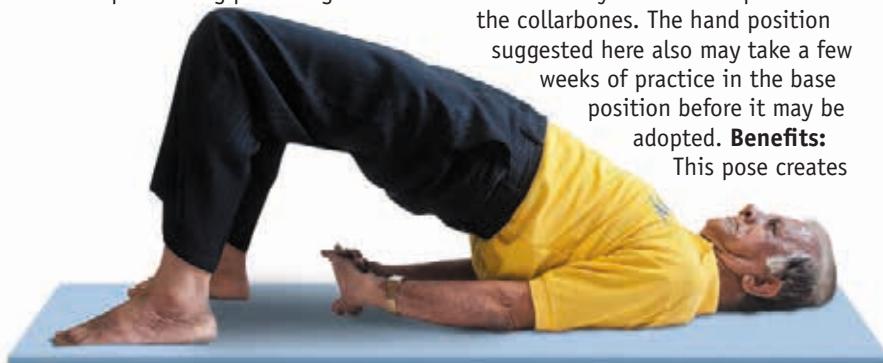
Bridge lock pose, variation (*setubandhasana*)

Lie on your back. Bend legs at the knees. Keep feet flat close to the hips. Palms should be flat on the ground. Inhale. Lift hips high. Hold that posture. This is the first phase of the pose. Bring palms together to

interlock fingers. Maintain the posture for a few breaths. **Remember:** The higher the hips the better the pose. That needs regular practice. Also, when the hips lift higher, the chin will naturally lock at the spot between the collarbones. The hand position suggested here also may take a few weeks of practice in the base position before it may be adopted. **Benefits:** This pose creates

overall flexibility and mental stamina, improves immunity, boosts lung capacity, heals lower back problems, helps control diabetes and obesity, and strengthens the hips.

Model: Rajnikant P Karia,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel



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

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SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET CHITHRA AND K S VISWANATHAN, CHENNAI

The last in a series about life, love and food that unites hearts

She is friendly and energetic while he is reticent and serious; she connects instantly with people, while he is happier by himself; she finds joy in the kitchen, while he stays for hours in his study. Chithra Viswanathan, 73, and K S Viswanathan, 83, allow contrasts to coexist. She grew up in Madurai in an Iyer family, while he is Palghat Iyer who grew up travelling across North India. Popularly known as ChitVish, she is an ardent cook and recipe writer, and shares over 2,000 recipes on websites like Indus Ladies, her own site *chitvish.com*, and now through Apps. She is quick with her SMS, answers emails promptly and shares an inseparable relationship with her new toy, the iPad tablet. Viswanathan is oblivious of such material indulgences and spends his days in scriptural reflection and meditation. He eats simple, *satvik* food that she cooks, but avoids the rich foods and modern experiments in her cooking. Yet, when we ask her what change she would like to see in him, she smiles, "I like him the way he is." We exclaim disbelievingly, "Come on Chithraji, Would you not like to change his food preference?" She replies disarmingly, "Oh no. Now I am used to his way of eating. I don't think I would know how to manage such a change."

This truly reflects the way many elderly couples lead their lives. Traits we may consider conflicting, they simply look upon as different. They do not question the differences, they believe in 'live and let live' and graciously accept each other. As Chithraji says, "We took it for granted that our marriage will work. That is how it was back then." We enjoy chatting with them about food, philosophy and cyberspace in their cosy flat in Chennai.

Jigyasa Giri and Pratibha Jain: To begin with, Chithraji, how did your journey to culinary fame happen? When did you start?

Chitra Viswanathan: It has been a life-changing experience, a sort of second chance. I was happy taking care of my home and children. We have a son and a daughter who are both married and well-settled in life. In 2003, I became unwell and was bedridden for a while. It was quite depressing. During that time, my daughter Usha turned up one afternoon with a technician in tow, carrying a computer and wires. She got it all fixed in the house along with an Internet connection and then told me that it was for me.

Really, just like that?

She: Can you imagine how nervous I felt? I had done a computer course earlier, but I had no practice at all. Now I started learning, though I was quite slow. I learnt to 'Google' for food sites. My granddaughter Manasvini taught me how to start a word file in which I would enter all my doubts. Whenever she visited, she would clarify them and I would meticulously write down all her new instructions. Then one day, she showed me how to Google my doubts as well. After that, there was no stopping me.

Quite the reverse, you seemed to have pressed the accelerator, topped the miles, and earned the title of 'Internet Maami'. Is this when you started contributing recipes online?

She: There were Indian food sites where women could chat and post

their doubts. One day an Indian lady from Atlanta posted a query for *Poonankai Kootu* on *Indiatastes.com*. For four days, there was no response to her query. I then took it upon myself to post the recipe. The next day, similar queries started and I began responding to them. They probably realised I was an elderly woman who knew traditional cooking and were happy to learn from me.

When did Indus Ladies happen?

She: Malathy Jey, the founder of *Indusladies.com*, happened to notice these online interactions and sent me an email in August 2005. She said that she had just started a website for women and asked me to become a member. I agreed. She then asked me to write a cookery column called 'Ask ChitVish'. I felt intimidated because sharing recipes as part of online chatting is one thing but writing a column.... Could I do it, I wondered for days. My daughter encouraged me, saying that *Ammamma* (my mother) is here and would be able to help me with traditional recipes. I started posting recipes and the feedback and questions started pouring in. To me, it was strange that people just wanted to know simple things like how to make *sambar* the correct way.

Indeed, a widening of horizons! Is it true that your online interactions have led to more than a hundred of your fans actually visiting you here, at your house?

She: It is true and a blessing indeed. I have had more than 200 visitors from the Indus Ladies forum. To me, it just shows the power of technology and Internet. How else can I make friends



Chennai Pix

from China, Australia and Boston? Last week, a young lady came along with her husband from Atlanta. She said that she had included Chennai in her travel itinerary just to meet me.

That's truly incredible. Do you feel excited or nervous before meeting them?

She: Initially, I felt a bit nervous and made it a point to tell them in advance, 'Don't come with any expectations. I am just a housewife who enjoys sharing what I have learnt from my mother.' In fact, I am the typical Mylapore *Maami*—plump and content with a simple life. This entire Internet connect is not something I ever visualised or desired, though it has really enriched my life. I am now a 'super moderator' at Indus Ladies. What more can I ask for at my age?

What do you enjoy most about the ChitVish phenomenon?

She: I enjoy everything about it, but if there is one thing I am deeply touched by, it is the hugging culture. I grew up in a conservative manner where respect rather than a display of affection was considered to be the right thing. So hugging people is definitely a new thing and something that is so beautiful.

What made you have an Application (App) for your recipes?

She: We felt the best way to preserve all these recipes and reach a wider audience, especially the newer generations, who are constantly on their phones or tablets, would be an App, which is the latest technology. So we have my recipes on the Apple and

Android platforms on smartphones and tablets for everyone to use, right next to the stove as they are stirring or looking to add the next ingredient. I must tell you, the App AskChitvish is my daughter's gift to me on her 50th birthday.

Sounds absolutely awe-inspiring! Have you always had a flair for cooking?

She: We were married in 1960 and lived in a joint family. I would assist the elders in the kitchen and attend to other chores, but never did the main cooking. My father-in-law realised that I would never learn to cook as long as there were others. In 1964, after both our children were born, he insisted that we live on our own. Slowly, I learnt to feel comfortable in the kitchen.



That is quite a contrast to your present accolades. How did you cultivate your love for baking?

She: In 1968, I heard that the polytechnic institute was teaching the basics of baking. I was intrigued because, at that time, baking was not a common idea. In fact, ovens were hardly available in the market. I asked some friends and all of us decided to join the class. My husband agreed to give us his car and we hired a driver; I still remember hiring him for ₹ 6 every day. I became very interested and then joined classes for making jams, squashes and juices.

Tell us Mr Viswanathan, what do you think of her rise to fame?

He: I held a hectic job, left home at 7 am and returned at 8 pm in the night. She took care of the house and her own time. Why should I have objected to anything? I am happy to see her happy.

She: He's like that even with the children. In fact, many people ask me what I gain from writing a column. I tell them that I am not doing it for money, but because I enjoy the work. Yet they question me. But my husband has never ever questioned me.

Is that the key to happiness in a relationship?

He: I believe that we must take things as they come.

What is your advice to youngsters about marriage and commitment?

She: My advice is to believe in the relationship. Each of us has our own background. Even though I married into a family that was much more conventional compared to mine, I did not question the difference. It was dinned into us that marriage would work.

Thavaladai

A traditional snack from Thanjavur cuisine, it's a tasty dish for sudden guests. The dry flour can be prepared in advance and kept for a month or so.

Ingredients

For dry flour

- Raw rice: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Split red gram (*tur dal*): $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Bengal gram (*chana dal*): $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Split black gram (*urad dal*): $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- Whole peppercorns: 1 tbsp

For the tempering

- Oil: 2 tsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 heaped tsp
- Asafoetida powder: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp

- Curry leaves: 8-10
- Chilli powder: 1-2 tsp, as per taste
- Salt to taste

Other ingredients

- Coconut: 2 tbsp (grated)
- Oil: for shallow frying

Method

Wipe the ingredients for the flour with a damp towel. Allow to dry for half hour and grind to a grainy consistency. Set aside. Mix chilli powder and salt in two cups of water and set aside. Heat the oil in a wok and add mustard seeds.

When they start popping, add the asafoetida and curry leaves. Add the

prepared water and bring to a boil. Reduce the flame, add flour and whisk thoroughly to avoid tiny lumps. Cook for 2-3 minutes and add grated coconut. Switch off the flame and allow the mixture to cool for a few minutes. Divide the mixture and roll into 7-8 balls. Pat them into 2-3 inches discs of uniform thickness and shallow fry on a *tava* with little oil. When the discs turn golden on the underside, flip over and allow the other side to roast well.

Serve with any chutney of your choice. For perfect granular consistency, sieve the flour after grinding. Discard the fine flour and use it in something else, for example, *dosai*. Use only granular flour for the *thavaladai*.

He: Freedom. I believe we must allow people to feel free. I believe in freedom for the children.

She: We don't want our children to be bound by our ideas. Do not ask unnecessary questions and create controversy. I believe that we give them the nest and then give them the wings to fly.

He: We have our own interests that keep us busy.

She: Yes, I have my friends and I love cooking. That keeps me happy. For him, it is his books and his reading.

Sir, what is that one trait you really admire in your wife?

He: I like everything about her and everything she does. I believe in detached attachment.

In that case, you can get along with anyone.

He: Is that not possible? My philosophy is very simple. When you see someone, what are you seeing? The body—it contains millions of cells, but it also contains some energy. That energy is God. So when you see some-

one, do not just focus on the physical form, but on that energy, on the God within that person.

How do you connect with this energy?

He: By staying calm and being quiet.

She: Even if I talk loudly, he will remain detached. In that sense, he is a true follower of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

It looks like one does not have to worry about compatibility.

He: That is what I mean when I say that we must take things as they come. In that case, there will be no room for discord.

She: Compatibility does not happen on its own. No one is going to behave or change as you want them to. You just learn to accept them for what they are. It is then that we can create harmony in relationships.

Alright, but how will you communicate this profound concept to your granddaughter, for instance?

He: She may not accept it at face value. But slowly, it will take effect. We

must start by accepting and respecting what she does.

It makes sense because then you are showing her how to accept and respect others.

He: Yes, and this can be done with practice, by retaining the energy in one's system. This is why one must be cautious about what one eats.

Are you referring to *satvik* food?

She: Yes, he never eats out, he eats simple food without onion and garlic. In fact, he has never eaten at a restaurant.

He: Not even in my own daughter's wedding. I am very strict about what I eat because if I am not careful, it upsets my stomach.

She: On the other hand, I love everything, I love taste and flavour.

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



NATION first

Witness to the 65th Independence Day this year, 100 year-old freedom fighter Dattaji Tamhane relives patriotic memories with **Sai Prabha Kamath**

On a breezy monsoon evening, we arrive at the residence of freedom fighter Dattatreya Balkrishna Tamhane earlier than the appointed time. Fresh after his noon siesta, Dattaji Tamhane—as he is lovingly called—is seated comfortably in his brother's grandson Rahul Nachane's modest two-bedroom

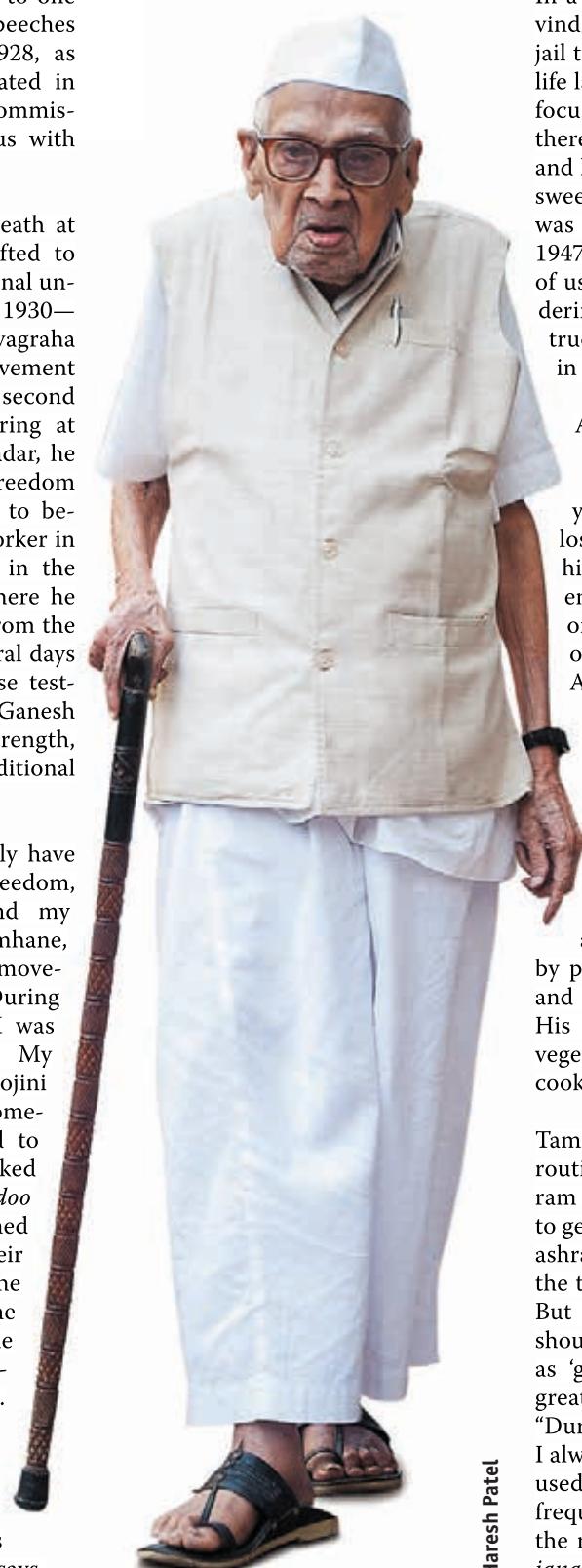
apartment in Mumbai's suburban Mulund. At 4.30 pm sharp, his tea is served by his granddaughter-in-law Vrushali Nachane; he then beckons us to the dining area to share some of his unforgettable memories and experiences of the freedom movement. That Tamhane turned 100 this year makes this conversation all the more special for him—and us.

Born on 13 April 1913 in Ratnagiri in a poor family, Tamhane belongs to the Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu community. Sixth among nine siblings, his father worked as a postmaster for the Imperial Government; he was a great admirer of Lokmanya Tilak and an avid reader of *Kesari*, the Marathi newspaper founded and run by Tilak. "I remember, as a five

year-old, I went and listened to one of Tilak's inspirational speeches at my father's behest. In 1928, as a school student, I participated in protests against the Simon Commission," the centenarian tells us with evident pride.

After his father's untimely death at 40, the Tamhane family shifted to Thane to live with their maternal uncle. Tamhane matriculated in 1930—the same year the Salt Satyagraha and the mass freedom movement started. When he was in his second year of mechanical engineering at VJTI in Mumbai's central Dadar, he was inspired by the Indian freedom struggle; he quit his studies to become a full-time Congress worker in 1934. Tamhane participated in the Salt Satyagraha in Thane, where he suffered a blow on his head from the police and had to spend several days in the lock-up. Through these testing times, his elder brother Ganesh Tamhane was his pillar of strength, giving him shelter and unconditional support.

"Many people from my family have fought for our country's freedom, like my sister Sindutai and my younger brother Natha Tamhane, who joined the underground movement," recalls Tamhane. "During the Quit India Movement, I was imprisoned for 27 months. My sister-in-law and poet Sarojini Tamhane, like many other home-makers of that period, used to stealthily send bulletins packed inside boxes containing *ladoo* and rice [bulletins were banned inside prisons because of their strong contents against the British rule]." Proud to be the first political prisoner of Thane jail, he says he was generally treated well by the British. "However, I had to spend one terrible night in a dark room as punishment. Next day, when I was brought out, I couldn't remember a thing as my mind had gone blank," he says.



Haresh Patel

In a book on his life written by Ravidra Gadgil, Tamhane says, "These jail terms moulded me for a political life later on." As all his energies were focused on the freedom struggle, there was no time for a personal life and he stayed a bachelor for life. The sweet result of the sacrifice, he says, was an ecstatic India on 15 August 1947. "Out of excitement, thousands of us, wearing white *topi*, kept wandering on the streets in hundreds of trucks!" he recollects with a sparkle in his eyes.

An early riser, Tamhane's day starts at 6 am with squats that have kept him fit over the years. Except for mild hearing loss owing to his advancing age, his medical record is the stuff of envy: no blood pressure, diabetes or cholesterol, and no complaints of aches and pains whatsoever! After his breakfast at 9 am, he travels alone in an auto-rickshaw to *Vachanalay*, a reading club started by a group of his friends in Mulund. After lunch at noon, he takes a short nap. Tea time is spent solving Sudoku and crossword puzzles that keep his mind sharp and alert. At 6 pm, he goes to a nearby park where he meets his friends and spends time with youngsters. His secret to good health: boiled vegetables, fruits and strictly home-cooked food.

Tamhane attributes his strict daily routine to his stay in Wardha Ashram with Mahatma Gandhi. He used to get up at 4 am and clean the whole ashram. When first asked to clean the toilets, he felt like running away. But something within him said he shouldn't discriminate between work as 'good' or 'bad'. "Gandhiji was a great worshipper of truth," he shares. "During my interactions with him, I always found him to be humane; he used to enquire about my family very frequently. Once I wanted to know the meaning of the song 'Vaishnava janato...' and he sent me to Acharya



"His endearing personality and politeness earn him respect and love from all, irrespective of political affiliations"

Vinobha Bhave who was also staying with us. I found Acharya truly intelligent. Later, I also went on to stay in Paunar Ashram founded by him."

A former member of both the Houses, he speaks with great degree of authority and conviction on matters relating to the first estate. His thirst for knowledge made him take lessons from prominent economist Dhananjayrao Gadgil on studying the Budget. In this, he excelled to such an extent that every year he was asked to give MLAs in the House a lecture on studying the Budget. "Back then, politics was not commercialised and politicians were made of a different mettle," Tamhane says with candour. In 1983, he took retirement from active politics.

A voracious reader, writer and thinker, he is an encyclopaedia of Marathi and English literature. As he recites a poem of Wordsworth, Vrushali Nachane chips in, "I am an English teacher but many a time *Bhaikaka*

puts me to shame. Well-versed in literature, he remembers innumerable verses of poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson. Post-dinner, sometimes, we have *jugalbandi* sessions. He is very observant and witty. I call him a modern saint because of his benevolence. Truly, we are blessed to have him live with us."

Wearer of many hats, Tamhane is a culinary expert as well; until some years ago, he used to cook and dole out cooking tips. Not one to rest on his laurels, he travelled on foot around Kharegoan, an Adivasi area in Thane district, when he was an MLC. He lived with the locals, fought for their rights and worked towards their progress. Founder of the Datta Tamhane Education Trust that takes care of the primary level education of Adivasi children, Tamhane is generosity personified—he has donated whatever he has received so far (in cash and kind in his honour) from the state government and various institutions.

Having the distinction of being the first 100 year-old to go to Vidhan Bhawan in person for his felicitation ceremony conducted by Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan for his contribution to society, Tamhane is also the recipient of various awards like the Adivasi Seva Puraskar and the Maharashtra Government's literature award for his book *Kathasangraha Kalicha Gowda*. Apart from being honoured by former President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, he has also been felicitated on turning 100 by senior leaders like Sharad Pawar and Manohar Joshi.

Tamhane's close friend and fellow member of *Vachanalay*, Mukund Dattatreya Bhusari, a retired cost accountant, sums up the man: "Dattaji is truly unique; a humanitarian, a person with a sharp memory and vast knowledge. He has dedicated his whole life towards social causes and has spent more time in prison post-Independence than pre-Independence in pursuit of various causes dear to his heart. His endearing personality and politeness earn him respect and love from all, irrespective of political affiliations. I am truly among the fortunate ones to be associated with him. I wish him a long and healthy life." We second the sentiment. *

Experience

A second
childhood



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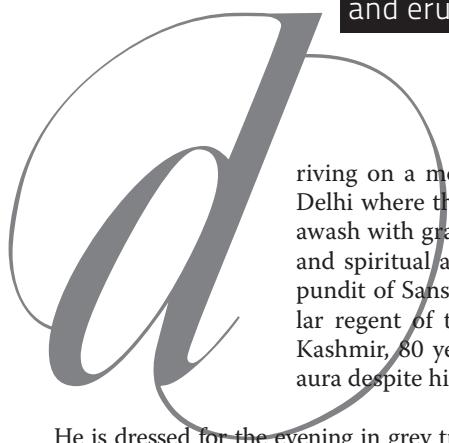
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COVER FEATURE

the last legend

Photographs by Anshuman Akash Jha

Eighty and active, Dr Karan Singh
is an emblem of a bygone
time of elegance, poise
and erudition, discovers **Sudha G Tilak**



riving on a monsoon evening down the boulevards of Delhi where the rich and powerful live evokes a feeling awash with grandeur and a sense of past glory. Cultural and spiritual ambassador, elder statesman, scholar and pundit of Sanskrit and Hindi literature, India's last titular regent of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, 80 year-old Dr Karan Singh exudes a mellow aura despite his many titles and achievements.

He is dressed for the evening in grey trousers and shirt, his trademark velvet cap perched on his head. His conversation is punctuated with recitation of verses in Urdu and Sanskrit and a sense of humour. He is a picture in poise as he poses in his courtyard besides a cerulean indoor pond for the photographer. It's the first house he "built" to live in Delhi and has been his home in the capital city for over 50 years, he remarks with a hint of pride. With the passing of his wife, the home is where he spends his time in contemplation, his public engagements with many endowments and charitable organisations, his affiliation with many societies and government bodies for the upkeep of educational and cultural trusts he supervises. His commitment to being a cultural ambassador on national and international forums and as one who partakes of the vast and immense field of India's cultural heritage, its languages and education is deep and abiding.

**THOUGH MADE A REGENT,
LUCKILY I WAS NEVER A RULER.
MY FATHER
MAHARAJA HARI SINGH WAS THE LAST RULER.
I WAS 16 WHEN INDIA ACHIEVED INDEPENDENCE AND BY 18, I WAS PROCLAIMED REGENT**

As dusk falls, crickets sing in the grass and a peacock's call pierces the sky. Karan Singh, the last living regent of India, looks back on the path he has traversed through India's last days of monarchy to democracy. Excerpts from an exclusive interview:

Born in 1931, you are the last ruler of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. What are the burdens and privileges you carry?

Genetics contributed to my title [laughs]. Though made a regent, luckily I was never a ruler. My father Maharaja Hari Singh was the last ruler. I was 16 when India achieved Independence and by 18, I was proclaimed regent. With my training in Doon—it was not the elitist school it is called today—and with the winds of democracy ushered in, I found it natural to adopt an egalitarian view.

What were the lessons you learnt from your father?

Can I talk about my mother first?

Please, do so.

My mother was from the small village of Bijaypur. She continued to have her old connections even after entering the royal household and when I was born. Her prayer

and cultural rituals like performing the *arati*, the circumambulation for the *tulsi* plant, her prayer and festival rituals all left a deep imprint in me as a boy. I could say I learnt *bhakti* from her. The moral universe of her piety insisted on helping the disadvantaged. She would always tell me to help the poor. In retrospect, I'd say it was perceptive of her to instil this value of working for the public good. Instead of growing up as a spoilt royal, she insisted I retain the common touch and help the needy. Speaking in a courteous manner to royal or common alike and helping others were valuable human lessons I received from her. And, of course, my musical ear and love for sound and language evolved in her arms. I learnt Dogri language and folk songs that she sang on festive occasions once a week for the special *puja*. I have on occasion accompanied her singing and played the *dholki* and performed at festivals. Growing up in her shadow left a deep imprint on me. Perhaps the seeds for my pursuit of music, education, language were sown by her at a tender age.

And your father?

My father was the maharaja. There was a formality with which we all saw him. I learnt discipline and commitment to work from him. I remember once when I was but 14, he asked me to undertake a small errand. When I summoned the secretaries to convey his order, he stopped me saying, 'No, Tiger, you do it.' He was a neat person and did not tolerate clumsiness. He was organised, liked to keep his surrounding free of clutter, and disliked messy spaces. I guess I have tried to follow these good habits.

To what do you owe your persistent thirst for education and your pursuit of scholarship? So unlike a royal, born to the manner and privileges, is it not?

I still can't put a finger on that. It was unusual for royalty to pursue education. I was told my grandfather was a scholar. While my father ascended the throne early on, I was able to pursue college, my doctorate and write my books. This [spreading his hands around his charming library stacked with bookshelves] is where I seem to belong. My university record remains unbroken. I became the chancellor of JK University from where I graduated! I can recite Sanskrit, Dogri, Urdu and



can pick up languages. I think my learning is owing to a strong aural felicity that allowed me to pick music, sound and languages. My father was keen on me learning classical music and was strict about my *riyaz*. When the palace tutors came in, I recall I took to music like a fish to water. I think I owe it to Panditji [Nehru] who guided me to a life of learning besides princely pursuits of just playing polo, *shikar* and fancy society. I read and read and my mind was enriched by the Greek philosophers, the writers of those times like Russell, Huxley, Shaw, Dumas; *The Scarlet Pimpernel* remains a favourite. Panditji and [Sarvepalli] Radhakrishnan took an avuncular interest in my mentorship. Panditji was my political guru; Radhakrishnan, my intellectual one.

Your father's friendship with Pandit Nehru and your association with the Nehru family runs deep, doesn't it?

My relationship with Panditji and his family runs deep and through generations. My letters to Panditji and Indira have been published and are public material. Indira was like an elder sister to me. Of course, our relationship went through its strains in the aftermath of the Emergency and the split in the Congress. I told her what I rightly felt in my letter and sent her my resignation. And later, I made up with her. Rajiv and Sonia revived the bonds.

How was your marriage to the late Yasho Rajya Lakshmi? It seems removed from the hoopla of fancy designer weddings of the rich and famous.

She was 13 and I was 19. You could say we grew up together. I still remember the day we were married in Bombay at 1, Napean Sea Road and the *baarat* went up the Napean Sea Road to the Kutch Castle where the wedding took place. Through our 60 years of marriage we were a great support to each other, though I think it must have been more difficult for her, coming as she did from a large family. She coped well and was a great help in my public programmes. I always think I got more votes when I contested for the elections because the women would come to see her, drawn as they were to her beauty. She took on many responsibilities including working as the chairman of the Welfare Board for the Mentally Handicapped and many other posts.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH PANDITJI AND HIS FAMILY RUNS DEEP AND THROUGH GENERATIONS. MY LETTERS TO PANDITJI AND INDIRA HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED AND ARE PUBLIC MATERIAL. INDIRA WAS LIKE AN ELDER SISTER TO ME



You were born in Cannes, in France, and came to India. However, I believe you were dogged by ill health since the age of 13. You were immobilised then and yet again after an accident a few years later, just nine days after being appointed regent. How did you deal with the pain?

It was my last year in Doon when I suffered shooting pain in my hip. Even my father noted the limp when I visited home. It must have been a problem with the hip joint. Anyhow, local medications didn't help and I was immobilised and confined to bed in June 1947 for six months.

It was Sardar Patel who, during a visit to my father, saw me and advised my father to send me to America for medical help. I was operated upon, the joint was fixed, and all through the time I played chess, watched TV. I still remember I had to lean on my sword as a prop for the *saat phera* at my wedding [chuckles]. Again a few months after I was appointed regent I had an accident and was bedridden. The experience taught me that we can allow such impediments to break us or make us. It helped me develop an inner strength at a young age.

You were appointed the regent when you were 18. Do you remember the day and the feelings in you? And what were the important orders you signed?



INDIA IS A COUNTRY WHERE NINE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD ARE PRACTISED. I COME FROM A MUSLIM MAJORITY STATE. I REMEMBER VISITING SUFI SHRINES AS A CHILD. RUMI, KHALIL GIBRAN AND THEIR MUSIC AND VERSES EVOKED DEEP PASSIONS IN ME

I suppose I felt euphoric as it was such a dramatic ceremony. I signed the order dismissing Sheikh Abdullah and, of course, the signing of the state constitution after it became law.

You voluntarily surrendered your privy purse and were the only regent to do so. It was a big decision. What prompted that move?

I was 36 and was in Mrs Gandhi's cabinet. I thought it was one of the last vestiges that ought to go and Mrs Gandhi found it populist. Looking back, I think it was brave of me to be the lone one to do so and it was a matter of a few crores then. I defended my position in Parliament saying it was in favour

of a free and democratic country. Of course, it made the other royals angry.

You are a believer in a global interfaith movement. Why is it important to you?

India is a country where nine major religions of the world are practised. I come from a Muslim majority state. I remember visiting Sufi shrines as a child. Rumi, Khalil Gibran and their music and verses evoked deep passions in me. At home, my mother had imbued Hindu cultural sense in music and aesthetics. My ideas in philosophy were awakened by the great guru Aurobindo. Aurobindo's evolutionary philosophical theory was that life emerged from primeval waters. Man is not the final product of that evolu-



OUR ELDERLY POPULATION IS GROWING. THE HINDU SYSTEM OF THE JOINT FAMILY IS BREAKING DOWN. WE NEED BETTER RETIREMENT HOMES SUITABLE FOR ALL ECONOMIC LEVELS TO TAKE CARE OF THE ELDERLY

tion. If we follow integral yoga, we can cooperate with the evolutionary process to arrive at that evolved being.

India's plural nature itself was a contributing factor. Hence along with Mohan Mittal, we developed a global forum for interfaith and the circles were held in Chicago, Cape Town and elsewhere. It's important to build understanding in these times for harmony and deeper understanding. And as chairperson of the Temple of Understanding, I have been temple building from Jammu to Yogaville in the US and a Nataraja temple in Tamil Nadu.

You've studied the *Upanishad*. What is their salient wisdom? Do you think the *Upanishad* have been overshadowed by the *Gita* in Hindu philosophy?

I'd say the *Upanishad* are the key to wisdom. The *Gita* is a derivative text of the *Upanishad*. Yes, the personality of Krishna has made it more prominent and it is more of an 'action text' that calls upon man to act. The *Gita* is *shruti*, to be heard; the *Upanishad* are *smriti*, to be remembered. It is important that these texts are rediscovered for their wisdom and beauty.

Looking back, how does Kashmir's status as a contested zone strike you?

The Kashmir Valley has a special ambience. The *Veda*, Buddhism, Shaivites, Islam, Sufism, Sikhs have all converged here at one time or the other in its past. Today, the state of Jammu and Kashmir saddens me especially as we witness deliberate attempts to divide the people. It's most sad and unfortunate.

In India do you find that public leaders tend to be older and the friction between younger and older generations is growing in modern times?

In India, respect for age has been built into our psyche. But it's changing. We do see younger chief ministers coming into public life. It will take five to 10 years to mark a politician in India and he will, in all probability, be in his 50s when in power. Also, the young need to prove themselves. Our elderly population is growing. The Hindu system of the joint family is breaking down. We need better retirement homes suitable for all economic levels to take care of the elderly. The state and private companies must step in to fulfil this growing need.

You lead an active life at this age with your music and various commitments. How would you like to watch the sun set?

Age is inevitable. It's not to be conquered by creams and anti-ageing lotions but cherished for its experience. My learning has been continuing. I do my *riyaaz* faithfully. At 80, I have discovered the joys of the iPad and it has opened new vistas for me. I think of each day as a blessing. Looking back, it has not been a meaningless journey from womb to tomb. I guess a persistent growth of consciousness keeps me active. I like to continue to stay involved, read, experience, laugh and engage. *

FATHER, FRIEND, GUIDE



1978. A father, away from home on assignment, wrote two letters to his daughter. Years have passed since; the little girl is now a doting mother of two children, but the two letters from her father, though yellow with time, are still her most prized possessions. Like her legendary actor father Soumitra Chatterjee, Poulami Bose is a credible name in Kolkata's cultural circuit. She speaks of inspirations and influences that guided and guarded her



Photographs by Shilphadra Datta

That you grow physically with time, but being grown up does not mean growing physically. Growing up means you are going through a process of building your mind large enough. The concept of deeper wisdom, sensible happiness, sharper intellect, wider scale of imagination, bigger sacrifice, infallible patience, true sense of love and affection—all these require to be nurtured by you, as you grow day by day....

I shall be the happiest person if I find my children living their lives as proper human beings, who do not waste their time running after fame and fortune....

These lines prove how Bapi has always steered us towards being good human beings. He is the super custodian of our lives, *Dada's* [her brother] and mine. We have enjoyed affluence without the stench of opulence. When I was growing up, there was always a rich cultural ambience at home. We practiced theatre, poetry, and participated in cultural discussions. There were musical sessions every evening. We watched good films and plays. In fact, both Bapi and Mamoni [mother] were very conscious about raising us amid unalloyed pleasure.

Our upbringing has been the best gift from our parents. Bapi's is a respectable name in the country, yet he has not allowed us to assume that we are the children of a celebrity. Our childhood and lifestyle have been like other normal children. Both my parents were miles away from any trace of vanity or arrogance. To me, Bapi has always been a doting father. It would never have been possible for me to know the world without the cultural stimuli he offered. Both Mamoni and Bapi would take us to different cultural functions. Had he not taken me to several painting exhibitions, plays and movies and taught me how to study them, I would have never known Rodin, Renoir, Matisse, Rembrandt, or Ramkinkar Baize. The classics of world cinema would have remained names in books and journals, had I not seen them at the USIS or British Council auditoriums in Bapi's company. Since my childhood, I have been meeting legendary poets, filmmakers, actors, dramatists, and painters. Is there any gift more valuable for a child from her parents? These are priceless experiences.

My memory takes me back to beautiful moments in his company. Bapi would take us out for shopping whenever required. Despite the media spotlight and public attention on him, he would freely mix with people. We would go to places like New Market or other shopping arcades to buy knick-knacks. We would find, to our surprise, that fans were following him. Initially, I could not hide my irritation; later, I learnt to take it easy. However, Bapi would speak to them very cordially and exchange pleasantries. He was never vain, nor did he ever decide to stay away from any public place. He loves people and likes to study them—perhaps it was his way to enrich his experience as an actor. As

an adolescent, I could not understand this. Now I realise how important it is for an actor to imbibe traits of several human characters by observing them. However, fame and fortune have never robbed him of love and affection for his children and family.

Mamoni identified my talent for dance at an early age. I went through the basics of dance under the auspices of Raj Lakshmi Pillai, though I was merely a kid enjoying the experience. Then Mamoni took to me to Uday Shankar Cultural Group where Amala Shankar was my teacher. When I was about 10 years old, Mamoni realised I should specialise in a particular genre of dance. My next training was under Thankamani Kutti. I began my career as a professional dancer when I was in my early teens. Thanks to my parents, dance is my life, my passion, my identity. I run a dance school today and Bapi has christened it AANARTO. I have performed Bharatanatyam all my life and have learnt Mohiniattam as well. I took a sabbatical to raise my children, but I am back now.

Being Soumitra Chatterjee's daughter is not easy. Though I have enjoyed the warmth of Bapi's company and the rare opportunity of meeting people from all over the world, I had to face tremendous challenges in real life as his daughter. The offspring of a renowned personality has to slip into the umbra created by a towering stature. A towering 'tree' like him will always overshadow the 'plants' underneath. At every step, comparisons are inevitable. If I fare well, 'it is the result of my father's popularity'. If I cannot, I am branded 'hopeless'.

Bapi advises that there is no other alternative but to take these things in my stride. He has always advised us not to give up. This reminds me of the lashing command of 'Khit Da' (the character Bapi played in *Koni*) to Koni, the swimmer-girl he coached: "Fight Koni Fight!" I thank the Almighty, as Bapi has never been associated with dance or anything related to this branch of performing arts, otherwise I would have had to face the same challenge. Yes, I am determined to prove myself because I cannot afford to be a 'loser'. Being a sportsperson, Mamoni knew how difficult it is to establish one's identity in the arena of sports and reminded me of retaining the same spirit. Bapi sometimes reacts by wondering why his daughter should perform on stage as he does. "She is Poulami Bose and not

Soumitra Chatterjee; she has her own observation of life that might be different from mine, then why should she copy me?" he asserts.

The stage is my passion. Whenever I am on stage, I enjoy those moments to the fullest. If you ask me which identity—a dancer's or an actor's—I enjoy the most, my answer would be, both, as I am equally comfortable in both skins. I simply need to express my feelings, my search for life, my pleasure and my struggle. Dance and acting supplement one another. In both forms, a sense of acting is necessary: dance involves acting and acting involves footwork; without adequate prowess, one can never reach the expected level of performance.



The offspring of a renowned personality has to slip into the umbra created by a towering stature. A towering 'tree' like him will always overshadow the 'plants' underneath. At every step, comparisons are inevitable

Bapi has always had a positive influence on my growth as an actor; that doesn't mean he has promoted me. I have learnt a lot from him and that is natural. You cannot afford to ignore an 'institution'. If I ever say that he has given me any special advantage as his daughter, it would be a blatant lie; at the same time, I would be dishonouring the person I idolise because it is indeed an 'advantage' being his daughter. Though most of my experience in theatre is with him (*Neel Kantha*, *Tritio Önko Ötoéb*, *Homa Pakhi*, *Atmakatha*, *Chari Gonga*), I began my career as an actor with Utpal Dutta in the plays *Ekla Cholo Re*, *Aajker Shah Jahan*, *Baniker Mandondo*. Bapi has always advised me to understand the character before acting. His style of acting is very normal, but one has to magnify the performance to a certain extent that it looks normal on stage. I learnt all this from him. I also follow his guidelines for diction.

I have never tried to step into his shoes, as they are too big to fill. In fact, copying him is next to impossible because he is so many things rolled into one. He is an actor, poet,

social thinker, sports enthusiast. As I have said earlier, I have him as my father, friend, and guide. Although it has never been imposed on me, his influence on me as an actor 'is there'. But on stage, I am the performer and it is my performance. It is my challenge. I have to prove myself. I think success has knocked on my door, otherwise people would not have accepted me in *Suparee Killer*, *Ichher Oli-goli*, *Chari Gonga*, *Tritio Önko Ötoéb*, *Homa Pakhi*, *Atmakatha*, *Ami Weds Ami*, and *Romi-Julie*.

As told to Partha Mukherjee and Priyanka Mukherjee

The first day at school

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen

The first drama you got a part in

The first day at college

The first date you went on

The first kiss

The first time you proposed

The first job interview

The first board meeting you addressed

The first day after retirement

BUTTERFLIES never retire

The first click of the mouse.

The all new

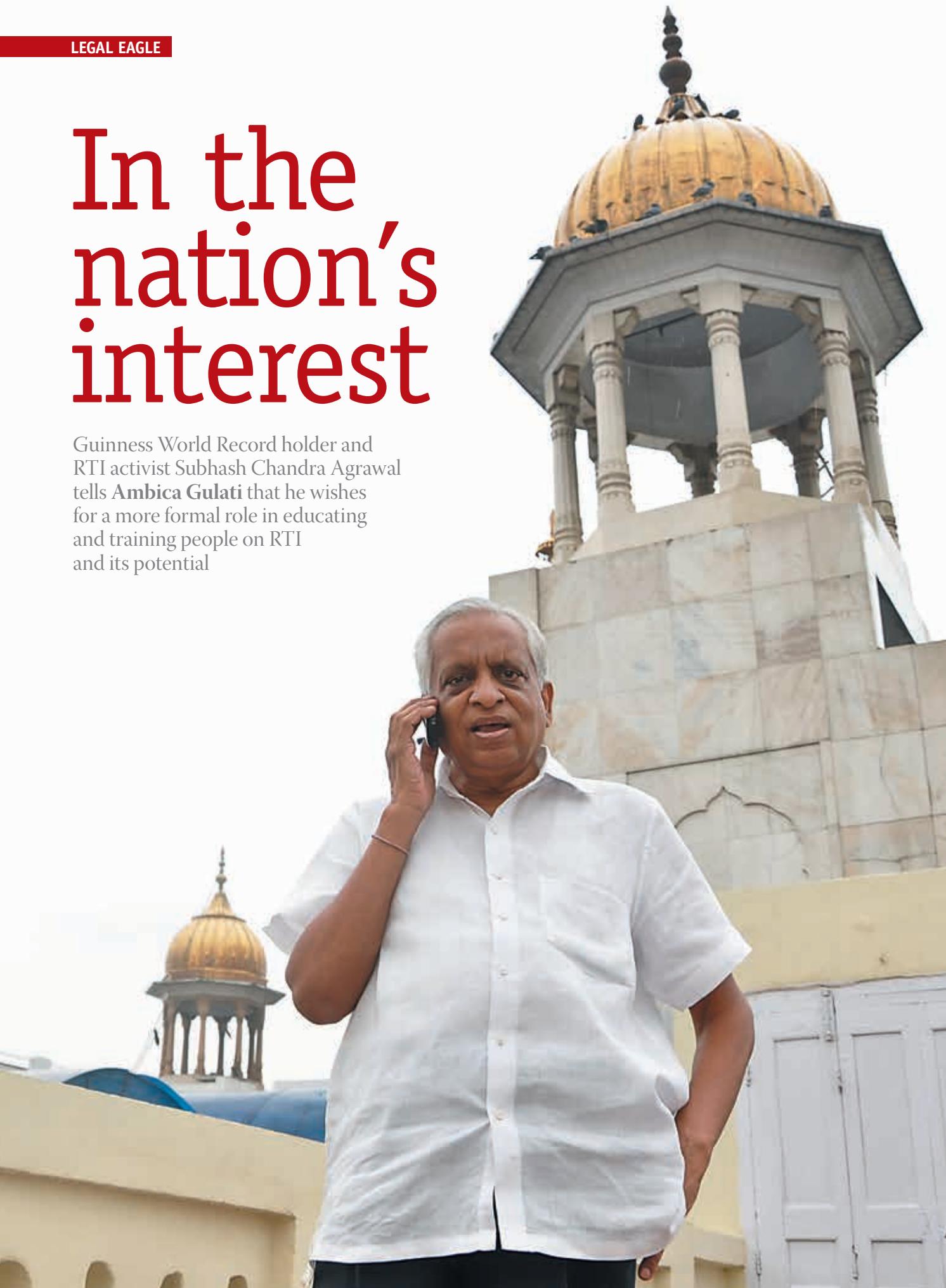
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In the nation's interest

Guinness World Record holder and RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawal tells **Ambica Gulati** that he wishes for a more formal role in educating and training people on RTI and its potential





Fragrant smoke of the morning *puja* drifts out of the open front door of RTI activist Subhash Chandra Agrawal's home. Right behind Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib in walled old Delhi, the simple abode houses a simple man whose passion is to debate issues of national interest. Is the government really spending ₹ 3.5 million on public toilets? Why is the President of India taking along her family on official visits abroad—all on the public exchequer's expense? He poses several such questions holding the government accountable to the public.

The journey of 'missile letters' began in 1967 with a letter to the editor; it ended with a world record. On the way, there have been petitions and hearings, a campaign for the RTI Act and, more recently, seminars and conferences. At one time, Agrawal had the distinction of a hat trick in *Guinness World Records*—maximum letters till date published in newspapers; maximum letters published in a particular newspaper in a particular calendar year in 2003; and maximum letters till date published in a particular newspaper. In 2009, Agrawal was presented with the first ever RTI Award at a function graced by the Vice-President of India.

A sharp observer, Agrawal started highlighting the woes of the common man while he was a student of mechanical engineering at Delhi College of Engineering. Facing an unpleasant experience of 20 paise ticket-money being pocketed by the conductor of a DTC bus plying from Mall Road to Red Fort, Agrawal fired his first 'missile' to the Hindi daily *Hindustan*. "It was my first letter, so I put my college address. It was published. The next day I saw a DTC van at the campus; I disappeared," he smiles, adding, "Later, I came to know that the DTC authorities had come with the conductor to offer their apologies. I realised the impact of media. Writing letters to the editors has since been a religious public service for me."

So began a love affair of sorts, with many more letters to editors of several newspapers. "I also sent practical suggestions and solutions to government offices about various issues," he says. His suggestions were implemented by various public authorities; for instance, change in design of railway coaches; change in size and metal of coins; publication of *Readers' Digest* in Hindi; improvement by Johnson & Johnson in their product Band-Aid; entry of women in Rotary International. No road is easy. An incurable hardening of his right thumb put a stop to personal writing, but not his passion. Agrawal bought a portable typewriter and without any formal training started typing using one finger. Now everything is done on the computer and email takes the message across instantly.

The Right to Information Act, 2005, was another tool used for optimum public good. "The Preamble of the RTI Act suggests that it's a tool to effectively check corruption in our democratic system, which comprises three wings: judiciary, legislature and bureaucracy. If legislature and bureaucracy are subjected to RTI provisions, why create unnecessary controversy on including non-judicial aspects of judicial administration under RTI Act?" asks Agrawal. Of the 3,000 RTI applications he has filed thus far, 350 have reached the Central Information Commission (CIC).

Personal traumas have shaped the 62 year-old activist's life. Victimisation by his uncle in the family business and a 16 year-old litigation over their home turned many of his dreams to dust. "I wanted to be an IAS officer and enrol for an MBA in the Faculty of Management Studies but my uncle didn't let me study. Gradually, I leaned towards the Parsi philosophy of life—work for society and not for yourself. When I married Madhu in 1975, we decided not to have children," recalls Agrawal. Until six months back, he assisted his younger brother in the family's old wholesale business of textiles

Photographs by Anshuman Akash Jha



and furnishing. But now he is looking for a change in role and hopes the government or an educational institution will formally invite him to spread awareness about RTI and alleviate the common man's fears related to RTI and transparency.

In his interaction with bureaucracy, Agrawal says he has been educated by many public information officers, central information commissioners (past and present), and the media. He has been invited by organisations like the Railway Staff College (Vadodara), Defence Research & Development Organisation (New Delhi), National Academy for Defence Production (Nagpur) and the Indian School of Mines (Dhanbad) to educate their officers handling RTI petitions. He has also conducted seminars at educational institutions like the BITS (Pilani) and Delhi University's Law Faculty to address gatherings at Rotary Clubs and other social organisations.

Over the years, the authorities have appreciated his suggestions and inspiring letters. Once, then Vice-President of India M Hidayatulla sent him a handwritten letter saying, "...because you think so seriously and sincerely in public interest, you

are my personal friend, and I will not use official machinery in communicating with you". "All certificates are a by-product of my passion," says Agrawal.

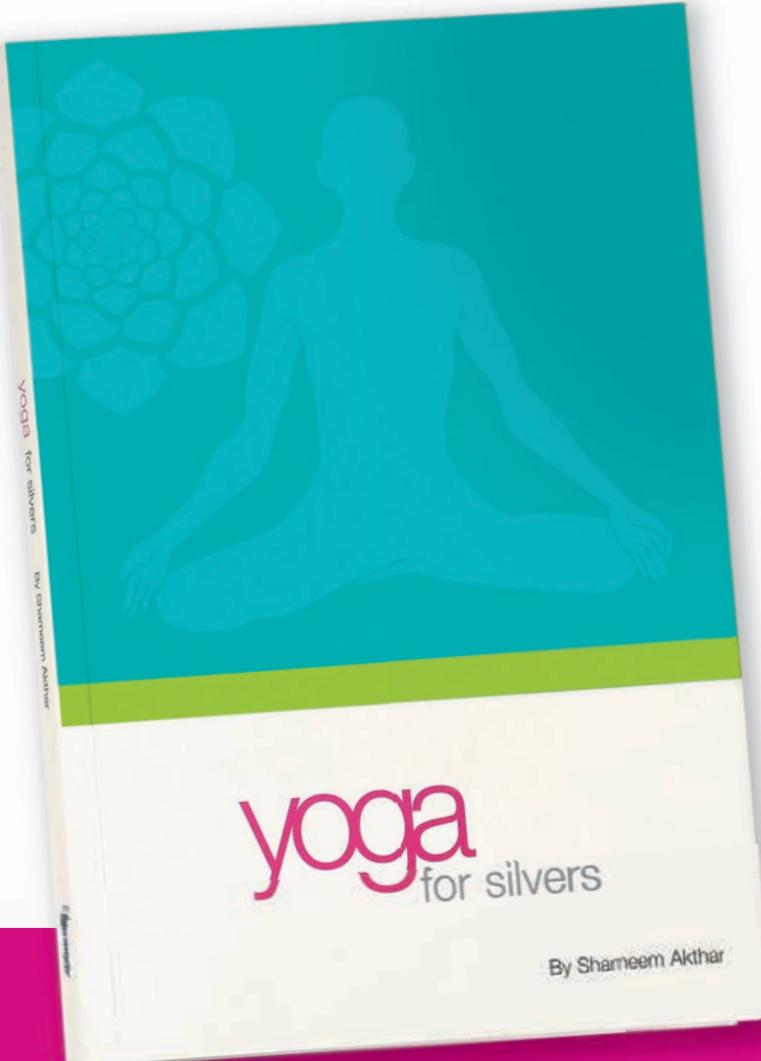
Several years ago, when the activism-oriented serial *Rajni* starring Priya Tendulkar was taken off the air, he was invited by then director of Doordarshan Pulok Chatterji, now principal secretary to the Prime Minister, with whom he spoke his mind. "We think the government does not do anything, but my experience shows that no paper addressed to the government goes unnoticed. Our voice is important and we need to use it," says Agrawal. Over the years he has found the Rajya Sabha and the PMO as the best secretariats and Lok Sabha the worst.

About the changes all of us are witnessing in the country, Agrawal says the political system needs a drastic change, "but there are both good and bad people in bureaucratic circles". Agrawal has always maintained an unbiased stand in his petitions, but insists, "We need more people involved in this work. I am a one-man army and believe no issue is trivial. Even small corrections in society can make a big difference." *

THE RTI AND JUDICIARY

He filed his first RTI application in the Supreme Court in October 2005 to know what action had been taken by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on a complaint of misconduct that he had made in January 2005 against a judge of the Delhi High Court. He faced resistance and had to send several petitions to the Central Information Commission (CIC) and President's Secretariat. The Supreme Court was then compelled to inform him that the CJI did not find any merit in his petition. Agrawal fought a related RTI battle that had the CIC directing the President's Secretariat and the Ministry of Law and Justice to share with him a copy of the file of the appointment of the same Delhi High Court judge as the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court. Later, the ministry managed to obtain a stay on disclosure of the file from the Delhi High Court where the case still lies pending. Agrawal had some reason to feel vindicated as the Supreme Court collegium's recommendation to appoint the same judge as Chief Justice was later returned by the then President to the government.

An RTI request filed in the Supreme Court on 10 November 2007 started a legal process that set off the ongoing debate on whether or not judges of the Supreme Court and the High Court should be made to publicly disclose information about their assets and liabilities. That legal process and the consequent debate led to the Delhi High Court ruling on 2 September 2009, declaring that the Chief Justice of India was a public authority under the RTI Act and the information about judges' assets was subject to the provisions of the Act. Earlier, amid an increasingly heated debate that seemed to have divided even the judicial fraternity, the Supreme Court announced that its judges had decided to make public the information about their assets—another result of Agrawal's RTI enquiry. The debate compelled the government to introduce a Judges' Assets Bill in Parliament, which was subsequently withdrawn.



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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Advantage silvers

Economist Priya Desai analyses IRDA's plan to clean up health insurance

Minal is curious about why her 62 year-old husband Himanshu is so engrossed and happy reading the newspaper, sipping his tea in the morning. As she looks over his shoulder at the news, she too is elated that they can look forward to getting a mediclaim policy. The news relates to the release of draft guidelines by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), which kindles hopes for an improved healthcare environment. Senior citizens are beneficiaries as well. Being held in low esteem, even spurned by insurance companies as resource guzzlers, many silvers like Himanshu and Minal have been treated like outliers. As ballooning medical expenses wipe out their scanty savings, a feeling of despondency overwhelms them. No longer, as there is now a ray of hope.

The Bombay High Court recently ordered IRDA to frame guidelines for the health insurance sector. The mover behind these guidelines was Gaurang Damani, a social activist who filed public interest litigation (PIL) in this regard.

What makes seniors smile?

Let us look at some favourable features.

Eligibility age increased to 65 years. Co-payment to cover pre-insurance check-up expenses is likely. This is a big change in the treatment meted out to seniors, as insurers often avoided even people in their 50s. Widening the eligibility scope will bring relief to a growing number of seniors who have the ability to pay a premium but still remain outside the health insurance net.

No age of exit if a mediclaim policy is renewed year after year without any break.

A 30-day deadline for claim settlement after submitting the documents and its inclusion in the policy document itself. Seniors like this author have felt financially abused when insurers have done away with

chological stress. All this could well be history now.

No undue loading of policies and arbitrary fixing of premiums at renewal. New guidelines compel insurers to be accountable. If an individual's claims in each of the three consecutive policy years (except the current one) exceed 500 per cent of the current premium, the insurer can hike the premium according to the predetermined table disclosed at the time of issuing the policy. IRDA would need to be convinced if premiums are to be hiked.

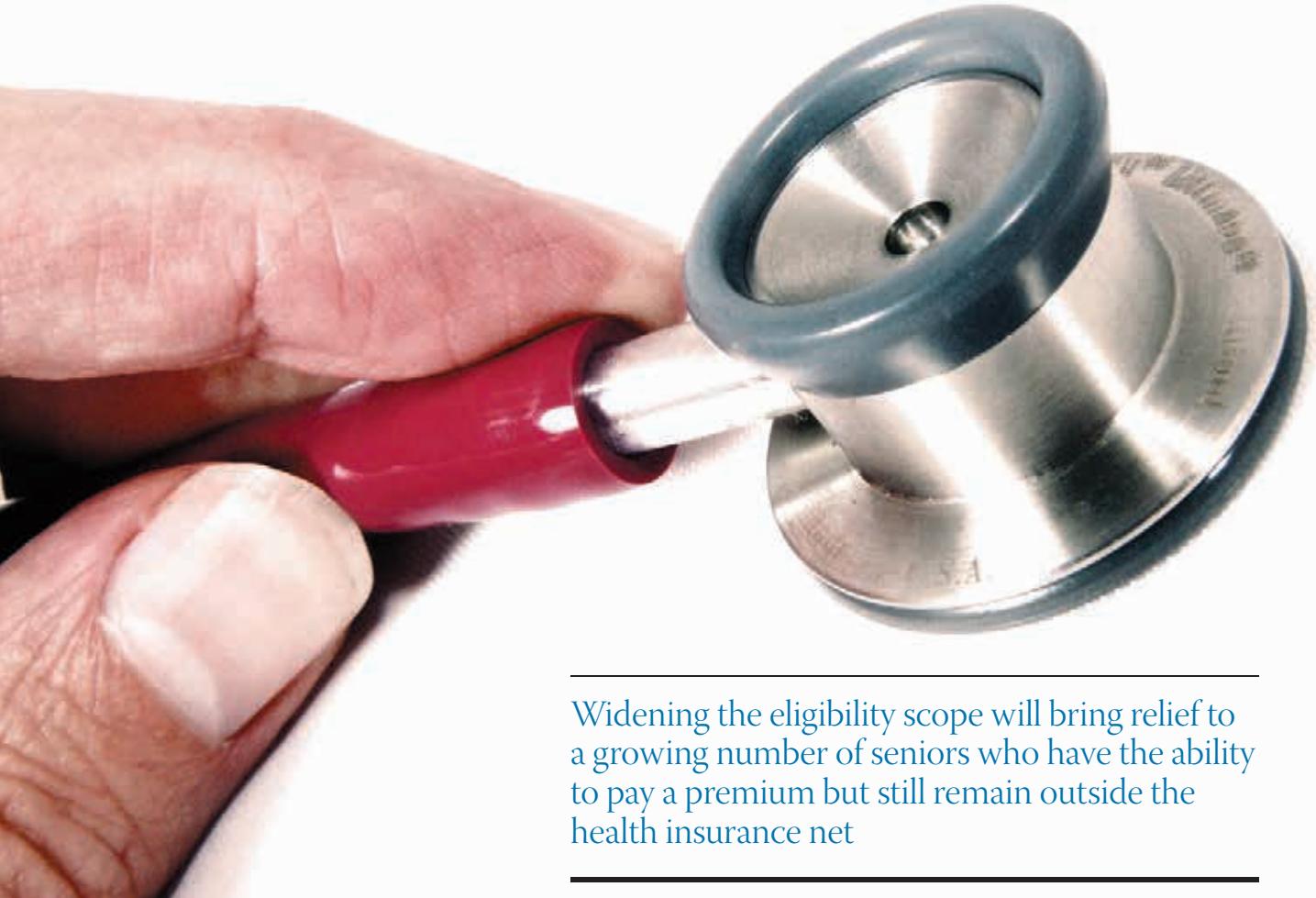
The IRDA draft cracks down on the practice of denying renewal if the insured is sick at the time of renewal. Insurers will also be wary of rejecting a claim, as it will require reasons for rejection to be given in writing. This should benefit silvers immensely.

The guidelines provide for the payment being made directly to the hospital (cashless facility) or to the insured, marginalising the role of the TPAs who are also known to reduce the amount of payment approved by the insurer as well as delay it. Obviously, the role of TPAs is downgraded.



cashless facility (public-sector institutions are big culprits here), followed by pronounced delays (sometimes running into months) in reimbursing claims. To rectify the situation, some enterprising elderly clients feel compelled to follow up with the company, insurance agents and Third Party Agents (TPAs). This process of chase-the-devil-who-has-my-money exacts a severe cost: unwieldy telephone bills, months worth of time and psy-

Instances of seniors who have a mediclaim policy for years and yet lose the huge no-claim bonus are not rare. When Freny (name changed) was denied her long accumulated bonus of over 175,000, it cost her many long distance calls and repeated letters to regain it. Anyone with lesser perseverance in following it up with New India Assurance would have just lost it like many others. Now, **IRDA has asked insurers to mention the working of cumulative no-claim bonus in the policy document and the**



Widening the eligibility scope will bring relief to a growing number of seniors who have the ability to pay a premium but still remain outside the health insurance net

norms for withdrawing this benefit in the event of a claim. Additionally, there will be rewards for low claims and continued renewal.

Special treatment to senior citizens is in the offing, as **health insurers and TPAs will have to establish separate cells to address health insurance-related claims and grievances of senior citizens.**

No El Dorado

In a nutshell, IRDA (Health Insurance) Regulations 2012 seem to offer a pack of the best practices in health insurance and strengthen the ₹ 130 billion industry in India. Many fresh provisions will improve product pricing, design norms and introduce measures for renewal of policies and their portability and transparency of norms.

But let us not kid ourselves. Getting a policy may become easy, but making a claim is a challenge. Hence, silvers need to take keen interest in understanding the fine print, the devil's den. Can one ignore that health insurance companies are credited with the highest number of pending cases of unpaid claims? My suggestion is that senior citizens should keep abreast of the final outcome of guidelines, understand rules and learn to make a valid claim when dealing with insurers and TPAs.

Do remember that seniors are unlikely to be offered a bouquet of roses without thorns. It is difficult to change the perception that they are a strain on resources rather than a source of revenues. No one can overlook the reality that their proneness to medical claims far exceeds the premium paid.

There are testing times and fierce battles ahead. The interest of insurers, TPAs and policy holders clash. While the former are interested in higher premium income and lower claim payments, the latter want exactly the opposite. Can you then wish away any attempts to scuttle or water down guidelines to prevent marginalisation of the role of TPAs and discretionary powers of insurers?

The IRDA and millions of senior customers will have to catch the bull by its horns and win the battle for a loopholes-free mediclaim policy. The health insurance cover may not keep you fully dry but will, surely, provide an umbrella to protect you from getting wet from head to toe. Silvers, wake up and seize the opportunity knocking on your door after over a decade!



Beyond **BANGKOK**

Game for a tryst with deadly fish, hungry crocs and a 'vanishing' market? Believe it or not, Bangkok is much more than a shopaholic's dream come true, says **Radhika Raje**

If arriving at Bangkok airport is any indication of Thai hospitality, every foreign tourist or 'falang' is in for a warm vacation in this South East Asian city. Illuminated at night and shimmering by day, Bangkok is a city of contrasts. It's where the ancient meshes seamlessly with the modern, and where hedonism and self-indulgence wrap themselves around a purely traditional core.

Founded in 1782 by the first monarch of the present Chakri dynasty, Bangkok is also called Kung Threp or City of Angels. The cityscape is dotted with 400-odd glitzy Buddhist temples constructed with precision and mind-boggling attention to detail. Apart from a vast and rich history, the contemporary city of Bangkok has plenty to offer the contemporary visitor.



Radhika Raje



(Clockwise from top left) Vimanmek Teakwood Mansion; Damnern Saduak Floating Market; a view of the city from Baiyoke Sky Hotel; Samutprakarn Crocodile Farm and Zoo (Opposite page) A reclining Buddha at Wat Pho

'Shopping' is one of the watchwords of this city, which is thankfully extremely affordable. A walk through the Chatuchak market or a day at Central World Mall will take care of your shopping list. But there is a dazzling array of markets, so set aside sufficient time to sample them all—a clothes market, Indian market, weekend market, and night market at Suan Lum Night Bazaar. Then there are the floating markets such as Taling Chan, Bang Khu Wiang and Tha Kha. Bargain till your pockets give way! But Bangkok is much more than a shopaholic's paradise. Read on...

Must-Visit Places

Vimanmek Teakwood Mansion and Arts of the Kingdom (Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall)

Located in the Dusit district, this royal palace was built in 1900 by King Rama after he returned from Europe. The interior decoration thus incorporates the European neo-

classical style with Thai motifs and architecture. Filled with photos of every successive monarch and their paraphernalia, the mansion impresses one room at a time. Its intricately carved household items and graciously painted walls and ceilings provide a peek into the royal lifestyle of a dynasty that once ruled what is now the city of Bangkok.

For art lovers, the Arts of the Kingdom, which opened only recently, is a must-visit. This museum exhibits the finest displays of Thai arts and crafts that have never been seen before. Gold-plated carriages and thrones are a reminder of the pomp and pageantry of the monarchy.

Samutsongkhram Railway Market and Damnern Saduak Floating Market

On the face of it, Samutsongkhram Railway Market is just another grocery market. Yet, skipping it renders the Bangkok trip incomplete. Also known as Talad-Rom-Hoob



(closed umbrella market), it is a makeshift bazaar that can, within seconds, transform into a simple railway track! Lining a railway track are vendors squatting with fresh produce spread out on canopies that can quickly and easily be pulled back to clear the way. As soon as the merchants hear the whistle of a train, they yank their canopies back to allow the train to pass and then unfurl them once again, almost at lightening speed. Since the 'market train' passes only twice a day, check the timings in advance.

Next up, a floating market on a manmade river—the Damnern Saduak Floating Market is one of Bangkok's main attractions. Vendors row their boats with all types of products across a canal dug during the reign of King Rama IV. It's an amazing sight. While riding across the canal in a boat, peep into the houses that flank the canal for a glimpse into the local agricultural lifestyle.

Samutprakarn Crocodile Farm and Zoo

This one-of-a-kind crocodile zoo will please visitors of all ages. Amid a smattering of other animals, the zoo is home



PLAN A TRIP AROUND ...

SONGKRAN FESTIVAL: Water, Water Everywhere!

It's *Holi* with a twist. Indian travellers to Thailand might get a sense of *deja vu* when visiting the country during Thai New Year or Songkran in April. Thailand's biggest annual event is celebrated by the splashing of water, which is a symbol of cleansing. Homes and public places such as temples, schools and offices are cleaned thoroughly to mark a fresh start to the New Year. Thereafter, people prepare scented water called Nam Op and visit temples to bathe an image of the Buddha and pay their respects to monks. The same scented water is sprinkled on parents and elders in the family to seek their blessings.

Now for the fun part. After the rituals, people revel in splashing water on friends, family and even passers-by. Sometimes, it's just a gentle handful of water but sometimes, a powered water gun is used. Locals prefer to wear light-coloured clothes during the festival to represent happiness and spring. Some celebrate by sprinkling talcum powder, which may also be made into a paste. This too symbolises a fresh welcome to a brand new year.

The best is you don't have to buy tickets to attend this event. Just take a stroll along the streets of Bangkok and, quite literally, soak in the revelry. **Caution:** The Thai people take Songkran very seriously, so carry a waterproof wallet and watch that your cell phone doesn't get splashed!



(Top) Ancient Siam; Samutsongkhram Railway Market

to the world's largest crocodile in captivity. There's a walkway above the hundreds of crocodiles that reside here, offering tourists a bird's eye view of these fascinating reptiles. There are also daily crocodile and elephant shows, where trained crocs interact with men, who perform dangerous stunts during an hour-long performance.

Ancient Siam

Ancient Siam, formerly known as Ancient City, is an architectural wonder. It's a theme park built in the shape of Thailand and spreads across 200 acres filled with greenery and stupas. It has everything the country has to offer—from unique temples, to lavish gardens to small villages peppered with stalls selling typical Thai food and drinks. And how can it be complete without monks?



TRAVELLER TALKS

"Bangkok was one of my unforgettable trips. I visited the city with my son and daughter-in-law. I loved the statues of the Buddha in their temples. The reclining Buddha in Wat Pho was my personal favourite. The intricate work and minute carving made me marvel at the labour and number of years that must have gone into making this single statue. Bangkok sure knows how to restore their ruins and preserve their heritage. Their museums are worth visiting. I loved the Gems and Jewellery museum. The gems were expensive but were of the best quality I have ever seen. And those on display were quite a spread!"

Apart from shopping, I had quite a relaxed time in Bangkok. The Thais are known for their massages the world over and I realised 'why' only when I indulged myself in one of them. The best part is they make you feel like kings and queens. And considering the hectic lifestyle we lead, we could all do with some pampering! Excellent infrastructure and safe roads make it possible to travel anywhere at any time.

My only problem was the unavailability of vegetarian food. But that was soon taken care of by Indian joints at every nook and corner. Bangkok boasts an amazing range of fruits such as Mangosteen and Rambutan, which you don't get elsewhere very easily.

It was an excellent trip. When Thailand tourism says, 'Thailand—Always Amazes You', they're dead right!

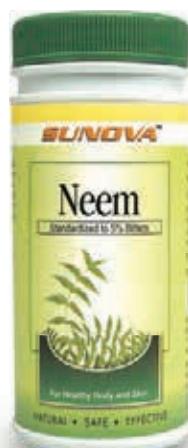
—Asha Chawla, 64

Siam Ocean World

Perhaps the most oft-asked question in all of Bangkok is: "Would you like to go to Siam Ocean World?" Be warned! Every travel agent and tour guide will invite you to this aquatic wonderland, so decide whose service you want to accept. Built underground, it is the size of three Olympic swimming pools. The large aquarium is considered the best therapy for heart patients, who are encouraged to spend hours here, watching the fish while listening to soothing music. Home to unique and rare species of fish, Siam Ocean World is South East Asia's largest aquatic exhibition. It also offers activities such as scuba diving and a boat ride in the water filled with some deadly fish. Watch out! ☀

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Chennai Pix

Custom-made

Currimboys in Chennai is not just a popular store for tableware and kitchen appliances, it's an inheritance that makes both owners and city-dwellers proud, reports Inara Hasanali

A functional yet pleasant-looking five-level building painted in a lovely shade of green with clear glass windows, Currimboys not just charms passers-by on the bustling Evening Bazaar Road in Chennai, it, in fact, attracts shoppers to this oldest part of the city for utilitarian tableware, kitchenware and appliances. With a character of its own, this clutter-free store has been promoting retail since 1889, when it made humble beginnings under a tree.

In 1887, Karim Bhai Shivji left Kutch in Gujarat (a dry region that still suffers from famine occasionally) for Chennai to earn a decent living. Two years later, he started a shop under a tree and later moved to a roadside store that sold hurricane lamps, bedroom lamps and chimneys; products greatly in demand at the time. The shop was located opposite a mosque that still stands and is very close to the present building constructed in 1939. Karim Bhai Shivji's descendants

say the patriarch's star shone during World War II, a historical scar that shattered the social fabric across the world but, ironically, also favoured some. Karim Bhai won the contract to supply hurricane lamps to the British Army and, in return, his shop was designated the 'Fair Price Store'.

During the war, all supplies went to the Army on priority. Others were given permits in the form of coupons. Rationing created such a dearth that

demand for every consumable item, including household basics like tableware and kitchen equipment, grew voraciously after the war. With crockery, cutlery and other essential commodities being imported on a larger scale from the UK and Europe, Karim Bhai's store was here to stay. As more and more British, Anglo Indians and locals began shopping at the store, it changed its name to Currimbhoys.

Through the decades, five generations of Karim Bhai's family have served simple as well as distinguished customers. Nazim Ali, who now helms the business, considers Abdul Rahim Currimbhoy and Gulam Hussain Currimbhoy the 'architects of the current store'. They laid the modern foundation of the flagship store in George Town—it included the Gold Market, the Textile Market, and the Stainless Steel Market, and is still a 'commercial hub' of Chennai. Decades ago, Fort St. George and the surrounding area was the main promenade; its proximity to Chennai Port, the Central and Egmore Station made it a popular place to shop. Many residents, mainly the British and the Anglo Indians, strolled and shopped here. After Independence, the demography of the shoppers changed to include a larger number of local residents.

The family behind the store climbed the social ladder and lived in an English bungalow with a driveway, a well-tended garden and servants' quarters. Nazim Ali also remembers that they were one among the first few families to own a horse cart. He joined Currimbhoys in 1950; he and his brother Yousuf Ali worked in tandem to lay a strong foundation. While Nazim Ali helped run the store, his brother

Through the decades, five generations of Karim Bhai's family have served simple as well as distinguished customers

was involved in marketing and other purchase activities. In the 1950s, one of their main contracts was with the Railways. Initially, they supplied lamps. As times changed, Currimbhoys became synonymous with dining and kitchen ware.

"Our sales dipped with the advent of stainless steel, but serviced apartments and catering institutes have laid the emphasis back on fine dining and, therefore, resurgence of interest in crockery. We continue to be a one-

stop shop for kitchenware for homes and hotels," says Nazim Ali, providing simple logic for the store's longevity. "We look after our staff, serving them simple lunch and tea/coffee every day; we are open all Sundays and holidays; and we take pride in the diversity of our clientele and culture," he adds.

At present, he is assisted by his sons Nawaz, Imran and Ishtiaq who run the four stores in George Town, Adyar, Anna Nagar and Pondicherry. Each store has three floors of retail space divided among the brothers. They hold independent charge of a floor each—the eldest is in charge of tableware, the younger one looks after kitchenware and the youngest takes care of kitchen appliances. Together, they promise 'total experience' to customers by referring them to appropriate floors according to their needs.

Moving with the times, yet maintaining core values has marked the 124 year-history of the store. While it never celebrated its 100 years, everyone (the staff included) is looking forward to a grand celebration upon completing 125 years in 2012. "It's a result of our ancestors' foresight and practicality," says Nawaz, the fifth-generation custodian of a legacy called Currimbhoys.

THE FOLKLORE OF MYSORE

The grand south Indian tradition, a distinguished brand in itself, the fabric millions from every generation swear by, Mysore silk is celebrating its centenary. With it, the T Narasipura factory, which was handed over to the Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation (KSIC) by the Mysore sericulture department in 1980, also turns 100 in September. The ritual of drawing micro-thin filaments of silk from cocoon, weaving an undeniably complicated yarn to make this super-soft, shining silk is one that can absorb the attention of the most modish visitor. The popularity of Mysore silk is, of course, irrefutable, what with KSIC having exceeded sales of ₹ 1 billion this year for close to 78,000 saris. With over 1,400 employees, including weavers, the makers of these jewel-tone saris are proud of their layered history. In 1912, the ruler of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV bought machines from across the seas to make rich silk for the royal family and the army. Later, Tipu Sultan was equally obsessed with sericulture and horticulture. Over the years, wars apart, such occupations of kings also found themselves documented in writings about India and its princely states. In the 1900s, it was the Wodeyars who made this indulgence commercial, and later encouraged weavers to settle in Mysore, Bangalore and Channapatna. Not only was it a traditional art and craft, it also brought in revenue. After Independence, the factory was handed over to the state's sericulture department.



MINIATURE MAGIC



Chennai Pix

CRAFT

R K Dastur started building miniature models to heal from a paralytic stroke, and turned a pastime into a labour of love, discovers Inara Hasanali

RK Dastur, aka 'Dusty', is a charming silver, whose indomitable spirit shines through everything he does. The 79 year-old is a gifted craftsman—he makes miniature models of vintage aircraft, ships, cars and motorbikes despite the limited functionality of his hands, the result of a stroke he suffered many years ago. Not that you would ever guess!

"Everyone knows that if they want to gift me something, it should be a miniature model kit. Imported kits are ideal," says Dastur, with a twinkle in his eye. In a more serious vein, he reveals that an unfortunate allergic reaction to an anti-rabies shot in 1985 compromised his mobility and partially paralysed his limbs. "After intense physiotherapy,

I began using my fingers to make miniature models," says Dastur, who is a licensed pilot and who worked at the Craigmore Tea Estates for over three decades.

What began as a brilliant way to heal also turned Dastur into a walking encyclopaedia on history as every precious miniature has a fascinating story tagged to it. These stories virtually spring to life with every exquisite fighter aircraft, warship and elegant car adorning his bungalow in Chennai. Dastur has painstakingly pieced together over 200 models, including 61 cars, 90 aircraft, 26 ships and 18 military vehicles. All his miniatures are built from kits he has either bought or have been gifted to him. Now, they are available online as well.



"I have been fascinated with cars and planes from childhood," he smiles. Pointing to a B 29 used during World War II, he reveals, "It flew sorties over the Hump (pilots referred to the Himalaya as the 'Hump') from Charbuia in Assam to Kunming in China, carrying fuel and essential supplies. The same aircraft was used to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Dastur is obviously partial to aircraft and his collection includes light aircraft made from bamboo, helicopters and various model aeroplanes, including the shark-nose P 40 also known as the Kitty Hawk or the Flying Tiger.

Another eye-catcher is a saffron-coloured Rolls Royce Phantom 2, which was made especially for the Maharaja of Rajkot in 1934. "The *kesariya* or saffron colour has religious significance and the erstwhile Maharaja had asked the manufacturers to paint the car this particular colour. It was initially bought by a British collector and then was in the possession of a German doctor. It finally made its way back to India at great expense to the Maharaja's grandson, who presented the car to his grandfather on his 75th birthday," recounts the gifted craftsman.

In a far corner of the room, the model of a red motorbike straddles a worktable. "Painting the models is the toughest part," confesses Dastur, who quickly adds that he never takes any help. But it's the tiny parts that rivet your attention. Leaf through the manual that comes with the motorbike kit and you find 19 steps with detailed instructions and some very, very tiny tools such as an 'artery forceps' that he uses to grasp the minuscule parts. It is then, that you truly appreciate Dastur's labour of love and the patience with which he wields his craft.



UNDER THE STARS

THE 'BEDTIME STORY' WILL NEVER CEASE TO ENGAGE THE FANTASIES OF A CHILD. THIS IS TRUE ESPECIALLY FOR INDIA, WITH OUR VAST RESERVES OF MYTHOLOGICAL, MORAL AND ILLUSTRATIVE TALES THAT ONLY OUR SILVERS CAN TELL. NOT ONLY DO THEY HAVE THE WISDOM TO MAKE THE PAST LOOK RELEVANT, THEY ALSO HAVE THE TIME AND INTENTION THE YOUTH NEED TO TAKE A LEAF FROM. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, WE HAVE OUR SHARE OF WRITERS WHO AIM TO GET A CHILD'S IMAGINATION TO FLY, LIKE RUSKIN BOND, RANJIT LAL AND SUDHA MURTY. IN FACT, MURTY, WHO ALSO EXCELS IN OTHER GENRES LIKE SOCIAL ISSUES AND WOMEN'S STUDIES, HAS RESURFACED AFTER A LONG HIATUS WITH HER LATEST COLLECTION OF CHILDREN'S TALES, GRANDMA'S BAG OF STORIES. IN TIMES WHEN IT'S DIFFICULT TO DISTRACT A CHILD FROM HIS LATEST GAMING CONSOLE, THE BOOK PROMISES TO BRING BACK THE TIMES WHEN CLIMBING TREES, STEALING MANGOES AND RIDING YOUR BICYCLE THROUGH THE BACK ALLEYS OF A SMALL TOWN WERE THE STUFF OF ADVENTURE. RELEASED AT LANDMARK BOOKSTORE IN BENGALURU, THE EVENT BROUGHT TOGETHER CHILDREN, PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS. "BACK IN THOSE DAYS, WE HAD JOINT FAMILIES, SO CHILDREN SPENT A LOT OF TIME WITH THEIR GRANDPARENTS. TODAY, THINGS ARE DIFFERENT. AND BEING A GRANDPARENT IS THE BEST, BECAUSE YOU CAN HAVE LOTS OF FUN WITH YOUR GRANDCHILD," MURTY SAID TO THE AUDIENCE AFTER A DRAMATISED READING FROM THE BOOK, WHICH CHARMED READERS WITH STORIES TOLD BY A GRANDMOTHER INDULGING SEVEN CHILDREN ENJOYING THE QUIET LIFE IN A SMALL TOWN. FUNNY, SIMPLE TALES SUGAR-COATED WITH SOCIAL MORALS—JUST THE KIND OF STORIES PARENTS FROM EVERY AGE WOULD WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO HEAR.



An eventful life

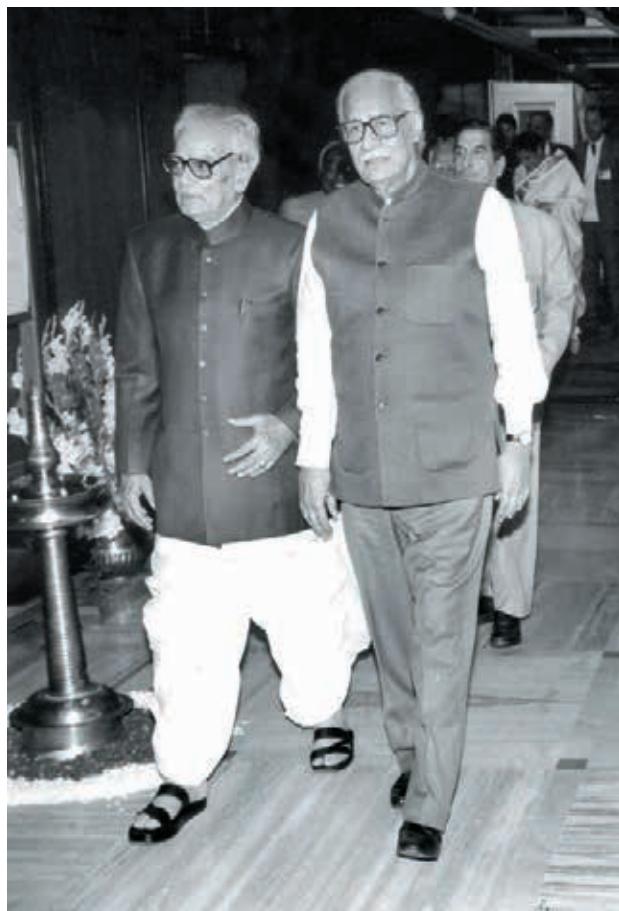
Journalist and human rights activist Kuldip Nayar's autobiography *Beyond The Lines* (Roli Books, ₹ 595) chronicles the post-Independence India. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* presents some images supporting his insightful narrative



(Top) With India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the election room during Lok Sabha election in 1957; with Lal Bahadur Shastri (standing in the centre) and M L Bharadwaj (principal information officer, extreme left)



(Top) With Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at a press conference; as the new Indian high commissioner on way to present credentials to the Queen at Buckingham Palace, London

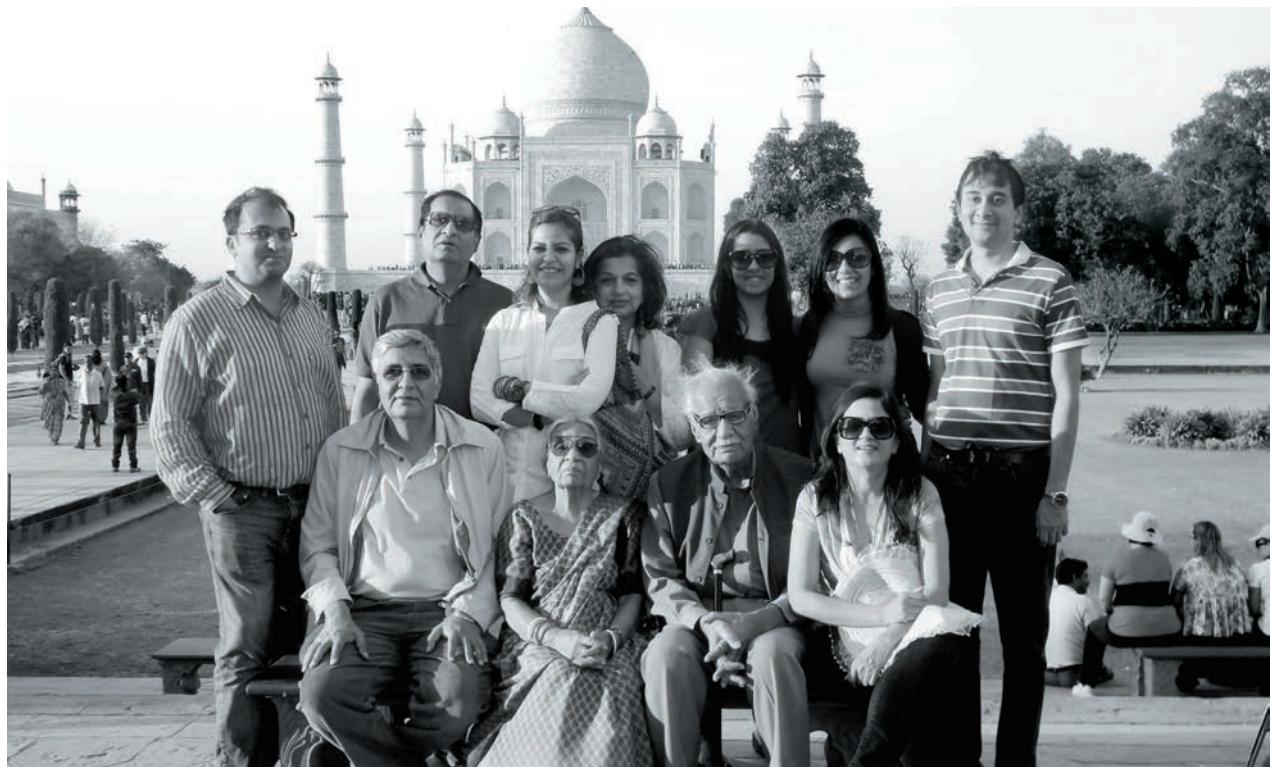


(Clockwise from left) With Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat; with Bharti [wife] meeting British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher; with President A P J Abdul Kalam at the Rashtrapati Bhawan





(Clockwise from top left) Receiving an award from President Giani Zail Singh at Tirupati; with elder son Sudhir; a recent family outing to Agra with wife, children and grandchildren



On patriotism

To aid the sense of introspection on nationhood that inevitably accompanies Independence Day each August, we present an excerpt from *Democracy in America* (1835), a seminal study by French political thinker and historian Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)

There is one sort of patriotic attachment which principally arises from that instinctive, disinterested, and undefinable feeling which connects the affections of man with his birthplace. This natural fondness is united with a taste for ancient customs and a reverence for traditions of the past; those who cherish it love their country as they love the mansion of their fathers. They love the tranquillity that it affords them; they cling to the peaceful habits that they have contracted within its bosom; they are attached to the reminiscences that it awakens; and they are even pleased by living there in a state of obedience. This patriotism is sometimes stimulated by religious enthusiasm, and then it is capable of making prodigious efforts. It is in itself a kind of religion: it does not reason, but it acts from the impulse of faith and sentiment. In some nations the monarch is regarded as a personification of the country; and, the fervour of patriotism being converted into the fervour of loyalty, they take a sympathetic pride in his conquests, and glory in his power. There was a time under the ancient monarchy when the French felt a sort of satisfaction in the sense of their dependence upon the arbitrary will of their king; and they were wont to say with pride: "We live under the most powerful king in the world."

But, like all instinctive passions, this kind of patriotism incites great transient exertions, but no continuity of effort. It may save the state in critical circumstances, but often allows it to decline in times of peace. While the manners of a people are simple and its faith unshaken, while society is steadily based upon traditional institutions whose legitimacy has never been contested, this instinctive patriotism is wont to endure.

But there is another species of attachment to country which is more rational than the one I have been describing. It is perhaps less generous and less ardent, but it is more fruitful and more lasting: it springs from knowledge; it is

nurtured by the laws, it grows by the exercise of civil rights; and, in the end, it is confounded with the personal interests of the citizen. A man comprehends the influence which the well-being of his country has upon his own; he is aware that the laws permit him to contribute to that prosperity, and he labours to promote it, first because it benefits him, and secondly because it is in part his own work.

But epochs sometimes occur in the life of a nation when the old customs of a people are changed, public morality is destroyed, religious belief shaken, and the spell of tradition broken, while the diffusion of knowledge is yet imperfect and the civil rights of the community are ill secured or confined within narrow limits. The country then assumes a dim and dubious shape in the eyes of the citizens; they no longer behold it in the soil which they inhabit, for that soil is to them an inanimate clod; nor in the usages of their forefathers, which they have learned to regard as a debasing yoke; nor in religion, for of that they doubt; nor in the laws, which do not originate in their own authority; nor in the legislator, whom they fear and despise. The country is lost to their senses; they can discover it neither under its own nor under borrowed features, and they retire into a narrow



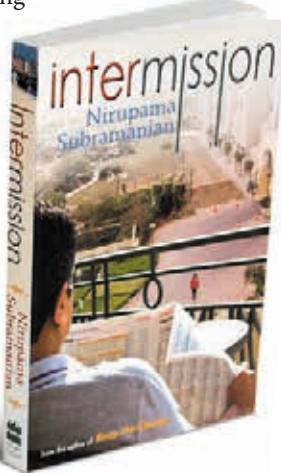
This patriotism is sometimes stimulated by religious enthusiasm, and then it is capable of making prodigious efforts. It is in itself a kind of religion

and unenlightened selfishness. They are emancipated from prejudice without having acknowledged the empire of reason; they have neither the instinctive patriotism of a monarchy nor the reflecting patriotism of a republic; but they have stopped between the two in the midst of confusion and distress.

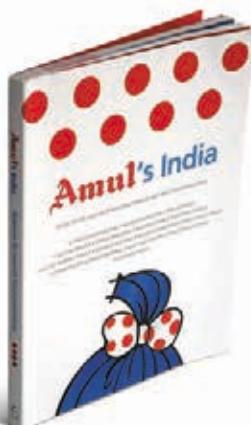
In this predicament to retreat is impossible, for a people cannot recover the sentiments of their youth any more than a man can return to the innocent tastes of childhood; such things may be regretted, but they cannot be renewed. They must go forward and accelerate the union of private with public interests, since the period of disinterested patriotism is gone by forever.

On the shelf

Gurgaon is a microcosm of both what is right about India today, and what is very wrong. A wonderfully appropriate setting for **Nirupama Subramanian's INTERMISSION** (HarperCollins; ₹ 250; 273 pages), which explores the contradictions that befall fragile lives in a brave new world. While hi-flying corporate couple Varun and Gayatri are readjusting to life in India with their teenage son Anirudh, struggling with adolescence and angst, young mother Sweety walks into their life and shreds the veneer of their perfect existence. Subramanian has a keen understanding of family dynamics and her natural empathy for each of her characters shines through the book. Adding further to the readability quotient is the wry humour—the author's observations on life in a gated community will leave those of you who have experienced it chuckling, and nodding in agreement.

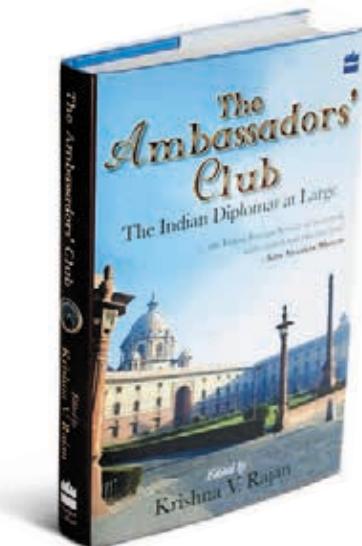
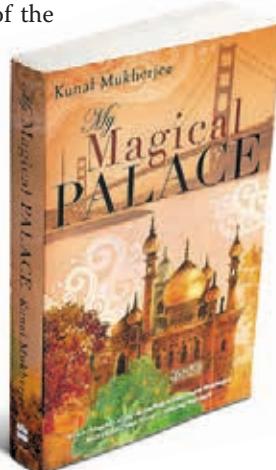


"Here is the Indian Foreign Service at its honest, understated and effective best," writes national security adviser and former foreign secretary Shiv Shankar Menon in his foreword to **THE AMBASSADORS' CLUB – THE INDIAN DIPLOMAT AT LARGE** (HarperCollins; ₹ 599; 330 pages), a collection of 16 essays by former Indian ambassadors, each recounting a significant chapter in his career. Editor Krishna V Rajan writes about his own stint in Nepal in an essay that appears to be more self-promotion than policy oriented; still, many of the others fare better. Like A Madhavan's riveting



Unarguably the most iconic Indian advertising campaign of all time, Amul's 'Utterly Butterly Delicious' polka-dotted cherub turns 50 this year (see 'The Way We Were'). **AMUL'S INDIA** (Collins Business; ₹ 299; 212 pages) is a toast to her impact on a nation. Classic hoardings and snippets are juxtaposed with essays by prominent Indians—ranging from Dr Verghese Kurien, the brain behind the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, to newsman Rajdeep Sardesai, cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle and actor Amitabh Bachchan, himself the subject of many an Amul quip. (The Big B actually confesses that he has collected every Amul hoarding that has featured him!) A delightful little book of vignettes that tells the story behind the campaign while chronicling the socio-political-cultural life of a country, this one's a keeper. Utterly.

Legacy, patriarchy, coming of age and coming out of the closet are all themes that are interwoven in **THE MAGICAL PALACE** (HarperCollins; ₹ 399; 372 pages) by Kunal Mukherjee. Rahul's love for Andrew in San Francisco doesn't preclude him from being grist for the arranged marriage mill back in India. While Andrew refuses to let his lover live a lie, he soon begins to realise that his partner's story is far more complicated than he can fathom, its gnarled and tangled roots anchoring him to a past and a reality that he finds incredibly difficult to pull away from. A sensitive read that gathers steam as you turn the pages, this book goes beyond being 'gay' literature—rather it's a study of eternal dilemmas that defy boundaries.



description of the fall of the Berlin Wall; L L Mehrotra's account of the return of the Indian Peace Keeping Force from Colombo; Jagat Mehta's intensive analysis of India's China policy; and Niranjan Desai's hair-raising experiences in Idi Amin's Uganda. An engaging read for anyone with an interest in Indian foreign policy and how it has been translated into action around the world.

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Free to THINK

In his powerful work *Freedom XIV*, Khalil Gibran gives us a unique take on the notion of independence

And an orator said, "Speak to us of Freedom."

And he answered:

At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you prostrate yourself and worship your own freedom,

Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and praise him though he slays them.

Ay, in the grove of the temple and in the shadow of the citadel I have seen the freest among you wear their freedom as a yoke and a handcuff.

And my heart bled within me; for you can only be free when even the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness to you, and when you cease to speak of freedom as a goal and a fulfilment.

You shall be free indeed when your days are not without a care, nor your nights without a want and a grief,

But rather when these things girdle your life and yet you rise above them naked and unbound.

And how shall you rise beyond your days and nights unless you break the chains which you at the dawn of your understanding have fastened around your noon hour?

In truth that which you call freedom is the strongest of these chains, though its links glitter in the sun and dazzle the eyes.

And what is it but fragments of your own self you would discard that you may become free?

If it is an unjust law you would abolish, that law was written with your own hand upon your own forehead.

You cannot erase it by burning your law books, nor by washing the foreheads of your judges, though you pour the sea upon them.



And what is it but fragments of your own self you would discard that you may become free?

And if it is a despot you would dethrone, see first that his throne erected within you is destroyed.

For how can a tyrant rule the free and the proud, but for a tyranny in their own freedom and a shame in their won pride?

And if it is a care you would cast off, that care has been chosen by you rather than imposed upon you.

And if it is a fear you would dispel, the seat of that fear is in your heart and not in the hand of the feared.

Verily all things move within your being in constant half embrace, the desired and the dreaded, the repugnant and the cherished, the pursued and that which you would escape.

These things move within you as lights and shadows in pairs that cling.

And when the shadow fades and is no more, the light that lingers becomes a shadow to another light.

And thus your freedom when it loses its fetters becomes itself the fetter of a greater freedom.

Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) was a Lebanese-American artist, poet and writer

UTTERLY INDIAN



Here's one 50 year-old who hasn't aged a day since she was born: the Amul girl; this chubby-cheeked sprite in a polka dot dress with matching ribbon has smiled back at us from packets of butter and billboards across the country. And she has no plans to retire.

Her story begins when Amul, in its bid to raise the bar of competition in the dairy products market, handed over its advertising campaign to an agency called Advertising and Sales Promotion, where an employee named Sylvester daCunha was given the job. A joint effort of daCunha and his

wife led to the iconic tagline, 'Utterly Butterly Delicious.' In 1962, Eustace Fernandes, the agency's art director, completed the campaign with his drawing of the Amul girl.

Since then, she has gone on to express her opinion on everything—from politics to Bollywood—always witty, sometimes cheeky, but never malicious. In fact, her considerable charms are under discussion in *Amul's India*, a new book by HarperCollins that invites eminent Indians to comment on the Amul ad phenomenon (see 'Bookshelf'). Buttering her audience once again?

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: AUGUST 1962

- On 1 August, Nepal Airlines crashed on its way to Delhi, killing all four crew members and six passengers.
- On 5 August, Nelson Mandela's 27-year incarceration began.
- On 11 August, athlete Pyotr Bolotnikov of the USSR broke his own world record for 10,000 mts in Moscow.
- On 25 August, Bangladeshi doctor, author and human rights activist Taslima Nasrin was born.

Cash Mob

n. An event where people support a local retailer by gathering *en masse* to purchase the store's products.

Example: Cash mobs appear to be catching on in the suburbs south of Boston, targeting local businesses for one-day boosts in revenue to help keep them afloat in this slow economy. Unlike the phenomenon of a flash mob, in which hundreds of people show up in one public place at the same time to sing, dance, or otherwise create a stir, organised cash mobs vote on which local businesses to support and visit on a designated day so as not to overwhelm the staff.

—Michele Morgan Bolton, “A new flavor in buying locally: cash mobs”,
The Boston Globe, 7 June 2012

CONNUBIAL

Ad. Pertaining to marriage or the married state.

Example: You wouldn't think Donald Trump would need much **connubial** coaxing to picture himself in the Trump White House. But a Globe headline this week reads: 'Wife Melania Tells Teg Donald: America Needs You!'

—Maureen Dowd, “She Made Me Run!”, *The New York Times*,
31 December 2011

Duopsony

n. A market condition in which there are only two buyers, thus exerting great influence on price.

Example: The BBC-ITV **duopsony** was gone for good, and the competition between the TV companies as purchasers of the rights intensified.

—Stephen Dobson and John Goddard, “The Economics of Football”,
Cambridge University Press, 2011

“ On the mountains of truth you can never climb in vain; either you will reach a point higher up today, or you will be training your powers so that you will be able to climb higher tomorrow

—Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher (1844-1900)

Wah Ustad!

Want to discover your musical side? Learn tabla from the maestro himself. The recently revamped **Ustad Allarakha Institute of Music in Mumbai** is conducting classes for all age groups and guest lectures will be hosted by none other than Ustad Zakir Hussain. Some newly designed courses—like the short-term intensive course—promise to brush up your musical instincts earlier than you think. Two to three classes per week are sure to turn you into a pro. The institute promises one-to-one attention for every student and tutorship from musicians from across the world. So bring in your tabla and drum away! Call Gyaneshwar on 9702410209 to know more about the classes or to fix an appointment.



“We should extend a helping hand to those who need us. Today I have the opportunity and the ability to help; so I do as much as I can.”

S Babu, 56, Thiruvananthapuram, on setting up a charitable organisation to support destitute cancer patients



When his younger sister died of breast cancer, S Babu was inconsolable. But he channelled his anguish into helping destitute cancer patients. “Florence’s loss is irreversible; but now I do what I can to help poor cancer patients who are struggling with the herculean task of managing this killer disease,” says Babu, who witnessed their travails during his visits to the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, where his sister underwent treatment. “Some of them do not have money to buy food, let alone medicines,” he says. In 2007, he founded Santhwanam, a charitable organisation that regularly contributes to the food account of RCC and every three months donates about ₹ 25,000, so the hospital can buy food and medicines for

those in need. A postman by profession, Babu personally devotes time to these patients after his daily mail delivery and during weekends. At the time of this interview, despite being sick with flu, Babu was busy giving final touches to the annual get-together of Santhwanam to donate ₹ 3,000 to each of the 100 cancer patients. He is also in the process of exploring options to help the families of those who have succumbed to the disease. “Many a time, the sole breadwinner succumbs and the family is left in the lurch. We hope to provide self-employment training to the family for sustenance. At present, we do not have funds for it, but we will find a way,” he says with a hopeful smile.

—Nisha Salim



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