

harmony

OCTOBER 2018 ₹ 40

# celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens



Former cricket selector  
Kishan Rungta  
reveals his wild side

Mystical  
Amarnath yatra

Remembering forgotten  
heroes of football

Oct 1  
**WORLD  
ELDERS'  
DAY**

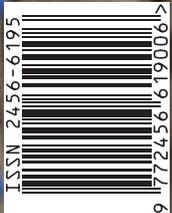
## HOLDING THE FORT

AMAN NATH

+ other remarkable silver restorers

ANUPAM SAH | C SEKAR | DINESH DESHPANDE  
INDRA VIJAY SINGH | MOHAMMAD IMTIAZ & REYAZ  
SAILAJA PATURI | SANDEEP KATARI | SHASHIKANT MAYEKAR

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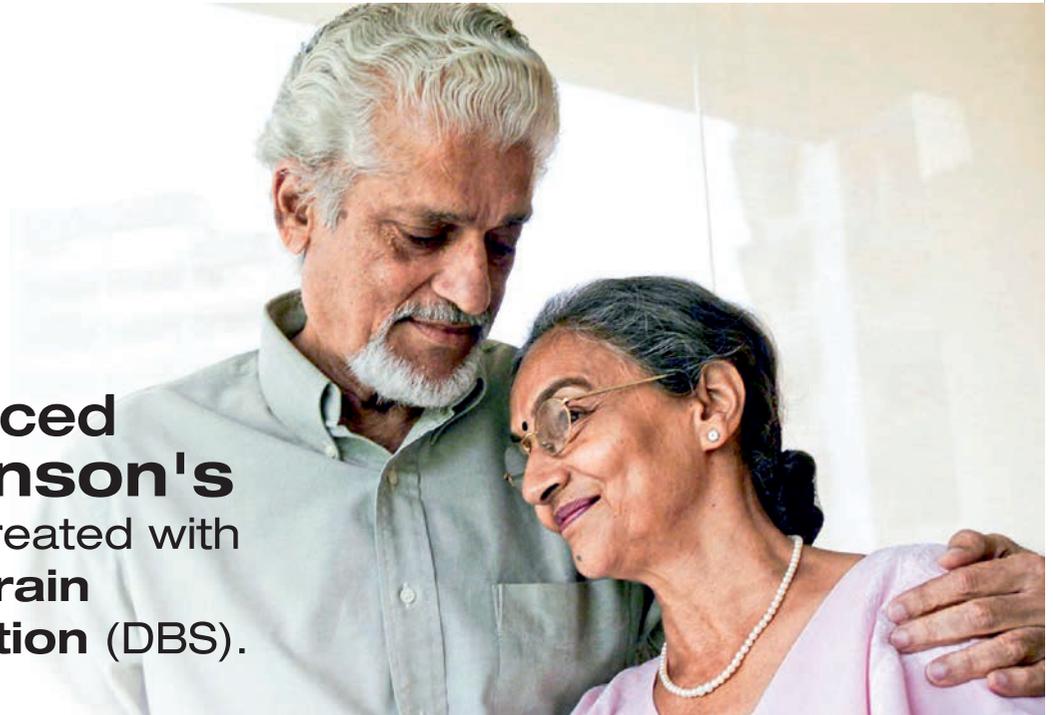




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# YOU'RE THE VOICE

Perseverance has its rewards.

When we began our journey 15 years ago to bring Indian elders to centre-stage, very few people were listening. Now, as we celebrate the International Day of Elder Persons this October, it is heartening to see that silver is becoming a colour with very real currency.

Take, for instance, the 1st Annual Senior Care Conclave to be held in New Delhi on 1 November. Titled 'Igniting Industry for India's Ageing Sector', the event is being organised by ASLI (Association of Senior Living India) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). To have a powerful industry body like CII focusing on the silver sector speaks volumes about the growing awareness in civil society about the power and potential of the silver market and the need to cater to it across segments.

This is no flash in the pan. A host of similar events—conferences, seminars, workshops—are taking place across the country with increasing frequency, which are attempting to translate research, study and analysis into concrete solutions for silvers, from inclusive living to active ageing. In fact, December will also see the Unmukt Festival in Hyderabad, a two-day event that will combine workshops, demos, talks and entertainment to showcase the lifestyle possibilities open to silvers.

These possibilities have always formed the core of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. And I am happy to say that we



Dabbho Retnani

are lending a hand, and our knowledge capital, to many of these events. After all, it will take a community of committed people and dedicated organisations to craft real, sustainable change in the way we view silvers—and what we offer them to put their best foot forward.

Indeed, community is the biggest engine of change. And each of us has a role to play in building a responsive, vibrant community where each constituent has the other's back. While every event that focuses on silvers draws greater public focus on our needs and aspirations, it is up to each of us to break out of our comfort zones, unite, and become more vocal about what we want, what we desire and, most important, what we deserve.

Today, India is listening—make yourself heard. Happy Elders' Day!

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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## 31 cover feature

## MISSION RESTORATION

MEET THE SILVERS WHO REVIVE, REBUILD AND REJUVENATE FORGOTTEN TREASURES, GIVING THEM A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

AMAN NATH      MOHAMMAD IMTIAZ & REYAZ  
 ANUPAM SAH      SAILAJA PATURI  
 C SEKAR      SANDEEP KATARI  
 DINESH DESHPANDE      SHASHIKANT MAYEKAR  
 INDRA VIJAY SINGH

Cover photograph: Smriti Pant

## features

**28 . Memoir:** Former cricket selector Kishan Rungta on his hunting expeditions and other passions in life

**56 . Faith:** The Amarnath yatra, a journey of belief, bravery and beauty

## every issue

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

**65 . ETCETERA:** Culture, leisure, lifestyle, books, buzz and miscellany

**82 . SPEAK:** Jayanti Premkumar in Mumbai trains the underprivileged in upcycling products

## columns

**22 . NUTRITALK:** Swap exotic foods with local substitutes to optimise your health, says wellness consultant Naini Setalvad

**24 . YOGA RX:** Shameem Akthar recommends a systematic yoga practice to keep hearing loss at bay

**26 . CAPITAL GAINS:** Financial adviser Dick Mody lists the benefits of investing in government schemes

**68 . OFF THE CUFF:** Raju Mukherji remembers Tulemaran Aao and Neville D'Souza, the unsung heroes of football

**70 . AT LARGE:** Writer Humra Quraishi recounts her father's struggle with Alzheimer's disease

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**KNOCK ON WOOD**

*Sailaja Paturi goes against the grain and makes furniture without nails for connoisseurs of the craft*

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# Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

Harmony-Celebrate Age

[www.magzter.com](http://www.magzter.com)

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



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

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



# column one

"I am not the red flag sort," says Aman Nath. He needn't be. One of the few prominent Indians to put their name on a petition challenging Article 377 in the Supreme Court, his actions have spoken louder than many activist words. And it is a happy accident for us that the Court's historic verdict, lauded across India and the world, was delivered while we were interviewing him.

Love is indeed love. And it takes myriad forms. This month, Nath headlines our list of remarkable silvers who pour their heart, soul and, yes, love into restoration. While Nath's Neemrana group of 'non-hotel' hotels has revived neglected fortresses, bungalows and havelis across India, our other skilled restorers have breathed new life into an array of relics, from vintage cars and jeeps to cameras, clocks, art, photographs, furniture and even pens.

Elsewhere, former sportsman and cricket selector and amateur photographer Kishan Rungta reveals his wild side; photographer Shilbhadra Datta whisks you away on a journey of faith to Amarnath; nutritionist Naini Setalvad highlights simple swaps for exotic foods that are high on health and easy on the pocket; yoga acharya Shameem Akthar explains how a regular practice can keep hearing loss at bay; financial advisor Dick Mody urges you to break the inertia and start planning for the future; and Raju Mukherji salutes forgotten football heroes Tulemaran Aao and Neville D'Souza.

Something for everybody, wouldn't you say? That's our promise—this month, every month. Keep reading. And Happy World Elders' Day!

—Arati Rajan Menon

Independence Day 2018 was celebrated with gumption by underprivileged students of Jagriti, Noida. Jagriti is an NGO I started in 2005, which provides free educational assistance to over 50 underprivileged children attending kindergarten all the way to grade 12.

The celebration started with the arrival of the top brass of Lions Club, Noida, and other guests at 10 am on 15 August 2018. About 50 students of Jagriti had already arrived and were busy putting up the charts and decorations they had made. As chairman of Jagriti, I welcomed the guests, recalling a line from a speech given by former Army chief Field Marshal (then General) K M Cariappa on the same blessed day in 1947. "Aaj se hum muft ho gaye hai!" (From today, we are free.) This brought a smile to the audience. However, my main intention was to bring to attention the plight of my students and the countless people in India who are denied the basic right to education and facilities to educate themselves.

Students at Jagriti come for classes but end up staying the whole day, sometimes leaving late at night after finishing all their studies, because they don't find their one-room apartments shared with their families conducive to their education. Finance is another problem and I do as much as I can from my personal resources but they are exhaustive. Last year, I was able to help 33 of my students and it pained me that I couldn't help them all.

Through the platform of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, I would like to bring these issues to the forefront. It is only the educated public that can take the country forward to progress and enable the coming generation to make



informed decisions for the betterment of our country. The fortunate sons need to come forward for the penurious and demand that this fundamental right of every child be enforced.

**Col K S Caveeshar**  
Via email

It's lovely and inspiring to hear about people in their 50s and older and read their stories. It is motivating, encouraging, and makes you feel life is more than just about 'anti-ageing' or being 'wrinkle-free'. It shows that ageing is part of life and that life still continues no matter how many decades you've crossed. Keep sharing the stories!

**Lilit Margaryan**  
Via email

## HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in  
September 2018 on

[www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)

1. Hysterectomy after menopause (March 2018)
2. Out of darkness (September 2018)
3. Mr & Mrs Singh (February 2010)



## MEDIA WATCH

### Eye-opener

'Aged Care Reimagined', a new initiative by Australian aged care provider Whiddon Group, aims to shatter stereotypes and correct prevalent misconceptions about elderly residential care. The campaign includes videos featuring residents on the themes of active ageing, the arts, community connections and companionship, which are published on their Facebook page. "When it comes down to breaking down stereotypes, seeing is believing," Chris Mamarelis, CEO of Whiddon Group, tells website [australianageingagenda.com.au](http://australianageingagenda.com.au). "It's about time we re-imagined the sentiment around aged care and opened our eyes to the goodness of our industry and its people, starting with our creative ageing programmes that bring enjoyment and health and wellbeing benefits to all our residents." The group's programme uses a holistic approach to help silvers tackle depression, anxiety and stress through humour, music, pet therapy and dance. Let the videos bring a smile to your face—go to [www.facebook.com/TheWhiddonGroup/](https://www.facebook.com/TheWhiddonGroup/)

Photographs by Whiddon





*I realised beauty is a nuisance... It tricks you into fighting an uphill battle against the march of time*

Photographs by Dinodia Photo Library

# Role model

At 74, she says she feels more herself than she did as a 20 year-old cover model! Meet former 'It Girl' **Benedetta Barzini**, who shares her journey from the streets of Rome to the flashy parties of Manhattan and her return to Milan to become a teacher in an article in the UK edition of *Vogue* magazine. She knows only too well how unforgiving the beauty industry can be—from being the face of Ford models at 20, she went to being “a nobody” by 25. It is then that she left for Milan, where she finally found herself. “It was around

that point that I realised beauty is a nuisance,” she writes. “It tricks you into fighting an uphill battle against the march of time. Who cares if you have wrinkles? Your responsibility is to do something with the life that you were given—and if that life is reflected in the lines of your face, so much the better.” Now, with her 75th birthday round the corner, Barzini acknowledges and embraces herself as somebody “real, authentic, who has a true sense of who she is and has really lived—rather than somebody who spends time worrying over whether or not her eyelashes are curled.” We love it.

## Manga goes SILVER

FOR THE ‘WOKE’ YOUTH across the world, Japan is synonymous with comic-book art. Now, it’s time for silvers to catch up: **traditional Japanese ‘Manga’ comics are now featuring elders as their protagonists.** According to website *japantimes.co.jp*, a current favourite is *Sanju Mariko*, the story of an 80 year-old who embarks on a new journey away from her family. Deeply resonant, the tale addresses issues like loneliness, alienation, forgetfulness and



dementia. Another popular comic is the heartfelt *Oya-san to Boku* (The landlady and me), based on the experiences of 41 year-old comedian Taro Yabe, who lives on the second floor of a house in Tokyo owned by a woman in her late 80s and the warm friendship they develop. Then, there’s *Tasukeaitai: Rogo*

*Hatan No Oya, Karoshi Line No Ko* (A wish for mutual help: parents broken after retirement, offspring on the verge of death from overwork), which tells the story of a couple in their 70s who find themselves in a difficult situation, financially and emotionally, when the husband suffers a stroke. “Featuring the elderly as leading characters, rather than in supporting roles, has shed light on the details of what they worry about and struggle with,” Kyoko Tominaga, associate professor of sociology at Ritsumeikan University tells news agency KYODO News, explaining the popularity of these comics. “I think it is the concreteness of this content that allows readers to empathise.”

## EASY DOES IT!

**E**lectronics company iBall, which gave us the first Indian silver-friendly phone in 2012, has launched an upgraded version of the product: **Aasaan 4**.

Features include a 2.31-inch display, emergency alert support, mobile tracking function, one-touch buttons for phone lock, LED torch and wireless FM, and an all-important emergency calling feature with SOS button—press it and a siren goes off, alerting people nearby to an emergency. This dual-SIM phone is powered with a 1,800 mAh battery and supports 32 GB storage space that can accommodate up to 200 text messages and 1,000 contacts. The phone also has an extremely user-friendly interface with a big keypad and large dialling keys and the option for Braille and a 'talking keypad'. Aasaan 4 is available in just one colour—'serene white'—and costs ₹ 3,499. To know more, go to [www.iball.co.in/Product/Mobiles/SENIOR-/Aasaan4/61581](http://www.iball.co.in/Product/Mobiles/SENIOR-/Aasaan4/61581)



## SLEEP SAFE

Painful—and potentially dangerous—falls from the bed could soon be a thing of the past for silvers. A team of researchers from RMIT University, Melbourne, have developed **Sleeptite, an advanced silicone fabric dotted with sensors to monitor sleep and track movement on and off the bed**.

Non-invasive in nature, the fabric can actually be stitched into bedding like a mattress protector. So promising is the technology for the caregiving industry that the Australian government has invested \$ 1.7 million into the project. The researchers believe the technology also holds great potential to be used for newborns to help prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). To learn more about the project, visit

[www.sleeptite.com.au](http://www.sleeptite.com.au)



*Nest, a division of Google that sells home automation products, is venturing into senior living products*

Photographs courtesy: Nest



## Nest of possibility

Recognising that silver care is a sunshine sector, **Nest, a division of Google that sells home automation products**, is venturing into senior living products. According to a report by *CNBC*, Nest has been approaching senior living facilities and spaces in the US to pitch for incorporating its devices and products. These include motion sensors and lights to enable easy navigation at night, sensors to

preclude dehydration from walking around in excessive heat, fall prevention mechanisms, and cameras and smart locks to enable safe and independent living. Today, as the report tells us, there are 1 million Americans living in assisted-living facilities and the number is expected to double by 2030. Investing in this space, then, makes great business sense. Smart thinking Google—as always!

# RESORT-RESIDENCES FOR SENIORS



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

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

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

## **HEALTHCARE AND SECURITY – YOUR LIVES ARE PRECIOUS!**

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

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

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

## **DESIGN AND DETAILS – THE SCULPTURE THAT INSPIRED MANY!**

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

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

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

## **PERSEVERANCE AND SKILL – THE TEAM!**

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

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

For more information  
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Kalpataru



Photographs by iStock

## SWEATY SOLUTION

‘Sweating the small stuff’ may actually be a good thing, provided it is used as a biomarker to gauge your stress levels. We’re talking about a steroid called **cortisol present in sweat**. According to researchers, cortisol is critical for blood pressure, metabolism, inflammation, memory formation and emotional stress.

It also provides information about electrolytes, proteins, hormones and other factors in the body. Why, it can even indicate whether your adrenal and pituitary glands are functioning properly! Problems arise when increased cortisol levels are sustained over time as this can lead to chronic diseases, many of which are prevalent in seniors.

Thus, it was quite a breakthrough when a team of material scientists led by Albert Salleo at Stanford University in the US created a **wearable device consisting of a stretchy patch that can be placed on the skin that can soak up even tiny amounts of sweat**.

The patch comes with portable biosensors attached to the wearable device, which can measure the stress levels in the body. The findings have been published in *Science Advance*.

## WORSE FOR WEAR

While smartphones mean you never really switch off from work, women may be pushing the wrong buttons. A new study indicates that **women who work long hours—over 45 hours a week—stood a 51-per-cent higher risk of Type 2 diabetes than those who put in 40 or 35 hours a week**. The researchers, at the Institute for Work and Health in Toronto, analysed data from a database of more than 7,000 workers in Canada who were followed for more than 12 years. They explain that longer working hours mean higher stress levels, which can change hormones like cortisol. Changes in cortisol can affect the body’s insulin levels and its ability to break down sugar, thereby triggering diabetes. Moreover, high stress levels can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to poorer mental health, which in turn can contribute to changes in weight and insulin levels, and trigger diabetes. Interestingly, the study found that longer working hours lowered the risk of diabetes in men, probably because the men in the study spent their work time doing a combination of sitting, standing and walking. Women, on the other hand, experience additional stress brought on by family chores and responsibilities that, typically, men don’t share. The study was published in *BMJ Diabetes Research & Care*.



# Senior living in India

## On the cusp of growth

The elderly population in the world is the fastest growing business segment with the 60+ community touching 11.5 per cent of the world's population. Though nearly 120 million silvers live in India at present, only one silver in every 10,000 is engaged in some form of senior living, compared to 12 silvers in every 100 in the US and four in every 100 in Australia.

A great stumbling block for senior living in India is the social stigma attached to the concept as these communities are commonly referred to as 'old age homes'. While independent and active senior living projects currently being offered in India have been accepted by some sections, much more needs to be done to make this concept acceptable universally.

Given this scenario, where the sector presents a huge opportunity for growth and investment, the entry of reputed corporates—not necessarily involved in real-estate ventures—will provide much-needed traction and impetus. In India, the sector is, at present, dominated by builders and developers. The entry of players with passion, commitment and empathy for developing senior living projects with a strong emphasis on service will change the perception of such projects being labelled as old age homes.

Realising the dire need for this sector, the entry of entities willing to pour in the funds to create continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) on a large scale will be the tipping point for this industry. Senior homes and CCRCs that offer lifestyle-oriented homes for silvers and give them the opportunity to live an independent life with dignity, while ageing in place, will change the face of the industry.

The development of this crucial sector requires a multidimensional approach, addressing needs across socioeconomic segments, clinical and non-clinical needs, and variations

in urban-rural requirements. This is the genesis of the **1st Annual Senior Care Conclave: Igniting Industry for India's Ageing Sector**, to be held on 1 November 2018 in New Delhi. The conclave is being organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India's premier business association, in partnership with the

Presented by



Association of Senior Living India (ASLI), India's only voluntary membership association for senior living and care. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* will be the magazine partner of the conclave, which has been designed as a unique platform to

discuss, debate and catalyse the growth of the sector by unlocking latent and potential opportunities.

**The objectives of the conclave are to:**

- ◆ Bring together various product and service providers catering to the senior segment
- ◆ Formulate and define the 'senior care sector'
- ◆ Showcase growth opportunities within the sector for the industry
- ◆ Evaluate public-private partnership opportunities
- ◆ Define specific government advocacy measures that help seniors
- ◆ Showcase investment and capital deployment opportunities for the investor community

The speakers' list includes eminent researchers, industry representatives from senior living, banks, healthcare, wellness, tourism, insurance, product providers, social entrepreneurs, NGO and key decision-makers. Special plenary sessions will include a CEO panel discussion on emerging trends in senior care sector, inclusive growth and development for elders in India and international best

practices in senior care. The conclave will also host an exhibition aimed at exchanging information on the global senior care and healthcare market, and promoting senior care facilities and equipment.

Magazine partner

*harmony*  
**celebrate age**

Watch this space for a report on the event

# Towards INCLUSION



The need to integrate care to living solutions and create an inclusive society that will address the needs of silvers, including those with special children, was the focus of Trends and Challenges in Elder Care, a seminar held in Bengaluru on 29 August. The event was sponsored by CovaiCare and Mantri Primus. Silver Talkies was the knowledge partner and *Harmony-Celebrate Age* the media partner for the event, which was also supported by Parkside by Brigade, and Pressalit Care, Denmark.

*Care and Ageing*, a book on ageing and care, was launched by chief guest, Rotarian Suresh Hari, district governor of RI District 3190, who informed the audience about various initiatives of Rotary and his district's commitment to the cause of care. Speaking of the need to integrate care to living, Col Achal Sridharan (VSM), managing director of CovaiCare, laid stress on the need to build a care-inclusive living model, pointing out that, with increased longevity, people now spend a third of their life after retirement; while Adarsh Narahari, managing director of Mantri Primus, spoke about perceptions and realities in elder care. Meanwhile, K Ganesh, chairman of Portea, spoke on the rise of elder care as an industry and the various

investment opportunities in this sunrise sector, calling the surging silver population both a challenge and opportunity for policymakers.

The first panel discussion, carrying on the theme of integrating care to living, was moderated by Nidhi Chawla of Silver Talkies, and featured leading professionals sharing their insights on multiple forms of care. Dr Radha S Murthy of Nightingales Home Health Services spoke on memory care and dementia; Dr Nagesh Simha from Karunashraya spoke on palliative care; Rajagopal G, founder and CEO of KITES, spoke on assisted living and preventive care; Dr Anitha Arokiasamy spoke on home healthcare; and Sridhar Aravamudhan from the Behavioral Momentum Institute spoke on care for elders with special children.

Following the lunch break, an award-winning short film, *A Shared Cup of Coffee*, shed light in a poignant manner on loneliness, one of the biggest problems plaguing silvers today. This was followed by a talk by Vineet Verma of Brigade Hospitality, who recommended building a world outside one's professional identity and engaging in social activities.

Next, Ayush Agarwal of *Seniority.in* addressed how one can make a qualitative change to the day-to-day lives of silvers, introducing the audience to products such as dry shampoo, a nail-cutter with magnifying glass, anti-slip solutions for bathrooms and senior-friendly mobiles. Meanwhile, advocate Shivkumar proposed the need for a legal framework that recognises the inherent needs of silvers and gives them priority. “Ideally, the law should be taken to their doorstep,” he said.

“With the silver care space becoming vibrant of late, the sunset years have transformed into sunrise years,” said Arati Rajan Menon, executive editor, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, who moderated the final session on creating an inclusive world for silvers. As part of the session, Ali Khwaja of Banjara Academy advocated looking at disabilities differently. “All of us are disabled at some level,” he said. “Not knowing how to drive or the inability to speak a language can also be construed as a disability.”

Echoing the sentiment was Vidhya Ramasubban of Kickstart Cabs, who spoke about mobility solutions for the physically challenged and called for the need for a perspective shift on disability. “Disability should be part of the development agenda and should be viewed as a society’s problem, rather than that of an individual,” she asserted. And while Puneet Gupta of SAP Labs spoke about his company’s mission to touch a billion lives through technology, Swapna Kishore, a resource person for dementia caregivers, discussed the complexities of caregiving and dwelt on the need to creating a supportive environment for those suffering from dementia.

Striking a deep chord with the audience was Hariharan Kanna, who shared the life-affirming journey of his differently abled daughter Karishma (present in the audience), who has given back to society through the sale of her paintings. Karishma received rousing applause from the audience—a beautiful moment in an event replete with insights and inspiration.

*If you’d like a copy of Care and Ageing, which was released at the event, contact P S Srikumar, CEO, CovaiCare at Srikumar@covaicare.in*



### TOGETHER AGAIN

When my husband was to retire at the age of 62 in 2003, as the CEO of a prominent hotel group, I was very nervous as I had heard numerous tales where wives went into depression or completely berserk after their husbands attained superannuation. Coping with a husband 24x7, 365 days a year, the curtailment of perks that come with your husband’s position, and moving into a new place with strangers around were some of my concerns.

What made retirement a joy, instead, was a decision we took to do everything together. I was working with an NGO but I gradually gave it up, with no regrets. Every day, we made a to-do list of chores and also visited friends and family. We were excited about the quality time we were spending together, sometimes just walking and trying out new eateries and cafes. It was courtship time once again, after 35 years of marriage! Soon, we were planning exotic holidays and cruises with children and friends, which we enjoyed immensely.

We also bought a small place at Mashobra near Shimla and started spending the entire summer amid the cool, fresh air there. Now, we are part of a larger social group of like-minded, retired people who meet regularly for breakfast or lunch at somebody’s villa.



Life is a never-ending party in Mashobra, with activities like cards, golf, coffee meets and evening cocktails to keep us in good spirits. Every year, it is also common to welcome a couple of new knees, stents and bypasses! The idea is to enjoy the hills to the hilt; for that, the most important thing is good health.

I also dabble in writing and Mashobra has been a peaceful and inspiring getaway to indulge this creative pastime. I have written three books, each revolving around a different stage in my life. I also write a blog called *Midlife Euphoria*.

Studies show that social interaction is an important contributor to good health. We are blessed to be part of a retired community that celebrates each day with verve .

—Poonam Kirpal, 62, New Delhi



Friends Adult Diapers presents

# KNOW YOUR FRIENDS

**All incontinence is not the same, as we told you last month. Nor is every silver! That's why there is a range of adult diapers to give you exactly what you need to reclaim your life**

### TAKE IT EASY

**Easy Friends Adult Diapers** with frontal tape and a 'landing guide' are perfect for first-time users with light to moderate incontinence. These non-woven diapers made of a highly absorbent pad offer up to eight hours of snug-fit protection from leakage. And the unique wetness indicator is always on guard to alert you, before you experience the discomfort of a leak. Available in medium, large, and extra large sizes; prices range from ₹ 345 to ₹ 430 for a pack of 10.

### PREMIUM ADVANTAGE

Soft as silk, **Premium Friends Adult Diapers** take comfort to another level. The dual padding with cloth-like breathable sides promises super absorbency and provides comfort and peace of mind for 10 long hours. And, of course, the wetness indicator will tell you when it's time to change, protecting you from any accidental leakage. Available in medium, large, and extra large sizes; prices range from ₹ 375 to ₹ 423 for a pack of 10.

Watch this space next month for more from Friends

### ALL NIGHT LONG

Sleep like a baby in your **Overnight Friends Adult Diapers!** Equipped with a back-sheet base to hold them in place, these are especially designed for night-long use and guarantee 16-hour protection from leakage. With increased super-absorbent polymer (SAP) for enhanced absorption and retention, the breathable sides and stay-dry features enable uninterrupted sleep, which is vital for physical and mental health. Available in medium, large, and extra large sizes; prices range from ₹ 600 to ₹ 670 for a pack of 10.

### PULL 'EM UP

Designed for active agers, **Premium Friends Diaper Pants** are pull-ups with a waistband and brief-like leg opening that function like regular underwear. These unisex pants provide a cosy fit while the 'ABSORB-LOCK' dual-core pad ensures odour-free protection for up to 10 hours. Further, the blue waist elastic has tearaway sides for easy removal. Available in medium-large, large-extra large, and extra large-double extra large sizes; prices range from ₹ 550 to ₹ 650 for a pack of 10.

### GO UNDERCOVER

If you have mild urinary incontinence, or just want some extra cover, **Friends Insert Pads** are ideal for you. These unisex insert pads are designed with an adhesive strip that can be secured onto your undergarment. The soft and absorbent material is tender on the skin and locks odour away. Free size; ₹ 195 for a pack of 10.

### JUST IN CASE!

For extra protection against leaks, try **Friends Underpads.** These sheets, incorporating absorbent gel technology in a soft, woven surface, are laid on the bed under the user. Available in a single size, in packs of 10 and 20; prices range from ₹ 400 to ₹ 600.

### GET BACK TO LIFE

With such an array of Friends to rely on, there's nothing holding you back from making each day count—emerge from your cocoon, make the world your oyster, and live your best life.

Buy the adult diaper of your choice at [www.nobelhygiene.com](http://www.nobelhygiene.com)

*Make them a part of your stories.*



**8 HOURS PROTECTION**

Why should a small problem like urine leakage hold your parents back, from doing what they love? With Friends Adult Diapers you can now make sure they are a part of your stories without any fear.



Available in S, M, L & XL

**TRIPLE ADVANTAGE**



Specially designed for Indian bodies



High Absorbency



Wetness Indicator

**FRIENDS**  
ADULT DIAPERS  
*Live Young*



Karthik Kumar

One of the first things he did was to get a membership of the Country Club in Hyderabad and the Secunderabad Club because both have large pools. “I had never planned on competing and swam for the sheer pleasure of it. But, when I was already 60 years old, the swimming coach prompted me to start entering swimming competitions. He said I could win medals.”

The first medal Seth won was a gold in the 200-m freestyle at the state championships, held in Hyderabad in 2005. After that, he entered the national championships at the end of the same year. “I was hesitant but I did participate and won silver,” recalls Seth, who has competed in many national championships since.

Buoyed by his achievements in a sport he is truly passionate about, Seth began to learn new techniques, and tweak his strategy like a champ. He recalls the time when he won only one silver, in the 50-m backstroke, at the 2007 national meet in Mumbai. “When I pondered over what had gone wrong, I realised I was only doing the short lengths—only the 50 m. So I switched to stamina swimming, which means doing longer lengths,” he says. It didn’t take long for his coach to give him the green signal to participate in the longer races. Seth was now 70 years old—and raring to go!

Asked to name one unforgettable sporting experience, Seth says, “The one I value most is my haul of four gold medals at the Thiruvananthapuram games in 2006. That will remain my best.” What’s next? Our champ has set his sights on the World Masters Games in Japan in 2021, a few months after the Olympics. But first, he’s off to Vizag for a nationals meet this month.

—Shyamola Khanna

# Water baby!

**I**t’s the oddest thing,” says **Om Autar Seth**, 82. “I was diagnosed with mild asthma more than 50 years ago but the attacks kick in only when I am walking and never when I am swimming!”

While doctors believe the water supports his body weight, which helps his breathing, the truth is that the Hyderabad-based businessman is a water baby. In November 2017, at the 14th National Aquatics Championship in Mysuru, Seth won a silver medal in the 400-m freestyle; a silver in the 100-m backstroke; and bronze in the 200-m freestyle. In April that year, he took part in the World Masters Games at Auckland in New Zealand, and stood fourth in the 400-m and 800-m freestyle in the 80-85 age group.

Seth, who swims 500-800 m daily, remarks, “I see other people my age also swim daily but they pause after

every 100 yards and hardly anyone does it without a break. At international meets, when I participated in the 800 m, people clapped loud and hard when I came out of the water.”

A lover of sports since he was a child, Seth played school and college basketball but harboured a special love for swimming. “As kids, we used to swim in the canal on the outskirts of Amritsar and I entered a swimming pool for the first time only at the age of 25. This was in Tatanagar, Jamshedpur, where I was posted for work.”

A metallurgical engineer from Banaras Hindu University, Seth is in the business of supplying building materials. After working for the Steel Authority of India for many years, he quit the undertaking and settled in Hyderabad in 1978. At the age of 50, he set up his own business in the city.

Bolivian national **Julia Flores Colque** turns 118 on 26 October, thus becoming the oldest woman in the Andean nation and the oldest living person in the world.

## BIRTHDAYS

Iconic actor **Amitabh Bachchan** turns 76 on 11 October.

British pop singer and actor **Sir Cliff Richards** turns 78 on 14 October.

Former actor and talk show host **Simi Garewal** turns 71 on 17 October.

Former cricketer and TV personality **Navjot Singh Sidhu** turns 55 on 22 October.

Telecom mogul **Sunil Bharti Mittal** turns 61 on 23 October.

Filmmaker, scriptwriter and actor **Aparna Sen** turns 73 on 25 October.

American politician and former US first lady **Hillary Clinton** turns 71 on 26 October.

## IN PASSING

American actor and *General Hospital* star **Susan Brown** lost her battle with Alzheimer's disease on 31 August. She was 86.

Veteran actor, director and producer **Burt Reynolds** passed away after a heart attack on 6 September. He was 82.

Centenarian freedom fighter, educationist and social reformer **Goura Chandra Mohapatra** passed away after a prolonged illness on 11 September. He was 104.

Noted actor and director **Captain Raju** passed away after suffering a stroke on 17 September. He was 68.

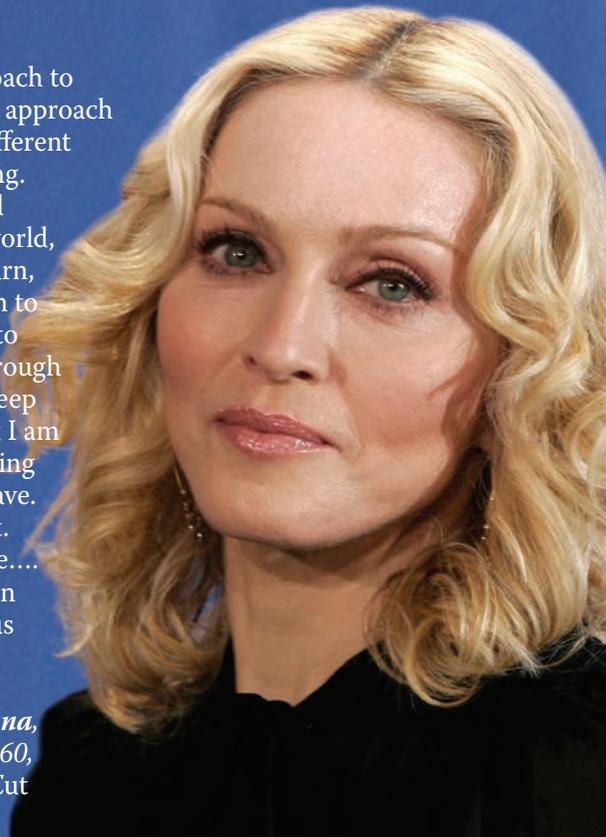
## MILESTONES

- Playback singer and Padma Shri recipient **Anuradha Paudwal**, 64, was honoured at the British House of Commons by the Indo-British All Party Parliamentary Group, for her outstanding contribution to music and her charitable initiatives, in July.
- Actor and activist **Shabana Azmi**, 67, was conferred the Bharatiya Manavata Puraskar for championing the cause of equity, humanity, social justice and human welfare, and bringing a change in society, in August in Mumbai. Other recipients included feminist legal scholar **Flavia Agnes**, 71; economist **Bibek Debroy**, 63; academician **Dr Uma Tuli**, 75; and lawyer and law-maker **Premila Nesargi**, 80.

## OVERHEARD

"I don't think about an approach to ageing. I just think about my approach to life. I don't do anything different than I used to do. I keep going. I continue being creative and working. I write, travel the world, am adventurous, curious, learn, and I seek knowledge. I listen to my children, I pay attention to them, and I see the world through their eyes. All those things keep you youthful.... I never think I am fighting age. I'm just continuing on with my life as I always have. I've never gotten complacent. I've never gotten comfortable.... If you keep putting yourself in challenging, new adventurous situations, you keep yourself alive and youthful."

—Singing superstar *Madonna*, who recently turned 60, speaking to website *The Cut*



Dinodia Photo Library

**Kick that ball!** FIFA may be over but it's not too late to start a romance with one of the world's favourite games. According to new research from the University of Southern Denmark and the University of the Faroe Islands (in Denmark), playing football can boost heart and bone health in untrained silvers with pre-diabetes. It also does wonders for one's state of mind, as it is a team activity that builds camaraderie.



istock



Haresh Patel

## Then: Leftover wax Now: Candle

**M**aking candles is one of the easiest and most satisfying DIY activities. You will need leftover candle wax, a glass bowl (a jar, or stem glass), wicks, two utensils for double-boiling the wax and a spoon. Start with scraping off the leftover wax from candle holders and placing it in a utensil set up for double-boiling. While your wax melts, tie the wick around a spoon and place it at the mouth of the glass bowl and let the wick hang to the bottom of the bowl. Once the wax is melted and the wick centred, pour the melted wax into the bowl and let it sit for 10 minutes before refrigerating. Remove after 30 minutes and light it up!



### RECYCLING FACTS

- Candles are biodegradable, especially the ones made of beeswax, paraffin and vegetable-based waxes (palm wax).
- All candle waxes are non-toxic.
- Too much fragrance can cause a candle to burn improperly or unsafely.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. YOU CAN EVEN GO FOR LAYERED CANDLES, WHERE YOU DOUBLE BOIL THE WAX SEPARATELY, DEPENDING ON HOW MANY LAYERS YOU WANT, AND ADDING COLOURS (COLOURED DYE) AND FRAGRANCE OIL (SEE FACTS) IF NEED BE, WHEN THE WAX IS MELTED AND OFF THE STOVE.
2. MAKE CANDLES THAT SUIT YOUR HOME DÉCOR, BY USING DIFFERENT JARS OR UTENSILS TO POUR THE MELTED WAX INTO.
3. IF YOU POUR THE MELTED WAX FROM A CERTAIN HEIGHT, IT WILL FORM BUBBLES THAT ADD THAT EXTRA OOMPH TO YOUR CANDLES.

### WAYS TO CLEAN CANDLE WAX SPILLAGE

1. LAY BROWN WRAPPING PAPER OVER THE WAX AND HEAT IT WITH AN ELECTRIC IRON THROUGH A TOWEL—THE PAPER ABSORBS THE WAX.
2. THE BULK OF THE WAX CAN BE SCRAPED OFF EASILY; THE SMALLER CHUNKS CAN BE CLEARED BY USING A SOFT CLOTH SOAKED IN METHYLATED SPIRITS (MIXTURE OF METHYL ALCOHOL AND ETHYL ALCOHOL).

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

*BUTTERFLIES never retire*

**The first click of the mouse.**

[www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)

*harmony*  
**celebrate age**



## **SIMPLE SWAPS: Switch your exotic food items with equivalent local substitutes that optimise health and are easy on the pocket**

**T**he food racks in the supermarket today are full of exotic foods that promise to boost immunity and optimise health. For instance, you find chia seeds that are high in fibre; quinoa that is high in protein, and tangerine that boosts Vitamin C... the list is unending. Food companies are increasingly recommending exotic foods and health-conscious silvers are abiding by their advice.

While I agree that the silver diet should be healthy, I recommend local or

seasonal foods instead of exotic foods for optimum health. "Healthy food leads to a healthy body, healthy mind and ultimately a healthy nation and makes the world a brighter place to live in," said late President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam at a function held on 16 August 2008 at Mumbai's K C College. The quote still resonates in my mind, especially because that was the day I received an award from him for my contribution towards raising nutritional awareness in the country.

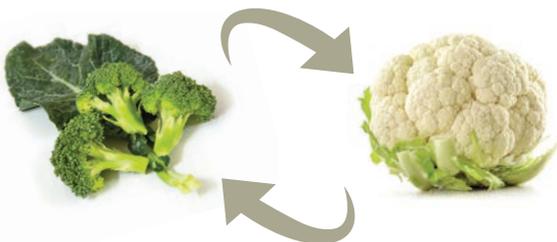
Dr Kalam believed in living healthy; according to him, it was one of the key reasons for his achievements. However, few people know that his diet was simple, without any exotic or expensive 'super foods'. In fact, he endorsed the concept of eating foods that are local, seasonal, fresh, and as simple as possible. Local Indian foods not only help you prevent, retard and reverse diseases, they also boost immunity levels. So, why not swap your exotic foods with local Indian substitutes?

### **Quinoa with amaranth**

Nutritionists say quinoa is full of protein and fibre. Our desi amaranth, also known as *rajgirah*, has a very high content of lysine and amino acid and is an excellent source of protein. Traditionally consumed during the fasting period, amaranth is not new to silvers. This seed flour is widely known to help the body absorb calcium and produce energy. And it is especially beneficial for silvers as ageing is associated with weakness of the bones. So ensure you include this daily in your diet.

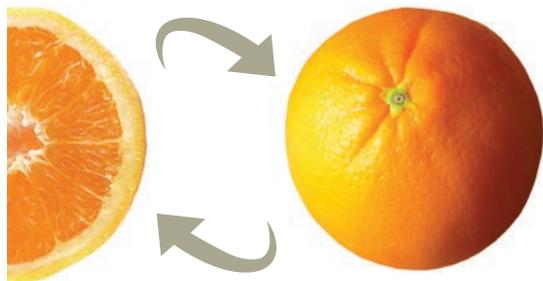
### **Broccoli with cauliflower**

A young patient once came to me for consultation and claimed cauliflower was the 'ghost' or 'dead' version of broccoli because it was white compared to green broccoli. I had to explain to him that cauliflower belongs to the cruciferous group of vegetables, making it a powerful source of antioxidant and high in fiber, much like broccoli. It has wonderful benefits and hence it makes more sense for the young as well as silvers to buy 'local broccoli', which is cauliflower!



### **Tangerine with orange**

While there are exotic varieties of the orange available such as the tangerine or Chinese mandarin, when it comes to Vitamin C and fibre content, the locally found orange is on top of the citrus chain. It boosts the immune system, keeps blood pressure under check and fights cold. The added benefit: it is local, easily available and cheaper.



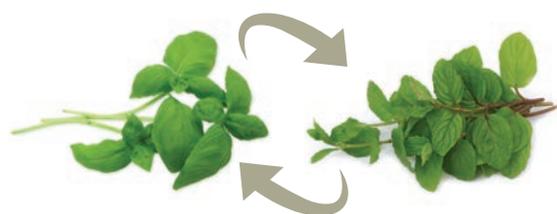
### **Arugula with spinach**

You must have often come across arugula leaves in salads when dining out. According to me, these leaves are just a fancier version of our humble spinach leaves. The calorie, protein and fibre content of both are quite similar. And when it comes to minerals and vitamins, spinach scores even higher. It contains more A, C and K vitamins, folate, potassium, magnesium, manganese and iron. So my vote is for nutrient-dense spinach over arugula leaves anytime! Remember to add a dash of lime

juice over your spinach leaves. Spinach contains oxalates that may interfere with the absorption of nutrients; the Vitamin C from the lemon will counter them.

### **Basil with tulsi**

The exotic basil leaf is packed with antioxidants and helps boost immunity. The humble Indian tulsi leaf also contains antibacterial and antifungal properties; it helps purify blood and is known to cure innumerable diseases. This magical herb builds immunity, improves digestion, fights anxiety and depression, reduces diabetes, and cures problems of the eye, kidney, skin and teeth that are common in silvers. Chewing a few tulsi leaves every day also drastically reduces stress levels in the body.



### **Greek yoghurt with homemade yoghurt**

Have you ever noticed that your homemade yoghurt (or 'curd') is smoother on the tongue and more refreshing

than a store-bought one prepared in a plant? Homemade yoghurt does not need any artificial sweetener or salt to enhance its flavour and is packed with enough bacteria to boost your immunity. It is a good source of protein and easy to consume as you do not have to chew it; thus, it is highly recommended for silvers.

### **Chia with flaxseeds or *sabja***

Imported chia seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, protein, fibre, antioxidants and calcium. However, we have locally available *sabja* seeds with the same properties that provide similar benefits without creating a dent in your pocket. We also have flaxseeds, commonly known as *alsi*, which are equally rich in omega-3 fatty acids and available everywhere.

### **Coconut oil capsule with coconut**

Why would you swallow coconut capsules when delicious, ripe coconut—found across the length and breadth of India—is more beneficial to silvers? You can blend it to make chutneys and stews; grate and sprinkle it on vegetables or salads; or cold-press it to make coconut oil. It has anti-bacterial properties and helps silvers manage their weight and diabetes; improves metabolism and digestion; wards off Alzheimer's; and slows down ageing.

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## **Simple and healthy Indian recipes**

### **CAULIFLOWER-STUFFED TOMATOES**

#### **Ingredients**

- Tomatoes: 300 gm
- Cauliflower: 50 gm; grated
- Coconut: 15 gm; grated
- Peanuts: ½ tbsp; coarsely ground
- Coriander leaves: ½ cup; chopped
- Chilli paste: ½ tsp
- Salt and lemon to taste

#### **Method**

Slice off the top of the tomatoes and scoop out the insides. Put a pinch of salt inside the scooped part of each tomato. Keep the tomatoes inverted so the excess water is drained out. Stir-fry the grated cauliflower; add coconut, peanuts, chilli paste, coriander leaves, salt and lemon to it, and mix well. Stuff the scooped tomato with the cauliflower mixture. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

### **SPINACH RAITA**

#### **Ingredients**

- Yoghurt (from low-fat milk): 1 cup
- Spinach leaves: 5-6; chopped
- Coriander leaves: 1 tsp
- Green chilli paste: 1 tsp
- Cumin seeds: ¼ tsp
- Sesame seeds: 1 tsp
- Walnut (or peanuts): 2 tsp; crushed
- Date chutney: 1 tsp
- Black salt to taste

#### **Method**

Clean the spinach leaves thoroughly. Finely chop the spinach and coriander leaves. Stir the yoghurt well in a bowl and add spinach and coriander leaves. Then, add the green chilli paste, cumin seeds, sesame seeds, walnuts, date chutney and black salt to the bowl. Mix well and serve chilled.

### **FLAXSEEDS MUKHWAAS**

#### **Ingredients**

- Flaxseeds: 50 gm
- Fennel seeds: 50 gm
- Sesame seeds: 50 gm
- Salt and lemon to taste

#### **Method**

Mix the fennel seeds and sesame seeds in a vessel. Add salt and lemon and mix well. Roast on low heat continuously till they turn crisp. Then add flaxseeds and mix well. Your delicious *mukhwaas* is ready.

*Setalvad is an obesity and lifestyle disease consultant who offers diet counselling at Health for You, a wellness clinic in Mumbai, as well as online. Visit [www.nainisetalvad.com](http://www.nainisetalvad.com) for more details or write to contact. [mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:mag@harmonyindia.org) if you have any queries for her*



# Hear today, and tomorrow

A regular yoga practice can keep hearing loss at bay—and help deal with its aftermath

The causes of hearing loss can be many, and are best addressed by a medical expert. However, a systematic and regular practice of yoga keeps the overall body-mind complex fit and youthful. What's more, yoga helps deal with the aftermath of hearing loss, which can include depression, anxiety and isolation, by stimulating the mind and easing the person back into the social circuit.

Hearing loss may be caused by continuous exposure to high-volume noise, as happens in some jobs or in certain areas (like homes near airports). It can also be caused by sudden exposure to noises, an infection of the middle ear, or even a build-up of wax.

In yoga, the victory breath (*ujjayi pranayama*) is seen as the most healing. Combine it with the humming bee (*bhramari*), which is also healing. Mudras such as 'destroying the ether element' (*akash nashaak*) and 'destroying the air element' (*vata nashaak*) are advised for long periods. For *akash nashaak*, press down your middle finger with the thumb, for each hand. For *vata nashaak*, press down your index and middle finger with the thumb,

for each hand. These mudras have to be done for at least half hour daily for impact. You can split up the time by including them during pranayama and meditation, or even while resting or watching TV, though their impact is more when done with focus.

Most inversions are seen as anti-ageing and help prevent age-related loss of the senses. However, in case of ear ache or infection, inversions must be avoided till fully healed. Some gentle inversions include the shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*) and psychic union pose (*viparitakarani mudra*). Forward bends have a similar impact; they flush the head with blood and keep the systems there—including sense organs—young and toned. However, these should also be avoided in acute cases. Some gentle forward bends include the down dog (*adhomukha svanasana*), child pose (*balasana*), hare pose (*shashankasana*) and puppy dog pose (*svanasana*).

## YOGIC MOVES

### Prayer pose, with leg lifted (*pranamasana*)

Sit on your knees. Lean forward to place your palms under the shoulders. Gently place your crown between the palms curling the neck lightly so there is a neck lock. The knees should be walked forward a bit, to create a taut tabletop position of the back. Breathe normally throughout. Ensure you are not loading your neck but using the palms to support it. At this point, fold the right leg at the knee. Push the heel of that foot into the right hip. If the balance is comfortable, reach your right hand behind you to grasp the right ankle. Hold for a while. (This is an advanced variation to spice up your practice and may be learnt gradually and in various stages as suggested.) Release the hold at the ankle. Repeat for the other leg.

**Caution:** Avoid in case of acute ear infection. **Benefits:** This pose encourages blood flow to the entire head, toning the organ systems it houses. This de-stressing pose balances the metabolism, encourages healing, and opens up the neck and upper back.



Photographs by Hareesh Patel

Pranamasana

## KNOW YOUR KRIYA

### Shanmukhi mudra

Sit in any meditative posture with your eyes closed. Place each of your fingers as suggested—the thumb to shut the ear, index finger over eyelid, middle finger on the nostril, ring finger over the top of the upper lip, little finger below the lower lip. The idea is that each of the fingers is acting as a gate, shutting down stimuli from these sense organs and turning the mind inwards. This may be tried as part of certain pranayamas, like the humming bee (*bhramari*), or done as a standalone meditative practice. If the latter, it must be done ideally when it is very quiet, like early morning or towards night. It is difficult for a beginner to do this for long, because the hands may start hurting. So build up your stamina gradually by doing this for a few minutes.



**Point to note:** You are said to hear inner sounds, perhaps of the body, such as gurgles, swallowing, heartbeat or pulse beat. Rishis have described these lyrically but instead of being influenced by that, just allow your experiences to arise spontaneously. **Benefits:** This *kriya* is used to fine-tune the senses and allow the introversion of the mind without being intimidated by it. It develops mental stamina and is suggested as therapy for issues relating to the sense organs.

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



Shyamola Khanna

### SALUTE TO SUCCESS

Eighteen years after retirement, I returned to the Army when I joined the Army Ordnance Corps centre as a volunteer teacher. I tell my students that discipline is a part of the ethos of the Army and the moment they accept that, everything will fall into place. Till now, they had been pampered at home but the Army would turn them into proud and gallant soldiers.

I also have two batches of junior commissioned officers (JCOs) who are on the verge of retirement. These JCOs are worried about what they will do after they hang up their uniforms. They repeatedly ask me, “*Saab, fauj ke baad hamara kya hoga?*” (Sir, what will we do after the army?) We do not have the qualifications civilians have.”

To queries like this, I always say, “You’re not yet 50; if you sit at home and do nothing you will go downhill very quickly. After having led an active life for over 20 years, if you suddenly do nothing, you will age very quickly and your health will start deteriorating. So it is very important to keep yourself physically and mentally occupied.”

Of course, if you get yourself some qualifications that work in the civil world, it makes the transition from the Army to civil life much easier. Before retiring, I did a course in the management of petroleum and related products. This helped a whole lot because within a month of retiring in 1995, I landed a job as a Reliance Petrol pump manager.

In the past 20-odd years, I have realised that if you are confident and talk calmly, and if you listen before expressing your views, you are likely to be successful. I have been trying to impress this upon the JCOs as well as the freshly minted recruits: proper communication is at the root of all relationships, whether in the Army, at home or in civil life.

—Col K Ananda Pillai, 73, Hyderabad



## CAPITAL GAINS BY DICK MODY

**Break the inertia:** Government schemes can get you on the road to financial security, even with limited resources



**F**inancial security is nothing but making sure people 'plan' for their—and their families'—future needs in terms of basic necessities, comforts and luxuries by judiciously choosing long-term savings and protection plans. Each of us has different types of family responsibilities and, more important, unique earning and spending levels. So if you want to ensure that your future lifestyle needs are met and protected, you must aim for financial independence and security.

**"I earn well enough today, why bother about tomorrow?"**

This is one of the most common questions I get to hear. It may sound logical at first; however, two important factors need to be carefully considered that make planning not a luxury but a necessity: Inflation or future rise in prices; and natural progression of needs, with either aspirational upgrades or increasing family responsibilities.

**"I barely meet my expenses; hence, I cannot plan"**

This is the second and very relevant point to address for a financial planner like me. In today's times, with the rise in real-estate prices, rental rates and overall cost of living, especially in metros, a large chunk of one's post-tax pay goes towards meeting EMIs and personal spending. Interestingly, the new generation of Indian consumers

has also shed the conservative attitude towards taking loans that their parents may have had. This gen-next is not averse to borrowing (with high credit card spends) to meet their present-day aspirations; including ownership of high-end vehicles, foreign trips, and even liberal personal spends. This is leading to an interesting impact: lower 'net savings' despite rising levels of 'gross earnings'. If one does not strike the right balance, there is a risk of financial imprudence—essentially, one will never be able to make a meaningful plan to attain future financial security.

**Act now**

All considered, it is my firm belief that we should all do the following:

- To begin with, break the inertia and optimise your limited resources.
- Something is better than nothing—so start small, but do start.
- If you can't immediately provide for everything, identify your most critical priorities; for instance, life protection, medical coverage, pension creation, etc.
- Once you decide these, there are several low-cost options from not just the private sector but government-sponsored welfare schemes too.

SCHEME	IDEAL FOR	HOW IT HELPS	KEY FEATURES
<b>Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana</b>	First-time bank account holders	Inculcates a basic saving habit as it reduces cash in hand and thus propensity to spend wastefully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No need to maintain any balance unlike regular bank savings accounts</li> <li>• Free RuPay debit card</li> <li>• Easy process to open and operate</li> <li>• Accident and life cover provided</li> </ul>
<b>Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana</b>	Low-cost life insurance	Provides support to immediate family in case of demise of key earning member	₹ 2 lakh life cover for a premium of just ₹ 330 per annum
<b>Sukanya Samridhi Yojana</b>	Long-term saving plan, especially for newborn girl child up to age 10 years	Earns attractive interest of 8.1 per cent per annum. You can contribute a maximum of ₹ 1.5 lakh	Minimum contribution is just ₹ 1,000; can be opened at any post office/bank
<b>Atal Pension Yojana</b>	Creating long-term security after retirement	Earn monthly pension from the age of 60 ranging from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 5,000 per month	Age-linked reasonable amounts per month can be contributed till the age of 60
<b>Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana</b>	Accident death/disability cover	Provides financial support at a crucial time; entry age is any time between 18 and 70 years	₹ 2 lakh cover at just ₹ 12 per annum

A good start would be to take advantage of these government schemes and later aim to participate in private-sector offerings. It is also a good idea to suggest these to other deserving people who may not be financially savvy

#### **Government welfare schemes are for one and all**

In today's media blitz, I am sure you have heard of a host of plan options from leading private-sector mutual funds and insurance companies. But few people speak about the options that abound in government schemes, which anyone can avail (*see table above*).

Thus, if budget is a constraint, a good start would be to take advantage of these and later aim to participate in private-sector offerings as your capacity to save rises. In fact, it is also a good idea to suggest these schemes to our domestic help and other deserving people who may not be financially savvy.

#### **In conclusion**

Limited resources should not hamper your long-term planning. Make sure you prioritise key long-term goals and make a beginning, however small. To start with, take full advantage of government initiatives and schemes, and resolve to step up into mutual funds and private life insurance-related wealth products as and when your investible resources grow.

We at Ethical Advisers firmly believe investments should be based on well-researched facts and deep knowledge, not rumours. We welcome any questions that you may have on this or other topics related to long-term investing; feel free to contact us.

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

# WILD at HEART

There's no taming former cricket selector Kishan Rungta, who revealed his wild side in a recent book, writes **Prakash Bhandari**

**A**long the course of his fascinating life, Kishan Rungta has worn many hats. The 86-year-old from Jaipur has been a sportsman, chairman of the national cricket selection committee, a sports administrator, amateur photographer and—hold your breath—a master hunter.

His latest exploit played out far from the stomping grounds of the big cats but it is no less tame. Rungta recently launched a book titled *Stalking Tigers on Foot*, an account of his hunting expeditions and experiences, and memories of those wild and heady days. The 200-page hardcover, published by The Marine Sports, is choc-a-bloc with arresting and rare photographs clicked by him and his friends on the field.

While books on tigers are becoming commonplace, this one has some dramatic tales of big cats from 1950 to 1970. With over two dozen 'kills' to his name, Rungta points out that this was a time when hunting was legal. He underlines the fact that he laid down his rifle in 1967, well before tiger conservation became the need of the hour and the Wildlife Conservation Act was promulgated in 1973.

Rungta has explored the jungles of Africa but the forests of Ajabgarh and Bhangarh in Rajasthan were his favourite hunting grounds. His book is peppered with some hair-raising tales, like the time in 1961, when he shot two panthers while hunting in Samode village near Jaipur. "The panthers were on a killing spree, seizing goats and monkeys in the village," he recounts. "I worked out a plan to kill them and took a great risk searching for them in the ravines. The ravine was almost 500 ft deep but I managed to descend into it and scalp them."

But the huntsman was also an ace shooter of another kind: behind a camera lens. Rungta's wonderful collection of wildlife photography has some rare shots of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles during their hunting expeditions



Photographs courtesy: Mukund Rungta

when they were guests of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh and, later, with Maharani Gayatri Devi in Rajasthan. Among his prized shots of royals included in the book are images of the queen climbing a *machan* and eating her meals in the jungles of Ranthambhore, and a picture of a tiger killed by the royals.

Yet, the picture on the cover of Rungta's book does not boast a tiger or lion as is typical of a tome of this nature—it is a stunning shot of a caracal (a type of wild cat), also called *siah gosh* in Rajasthan's local parlance. Our huntsman says it is a tribute to the most challenging experience he's ever had: rearing a pair of caracals in his Jaipur home.

He flips the pages to a chapter devoted to how he retrieved two caracals from the jungles of Ajabgarh in Alwar district of Rajasthan in the early '60s. "We spotted them lying in a hollow in the jungle, their eyes not yet open," he writes. Rungta and his team, who thought they were tiger cubs, wrapped them in a blanket to take them home to provide them food and comfort. On the way back, he met a tiger conservator friend, Kailash Sankhla, who told him they were caracals, not tiger cubs! "It was the first time I had seen caracal cubs. I brought them home and started taking care of them with tips from Sankhla."

The cats brought out a soft side in our hardy hunter, who had a rare opportunity to observe caracal behaviour in captivity. "It's a world record that a male-female pair of caracals lived in captivity for so long in an urban location," he reveals.

"When they grew up, I made several attempts to get them to breed but they all failed." When the cubs began to show distinct carnivorous traits, Rungta wondered what to do next. "Their instinct to attack was slowly becoming sharper. That's when Sankhla advised I send the cubs to the Jaipur zoo, where a female caracal had already been housed. This was also a potential opportunity to breed the cats." With a heavy heart, Rungta and his family at Man House, the family home in Jaipur, bade farewell to the cats after having tended to them for nine years. Sadly, the cats did not breed in captivity.

Rungta was known for hunting in a state where the activity was confined to kings and other royals, thakurs and zamindars, and high officials. He was often accompanied on his expeditions by his close friend Shanti Kumar Tholia from the famous Banji Tholia jeweller family of Jaipur.

"In 1963, Tholia and I were at Bhangarh forest and I was carrying my .423 rifle that was fully loaded. Neither of us was aware that the safety catch was unlocked. Tholia asked me to show him my weapon and I promptly handed it over to him. Assuming it was locked, he aimed at a barrel and fired. Oh God, I had such a narrow escape! I was in shock as the bullet whizzed past my face. Tholia was extremely sorry and apologised. The incident could have caused bad blood between us but it brought us closer. However, that day, I learnt the 'safety first' principle."

**Clockwise from top left: Rungta after hunting a predator in Ajabgarh forest region in 1967; the caracal cubs at Man House in Jaipur; Rungta (left) after hunting a marsh crocodile in Udaipur's Pichhola Lake in 1961; with the late Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur**



"I had great passion for photography and had three cameras with me. I would click Gandhiji and immediately go to the photo studio to get the black-and-white film processed"

**Mahatma Gandhi attending a public gathering in Bombay, as captured by Rungta; (bottom) during his cricket days**

### Life through the lens

Fond of photography from an early age, Rungta captured some precious images of Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters. The Rungtas were staunch nationalists and, like many other Marwari industrialists, at the forefront of the freedom movement. From his vantage point, the amateur photographer clicked scores of photographs of Gandhi in different moods and images during his prayer meetings.

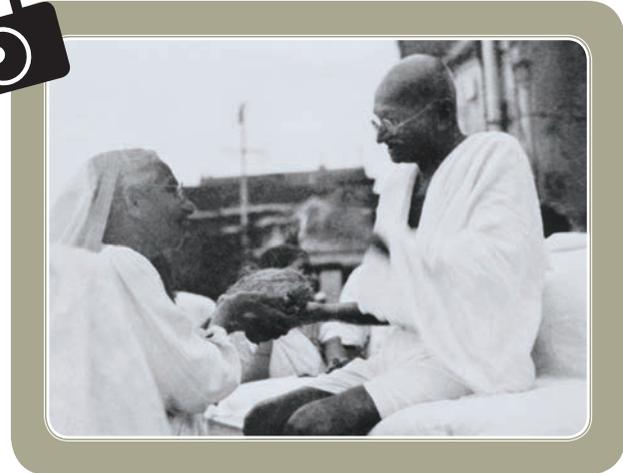
He has nostalgic memories of the pre-Independence era, when Gandhi stayed at Birla House in Napean Sea Road in (then) Bombay, and came to his home to participate in prayer meetings held there. "I had a great passion for photography and had three cameras with me. I would click Gandhiji and immediately go to the photo studio to get the black-and-white film processed."

Rungta's memories also revolve around freedom fighters such as Sardar Patel, C Rajagopalachari, M A Jinnah and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan who would frequent his home to meet Gandhi. "In the '40s, when the great freedom fighter of Bihar, Jaiprakash Narayan, was wanted by the police,

my family gave him shelter in our house at Napean Sea Road. Jaiprakash Narayan stayed in hiding in our house for several months."

### Clean bowled

Rungta was a multi-talented lad; when not clicking pictures, he was practising on the cricket pitch. A talented bowler and batsman, he played first-class cricket for Maharashtra and Rajasthan from 1953 to 1970. Rungta went on to become a national cricket selector, member of the Board of Control for Cricket



Kishan Rungta

in India and chairman of the Cricket Board's Selection Committee.

Although cricket was his first love among sports, he also played tennis, badminton, billiards and golf. In fact, he got two grass courts developed at his residence in Jaipur, where several youngsters as well as national and international tennis legends such as the Amritraj brothers, Illie Nastase, Ion Tiriac and Akhtar Ali have played.

Rungta's adventurous spirit drove him to break with tradition when he refused to join the family business. This was a huge step, considering he hailed from a high-profile family of industrialists close to the Maharaj of Jaipur, Sawai Man Singh. "I was meant to pursue the family business but indulged in activities opposed to the age-old traditions of the family. I was invited by Maharana Bhagwat Singh of Mewar [Udaipur] to play cricket and join wildlife safaris." And what a turning point that was in his life. With a twinkle in his eye, he adds, "Despite my love for hunting, I am a strict vegetarian and teetotaller!"

A colourful personality who has lived life king-size, Rungta is unstoppable even if just four years shy of 90. He says his next project is a book on his experiences with cricket and other passions. We can't wait! ✨





MISSION  
RESTORATION

MEET THE SILVERS WHO REVIVE, REBUILD AND  
REJUVENATE FORGOTTEN TREASURES, GIVING  
THEM A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

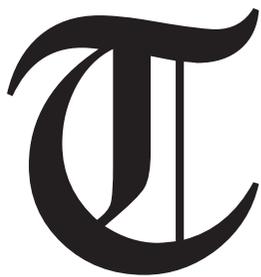
:: cover feature ::



Photographs courtesy: Aman Nath

# THE GUARDIAN OF KINGDOMS

Rebuilding ancient fortresses is not a job for the faint-hearted. Fortunately, Aman Nath, the foremost restorer of vintage properties in India, is an intrepid visionary, writes **Natasha Rego**



here are many places in India that possess a certain time-travelling magic, but only few allow you to wake up in these alluring locations. Step into the grounds of the 17th-century Deo Bagh in Gwalior, the 19th-century Ramgarh Bungalows in Nainital, or the 20th-century Piramal Haveli in Shekhavati, and take a deep breath. You will be transported back in time, even as you

enjoy a supply of sun-dried towels to soak your face in, a bed lined with crisp linen, and other modest luxuries of modern-day life.

It's hard to imagine that, until a few years ago, these heritage hotels were in various states of ruin, with no paths leading up to them, let alone running water and electricity.

What, or rather who, brought about this transformation? Professionally, he's an author, historian and art curator. He's also been called a philosopher, fakir and ascetic. He's certainly a sharp dresser! But above all, he is a visionary. We speak of Aman Nath, founder of the Neemrana group of 'non-hotel' hotels, who's in the business of converting ruined fortresses, daunting bungalows and old havelis into "rose petals and smiles".

"We were absolutely privileged—even spoilt—in the past, to dream up a structure and, lo, it was built! However, India has no tradition of archives. This is one of the shortcomings of an otherwise alive civilisation," Nath rues. But having spent over

32 years rebuilding, resuscitating and revitalising India's heritage, it has become second nature to him. If you keep your senses awake and alert, he says, history's built heritage is the best teacher.

He first set his sights on the enormous ruins of Neemrana Fort as a 27 year-old. He was driving back from the Shekhavati region of Rajasthan with his late partner Francis Wacziarg, when they came upon a magnificent sight: the dilapidated 15th-century fort on the Aravalli foothills that lay ignored since its time.

"The locals looked at my black beard and thought I was a smuggler. Nobody could understand why I would be interested in the ruins. But people are sensitive. When you deal with them, employ, empower and look after them, they look after you," says Nath, who has since restored 32 unlisted historical sites, both sprawling and small, along with Wacziarg, in 18 states across the country.

Now, he's working on his grandest project yet: 15 years in the making, the unfinished and abandoned palace in Tijara is nothing short of a labour of madness. Spread over eight precarious acres, Tijara has 75 rooms that are open to visitors, while a few more are still in the works.

It's a story out of a history book... dynamite being used to cut through the rocks, donkeys that transport material up an unpaved path, and locals being employed to care for the palace as their own. "We do one room at a time and we do it lovingly," he says.



Nath speaks to us over the phone on a September afternoon from his New Delhi office in Lajpat Nagar. “This place is the antithesis of everything I do. It’s a slim, modern, functional office in our own building. There are books and tables, and a bit of a mess.” The destination offices around the country are for the weekends. But WhatsApp keeps him linked to each property for details of construction, repair, art, systems controls and management. “I work for 18-20 fascinating hours a day, scribbling notes and making sketches on little pads. We also have a fabulous young team that won’t let me age beyond 25!” says the 67 year-old.

At the office, the fan mail never stops. Guests send praises for Neemrana’s brand of experiential tourism and members of erstwhile royal families inform him about the ruins in their possession that could afford a revamp. Nath reads them all. As we speak, he receives one, purportedly from a royal family that belonged to a southern state.

All these words of praise and encouragement are a constant reminder that there is so much to do and so little time. “I just wish I had the pocket to do it all,” he laughs.

## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

### What triggered your fascination with historical monuments?

My parents were refugees from Lahore, so there was no physical, ancestral caress. But I grew up in Nizamuddin, right by a Mughal gate that led into Humayun’s Tomb, while listening to fairytales of a lost child who saw light in a castle on the hill and was asked in by a princess. Don’t we all grow up and try to fill the vacuums we felt as children? As kids, we would also visit amazing sites like Tughlaqabad, Red Fort, Hauz Khas, the Old Fort. When I read history at college, all this dovetailed quite naturally into action.

### Tell us about the first time you and Francis Wacziarg laid eyes on Neemrana Fort. What went into restoring it?

The year was 1977 when Francis and I were driving back from Shekhavati. The afternoon sun lit the lime plaster of the ruined Neemrana Fort, which showed up in a special orange-gold. I turned left onto an unmarked road, drove up about halfway,



**Instructing carpenters, 1986; with late partner Francis Wacziarg when he joined Neemrana in 1992**

**Opposite page: When Nath read that 70 per cent of Indians had a Vitamin D deficiency, he decided to spend time building walls topless in the sun**



On a serious note, our work is to make old structures ready for modern habitation, with some resemblance to contemporary lifestyles within. Friends of Neemrana understand simplicity over fuss; we don't need Italian marble or a Jacuzzi to lure or impress our clients. In fact, those who have been through enough in life want to move from bling to khadi, from more to less. What we can give you, though, is green mango curry on a rustic rampart or homemade strawberry ice-cream under a peach tree in the Kumaon.

**How do you find and employ skilled experts of various disciplines involved in the restoration processes?**

Back in 1984, when I began restoring the first haveli in Sohna, Haryana, it was easy to find masons who worked in lime mortar. One thought they won't last. But India is an amazing repository of skill and of *jugaad*, the most ingenious makeshift technology that provides inventive solutions.

At the Neemrana properties, the greatest compliment is to our living traditions, which live on in the veins of our craftspersons and masons. No one can tell the old from the new. We build organically on a need-based system, much as it was done in the past. For instance, if stables needed to be built, more hills would be cut up in such a way that they would fit right into place, like they were always there.

**How do you incorporate the comforts of the present—air-conditioning, lighting, plumbing—within the regal ambience of these ancient monuments?**

This is a challenge that we got into headlong and began to enjoy more and more. We had once joked with some American guests about our special technology where the electricity, ventilation and water were supplied without wires, ducts and pipes. They believed it till we started laughing! Actually there are two aspects to this: the functional and the aesthetic. You want the air-conditioning to work but don't want to see the cables and gensets. If, however, guests did see our plumbing and sewage plans, they would admire us even more.

and parked by a handsome police station. Kids ran with us as we passed a camel or two on our way up. The entrance to the fort was viciously spiked to guard against elephant attack. Partially open, it looked like a giant and ominous alligator. I walked in, willing to be swallowed by my own cosmic destiny.

In 1986, I acquired it with my friends O P Jain and Lekha Poddar. The scale of madness that came upon us was enormous—the volume and diversity of headaches were never ending, as were the costs of organising staff and supplies, pumping water to different levels and supplying diesel for the gensets that ran full time. It took us five years to complete the first phase. We finally opened for guests in 1991. Later, Francis and I bought OP and Lekha out.

**How do you go about the restoration process?**

Neemrana works on unlisted heritage buildings where the end use can be changed. For instance, a 700 year-old fort like Kesroli in Rajasthan doesn't have to be readied again for medieval warfare. Round holes in the ramparts, which were used as toilets by sturdy soldiers, would be a laugh for plump urban clients who can hardly squat on their haunches. Some of them would have to be lifted up by crane. Ha!



An aerial view  
of Tijara Fort-Palace

**“WE ARE ‘CUSTODIANS’ OF OUR HERITAGE—NOT OWNERS. WHEN ONE IS SENSITIVE IN THE IDIOMS OF TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION, ONE CAN BUILD INTUITIVELY IN INDIA WITH SUCCESS, BECAUSE THE MEDIEVAL AND MODERN COEXIST”**

**Once a property has been restored to its former glory, what does upkeep and maintenance involve?**

When a 15th-century property has been restored and revitalised, it is naturally much better, more liveable and visually more beautiful than it was without attached bathrooms, air-conditioning, gauze doors to catch the breeze without the insects, and more. In the past centuries, the water at Neemrana Fort was brought up in large copper cauldrons on donkey-back, so naturally they couldn't plant hanging gardens on terraces cut into the hill. We married the raw beauty of the fort walls with modern facilities and design sensibilities. An American designer once commented that it was very Alhambra-like, but the difference was that one could also live and wake up in it now.

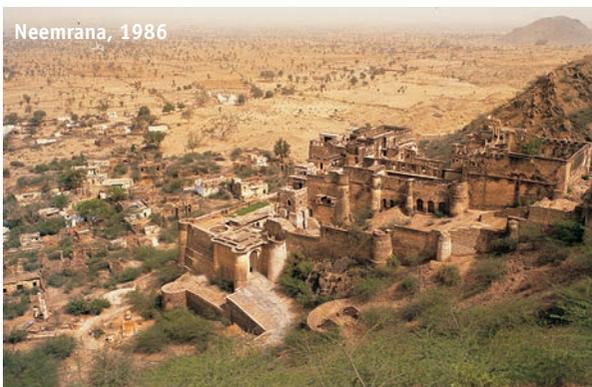
**The hotel business is a rather flaky one. How did you come by a working model?**

When I called our properties 'non-hotel' hotels, Francis was surprised. My friend Aroon Purie [editor-in-chief] of *India Today* even phoned and said, "Why begin with a negative?" I had to explain that Neemrana, as a fortress, was originally designed to keep people out; we were trying to transform that forbidding shield. It was certainly not built as a hotel with rooms along corridors, so the nomen-

clature was chosen to avoid false notions of hospitality and service. We still don't have room service or televisions in the rooms. Our clientele would appreciate that, we had hoped, and it worked! But the world has markedly changed in one generation; so, too, the necessities. To not have Internet today is to disconnect patients from their oxygen!

**This is undoubtedly a story you have told numerous times... but who was Francis Wacziarg?**

Francis was a fabulous person—a lost Western soul who found his cosmic connect in India. He was a business graduate from Paris who saw his share of socialist rebellion in the Paris of 1968. He read Aurobindo and Krishnamurti but did not fall in the guru trap to be lost among the 'baba cool' youth of that time. He was terribly restless to try out things even if they didn't work. He had no regrets, though he would say that if we had met earlier, he would have gained time. When his term as the head of BNP in New Delhi had ended and they wanted to send him to Nairobi as a bank manager, he felt he had connected with his past life in Tamil Nadu (!) and stayed on. Above all, he wanted to dabble in the arts. He would say to me, "I am an artist without an art." When he left us, much too early in 2014, it was less true. He had learnt that life itself was an art. It was great to walk this path together.



Neemrana, 1986



Neemrana, 2018



Rani Mahal, Tijara: BEFORE



Rani Mahal, Tijara: AFTER

### How has it changed since his passing?

Francis joined Neemrana when it had already opened, and once we put our energies together, we wasted little time. We did about 30 properties in 32 years, though some were just follies or love at first sight that made no business sense. But not doing something can never live up to the joy of doing something passionately. The brand hasn't changed even though we run fewer properties now.

### It's been more than 30 years since you rebuilt Neemrana Fort. What have the biggest learnings been through the years?

However modestly one looks back, it is daunting to think that what took five centuries to build can still be added to with the same vision—in just three decades. Even though it can be a huge nuisance to work in a field where the babus think you will run away with India's heritage, this country remains among the few places where one can still attempt whatever one dreams. For me, it has never been about possessing heritage; we are at best 'custodians' of our heritage—not owners. When one is sensitive in the idioms of traditional construction, one can build intuitively in India with great success, because the medieval and modern coexist in the ever-flowing eternity that India is.

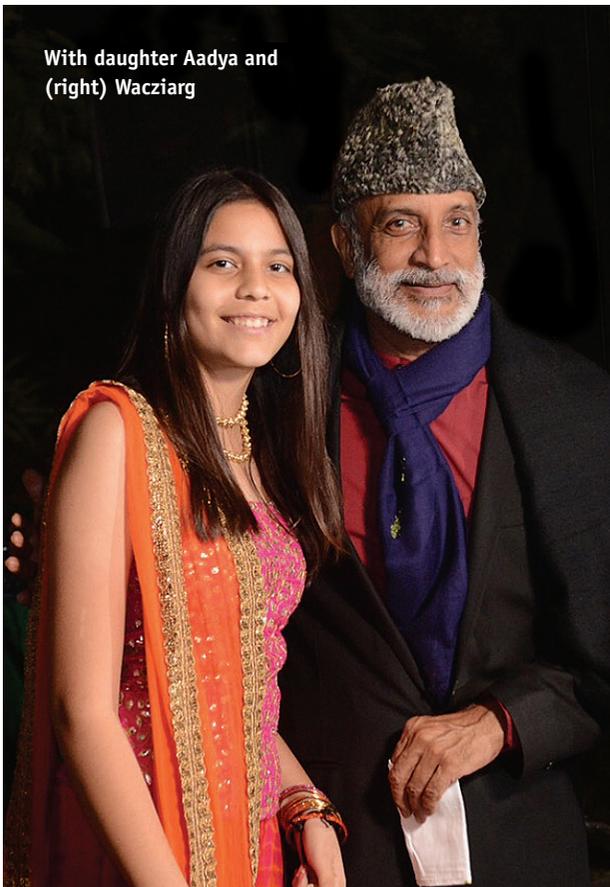
### How do you decide which property you want to work on?

As intuitively as one falls in love, I guess. You must trust your deepest instincts. You can't wake up in each ruin to know how splendid a winter sunrise can be. So I actually have a heightened sense of simulation within spaces to do an imaginary walk-through—and magic is easily recognisable!

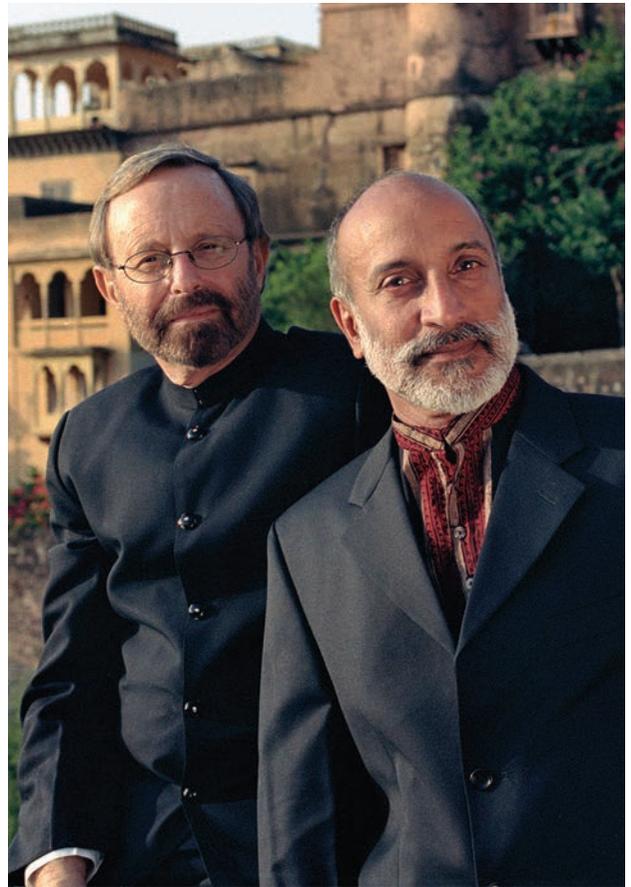
### What is your latest project?

I have been obsessing over Tijara Fort-Palace in Alwar since I first saw it in the 1980s. It's been most challenging ... almost as undoable for us as the 13 other hotel groups who had collected the tender papers but had not dared to bid. I can only imagine what its builder must have conceived, as there were no blueprints. But many clues of a great mystery lie close at hand. I had conceived an entrance gate and when we cleared the hill, some 10 ft below appeared the wall I had wanted to build! An invisible contour map guides me and I don't need to do scale drawings to imagine how it will end up looking.

### Why is it important for us to look at our past and preserve our heritage?



With daughter Aadya and  
(right) Wacziarg



**“I AM NOT THE RED FLAG SORT BUT SO MUCH NEEDS DOING AND UPDATING IN INDIA THAT WE SHOULD ALL NATURALLY BECOME A PART OF IT. THAT SECTION 377 HAS NOW BEEN REPEALED IS A TRIBUTE TO INDIA RETURNING TO ITS OPEN, PRE-COLONIAL MORALITY”**

Because our present can only stand proudly on a past that is preserved with contextual dignity. Otherwise, future generations will float in a rootless vacuum. It is our heritage that gives India a part of the gravitas that it holds internationally.

**Given the neglect of our historical monuments, do you think Indians are not heritage-proud?**

The mindset is changing—but it hasn't yet changed. Earlier governments just thought it was enough for them to 'own' India's heritage, irrespective of whether they had the funds or expertise to do something constructive with it.

The private sector or individuals like us were considered interlopers. Now, this Government wants to push the PPP model. But how much controversy was whipped up over Dalmia Bharat taking the responsibility of Red Fort! We go one step forward and two backwards.

**What are the most amazing architectural developments of ancient India you have come across?**

The town planning of Indus Valley as well as all the collective wisdom that went into making the oldest university of the world, Nalanda, in 800 BC. But nothing can beat Ellora! To think that 400,000 tonne of stone was hand-chipped

## ROYAL RETREATS

### OLDEST

The 14th-century Hill Fort-Kesroli (Alwar, Rajasthan)

### MOST INTRIGUING

... is perhaps an underground step-well I built with three friends in Haryana; it has yet to go public

### MOST FUN

Our Rajasthan properties are the most playful where guests often lose themselves

### MOST CHALLENGING

Both the flagship 15th-century Neemrana Fort-Palace (Neemrana, Rajasthan) and the 19th-century Tijara (Alwar, Rajasthan) have been mammoth challenges

### MOST COVETED

Different seasons have different demands; some love the intimacy of the 19th-century Ramgarh Bungalows (Nainital, Uttarakhand) or the in-house heritage of the 17th-century Deo Bagh (Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh)

### FAVOURITE

Always the one that I am working, or reworking, on

over 800 years to carve out a monolithic Shiva temple from a volcanic mountain... it defies the imagination even today.

### What has modern Indian architecture retained from the wisdom of the past?

Alas, very little. In school, we were still fascinated with foreigners, even had a complex about them. By the time I was an adult, India had begun to assert its identity in art, design and architecture. Later—and one wonders how—we went back into this cycle of lacking confidence. First Scandinavian, then Singaporean design and architecture became role models and India got off track. Traditional Indian architecture has more to teach us besides just lending its derivative and cosmetic frills.

### What is your daily routine like?

I have always risen early. My metabolism, however, urban as it is, has always moved with the planets. I am sure that we are all connected, but if you must drug yourself with whiskies and vodkas, why would you be surprised if both the moon and sun drown like ice and lemon to blank out

the cosmic links we are born with, and force us to live by lamp light!

### Has age affected your life?

Not yet... but you can't stop people's perceptions. Feet-touching and too much show of social reverence irritate me. Early on I told my staff in Rajasthan who would all too naturally bend to touch my feet that I would reciprocate with the same gesture. Soon the dignified 'namaste' was restored. Now, despite my white beard, the younger lot inform me of my 'young' presence and ask why I don't tire like them. However, there are things I don't want to do anymore, like travel long miles to dine with famous people!

### Fatherhood came late in life to you....

I had considered making my own progeny with at least two admirable women but that was not to be. Finally, I was gifted a daughter, Aadya, by a mountain family that loved and adopted me. I used to joke with friends that I got the profit of the wedding without the loss! Fatherhood came naturally, as being a grandfather also eventually does strike everyone as normal without having borne the children.

### Do you get to pick and choose where you'd like to lodge your writing desk?

I have had many study tables in many homes. I have worked a lot in Ramgarh, Kumaon; the Himalayan foothills bring out the best in the brain. I moved my books on Indian mythology and spirituality there, as also the difficult, slow reading ones. I wrote four to five books there, on a large English desk I had bought from a retired army man. But now I can sit anywhere and write: on the floor, the bed, the dining table. I think it's your head that needs to be arranged, not the aesthetic of the quill and inkwell.

### Tell us about your work on Section 377. What motivated you to join Sunil Mehra, Navtej Singh Johar, Ritu Dalmia and Ayesha Kapur to file a joint petition in the Supreme Court?

I am not the red flag sort but so much needs doing and updating in India that we should all naturally become a part of it. Our nation and its majority religion are perhaps the most open—hundreds of thousands of devotees go to worship at Sabarimalai, where Shiva and Vishnu (as Mohini) made love to produce a baby. In India, [former prime minister] Vajpayeeji could be a bachelor-father without the press bringing his private life into a belittling Lewinsky affair. So when I was asked by friends to sign a petition in which I believe, I did it with full conviction. That Section 377 has now been repealed is a tribute to India returning to its open, pre-colonial morality. The love of mankind will finally be legal in India! ✨

 NATASHA REGO

ANUPAM SAH, 50  
**STATE OF THE ART**

From ageing mummies to crumbling murals,  
Mumbai's 'art doctor' uses out-of-the-box solutions  
to preserve our artistic and cultural legacy

**I**n the Key gallery of Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vaastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS), two bronze statues have made a conspicuous disappearance. A 10th century Buddha from Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, and an 8th century Bahubali from Karnataka are being transported to the Museum Art Conservation Centre to be treated for a turquoise-coloured mold that was found growing out of them. There, Anupam Sah, head of the conservation centre, awaits their arrival.

With gloved hands, he delicately places the statues on the operation table, beneath a large box light, and examines the mould through a microscope. It looks like they have contracted a corrosive "copper disease" owing to the moisture and minerals in the air. "The disease is eating away at the statues from the outside in, so we'll have to scrape it out and use corrosion inhibitors to treat it," Sah tells us.

Sah is one of India's leading art conservators and restorers, who shot to the spotlight a couple of years ago, when his work on a 4,500 year-old Egyptian mummy made the news. "But people were rather disappointed to see the mummy all covered up. Earlier, there were pieces of toe and head sticking out," he chuckles.

The mummy of princess Naishu, purchased by a relative of the Nizam of Hyderabad, had been spoiling away at Hyderabad State Museum since the 1920s. While Sah's restoration efforts made for juicy headlines, he remains unfazed. "The first thing they teach you is to not get excited because you have to do objective work. You never allow your own artistic opinions to overpower your sense of propriety when treating someone else's work. You have to use your skills and sensitivities to do just what is required," says Sah, who has been knighted by the Italian government in recognition of his work.

When a 100 year-old wall painting at the Jagannath temple of Dharakote in Orissa was falling off the wall, the plaster on which the 20-ft painting was done was so unstable that Sah and his team could not directly intervene. "We needed a few days to just sit down there, to feel the material and its layers before we arrived at a treatment plan," he says. They mounted a scaffold close to the wall and rolled layers of fine muslin cloth over the wall. Through the muslin, they administered their consolidation injections, which would bind the plaster back onto the wall and hold the painting in place.

Despite his fascinating achievements, Sah is even more proud to have worked on bridging the gap between



heritage conservation and development, through his work as a teacher and trainer. As we speak, his team is readying the office computer for a video conference with students in Nainital, his hometown, where he runs a manuscript conservation centre under the Ministry of Culture's National Mission for Manuscripts. "Over 100 people have been trained here in the past eight years," reveals Sah, whose formal qualifications include a bachelor's degree in science and a master's degree in art conservation.

## II

### YOU NEVER ALLOW YOUR OWN ARTISTIC OPINIONS TO OVERPOWER YOUR SENSE OF PROPRIETY WHEN TREATING SOMEONE ELSE'S WORK

He has also worked on reviving the wall painting tradition of Orissa in Raghurajpur, which was then declared a heritage village, and has trained stone sculptors under the Old Town Revitalisation project near Bhubaneswar, which encourages local government agencies to employ locally available artisans and craftspeople in civic projects. "You just need people to start things off; if it's a good idea, people catch on."

In Ranibagh, near Nainital, Sah has set up the Himalayan Society for Heritage and Art Conservation, or HIMSHA-Co. Now in its 13th year, the organisation trains people, especially in the hinterland and across mountain regions, in wood and stone carving, paper work, darning, etc.

Of all his projects, this one remains closest to his heart, for this is where it all started. It was at his grandfather's place in Ranibagh, as a boy of 13, that he decided he wanted to be an art restorer. "I read an article titled, 'How science cures the ailing art' by the Central Institute of Restoration in Rome. It spoke to me. Right then, I knew I wanted to do something that was an amalgam of the sciences and the arts." He wrote them a four-page letter, learnt the Italian, and followed his dreams all the way to Italy. Then, he returned to commemorate the place where it all started. "That's providence," he smiles.

—Natasha Rego

## C SEKAR, 62

# IN SEPIA

Cameras make memories but this collector's memories are tied to his adventures in acquiring these fantastic machines

**C**hinnasamy Sekar knows a thing or two about patience. This ace restorer and collector of vintage cameras picks up a Bolex H-16 M—a leather-covered camera with a leather strap that slips across the back of your hand—and is instantly transported back in time.

“When I was in school in 1961, we were shown a silent movie shot on a Bolex 16 mm. That camera left an indelible impression on my mind. So when a Bolex H-16 M came up for auction in Delhi, I spent all my savings to buy it. It was an accomplishment,” says the proprietor of Sekar Camera House in Chennai, who adds that his prized camera is still partly functional.

Patience, perseverance and persistence have helped Sekar piece together a jaw-dropping collection of 3,500 vintage cameras across 35 years. Amazingly, 70 per cent of them are in working order. “I started my career in camera repair at a time when India was transitioning from analogue to digital cameras. At that time, there were only three people who were repairing cameras in Chennai. I saw this as an opportunity to carve a niche for myself,” explains Sekar, who holds a diploma in mechanical engineering.

The story he loves telling most is about two cameras once owned by former Tamil Nadu chief minister

M G Ramachandran. “I followed up for nearly two years to get my hands on them. After MGR passed away, his Hasselblad and Bronica cameras passed on to a friend, who would not part with them. I used to visit the friend once a week to coax and cajole him into selling them to me. But he said the same thing every time, ‘I do not want to part with them during my lifetime.’ Three years later, when he passed away, his children called and handed them over to me,” recounts Sekar.

Sometimes all you have to do is ask, he says with a smile, referring to how he bought a Nikkormat EL, a camera belonging to Harry Miller, chief photographer of *The Indian Express* in the 1990s in Chennai. “He used to click those iconic photographs with it and I just had to have that camera. So I picked up the courage and directly asked him if I could buy his camera. Imagine my surprise when he agreed!”

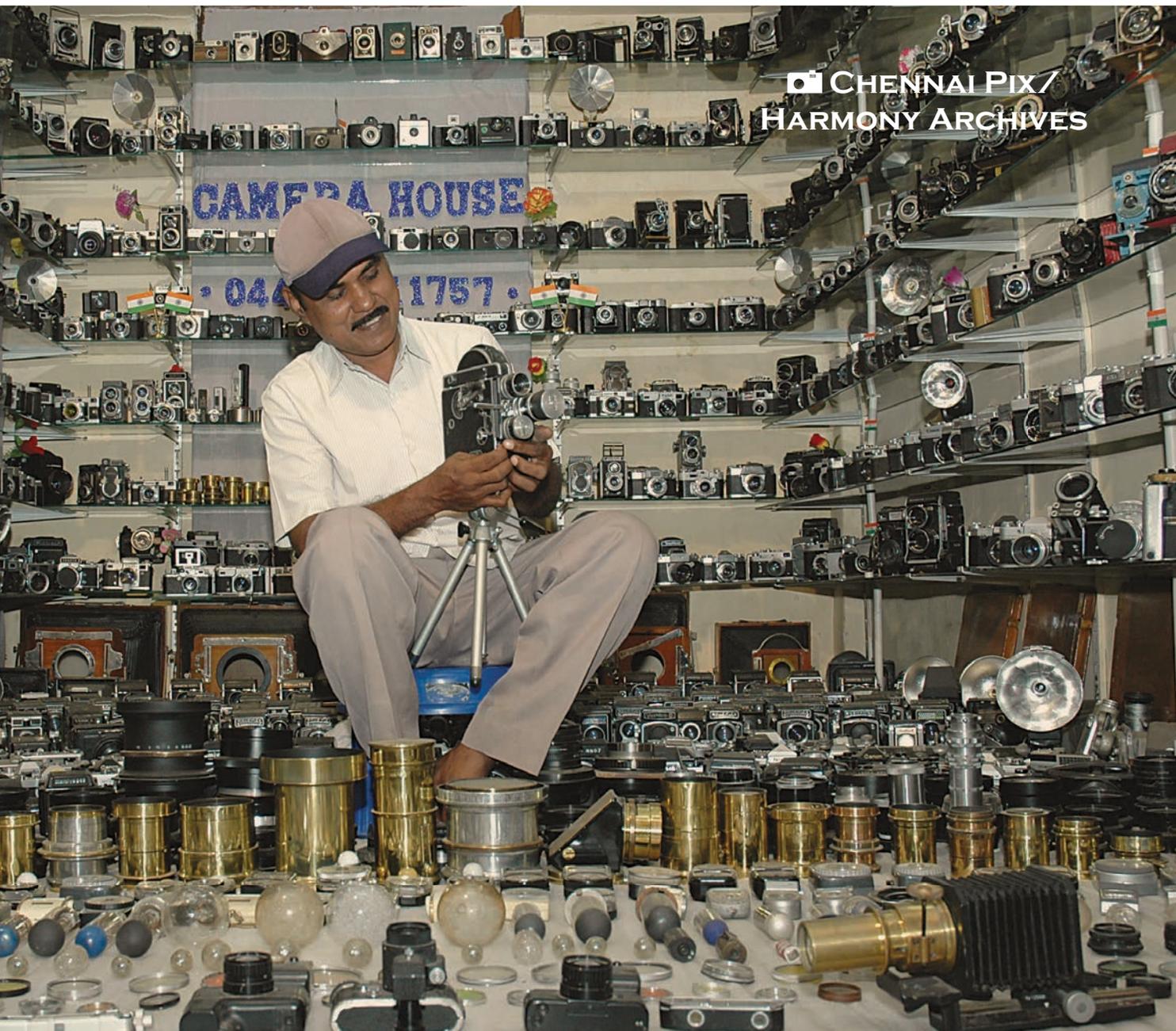
Sekar admits that repairing analogue cameras can be a huge challenge as parts are often obsolete and sometimes impossible to replace. “Sometimes I make the parts with fabricators, or I dismantle some cameras and use their parts in other instruments.”

He says customers walk in almost every day to get their vintage and digital cameras repaired. “People bring them in, not knowing their commercial value. In most cases, these cameras belonged to their grandparents or



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**IN MOST CASES, THESE CAMERAS BELONGED TO THEIR GRANDPARENTS OR GREAT-GRANDPARENTS AND CLIENTS WANT TO PRESERVE THEM**



CHENNAI PIX/  
HARMONY ARCHIVES

great-grandparents and they want to preserve them,” he says. “Most customers have no intention of actually using these vintage beauties but want them in working condition before locking them up in their cupboards.”

Excellent manual dexterity with small tools and components and attention to detail are the key attributes one

needs to repair cameras, he points out. “Along with this, you need a lot of patience and you can never run out of small screwdrivers, spanners and tweezers,” he quips.

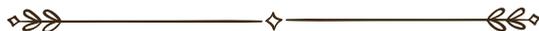
When younger, Sekar used to work on cameras 14 hours a day. Today, at 62, he spends half the time on the job. He also takes classes for media stu-

dents, in his home, free of cost. “Most students of visual communication and the media have seen only a few photographs made by these cameras. I take them through the evolution of cameras, using my collection.” The idea, he reveals, is to not let analogue cameras completely fade from our collective consciousness.

—Jayanthi Somasundaram

DINESH DESHPANDE, 80

# THE TIMEKEEPER



For Pune's 'clockwork doctor', ancient timepieces are chroniclers of a different age



**I**n a dimly lit studio in Pune's Dhankawadi, Dinesh Deshpande, 80, has achieved the impossible—he's managed to halt the march of time. The frail timekeeper is poring over an assortment of ratchet wheels, gears, levers and a yellowing dial, which magically meld together in a poetic symphony at the appointed hour. Every time that happens, he breaks into a broad grin. It's yesterday all over again!

"In my lifetime, I have repaired about 10,000 watches and clocks, including a 90 year-old Rolex wristwatch," says 'Ghadiwalla' Deshpande, who is among only a handful of craftsmen in the country who can fix these vintage time machines.

Deshpande learnt the tricks of the trade from his father, a watch repairer, but the lad discovered he had a special affinity for the vintage kind. In the past 43 years, he has resuscitated the clocks and watches of bigwigs, not just from India but across the globe. He has received requests from a Hyderabad museum to fix about a dozen ancient clocks housed in their facility. Even business moguls, including the Poonawallas, hire him to mend their expensive watches. On special request, he even manufactured a

## II



**WHEN I STARTED WORKING ON THE HISTORIC RAMAKRISHNA PARAMHANSA CLOCK IT HAD BARELY ANYTHING INSIDE IT. I HAD TO CREATE ALL THE SPARE PARTS FROM SCRATCH**

clock that ran anti-clockwise. What's more, he has repaired late Congress politician Madhavrao Scindia's grandfather clock.

Deshpande's extraordinary talent was called upon by the Pune Municipal Corporation, which hired him to restore the historic Ramakrishna Paramhansa Clock that had come into the municipality's possession in 1930. "When I started work on this, it had barely anything inside it. I had to create all the spare parts from scratch,"

says our 'clockwork doctor'. The five-and-a-half-foot beauty, which had not chimed in 50 years, is now happily marching to a new beat.

Deshpande is not sure how long he can keep this up. A few years ago, dengue struck, dealing a blow to his hands and vision. But there's another reason he's unhappy. When you add up all those seconds and minutes, Deshpande has built a formidable legacy but there's no one to carry it forward. "My son gave this up and took to electronic engineering. This profession has lasted only two generations," says the octogenarian. Change is inevitable, he grudgingly admits, mulling over a cruel irony—time and tide wait for no man.

—Prutha Bhosle



 HEMANT PATIL

ANCHIT NATHA



INDRA VIJAY SINGH, 65

# REVERSE GEAR

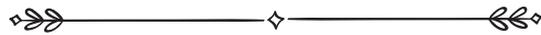


Adventure and intrigue follow this restorer's quest for vintage jeeps. The go-to guy for lovers of these old roadsters in Rajasthan, he has restored over 60 to 70 jeeps since 1985



:: cover feature ::

# MOHAMMAD IMTIAZ, 58, & MOHAMMAD REYAZ, 55 IN THE INK OF HEALTH



In Kolkata's 'pen hospital', a pair of brothers resuscitate old and ailing Parkers, Sheaffers and Montblancs



SHILBHADRA DATTA

I still have the pen I used to write my first love letter. I like to think that the fountain pen that scripted my declaration of love has something to do with the fact that the lady and I are still together. It was a Chinese-made Wing Sung but, mind you, it was no nasty rip-off. These were times when 'Chinese' didn't mean 'cheap' and letters could say what the heart and mind couldn't.

In times when the written word was savoured and measured, the fountain pen was worth its weight in gold. And when our favourite pen took 'ill', every Calcuttan headed straight for the 'Central Pen Hospital'. Located in the heart of Kolkata, in the iconic Esplanade area, this nondescript yet remarkable shop-cum-repair centre was the last hope for those who adored their fountain pens.

Set up in 1945 by Mohammad Shamshuddin, when foreign makes like Pilot, Parker, Waterman, Sheaffer, Montblanc and Pelican, along with the Indian Artex, Caravan, Doctor, Diploma, Wilson, and the Chinese Wing Sung were the envy of all, Central Pen Hospital never sent a customer back disappointed. The business then passed to Shamshuddin's son Sultan, and then his sons, Imtiaz and Reyaz.

Operating out of a makeshift structure in the Smith Brothers building—ongoing work on the Kolkata Metro has displaced the shop from its original premises—the 'pen hospital' once even rubbed shoulders with the aristocracy. "Back in the day, the dentist of the Governor of West Bengal lived in this building, and our grandfather and father used to service the dentist's and the governor's pens," says Reyaz.

My mind goes back 40 years, when my father, a connoisseur of pens, used to bring me to the pen hospital. Customers and pen aficionados would take a seat behind the long wooden reception table to wait their turn. One by one, the slightly portly owner Mohammad Sultan, in spotless white Lucknowi *chikan* kurta and Aligarhi pyjama, would meticulously attend to customers, one at a time, examining the pens they laid out for him to resuscitate or repair. The 'hospital' had a special license to import genuine parts and original makes of a variety of pens.

Like their father, the brothers approach their work with the passion of a surgeon. I watched as an elderly gentleman walked into the shop and asked Reyaz if he could fix his ballpoint pen. The pen doctor worked on it for 10 minutes before declaring it 'dead'. Imtiaz took a closer look and declared with regret that the pen was a new-generation Chinese make or perhaps even a copy. Hence, he confirmed, they didn't have the required spares to repair it.

The incident rolled back the years to when my copywriter friend Chitro Sen took his father's precious Pilot pen, which had developed a fault in its suction system, to the pen hospital. Its pin had also broken off. The then owner, Sultan, took a week to fix it up as good as new and presented Chitro a bill for the princely sum of ₹ 25.



## II

**WE SAVE OLD PENS FOR  
THEIR SPARE PARTS  
BECAUSE THERE ARE  
MANY PEOPLE WHO  
STILL LOVE THEIR OLD  
PENS AND WANT THEM  
IN WORKING ORDER**

"The new models of today are tricky to repair because of the unusual fittings with which they come," Imtiaz tells me. Reyaz, who is juggling a spring, a rubber tube, water, liquid detergent, a piece of cotton cloth, buffing brush, polish and a pumping converter system, looks up, briefly, and adds, "We save old pens for their spare parts because there are many people who still love their old pens and want them in working order."

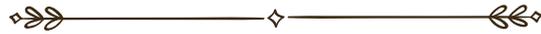
Sometimes, the job calls for innovative solutions. "In April, a gentleman brought us his Golden Swan fountain pen for repairs. It had developed problems with its ebonite rod. We had to cut a 'rod' of hard rubber to size, file it to create grooves and then fit the nib onto it," recalls a triumphant Imtiaz.

The brothers reveal that repairing pens is not their primary source of income but their passion for the craft has kept it alive. Imtiaz points to a glass cabinet that displays restored but discontinued models of Parker, Sheaffer and Montblanc pens—these are sold to collectors. Among this collection is their prized possession—a Montblanc Meisterstück. The conceited but elegant fountain pen forces your gaze upon her super-sleek body. She's haughty but she's earned your respect—as has the pen hospital.

—Shilbhadra Datta

SAILAJA PATURI, 57

# NAILING IT!



What this woodworker loves most about restoring antique furniture is the stories they tell

**W**hen Sailaja Paturi moved to Hyderabad 26 years ago, she desperately needed a cupboard. “I bought an old cupboard from a small shop in General Bazar. It was falling apart but I saw the strength of the old wood. The store owner, Mr Mehta, told me it once belonged to a royal family from the East Godavari area, near Vizag. It had been discarded in their cattle shed. I paid ₹ 11,000 for it and spent almost double on its restoration.”

That was the beginning of Paturi’s love affair with old and antique furniture; she has been restoring furniture ever since. “I love that so many people have shared their lives around the piece. Something reaches out to me. Maybe it is the spirit of all those who have used the piece, maybe the men who worked on it, maybe the story behind it. I bring it home to savour, to study, and then start work on it.”

Paturi has learnt the craft of restoration from the Internet, books, and good, old-fashioned experience. She also makes furniture for sale and uses the same carpenters in her restoration projects. Pointing to an enchanting camphor wood chest she bought in Puducherry, she says, “It has an insignia and a crown inlay. The crown signifies that it may have been part of a British officer’s personal belongings. It was used to store woollens, especially on long voyages across the seas. When you open the chest, the smell of camphor wood still lingers!”

Sourcing old and exquisite furniture is like a treasure hunt; she scours scrap yards and raddiwalla, scans newspapers for announcements, taps into furniture markets across India, and relies on a network of friends. She even finds treasures at antique markets overseas. “I usually only bring back whatever I can carry. This February, I brought a small wooden box from Hungerford in the UK.”

Attention to detail is everything. And while it can test one’s patience, it can throw up some truly ‘aha!’ moments too. That’s exactly what happened when Paturi was looking for a suitable handle for a 100 year-old Goan rosewood cupboard, which she had chanced upon in Mumbai. “I fashioned a handle out of wood but it wouldn’t do, so I waited but didn’t give up. I found the crystal knobs I was looking for at Portobello market in London. After I returned home, I fixed one of the knobs on the cupboard.”

When focused on a project, Paturi says the rest of the world ceases to exist. She recalls a teakwood spindle bolster staircase she found at a scrap dealer in Hyderabad. “It was in horrible condition, layered in coats of paint. Every time I removed a coat, there was another—white, pink, green! We sandpapered it till all the paint was scraped away and the wood grain showed. Then, we smoothed it using high-grade sandpaper, which took several months,” she says, clearly revelling in this labour of love.

Saving the best for last, Paturi guides us to a pile of rusting iron nails—at least a couple of kilos worth—metal brackets and around 30 pieces of wood. Is this scrap left over from her last restoration project? She laughs! “It is a Victorian rosewood two-seater I picked up in Hyderabad. It was just sitting there on the road, outside a shop in the old city. We have taken it apart and, after cleaning each nail, we will put it back together.”

Paturi keeps some of the pieces she restores, gifts some away and hopes to sell the rest. “I feel the best piece is always the one I am working on. I hate to part with it but I cannot keep so many pieces. I just hope the person who receives it takes as much care of it as I have.”

—Shyamola Khanna

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To read about Paturi’s furniture without nails, log onto [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)

## VI

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A man with a long white beard and a striped kurta stands in a garage filled with vintage cars. He is holding a small black object in his right hand. The background shows several classic vehicles, including a green one and a blue one, parked in a well-lit space.

📷 HIMANSHU KUMAR

SANDEEP KATARI, 51

# ONE FOR THE ROAD



Classic and vintage cars are more than just beautiful vehicles for this collector—each one tells a precious story



**S**andeep Katari has a reputation for rescuing old and battered beauties and putting the va-va-vroom back into them. The first vintage car he rejuvenated was the Hindustan 14, a car he bought in Delhi for a mere ₹ 4,500. “It was 1987 and it took me a year to get it into shape. I drove it for a year before I got a 1962 Fiat from Gujarat and later sold that too,” says our restorer, who studied law but did not pursue it as his heart was in refurbishing classic and vintage cars.

“I have restored many Rolls Royces, Cadillacs and Austins, mostly for clients,” says Delhi-based Katari, who when not hunting down spares is usually found in his workshop in Jaunapur village, Chattarpur, Delhi. He is currently working on three Rolls Royce cars from 1928, 1931 and 1930. “It could take anywhere between one to three years to restore these beauties.”

The unavailability of spare parts makes the going especially tough but Katari embraces the challenge as an adventure. “With the Hindustan 14, we did a lot of *jugaad* [improvisation] as many parts were not available and I didn’t have the budget to buy online from foreign websites.”

While he loves all the cars that have come into this life, his 1937 Buick is extra special. “It was in tatters, almost in pieces, barely recognisable as a car. It came from a client in Bihar.” It took him a year-and-a-half to put it back together. Then, there was a carriage-like car, a Bow Top Wagon from 1816 that was displayed at Auto Expo 2010. It belonged to a client who had got it in Gujarat. “These cars travel just a few kilometres on fuel, so it’s only for show. They don’t have much power,” he remarks.

## II

### I HAVE RESTORED MANY ROLLS ROYCES, CADILLACS AND AUSTINS. IT COULD TAKE ANYWHERE BETWEEN ONE TO THREE YEARS TO RESTORE THESE BEAUTIES

There are not many mechanics that can do this work, he tells us. Luckily for him, his mechanic has been with him for years. “Old cars have wooden interiors and I personally handle the interiors and styling,” says the quirky restorer, whose fleet of vintage vehicles includes many two-wheelers including a 1926 Harley Davidson and a 1954 Lambretta scooter; as well as a 1918 Fiat that has only three doors—the driver’s side is closed as it holds a stepney—and whose bonnet opens with a latch.

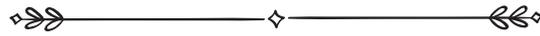
For Katari, every classic car presents a chance to learn something. He mentions a 1928 Ford ‘Doli’ that was part of the Cartier show in Delhi in 2014. More a carriage than a car, it harks back to an era when women were not seen in public. “It was used to take the bride to the bridegroom’s place during a wedding. The women were taken in carriages where they could look out but the public could not look in,” he says.

Earlier, Katari would go to old markets everywhere to collect automobiles and spares. But now, he’s been in the business for so long, that things come to him. All sorts of things. With a flourish, Katari ushers us into his ‘hideout’—a three-storey building in Jaunapur that houses what can only be described as a crazy collection. What started as a hobby collecting headlights, bumpers, number plates and logos, went on to include music boxes, chairs, tables, old photographs, grandfather clocks, newspaper clippings dating back to the 1790s and even a microlight airplane! “I sold my car accessory business in Vasant Kunj to set up this space and have rented space for my workshop,” reveals the unstoppable Katari.

—Ambica Gulati

SHASHIKANT MAYEKAR, 75

# TINTED MEMORIES



Paintbrush in hand, this hand-tinter revives old and cherished memories by restoring ageing photos and portraits for sentimental customers

**S**hashikant Mayekar sits by a window, the late afternoon sun highlighting brushstrokes he's making on an easel. With short, sharp movements, Mayekar's fingers darken the lines on a weathered face that appears to gaze at the street outside.

Mayekar is not a 'painter' in the conventional sense; he restores ageing photographs by a process called hand-tinting, using paints and a paintbrush. He also fixes old paintings of portraits, and sometimes even creates new portraits.

The resident photo restorer at Indian Art Studio (see 'Frame & Glory,' page 66) at Kalbadevi in Mumbai, Mayekar has been reviving faded memories for clients for 59 years. In fact, he is the sole reason the studio still restores old photographs and portraits for customers.

"If they want it enlarged, the studio takes care of it and then I begin my process. After analysing the original, I select the colours I want to use. Sometimes, I use imported colours to get the right hue. I use brushes of various thicknesses too. I begin with a light coat and then take it from there," reveals Mayekar. "Simple jobs can take a day or two but the tricky ones can take up to eight or 10 days, and sometimes even two weeks." He cheekily adds, "It also depends on my mood."

Mayekar is self-taught. He learnt to hand-tint by working in his brother's studio in Dadar. To make ends meet, he had an administrative job in an advocate's firm and was only a part-time artist. After work, he would arrive at Indian Art Studio at 5 o'clock, and then indulge his passion for his craft.

Even with the advent of digital restoration software, people still choose to use Mayekar's services to get their photographs restored. "Many are using computers to do this nowadays but hand-tinting always has a more vintage appearance," he points out.

Most restoration requests involve photographs of sentimental value, usually of a father or mother. "The original photograph is mandatory. Whatever the customer wants, however beautiful, small or big they want it, however spoilt the photos have become, I make the end result proportionately beautiful. I usually restore the photo I am working on to the state of the original photo that the customer has—but I make it first class!" Mayekar proudly remarks.

Some requests put his skills to the test. "Many customers want a family member's grand portrait as a keepsake and sometimes bring in a young grandfather wearing a *baniyan* and want him painted with a Jodhpuri suit or a blazer, shirt and tie," he explains.

As if that weren't challenging enough, Mayekar has received some seemingly impossible requests. Customers would bring in photos of deceased family members and want him to produce an image of the relative, alive, with open eyes and garlands removed. "They want a portrait of their loved one 'alive,' because it is the last or only image they have in their possession," he shares. He says there have even been occasions where he has been presented with an image of a person's

head in one photo and their body in another, and has had to combine them seamlessly using his oil painting skills!

Mayekar admits that it is not a lucrative profession. It is certainly not for the impatient. As he sits in front of a worn-out easel and works on a portrait created from an analogue device, it is apparent that he has put in years of hard work into building his hobby into a skill. He says with a laugh, "I don't do it for the money," and thoughtfully adds, "I must have worked on around 2,000 photos to date."

Mayekar's son, a software engineer in the US, has been urging him to come overseas. But something he cannot explain keeps the artist rooted to his paint and easel. He cannot leave, at least, "not until I finish 100 years".

—Anisha Samuel



## II



**I USUALLY RESTORE THE PHOTO I AM WORKING ON TO THE STATE OF THE ORIGINAL PHOTO THAT THE CUSTOMER HAS—BUT I MAKE IT FIRST CLASS!**



FAITH

# Pilgrims' progress



**M**agical, mythical and mystical, the Amarnath cave—situated at an altitude of 3,888 m (12,756 ft), about 141 km from Srinagar—draws the devout in large numbers. Though it's a journey of faith for the majority, for some it's communion with nature. In essence, the Amarnath yatra, held for 45 days from the end of June to the first week of August, celebrates the breathtaking landscape of the Himalaya along with the grit and determination of devotees, who trek through the most picturesque and bleak terrain in the world in challenging conditions to witness the holy ice stalagmite or Shiva lingam.

The yatra to one of the holiest shrines of Hinduism starts from the base camp in Pahalgam, a hill station, or Baltal, a flower-laden valley. Facilities, including tented accommo-

modation, medical assistance, food and security, are provided throughout the route. Zulfiqar Hasan, IGP, Central Reserve Police Force, which has been playing a vital role in the conduct of the annual yatra, tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, "Over 12,000 additional troops, including women personnel, are deployed for security on both the routes."

On the flipside, the large numbers of devotees have translated into large-scale littering of plastic and non-biodegradable garbage such as tents, raincoats, plastic bottles, gutkha and candy wrappers, all along the route, jeopardising the fragile ecosystem and earning the wrath of environmentalists.

**Shilbhadra Datta**, who undertook the arduous trek, presents images that speak of belief and bravery, faith and beauty.

A helicopter lands at Panchtarni helipad, specially prepared by the CRPF for the convenience of devotees. Private helicopter services are available from both Baltal and Pahalgam to Panchtarni, a busy nodal point on the Pahalgam route, barely 8 km from the Amarnath cave. Panchtarni, at the foot of Mount Bhairav, has five rivers flowing out of five glaciers. Pilgrims often camp at Panchtarni for the night



The cave of Amarnath is about 48 km from Pahalgam and about 13,000 ft above sea level. Made of gypsum—a soft sulfate mineral—it is 150 ft long and 150 ft broad at the mouth and 90 ft at the centre. Inside is the holy lingam at a distance of around 16 ft from the viewing platform



Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Amarnath temple is among the most revered Hindu temples. Devotees are seen participating in the morning *arti*

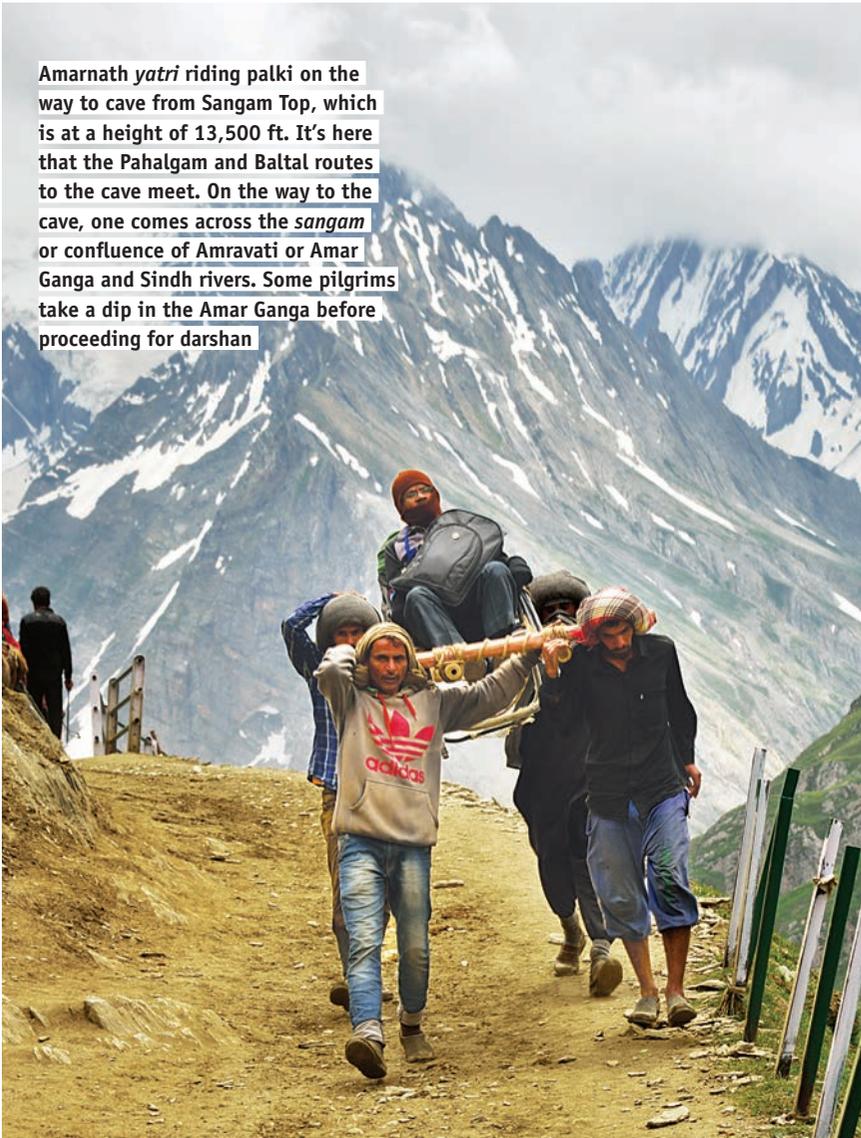


An aerial view of Amarnath gorge, where the routes from Baltal and Pahalgam unite over the frozen Amar Ganga and Sindh rivers

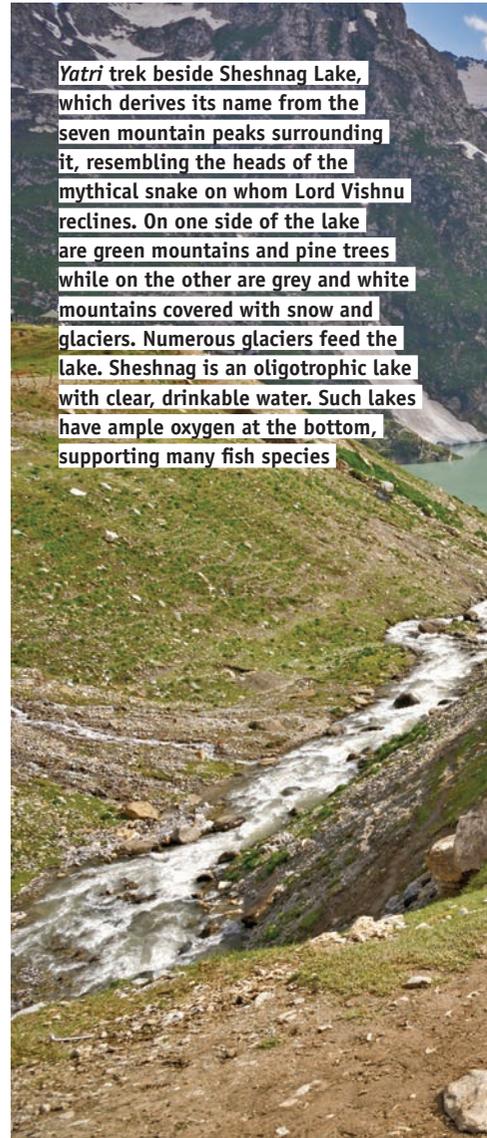


For those coming from the Pahalgam side, the trek starts at Chandanwadi. The steep and narrow route through two passes, on to a plateau and down into the meadows, is negotiated by foot, pony and sometimes even palanquins. As the trek progresses, the landscape dramatically changes from sleepy, woody meadows to narrow and rocky glacial terrain

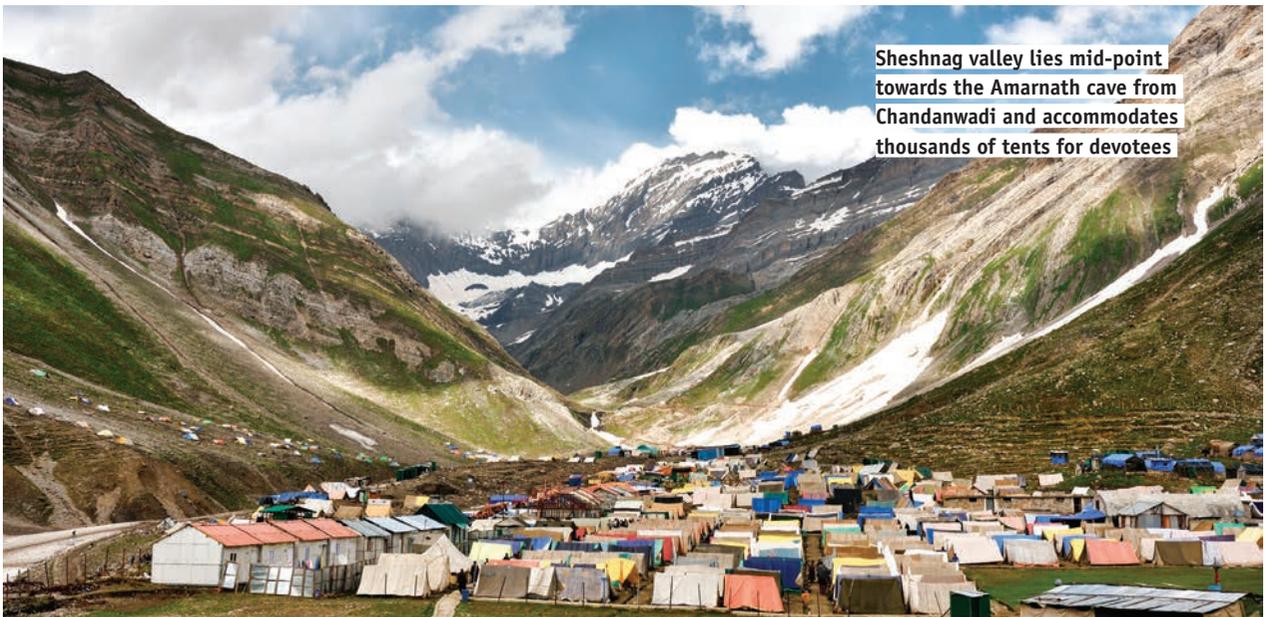
Amarnath *yatri* riding palki on the way to cave from Sangam Top, which is at a height of 13,500 ft. It's here that the Pahalgam and Baltal routes to the cave meet. On the way to the cave, one comes across the *sangam* or confluence of Amravati or Amar Ganga and Sindh rivers. Some pilgrims take a dip in the Amar Ganga before proceeding for darshan



*Yatri* trek beside Sheshnag Lake, which derives its name from the seven mountain peaks surrounding it, resembling the heads of the mythical snake on whom Lord Vishnu reclines. On one side of the lake are green mountains and pine trees while on the other are grey and white mountains covered with snow and glaciers. Numerous glaciers feed the lake. Sheshnag is an oligotrophic lake with clear, drinkable water. Such lakes have ample oxygen at the bottom, supporting many fish species



Most pilgrims start their journey from Jammu and reach Nunwan late afternoon. Some bathe in the Lidder river near the parking lot and move towards the entry gate of Nunwan base camp. This salute by a silver to CRPF personnel was completely spontaneous



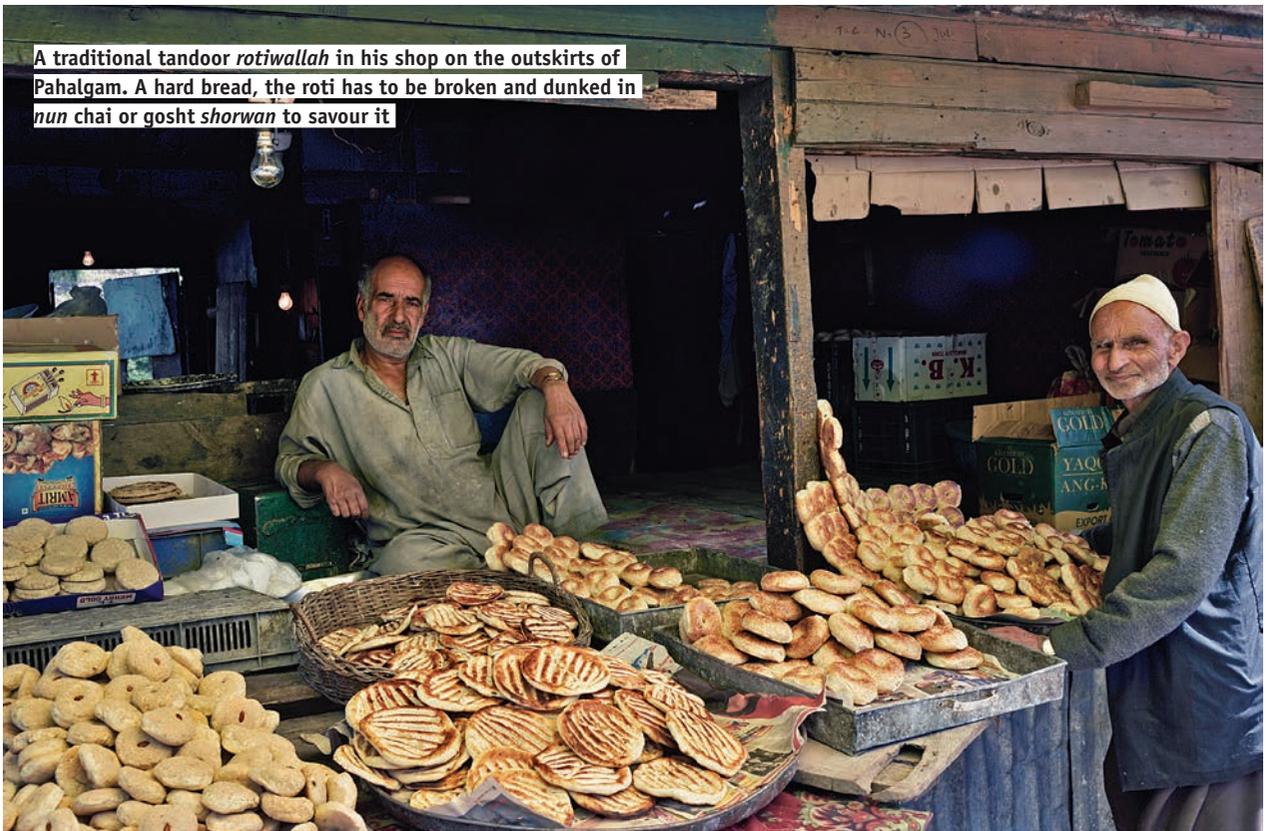
Sheshnag valley lies mid-point towards the Amarnath cave from Chandanwadi and accommodates thousands of tents for devotees



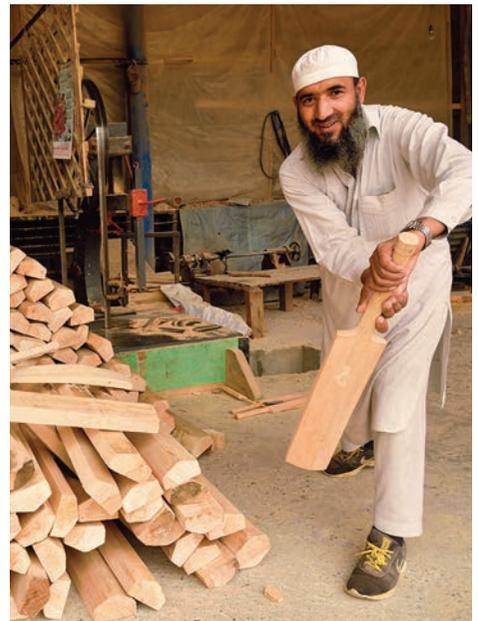
Seen here is a *bhandara* at Sheshnag. The *bhandara* serves vegetarian fare such as pulao, fried rice, aloo or gobi paratha, tandoori paneer tikka, chilli mushroom, dosa, cheese pasta and veg noodles, besides desserts such as gulab jamun and *gajar ka halwa*



The ruins of the Martand Sun Temple, which was built in 8th century CE by Lalitaditya Muktapida of the Karkota dynasty. The architecture is a blend of Gandharan, Gupta, Chinese, Roman, Syrian-Byzantine and Greek forms. The temple was destroyed in the early 15th century on the orders of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan



An artisan stitching embroidery on a *phiran*, a traditional loose upper garment worn by both men and women in Kashmir



# Experience

## A second childhood

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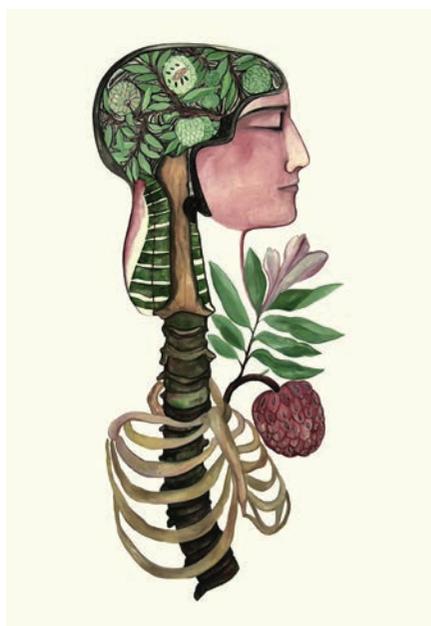
N Divya

## Stories at SIXTY

I paint to negotiate a world I live in—where the multitude of stories that filter into my consciousness create landscapes of discourse to be explored,” says renowned artist Rekha Rodwittiya, whose solo exhibition *Rekha@Sixty: Transient Worlds of Belonging* will open at Sakshi Gallery in Mumbai on 31 October. The month-long exhibition will celebrate the artist’s 60th birthday through a new body of work that looks back on her spiritual and physical journey across six decades. “My journey within these six decades corresponds to a journey of change within India; some of which de-

lights me, while some has been painful to witness,” says Rodwittiya. As one of the pioneering artists of her generation, the Vadodara-based artist’s work has served as an important voice for the feminist movement in India. “I hear the voices of empowered Indian women across all sections of society, and feel the pride of a shared journey. However, the stories of oppression and injustice that bury far too many weigh me down with sorrow,” says the artist, whose show will have a series of hitherto unseen multimedia works, along with an impressive 60-piece series of paperworks.

art



# FRAME & GLORY



Sanjay, Anil and Rajesh Singh Chaddha  
at the Indian Art Studio

Photographs by Natasha Rego

Indian Art Studio, one of Mumbai's beloved icons, has been freezing memories for over a hundred years, writes **Anisha Samuel**

**I**n the basement of an old building in Kalbadevi, Mumbai, the proprietors of what is arguably the city's oldest photo studio rummage through decades of photographic treasures saved by their father and grandfather, from whom they learnt the art of photography. In the early 1900s, there were only five to six studios in the locality, and Indian Art Studio was one of them.

Among this collection are pictures of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in various moods, and his successor Lal Bahadur Shastri. The collection also has pictures of Bollywood superstars Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor, and a few negatives of Shashi Kapoor playing cricket, shot by earlier generations of the family.

## photography

These treasures exist thanks to Hargopal Singh Chaddha, a self-taught photographer and founder of Indian Art Studio, who was also vice-president of the Professional Photographers Association. "Our grandfather's contacts helped him build an impressive clientele, which included royalty like the Maharaja of Morbi Estate in Gujarat and even former prime minister Indira Gandhi," says Anil Singh Chaddha, the eldest of the three brothers who run the studio today.

Hargopal's son Yaggopal Singh Chaddha took over the studio in the 1960s and turned it into the official photographer for industrialists and political events. "Why, even Kodak wanted to lease the property to open a photo processing lab here but my father wouldn't hear of it! During

this time, transforming studios into film processing labs was all the rage but our dad had done the math. He didn't fancy investing in equipment that develops photographs and toiling over heaps of negatives just to break even," says Anil's brother Sanjay.

The brothers entered the profession in the 1990s. And to counter the changes wrought by technology, they offer services like product photography, wedding photography, industrial photography, videography, and much more. But here's what sets this studio apart: the Chaddhas still take portraits using the same props used in the days of yore, and undertake hand-tinting to restore old photographs (*see 'Tinted memories,' page 54*).

The third brother Rajesh says that during his grandfather's time, the studio was a pioneer in photography because it had a range of sizes in plate cameras, to take group photos as well as smaller passport-size photos. "Back then, a wedding needed to be shot in 20-24 pictures because each click meant that another magnesium flash bulb would burst," he explains.

"Taking photos was an activity for festivals and special events," he adds. "Folks would line up in their Sunday best outside the studio and wait their turn to get portraits taken. They would stand still for maybe five minutes after the flash went off so that the image came off sharp and they could have that one cherished photo of their loved ones."

Anil points out that any imperfections in a negative were worked on with the 'Photoshop' tools of the time: a spotting pencil and dyes that cleaned them up. "After all this work, three copies of a portrait would bring in about ₹ 80, while three copies of a passport-size photo fetched ₹ 20. This is the equivalent of around ₹ 2,500 today."

Indian Art Studio was ahead of its time in many ways. "In the 1970s, there were two huge boards outside the studio, announcing 'Passport Photos In Half An Hour,'" recalls Sanjay. "That's because we used single-cut films. Other-



"Folks would line up in their Sunday best outside the studio and wait their turn to get portraits taken. They would stand still for maybe five minutes after the flash went off so that the image came off sharp and they could have that one cherished photo of their loved ones"

Pulling out another cherished moment, Sanjay adds, "Our father was a perfectionist and he had no qualms about stopping a group photo-shoot to tell Giani Zail Singh that his *sherwani* needed to be adjusted. He was later thanked by the former President for being true to his profession!"

In their leisure time, the Chaddhas descend into the studio's basement and, under the original tungsten bulbs and old, wooden furniture, they sort through piles of photographs clicked over the decades. There's even a chair with a 'hidden table' that was used by their father's accountant. Their mission: to create an archiving project that will showcase the history of the studio along with the now famous personalities who once posed for their photos.

wise, one would have to wait for 12 customers to finish the strip before it was developed."

When the three brothers entered the profession, it was an uncertain time for photo studios. "Compact cameras were already in the market but we stayed focused. We made sure we remained a part of photographic associations, which got us assignments shooting prestigious people. Earlier, we also did a lot of press work and journalism photography," reveals Rajesh.

Continuing the tradition at Indian Art Studio is not the preserve of the owners alone. Sometimes, customers play a vital role. "My grandfather Hargopal had the privilege of shooting the Morbi Estate in Gujarat, during the time of Maharaja Mahendra Singh. Years later, I was called to shoot the Maharaja's grandson's wedding in Morbi," Rajesh tells us.

When he went to Morbi Estate in Rajkot, the Maharaja's wife showed him the pictures that his grandfather had taken. "It was a proud moment for the Maharaja's grandson and me because my grandfather had served his grandfather. Now the third generation was back doing the same thing."



## OFF THE CUFF BY RAJU MUKHERJI

### MEN OF HONOUR: We remember two forgotten heroes of Indian football, Tulemaran Aao and Neville D'Souza, who played and lived with their head held high

**T**he sorry tale of Indian football is best exemplified by the incidents concerning Tulemaran Aao and Neville D'Souza. Aao was India's first captain at the Olympic Games in 1948. Neville D'Souza was India's sole hat-trick maker at the Olympic Games in 1956. Both possessed impeccable credentials as footballers, but both suffered irreparable neglect.

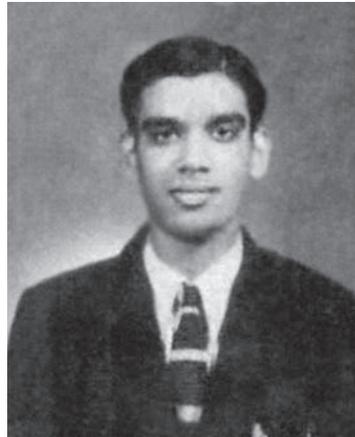
Tulemaran Aao was from Kohima in Nagaland. He was a brilliant scholar and had come down to Calcutta after India's Independence in 1947. While chatting with his fellow students at the campus of Calcutta Medical College, he came to know football was a very popular sport among the local Bengalees.

He told his mates he would like to go to the ground one day to witness a match. A doctor-to-be student friend of his accompanied Tulemaran to the Mohun Bagan-East Bengal ground on the northern periphery of Fort William at the Calcutta maidan. It is said that Aao observed the match in progress with very keen interest. Later, with much trepidation, he asked his friend if a trial could be organised for him at one of the clubs. As it transpired, another student knew a patron of East Bengal Club, K D Banerjee, who called Aao over to the club for a trial. He arrived early at the ground with his kit bag in tow.

A group of footballers were about to start their practice session. Aao quickly changed into his football gear and joined them. The coach happened to be Balaidas Chatterjee, a very influential sports administrator who had been a prominent football player and boxer in his salad days. Balaidas realised he had found a gem and, without any delay, registered him to play for the club. However, without realising it, Aao had joined the rival club Mohun Bagan whereas he was supposed to attend the East Bengal trial! As both teams shared the same ground, it was not possible for the young Naga student to know which club was practising at the time. When K D Banerjee arrived at the ground with the East Bengal team for practice, Aao was taken aback. But KD put his arm around Aao and told

him, "Son, do not worry. You have got a club. Be loyal to it. Make a name for yourself." How prophetic those words were to be!

At the time, Mohun Bagan officials prided themselves in not recruiting foreign talent. They relied on Indians and took special care of their players. Normally, a player who joined the club would become a family member of the club, as it were. Aao fitted into the slot with ease and his academic credentials added to his ready acceptance at the club.



Neville D'Souza

Within the course of the year, the bright medical student became the club's most prominent player in deep defence. He was tough and fearless in his tackles and looked every inch the ideal sportsman. In 1948, when it was announced that the Indian football team would take part in the Olympic Games for the first time as an independent nation, the name of the medical student from Kohima was right on top as captain. At the Games in London, the Indian players played superb football, only to go down

1-2 against France. India failed to convert two penalty kicks and was knocked out of the tournament after just one outing.

Back home, Aao could see that times were changing. Corruption and intrigue were gradually filtering in at the Calcutta maidan. Now in his final year, the medical student did not want to waste time with maidan politics and, sensibly, bid adieu to Mohun Bagan and football forever. He went back to Kohima and became a popular and successful medical practitioner. The intelligent gentleman kept himself away from the wretched condition of Indian football. For their part, our football administrators had no time for India's former captain and an outstanding defender because he did not come from the mainstream states.

As for Indian football, after a disastrous experience at the Helsinki Olympics in 1952 where the team lost 1-10 to Yugoslavia, it was in doldrums. As directed by FIFA, Indian players were now forced to wear boots—

unlike in London in 1948 where they were allowed to play barefoot—and tried their best to adopt and adapt. Thankfully, a magnificent batch of youngsters arrived on the scene at the same time. In coach Rahim they found a mentor who could inspire and encourage.

And at the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, Indian football players made the nation proud—they missed the bronze medal but came in fourth. The principal torchbearers included youngsters like Tulsidas Balaram from Andhra Pradesh, P K Banerjee from Bengal, Narayan from Bombay, and Neville Stephen D'Souza from Goa, which was a Portuguese colony in India at the time.

Among these prodigious talents, the man who was in the headlines perpetually was D'Souza. He could weave his way through hardened defenders with courage and gumption—and then unleash a thunderbolt of a shot that blasted the net. D'Souza possessed firepower in his feet and his power and unerring accuracy would find the back of the net from any angle. He was a centre-forward who had no weakness as a striker. Whether shooting or heading, he had few parallels. He sent the international football critics into raptures with a brilliant hat-trick against Australia. (He later scored India's only goal in a losing cause against Yugoslavia.) Never again was any Indian able to replicate this outstanding feat at the Olympics.

However, the bug of corruption Aao had anticipated in the late 1940s was already in motion. When the trials for the selection of the Indian team for the following Olympics in Rome in 1960 were in progress, it was a foregone conclusion that D'Souza would be the captain. He had all the essential qualities of leadership. Apart from being among the best players, he was by far the most articulate and

had a brilliant, incisive, tactical mind. He had even led Maharashtra to victory in the Santosh Trophy, the symbol of inter-state supremacy in Indian soccer. But, sad to relate, D'Souza was not only deprived of the captaincy, he was omitted from the team altogether! He then vanished from the Indian football scenario for ever.

Why would this happen? You see, D'Souza was educated and held prominent positions in multinational corporations. It seems his supposedly 'better' background went against him! The general conception among football administrators in India was that the players should belong to financially deprived sections; should not have any decent academic credentials; and should kowtow to officials and be happy to receive whatever little they were offered. Unfortunately, the attitude has not changed much even after so many years.

*The general conception among football administrators in India was that the players should belong to financially deprived sections; should not have any decent academic credentials; and should kowtow to officials and be happy to receive whatever little they were offered*

Neville D'Souza was not a person who would bow down to undeserving people. He had education, self-respect and a brilliant career with a MNC ahead of him. He would be the last person to dance to the tunes of corrupt, unworthy officialdom. For all his sterling qualities, he was forced to make way for the less deserving. Thankfully, like his famous Naga predecessor Tulemaran Aao, the Goan D'Souza never compromised; never resorted to underhand dealings; never formed cliques; never flattered influential officials; never conspired to win awards. They played and lived their successful lives with their head held high.

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



**Getting old is a fascinating thing.  
The older you get, the older you  
want to get.**

*—British rock musician Keith Richards (b. 1943)*



# Forget me not

With World Alzheimer's Day having just gone by, **Humra Quraishi** recalls her father's struggle with the degenerative disease

**M**y father Iqtidar Ali Khan started showing the initial symptoms of Alzheimer's soon after retirement, but we thought his depression and slight traces of forgetfulness were along the strain of the typical post-retirement blues. However, when he and my mother travelled to London to be with my sister's family, they realised something was amiss, and that it was more than a routine bout of depression. More so, as one evening he got lost on his way back from Hyde Park; when he was finally traced, he showed no signs of anxiety. It was as if he wasn't even aware that he had got lost!

It's then that the family decided to show him to a specialist in London. We were told that he was suffering from Alzheimer's, and there wasn't much that could be done in terms of medical treatment to harness deteriorating memory cells. But, yes, ample advice was given on treating the patient with patience and love. Prominent among the 'dos' were a caring caretaker and the need to keep the patient in familiar settings, with an unchanging atmosphere and routine.

My father's depression paved the way for more obvious signs of Alzheimer's. He started forgetting mundane things such as eating, changing clothes and bathing. More changes followed. He couldn't coordinate dates with days anymore. And though he had been driving for decades, he couldn't drive with the same level of confidence. Gradually, he lost sense of direction too. Within months, my handsome and well-dressed father looked all too changed. He disliked bathing, shaving and even stepping out on the outer lawn. My father, who was very particular about going on long drives and to the club for tennis, started looking forlorn, sitting tight like a recluse.

With each passing day, his memory shrank further. In effect, this is what Alzheimer's disease is all about: shrinkage of memory cells and consequent degeneration. Some battle with it for a few years, others succumb within a

short span. In my father's case, he passed away in the winter of 1996, after a struggle of almost six years. In fact, the degeneration of his memory worsened just months before he passed away. He could no longer sip chai, his favourite brew, or differentiate between toast and butter.

Alzheimer's is a disease that is yet to find a cure, although it was diagnosed as far back as 1906 by German pathologist Alois Alzheimer, who had noticed changes in the brain tissue of a woman who had died of an unusual mental illness. Her symptoms included memory loss, language problems and unpredictable behaviour.

**One particular incident shattered us. We saw him looking for something he seemed to have lost. When we asked him what the matter was, he spoke with nervous impatience: 'Where are my children? I'm looking for them. They're lost!'**

Alzheimer's is progressive and degenerative, and those affected by it change drastically—beyond recognition. Their memory becomes 'polka dotted.' Only 'little islands of memory' remain. With pathological changes in the brain beginning to take place, the affected person undergoes a sharp transformation. Some common symptoms include a gradual loss of memory, decline in the ability to perform routine tasks, disorientation, impairment of judgment, and loss of language and communication skills.

As for my father, worse was to come. He stopped recognising friends and family. He couldn't even recognise us, his children. He would ask: '*Aap kaun hain... aapka kya naam hai?*' His eyes relayed restlessness, as though he wanted to communicate something significant with us. Sometimes he would murmur while recalling some childhood incident. Occasionally, he would burst into tears and sob like a child and go looking for his long-dead mother or siblings.

Though we would be sitting next to him, he seemed oblivious of that. I remember one particular incident that shattered us. We saw him looking for something he seemed to have lost. He moved about, peering under beds, behind sofas and doors. When we asked him what the matter was, he spoke with nervous impatience: 'Where are my children? I'm looking for them. They're lost!'



**Iqtidar Ali Khan in 1995; Quraishi (extreme right) with family in 1976**

He had been a doting father all along, who helped us with school homework, drove us to the dentist, tailor, tutor ... wherever we wanted to go. He was there with us even through our emotionally turbulent adult lives. He was gentle, sensitive and soft-spoken. The family sort, he would wait at the dining table for us to assemble before downing the first morsel. An engineer by profession, he would take us on all his tours; we'd be stuffed in our Baby Hindustan car and driven across far-flung rural locales.

For us, it was traumatic to see the transformation in our father's personality with the onset of Alzheimer's. The only time he looked somewhat settled and at peace was when we sat close by, holding his hand. Though he didn't recognise us, our presence seemed to be reassuring for him. Indeed, those with Alzheimer's need time, affection, love, and gentle care. Sadly, I couldn't spend much time with my father since he was located in a different city. To this day, it remains one of the biggest regrets of my life.

*Quraishi is a Delhi-based writer, columnist and journalist*



**I'm 59 and people call me middle-aged. How many 118 year-old men do you know?**

*—British comedian Barry Cryer (b. 1935)*

# Adventure, she writes

Her first book *Dungeon Tales* was Arabian Nights-esque. Her second, *The Washer of the Dead*, a collection of ghost stories centred on women, was humanistic rather than scary. Her next, *Soap! Writing and Surviving Television in India*, a handbook for people writing for the cash-rich but quality-strapped Indian TV industry, drew upon her years of experience in the space. She then wrote a three-book animal fiction series on the trot. Her most recent, *Boy No. 32*, is about a boy in an orphanage with the name, or rather, number *battees* (32). But his life and luck may be about to change when the orphanage is inadvertently brought crashing down, letting him and his mates loose on the pathways of Mumbai and setting off a series of adventures and discoveries.

Somewhere, **Venita Coelho's** life is as varied, adventurous, unconventional and humanistic as the books she writes and the themes she explores. She was born in Dehradun, grew up in Calcutta, worked in Bombay, stayed in Coimbatore (which she considers home) and now lives in Goa. She is a single mother to an adopted girl of 10, whom she home-schools and takes on tours across India in a customised caravan, because she feels that's the best way to learn geography and history. She also loves animals, owing to which she turned vegetarian 20 years ago.

Coelho started off writing for TV in the early days of satellite TV, and worked there the longest, before giving it up when the "saas-bahu poison" took over. She returned to front *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nah*i, but left TV for the second and final time when she saw that the show was getting into saas-bahu mode. She wrote a few films but took a break when none of the three scripts she penned turned out as envisaged. She switched her attention full-fledged to books and has been quite prolific: seven books in 11 years, with about as many at various stages. She has started looking at films anew and is also interested in the rapid rising space of web series. And somewhere in the midst of all this action, she has engaged in activism too, being a part of the Goa Bachao Abhiyaan and espousing other causes as well. **Irfan Syed** spoke to the author about her work, motivation and inspirations. Excerpts:

## You have written across mediums and genres....

Actually, I'm not a writer—I'm a storyteller. It has allowed me the freedom of adapting, learning and going from genre to genre, medium to medium.

## How easy or difficult is it writing across mediums?

TV is easy; once you've cracked the formula—24 minutes, 12 scenes, ad breaks—it's pretty easy to write. Film is the most difficult. In film, the universe you create has to be credible. It takes many minds and is collaborative whereas we, as writers, tend to be solitary. The easiest is books, because with them, you are the sole person in charge.

## It seems the inspiration for *Boy No. 32* came from the time you spent with street kids while waiting for the last train back from work during your TV days.

I was always on that last train back to the hostel. All the odds and ends would be on that train: *hijra*, fisherwomen, some urchin or the other. Because the train was empty, these kids would come and chat. I would have these absolutely fantastic conversations. They would also entertain me. They'd catch those handholds on top and swing from them and do acrobatics. I thought they deserved a book. I wanted people to see them as children and not just beggars.

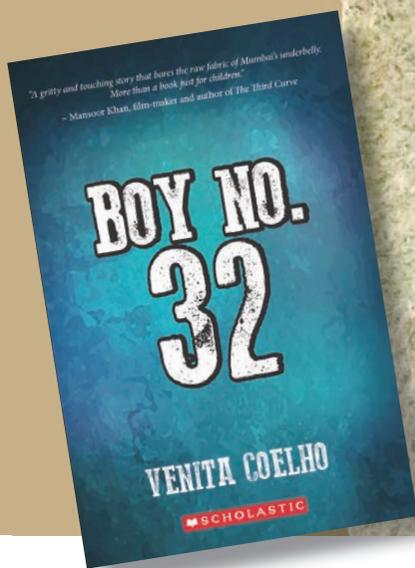
## Were there any other motivations for writing the book?

*Boy No. 32* is also about family. That's what he is looking for. He's never had a family. It also came out of the conversations I had with my daughter about family because, by definition, we are not your standard family: single mom with adopted kid. The fondest, deepest, most loving family can be the family you choose.

## The book seems to have influences of Salman Rushdie—the telepathic communication between kids and various elements of fantastic adventure. You seem to be a Rushdie fan, which is also evident in your first book, *Dungeon Tales*. Do the similarities creep in subconsciously?

I picked up my first Rushdie when I was in college. I just fell into *Midnight's Children*. It was not as much for the storytelling but for the fact that it was the first time that I read a book and said, 'Oh my God, we can tell our stories and people will take us seriously.' Rushdie used *Bambaiya* dialect to tell a truly Indian story. I was like: 'I can admire an Indian author, and the world admires him as well!' So, that's why, for me, always at the back of all my writing is Papa Rushdie sitting there as an inspiration!

*authorspeak*



Kaira Coelho

“Because the train was empty, these kids would come and chat. I would have these absolutely fantastic conversations. They would also entertain me. They’d catch those handholds on top and swing from them and do acrobatics. I thought they deserved a book”

**The book could so easily make a movie. In fact, many of your books can. Is that your TV and film writing at play?**

All the books are the movies that will never be made! Look at my animal rights series—climaxes that involve 250 tigers! So, that’s how I use my books. Because in film, you are trying to write stuff that will get made. But in books, you can write stuff that doesn’t have to ever be made—you can just go mad!

**How did the animal series books come about?**

I was sick of the way people were treating animals. In our family, animals are treated in a loving manner, much like family. I thought, ‘Animals have nobody to speak for them. So, I’m going to do it.’ I decided to talk to kids again; tell them fun stories that would teach them about animal rights, cruelty to animals, the space that animals have in the world and the need to respect that.

**Most of your books are aimed at children. Do you find it easier to write for them than adults?**

Adults have a whole lot of opinions and prejudices that they might not openly show, and a whole lot of thoughts about what good and bad reading is. Kids don’t think like

that. As long as you are telling a good story in a fun way, they listen.

**In *Soap!*, you’ve talked about the physical problems you had while writing, which eventually receded through yoga. Is that you how keep fit?**

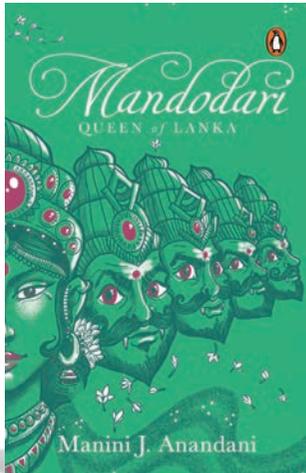
Totally! It saved my life. There is no problem I’ve had that yoga has not fixed.

**Any plans to take up a web series?**

I hope to do a web series. But recently, when I looked at a series that is really popular, I felt a bit lost. I didn’t understand the thinking. So, I’ve taken some time off and am just looking at the whole thing: at stuff that’s popular, at youngsters and what interests them. For me, it’s one more new genre to learn.

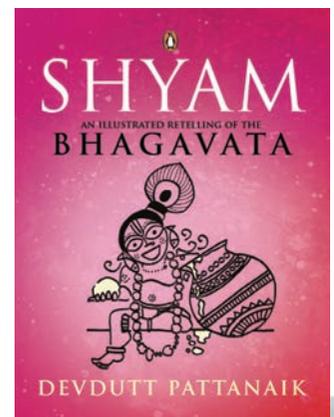
**Finally, will you be writing on your pan-India trips?**

I’ve got all kinds of offers: ‘Shoot it.’ ‘Do a blog.’ ‘Do a series.’ But I’ve said no to everything. For once, I want to do something just for the fun of it. We are doing our tours, meeting people, seeing sights, and eventually I’m sure it will influence my writing. Any kind of adventure you have enriches you, and feeds back into your work.

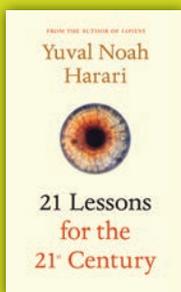


Borrowing from Sanghadasa's Jaina version of the *Ramayana*, debut author **Manini J Anandani's** *MANDODARI: QUEEN OF LANKA* (Penguin; ₹ 299; 270 pages) retells the epic from a hitherto unknown perspective—that of Ravana's wife. An unsung character of the epic, Mandodari is considered one of the *Panchakanya* of Hindu mythology—the others being Ahalya, Tara, Sita and Draupadi—known for their steadfast love, loyalty and devotion towards their husband. The simple, yet poignant, narrative takes us through the rise and fall of the emperor of Lanka, while humanising him. We are introduced to a different side of the Asura king—as a child denied education because he was not completely Brahmin; a brilliant mind beyond measure; a king under whom the kingdom reached its zenith; and a loving son, brother and father. As for a man abhorred for his lustful ways, we get to see plenty of tender moments between him and Mandodari, who occupied not just a special place in his heart but court as well. That said, this is primarily the soulful story of a wife and queen.

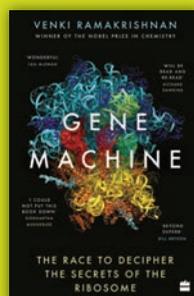
**Devdutt Pattanaik's** *SHYAM: AN ILLUSTRATED RETELLING OF THE BHAGAVATA* (Penguin; ₹ 499; 274 pages) is distinct in more ways than one. The 16 chapters detail 16 pivotal roles of Shyam, including that of a student, refugee, householder, cousin, father and elder, with interesting trivia thrown in. For instance, in "The Birth of Kamsa", it is revelatory that Kamsa's demonic character is because his mother Padmavati had been abducted and raped by demon Gohila and that Kamsa's end at the hands of 'a true Yadava' was a curse by his own mother! The author weaves a narrative around Krishna's "descent to the butter-smearing world of happy women and his ascent from the blood-soaked world of angry men". The intensely layered yet beautifully crafted story explores the *Bhagavata* lore to discover new understandings of Krishna without rejecting the old. Laced with beautiful illustrations by the author himself, the book also provides insightful references and links with Greek and Abrahamic fables.



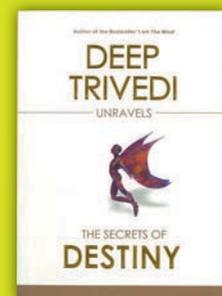
## Also on stands



**21 Lessons for the 21st Century**  
**Yuval Noah Harari**  
 Penguin Random House;  
 ₹ 799; 370 pages  
 The critically acclaimed author of *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus* focuses on the challenges of navigating life in a world ruled by big data.



**Gene Machine**  
**Venki Ramakrishnan**  
 HarperCollins; ₹ 699; 288 pages  
 A thrilling story of how three scientists, including the author, succeeded in decoding the ribosome, winning the 2009 Nobel Prize for chemistry.



**The Secrets of Destiny**  
**Deep Trivedi**  
 Aatman Innovations;  
 ₹ 295; 206 pages  
 The author sheds light on the laws that govern our existence.



# INSIDE OUT

Healing chronic pain is an inside job, writes **Sarah Anne Shockley**

Let's face it, living with any kind of physical pain is a challenge. In the fall of 2007, I contracted an extremely painful and debilitating condition, Thoracic Outlet Syndrome, a structural collapse that compresses the muscles, nerves and arteries that run between the collarbones and first ribs.

Yet, as most of us do, I believed my condition would, naturally clear up soon and the pain would leave. That's what happens most of the time for most of our physical ailments. We might lay low for a while, take some medications to ease the discomfort, and then we're back into the swing of things. No problem.

Except when it doesn't work that way. What happens when pain becomes a fixture in our lives and no amount of medication or treatment or therapy can eradicate it?

Our usual response is to fight. We put on our battle armour and spend every day in an effort to overcome pain so it won't take over any more of our lives. We search for the right therapies and medications, trying one approach after another, with the attitude of defeating a mortal enemy.

If nothing works, we eventually exhaust ourselves. We wake up one morning with our anti-pain armour in a heap on the floor and find we have no more reserves to fight, so we leave it there.

So, we swing to the other end of the spectrum, deciding that the best thing to do now is to ignore the pain we're living with. *This is just the way*

*it is right now*, we say to ourselves. *These are the cards I've been dealt and I'm going to have to live with the situation.* We put on our best face and try to function despite the pain, doing our best to ignore its insistent cries for attention.

I spent years swinging back and forth between the two poles, until one day I couldn't stand it anymore. I decided there had to be a different way to live, to find more ease and grace even in the midst of pain.



So, I decided to turn my belief about what pain is and how I was dealing with it on its head. I found ways to shift my relationship with pain into a more positive, constructive one and, after many years of having no perceptible change, began to finally experience some relief.

Here are three important ways I shifted my relationship with pain and thereby began to experience more healing in my body.

## **Making friends with pain**

It helped me a great deal to understand that pain is not an enemy but a signal and a message that tells us that the body is trying to heal. Pain is a voice from within that announces

that something is out of harmony and is trying to put itself right. Instead of experiencing pain as torture, I began to understand that it was a natural communication from my body. In a way, it was *me* talking to me. A part of me was hurting and asking for attention.

Pain needed me to be with it just as it was, to stop pushing against it, and to listen to it.

## **Finding positive ways to express pain**

I began to journal about living with pain, which helped me see it differently. I wrote about the loss and the loneliness, the shame and the frustration. Then I read what I wrote out loud to pain, and to myself. We both listened. Something shifted. We both relaxed. Pain started to move.

## **Allowing pain the time it needs**

I also discovered that pain was asking for time. Healing simply wasn't going to be rushed. My body didn't respond well to being hurried or pushed, and healing could not be approached as another goal to be achieved. Pain kept its own timetable.

Allowing pain to take the time it would take rather than trying to hurry it out of my body allowed for a healthier emotional and physiological response that was far more conducive to healing.

....

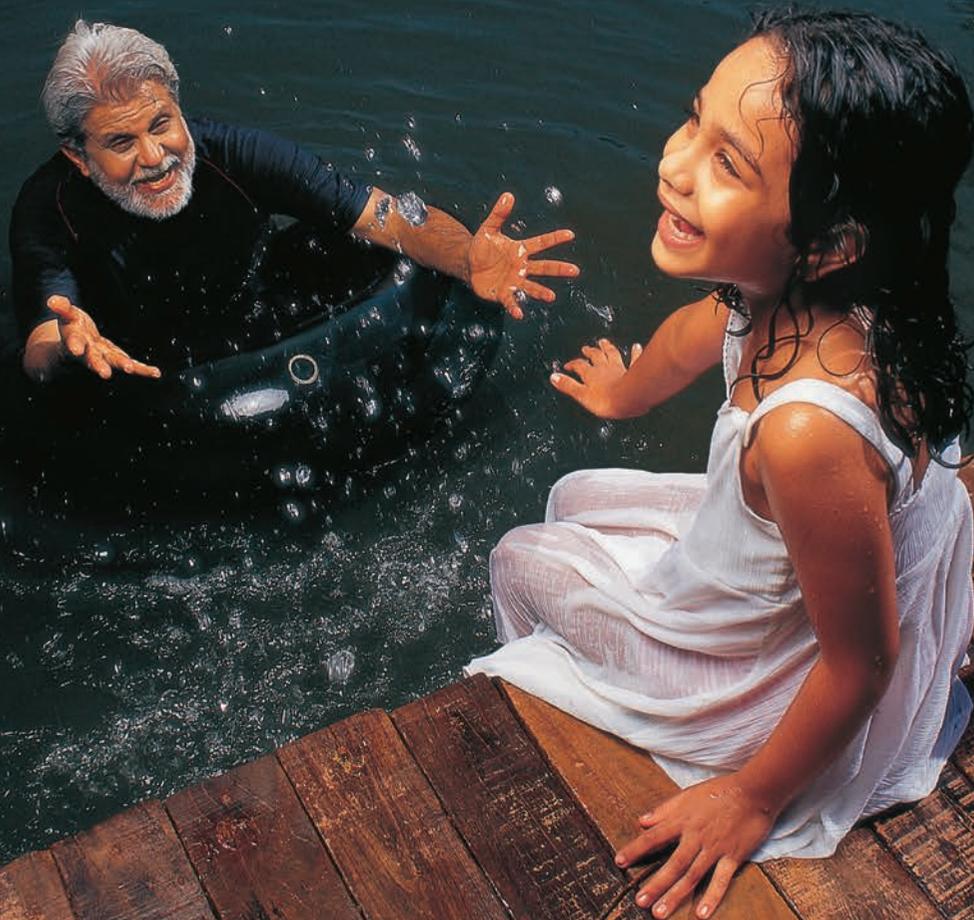
Pain, since, has become something of a spiritual mentor. It has, in the end, taught me how to live more deeply, more authentically, and more wisely.

---

Shockley is the author of *The Pain Companion*. Visit her online at [thepaincompanion.com](http://thepaincompanion.com)

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# To the MOON & back



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It was a historical mission that took mankind where it had not ventured before—right around the moon. The seven-day flight of Apollo 8, launched on 21 December in 1968, was the first manned spacecraft to leave the earth's orbit, reach the moon and return safely to earth. Originally intended as a low-earth orbital flight, Apollo 8's mission was changed suddenly in the summer of 1968 following rumours that the Russians were planning a crewed

mission to lunar orbit. With just four months to plan and execute the mission, NASA audaciously decided to man its flight with commander Frank Borman, command module pilot James Lovell and lunar module pilot Bill Anders.

The crew became the first men to see the earth as a whole sphere. At the moon, Anders snapped one of the most iconic photographs in history, *Earthrise*, that showed a brilliant blue

earth rising over a gray and lifeless lunar surface, all set against the black infinity of space. The picture, incidentally, inspired the first Earth Day in 1970 and was also selected as the first of *Life* magazine's '100 Photographs that Changed the World'. On Christmas Eve, in a broadcast heard by more than a quarter of the world's population, the astronauts read from the *Book of Genesis*. Talking about their experience, Borman called the moon "a vast, lonely, forbidding type of existence", while Lovell paid tribute to the earth's "grand ovation to the vastness of space".

The triumph of Apollo 8—which the crew themselves had rated as only having a 50 per chance of fully succeeding—paved the way for the 1969 Apollo 11 mission seven months later, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked the moon, fulfilling former US president John F Kennedy's dream of landing a man on the moon before the end of the 1960s, and dealing a devastating blow to the erstwhile Soviet Union in the space race. Aptly, the crew members were termed *TIME* magazine's 'Men of the Year' for 1968, a year filled with historically tragic events such as the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, Robert Kennedy, and the Vietnam offensive. The effect of Apollo 8 can be summed up by an anonymous telegram received by Borman that simply stated, "Thank you Apollo 8. You saved 1968."

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: OCTOBER 1968

- On 9 October, French Jewish legal scholar Rene Cassin was named the recipient of the 1968 Nobel Peace Prize for drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- On 12 October, Australian actor Hugh Jackman, known for his portrayal of Wolverine, was born in Sydney.
- On 15 October, the Kingdom of Bhutan inaugurated its first ever airport, financed and built by India.
- On 18 October, John Lennon was taken to Paddington Green police station on charges of possession of cannabis and obstructing a police search.



*he evolution of the English language has indeed been incredible—and intriguing. Various words and phrases have drifted away or evolved into different ones. To celebrate the International Day of Older Persons, here are a few delightful Victorian words and phrases to mull over*

## Academy Headache

When art became fashionable to a severe degree, this malady appeared; now applied generically to headaches acquired at art galleries.

**EXAMPLE:** Art critics complain of **academy headache** and of the fatigue produced by leagues of coloured canvases.

—Daily News, 15 April 1885

## Academic Nudity

Appearance in public without a cap or gown.

**EXAMPLE:** After a tranquil pipe in a friend's room we set out again. Shall we take cap and gown, or shall we venture forth in a state of **academic nudity**? Perish the slavish thought! We go without them.

—News cutting

## CINDERELLA

A dance which ends at 12—the name fancifully suggested, it is not known by whom, in reference to that successful young professional beauty who, at midnight, was by force majeure compelled to give up dancing.

**EXAMPLE:** The hours at which balls begin grow later and later. The stroke which sends the last guest hurrying away from the **Cinderella** dance scarcely ushers the first arrival to a season ball.

—Daily News, 27 March 1884

## Telescope

To collide and close in like a telescope—applied to the running into each other of railway carriages in collision; now applied in various ways.

**EXAMPLE:** The excursion train, of 20 cars, came into collision with a goods car. The shock was so severe that five crowded cars were completely **telescoped**.

—Daily News, 1878

## Love curls

This term came in when women began to cut their hair short and wear it low over the forehead.

**EXAMPLE:** For the defence, the respondent, Mr Robert Nathaniel Latham, was called. He gave a positive denial to the charge of cruelty. He had objected to his wife wearing what she called **love curls**.

—Latham v. Latham, Probate and Divorce Division, 9 February 1883

## Squeezability

Political pressure. Word invented long since, but only accepted politically about 1884.

**EXAMPLE:** They could not realise the change which the Franchise Act had made in the counties; or they believed too implicitly in the **squeezability** of the newly enfranchised electors.

—Daily News, 3 December 1885

# Backsheesh

Bribe.

The origin of this word is historical. When Mohamed [sic] Ali endeavoured, after his lights, to bring Egypt within the pale of civilisation, he sought to abate the endless begging exercised by most of his subjects. To this end, he assured his people that if they did not beg, foreigners would always make them a backsheesh, or 'present'. The natives accepted the theory, but only to apply it to their old practice. They begged, as they beg to this day, as much as ever; but they made their entreaties elegant by asking for a backsheesh—the one word of Arabic that every Englishman in Egypt learns, even if he acquires no other.

**EXAMPLE:** The people who talk of bribery and **backsheesh** in such circumstances are imperfectly informed as to desert customs and slang. To give a Sheikh who gets for you a hundred camels, say £ 60, is not an act of bribery. It is merely paying him a commission.

—Daily News, 16 March 1883

# Trilby

Woman's exquisite foot. It is an American-English word taken from Du Maurier's book (1894) *Tray*, also the name of the heroine, whose beautifully rare foot is insisted on.

**EXAMPLE:** Having exhausted palmistry an American paper has spent its energy of psychological investigation on the foot (I beg pardon, the **trilby**), but a rival comes out with a page of illustrated description of the mouth.

—People, 7 July 1895

## Petticoat interest

Those portions of fiction referring to womankind.

**EXAMPLE:** Scott did not trouble himself much about *Maid Marian*. He had enough of what is now called **petticoat interest** in his story without her.

—Daily News, 29 March 1892

## Flier

A breeder of carrier and other homing pigeons.

**EXAMPLE:** **Fliers**, a term given to individuals whose sportsmanlike instincts induce them to spend considerable time and money on the training of homing pigeons.

—Daily Telegraph, 17 December 1897

## NEEDLES AND PINS

Warning against marriage.

**EXAMPLE:** The rhyming runs—

Pins and needles—  
**needles and pins**

When a man marries  
his trouble begins.

## Bags o' Mystery

A satirical term for sausages, because no man but the maker knows what is in them. This term took its rise about 1850, long before the present system of market inspection was organised. But this term remained long after sausages were fairly wholesome.

The 'bag' refers to the gut that contained the chopped meat.

**EXAMPLE:** If they're going to keep running-in polony fencers for putting rotten gee-gee into the **bags of mystery**, I hope they won't leave fried-fish-pushers alone.

## Born a bit tired

Sarcastic excuse for a chronically lazy man. 'You can't reasonably expect him to work a couple of hours per day—he was born a bit tired.'

**EXAMPLE:** According to Mr Alderman Taylor of the London County Council, there exists the man who is **born a bit tired**.

—Daily Telegraph, 13 February 1897

Compiled from the *Passing English of the Victorian Era: A Dictionary of Heterodox English, Slang and Phrase* by James Redding Ware, accessible at [archive.org/details/passingenglishof00wareuoft](http://archive.org/details/passingenglishof00wareuoft)

## JAYANTI PREMKUMAR, Mumbai

**“We need to change our mindset about what constitutes waste. My main aim is to create awareness and train people to upcycle materials”**



Photograph courtesy: Jayanti Premkumar

**F**lowers from pistachio shells, jewellery boxes from coconut shells, candle stands made from recycled sugarcane stalks and sturdy newspaper stands created from wedding invitation cards—these are all part of Mumbai-based **Jayanti Premkumar**'s innovative and aesthetic portfolio. In fact, her living room is a veritable treasure trove for upcycled products, including an attractive bright red flower, which turns out to be a

plastic bottle cleverly crafted to look like a real flower. The 54 year-old has also been sharing her artistic skills with others through YWCA's established communities and workshops for the underprivileged. This self-taught artist's upcycling lessons have benefitted many single mothers, women undertrials, girls rescued from human trafficking and street children, who sell upcycled products to earn a livelihood.

—Anisha Samuel



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