

# harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

JANUARY 2012 ₹ 30

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## APOCALYPSE 2012?

TWELVE SILVERS SHARE  
THEIR BUCKET LIST

AMJAD ALI KHAN  
ASHOK ROW KAVI  
BACHENDRI PAL  
DAGGUBATI RAMANAIDU  
FARRUKH DHONDY  
GIEVE PATEL  
JIGGS KALRA  
PALLAVI JAIKISHAN  
SAROJA DEVI  
SUREKHA SIKRI  
USHA GANGULI  
YAMINI KRISHNAMURTHY

INDIAN ODYSSEY

Sir William  
Mark Tully



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# Your life IN A YEAR

Live a lifetime in a year. That's essentially what 'The Bucket List' demands.

The concept is derived from the empowering—and moving—2007 film of the same name, which features Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman as two terminally cancer patients who set out on a road trip to do all the things they had left undone. Our premise, of course, is less morbid; a light-hearted take on the impending 'Apocalypse' in 2012 that so many writings have alluded to.

We all go through life counting on that next day to come around, the next opportunity to get cracking on our 'to-do' list. The thought that time could be finite is quite an eye-opener. So when the team at *Harmony-Celebrate Age* began to ask renowned silvers for their Bucket List, it set me thinking about my own.

Having been so inspired by art and artists all these years, it would be a true joy to learn how to paint. And before the world comes to an end, take a trip to The Hermitage in St Petersburg, Russia, one of the finest repositories of art and creativity in the world. Just like art, books are both a passion and a haven; there are so many—too many—books left to read. One aspiration is to develop the skills to express myself better, to translate my own thoughts to meaningful words.

With my husband immersed in work and my sons all grown up, our lives seem to get busier every year, making it increasingly hard to eke out moments of solitude for the family. I would like to change that, and carve out some special moments of togetherness far from the madding crowd. And in those moments, give

Suresh Natarajan



my sons the most valuable life-lesson I can: learn from your experiences.

Speaking of family, this would be the year to give thanks—to my parents, for the balance and love with which they raised me, enabling me to stand proud through both success and adversity, and all those confidantes and friends who have sustained me emotionally over the years. Finally, a gift for myself: serenity. Quietude and tranquillity that come from self-realisation and self-actualisation, an end to the chatter of the mind, an embrace of the self that would be a fitting end to a year.

Indeed, serenity is what I wish for you and your families in 2012 too. Doomsday predictions aside, this year will not be our last—but let's make it the very best we have ever lived, a marker of how to greet each day, each experience, each opportunity with hope, joy and a sense of delicious abandon. Happy New Year!

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

*Harmony Celebrate Age*—January 2012 Volume 8 Issue 8

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**Editorial & Marketing Offices:** Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Tel: 91-22-30327108 (Editorial), 30327102 (Marketing). Email: [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) **Printed and published** by Dharmendra Bhandari on behalf of the owners, Harmony for Silvers Foundation **Printed** at Thomson Press India Ltd, Plot No. 5/5A, TTC Ind. Area, Thane-Belapur Road, Airoli, Navi Mumbai-400708 (Maharashtra); Thomson Press India Ltd, 18-35, Milestone, Delhi-Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007 (Haryana). **Published** at Reliance Energy Centre, Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400055. **Disclaimer:** The material provided by *Harmony* is not a substitute for professional opinions. Readers are advised to seek appropriate advice from qualified and licensed professionals in the concerned field. © Harmony for Silvers Foundation. All rights reserved worldwide. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited. *Harmony* does not take responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material. [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)

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**PEDAL PUSHER**  
*Pandurang Gaikwad turns rusty bicycles into vintage beauties*

**BRUSH WITH HISTORY**  
*At 77, Uma Lohtia makes her debut as a painter*

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# column one

As much as we find our systems and the inherent red tape loathsome, it's easy to fall in love with India. Many a westerner has come here and made India his home. We would disagree if you point to their sterile capital environment, arguing that they are remote from our true realities. In fact, many of them have seen more of these than many of us collectively. On foot in Kolhapuri *chappal*, and in musty train compartments, they rejoice in the country's uniqueness and experience heartbreak at the falling value of the rupee. One of them, whose Indian-ness none of us has ever challenged, is Mark Tully, the name synonymous with the presence of BBC News Service in India. Two decades ago, his book *No Full Stops in India* was read by almost every urban Indian to seem knowledgeable in 'India conversations'. Today, its sequel *Non Stop India* is one among a multitude of country-specific books thronging the stores. How it will fare remains to be seen, but it proves nonetheless that Tully is as Indian as any of us.

How well do we all adapt, let alone become change ourselves? *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is a one-stop destination to meet many such unique role models. Delhi-based blinds designer Vimla Mehta proves that a homemaker can become an entrepreneur ("Window of Opportunity"); former IANS director K P K Kutty ('Speak') shows that convictions are mightier than a pen; and S Sitarama Swamy in Bengaluru is proof that fighting for a cause can bring true meaning to life ("A Citizen's Call"). There's still much to do. Read how well-known silvers envision they will live in 2012, the so-called apocalyptic year ("The Bucket List"). So what would you like to do if it were the beginning of the end?

—Meeta Bhatti

The traditional joint family system appears to be a thing of the past. Though there are many reasons for this, the blame always lies with the younger generation. This is not fair as we are also in many ways responsible. Having seen many monsoons, the older generation is supposed to be mature enough to understand and accept youngsters as they are. Instead, we create so many problems. Just give a thought to why even working mothers prefer to keep their babies in crèches rather have their own elders around?

It is unwise to compare today's lifestyle with our old good days. Nothing ever remains the same. Their way may be different but not totally wrong. Just as you find yourself unable to digest their modern thinking and free lifestyle, they too are not able to accept our traditional thinking. This is the classic debate of the generation gap. Do not allow it to enter between your relationships. By accepting change as inevitable up to a certain extent, you can fill the generation gap and bring hearts closer. Only then can you have harmony in the family.

Many parents refuse to accept their children as individual people with their own thinking and own way. If you dominate them, the home will become a prison for them. So accept

the individuality of your children and respect their opinion—then, your home will be a heaven instead of a prison they endeavour to flee.

**Padmavati K Mhatre** *Mumbai*

Even a human being who is beloved to his family becomes a liability after death. The dead body becomes an object for quick disposal after the completion of religious formalities. Most people believe that a man's body is of no use after his death—they couldn't be more wrong. Body donation enables others to benefit from your vital organs and medical students to carry on their research, both extremely noble ends. I am a 75 year-old senior citizen and social worker. In September 2010, I registered my name and offered my body for donation after death to the authority of J J Hospital (Grant Medical College) in consultation and prior approval of my kith and kin, with a request to them to forbid unnecessary religious ceremonies and formalities. My registration number is 6441. I urge my fellow seniors to follow suit and request newspapers, magazines and government bodies to raise greater awareness on this issue.

**Manmohan Bagri** *Mumbai*

## CONTRIBUTOR



Vanessa McGrady

This month, **Kaumudi Marathé** recounts her unique legacy of flavour—and love—in 'At Large' ("Memories of Food"). Marathé is a journalist, cookbook author and chef. She started Un-Curry, a cooking school and catering company in Los Angeles, in 2007 to dispel the myth that all Indian food is 'curry'. Family, memory and food have always been an important part of her life. She cooks dishes she learned from her great-grandmothers, grandmothers and mother, and documents Marathi food history every chance she gets. But her most important job is raising her 10 year-old daughter Keya (see photograph), who also loves to cook.





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INSIDE  
**P26: Blind love!**  
**P28: Perk up your palate**

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## ► FACE OFF

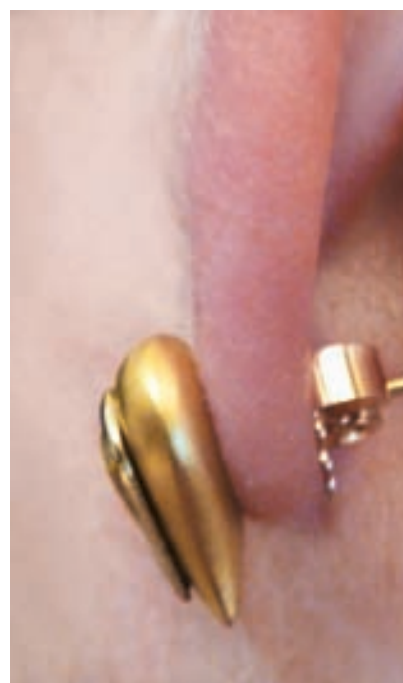
# Wintry view

**Y**ou don't just feel the winter blues in your soul—you also show them in your eyes. According to a recent study conducted by New York-based AMA Laboratories, **winter ages a woman's eyes by almost five years.** During clinical trials on behalf of British cosmetics Adonia Organics, researchers studied the eyes of 5,000 women aged between 27 and 60 for an entire year and concluded that 82 per cent of women suffer from dark circles and puffy eyes during the winter compared to 38 per cent in summer. As the London edition of *Marie Claire* magazine reports,

they found that the lack of sunlight in winter makes the skin paler, emphasising the bags under the eyes. The problem is exacerbated by a higher level of fatigue during the winter owing to a lower level of Vitamin D, which is generated in sunlight and is directly linked to the body's production of 'feel-good' chemical serotonin. "It might not be wrinkles or grey hair that ages you most, but dark circles under your eyes," says researcher Dr Mark Binette. "A lack of vitamins D and K can lead to dark and puffy eyes and can age a woman by 4.7 years."



# Lobe JOB



## Potion from Punjab

**I**t is perhaps poetic justice that the state that introduced the rest of India to many forms of excess will now give us a way to wipe some of it off! The University Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (UIPS), a part of Punjab University in Chandigarh, claims to have developed a **formulation to tackle the ageing process using green tea, sesame oil and turmeric extracts**. As *The Indian Express* reports, the team worked on three molecules: sesamol (from sesame oil), curcumin (from turmeric) and green tea extract. Fol-

lowing six years of trials on mice, they believe their product offers better results than other cosmetic products available. Their research has already been accepted and published in US-based research journal *Rejuvenation Research*. "If marketed well, it will certainly be a solution for anti-ageing cosmetic products and even replace Botox treatment, which is so popular in India today," claims lead investigator Prof. Indu Pal Kaur. UIPS has applied for a patent with the Indian Patent Application (IPA) for the product.

### MEET THE MULBERRY, AGAIN:

**ACCORDING TO AMERICAN RESEARCHERS, THE MULBERRY IS PACKED WITH ANTI-AGEING PROPERTIES THAT COULD GIVE SKIN BACK ITS YOUTHFUL BLOOM AND EVEN REDUCE THE ONSET OF WRINKLES AND GREY HAIR. THAT'S BECAUSE IT CONTAINS MORE THAN TWICE AS MANY ANTIOXIDANTS AS ORANGE AND CRANBERRY JUICE, OR A HANDFUL OF BLUEBERRIES.**



**I**t's not just your breasts that sag and droop—your earlobes too are forced to bow to gravity over time. But now there are ways to perk them right back up. If you're brave enough to go under the knife, there's the **earlobe nip and tick**, a simple operation to reshape the earlobe to a better proportion that was lauded at the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (BAAPS) conference held in November. And as London newspaper *Daily Mail* tells us, non-surgical ear treatments are also becoming increasingly popular, such as radio-frequency energy to tighten up the skin; reshaping using a special machine that evaporates the tissue; and plumping with a bit of filler.



# For touch-me-nots

There may be a bounty of anti-ageing products on the market but most are packed with strong ingredients—collagen-building retinoids, Vitamin A derivatives, exfoliating alpha and beta hydroxy acids, fragrance—that can inflame skin that is not too hardy. Fortunately, there has been a rash of **new products for sensitive skin**. “Sensitive skins have a weak and thin barrier, which means irritating substances can penetrate them more easily,” dermatologist Dr Benedetta Brazzini of The London

Medical Centre tells media. “If you use a product that the skin can’t tolerate, the cells react by secreting molecules called cytokines, which act to stimulate the inflammation process. This results in redness, itching and burning. The new products available come boosted with less irritating yet effective anti-ageing ingredients that focus on strengthening the fragile skin barrier, while building collagen and rejuvenating the complexion.” Here are her picks of the pack:

## **Nurture Replenish Facial Wash:**

Contains borage oil to restore the skin’s barrier, lavender oil to soothe, and soybean and red clover extracts to stimulate collagen production; priced at £ 6.45 (about ₹ 550); go to [nurtureskincare.co.uk](http://nurtureskincare.co.uk)



**Aveeno Positively Radiant Daily Exfoliating Cleanser:** Smooth micro beads gently slough away dead cells, while soy extract improves radiance and evens out skin tone; priced at £ 5.99 (about ₹ 500); go to [boots.com](http://boots.com)



**Perricone MD Hypoallergenic Firming Eye Cream:** Tackles crow’s feet,

dark circles and loss of firmness with olive polyphenols (from the leaf and fruit of olives); priced at £ 50 (about ₹ 4,200); go to [perriconemd.co.uk](http://perriconemd.co.uk)



**Origins Plantscription Anti-Ageing Serum:** Contains a bark extract that mimics prescription retinoid — without the irritation; priced at £ 45 (about ₹ 3,700); go to [origins.co.uk](http://origins.co.uk)



**Elure Advanced Skin Lightening Lotion:** A mushroom-derived enzyme called melanozyme attacks the melanin on the skin’s surface; priced at £ 105 (about ₹ 8,700); go to [urban-retreat.co.uk](http://urban-retreat.co.uk)



**Pukka Ayurveda Firming Face Oil:** Contains organic oils of starflower and rosehip to plump the complexion, and arnica and neroli to repair and rejuvenate; priced at £ 38 (about ₹ 3,200); go to [pukkaherbs.com](http://pukkaherbs.com)



**Olay Total Effects Sensitive:** Niacinamide and pro-vitamin B5 repair and strengthen the skin; priced at £ 14.29 (about ₹ 1,200 ); go to [boots.com](http://boots.com)

**Manuka Doctor Api Nourish Rejuvenating Face Mask:** Contains Manuka honey and avocado oil to hydrate and soothe, and purified bee venom that stimulates cell renewal and collagen growth; priced at £ 49.99 (about ₹ 4,200); go to [hollandandbarrett.com](http://hollandandbarrett.com)



## Winter warmth

**T**alk about Santa in disguise. After redefining speed in the capital, The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is now adding shelter to its mandate. This winter, the DMRC opened a unique ‘old age winter home’ in Govindpuri, a resettlement colony in south Delhi surrounded by a host of swank colonies. Run in association with NGO HelpAge India, the home, which can accommodate 45 to 50 male silvers, provides necessities such as beds, pillows and blankets as well as water dispensers, and simple crockery and cutlery; serves three meals a day; and offers basic medical assistance to residents. The home will remain open till 31 March.

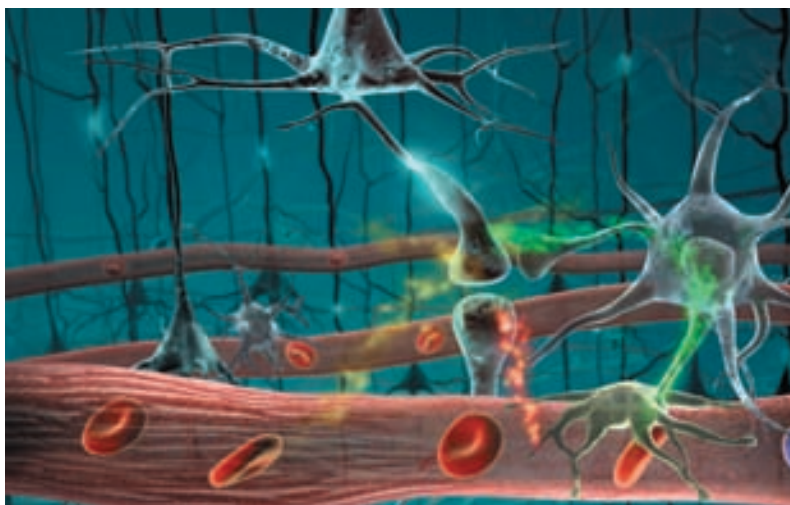


## IMMUNITY INTERVENTION

**H**ow does ageing affect the immune system? A new research project with a £3.6 million price tag—led by scientists at Cambridgeshire-based Babraham Institute and University of Cambridge’s MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology—attempts to get the answer. The project is being funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC). According to a media release by the BBSRC on its website ([www.bbsrc.ac.uk](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk)), the team hopes

these cells and how the process changes as the mice get older.

“Genes produce messages that tell cells how to behave, but they are written in a code,” says Dr Martin Turner of the Babraham Institute. “For a cell to be able to read the instructions, the message needs to be rewritten in a format that the cell can understand; this requires a series of intermediaries. It’s like the process of producing a news report. The same event can be reported dif-



to **shed light on the mechanism that controls cells in our immune system.** With age, our lymphocytes (a type of white blood cells) become progressively inactive, thus reducing the effectiveness of our immune systems. Working on mice, the team hopes to reveal how messages encoded in genes are delivered to

ferently because of the decisions of the journalists along the way. This is what happens in a cell. The same gene can result in a different message depending on the intermediaries along the way.” The team believes this project will help determine the process that controls the behaviour of lymphocytes as animals age.

# 225

**THAT’S THE NUMBER OF OLD AGE HOMES IN GUJARAT, ACCORDING TO A STUDY BY THE MANAV JYOT PUBLIC CHARITABLE TRUST.**

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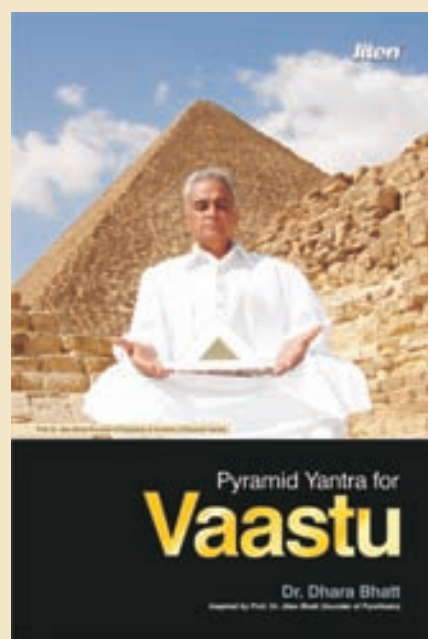
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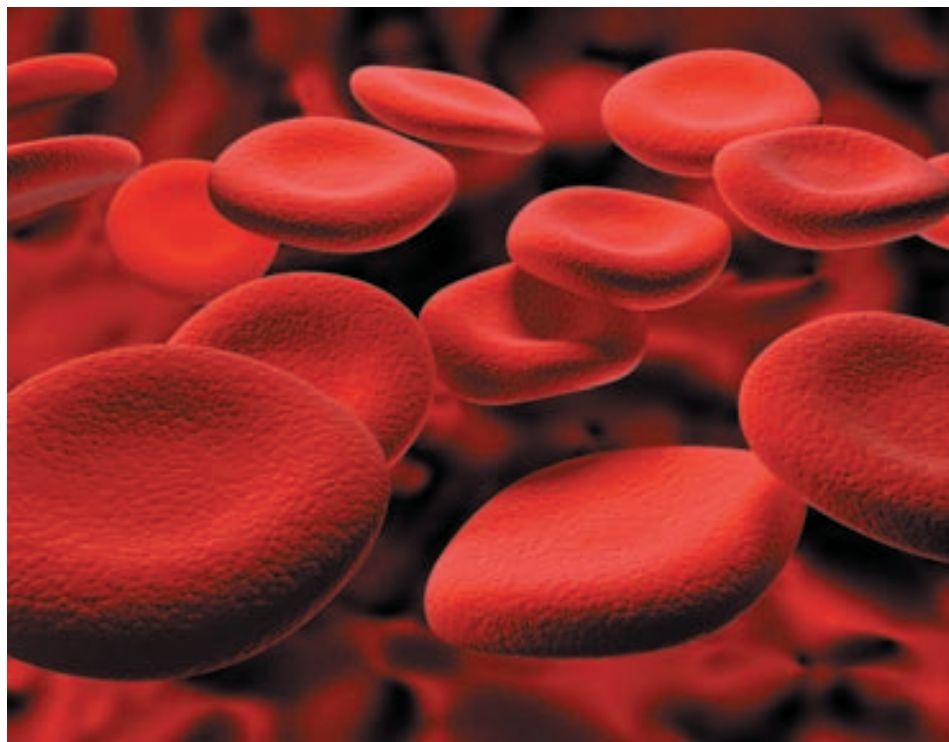
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# New blood from old

There has to be something pretty special about you if you've lived oh-so-long. Recognising this, researchers from Keio University in Japan have **created induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) from the blood of people aged 110 or older.** (iPS cells taken from human skin cells or other somatic cells can transform into any kind of organ or tissue and can reproduce indefinitely.) As news agency Reuters reports, there are over 47,000 centenarians in Japan but only about 60 have 'superlongevity' (over 110 years old). As people with superlongevity are less susceptible to hardening of the arteries and cancer, the research team predicts their cells may have a stronger defence mechanism against illness than those of ordinary people. Using the iPS generated from their blood, they plan to create cells of veins, cardiac muscle and nerves and examine their proliferation capabilities,



ties, ability to recover from injuries, tolerance for stress and speed of ageing. "We may be able to help prevent many age-related diseases and promote the development of new medi-

cine," says study leader Nobuyoshi Hirose. "Further, the analysis of the genome of people with superlongevity will help clarify the genetic factors behind a long life."

# The worm of an idea



This tiny yet shudder-inducing parasite may actually be worth its weight in gold. After successfully prolonging its life six-fold in the laboratory, scientists at the Hillblom Centre for the Biology of Ageing in San Francisco believe the icky **roundworm may hold the key to longevity.** The lifespan of a typical roundworm is miniscule, just a fortnight, but the team managed to breed roundworms that lived 84 days, or 480 years in human terms. The method: manipulation of a particular gene known as daf-2, which is also present in humans. "You have something you never thought was possible," team leader Cynthia Kenyon announced in a media release. "These worms should be dead, a long time ago. But they're not dead. They're moving. They're young. As a result of this study, youth-boosting drugs could be available within 15 years."





## Healthier at 100

**T**his study may well surprise you, as it did us: **centenarians are often healthier than younger silvers.** According to researchers at the UK chapter of the International Longevity Centre (ILC-UK), genetic advantages and lifestyle adaptation have combined to ensure that most centenarians in the UK—a rapidly growing breed—actually enjoy better health than other groups of older people, without many of the conditions that tend to be associated with old age. “The study shows that our centenarians are taking very good care of themselves,” David Sinclair, assistant director of policy and communications at ILC-UK, tells website [www.netdoctor.co.uk](http://www.netdoctor.co.uk). “But the government must look after them too. With significant growth in the numbers of centenarians ahead, it is vital that our efforts are focused on understanding how we support and deliver improvements in quality of life for the oldest old.”

## The HIV experience

**A**IDS may be a universal worldwide disease but a person’s experience with ageing with HIV still remains uniquely individual. According to a study conducted at the University of Exeter in the UK, the **attitudes of older HIV-positive gay men towards ageing are affected by the period of time since diagnosis and their personal experiences with the epidemic.** The team interviewed 10 HIV-positive gay men between the ages of 52 and 78; while all of them wished to be seen as empowered and well-adjusted, there were clear differences in attitude depending on the time they were diagnosed.

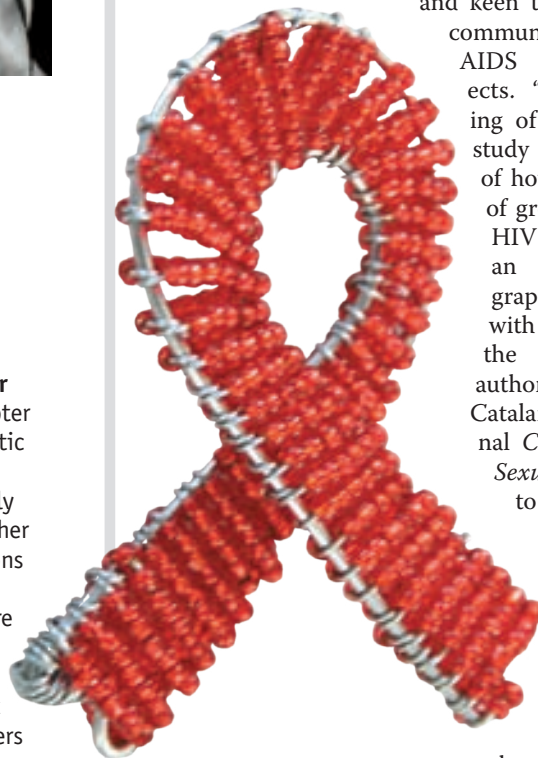
For instance, people diagnosed before the advent of effective therapies in 1996 were generally more fearful about their health and finances and prone to withdrawing into a shell and bemoaning their lot in life. By contrast, those diagnosed after 1996 were

more optimistic and hopeful, and keen to be involved in community activities and

AIDS awareness projects. “The main finding of this exploratory study is an illustration of how the experience of growing older with HIV is influenced by an individual’s biographic relationship with the history of the epidemic,” write authors G Owen and J Catalan in online journal *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. “Attitudes

to ageing were particularly influenced by the lived experience of HIV on personal health, emotional proximity to AIDS-related bereavements,

and an individual’s narrative interpretation of the history of the epidemic.”





# Gild your life

**A** plush community lifestyle solution—that's the calling card of **The Golden Estate, a residential complex for silvers**. Inspired by the Indian joint family concept, where residents enjoy the social and financial benefits of living and sharing community spaces while maintaining their privacy within individual units as well as the traditional *mohalla*, the developer UCC Care Pvt Ltd has created multiple blocks of residential units that comprise suites (a separate living area and bedroom) and studios (a combined sitting and sleeping area). All spaces have been designed using elderly-friendly materials and specifications and all units are equipped with amenities that include furniture and soft furnishings as well as a TV and DTH connection, split air-conditioner, wireless Internet, intercom with direct telephone line and emergency 'call points'. Other highlights include sumptuous meals (prepared under nutritional advisory); an indoor games area, entertainment area, wellness centre, gym, library, business centre and, most important, 24-hour in-house medical support.

Interested? You need to be at least 55 years of age and not be severely handicapped or suffering from any chronic diseases. The Golden Estate offers a 'long-term stay' agreement model, where the resident deposits a fixed (and one-time) amount as security against allotment of a living unit; 75 per cent of this is fully refundable. The resident then pays monthly charges calculated on an 'actual cost



basis' for the use of services and facilities. For more details, contact UCC Care Pvt. Ltd., Suite No 902 & 903, DLF Tower A, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi-25, or go to [www.thegoldenestate.com](http://www.thegoldenestate.com)



**Spread the warmth.** New Delhi-based Agewell Foundation's winter campaign seeks to help over 100,000 destitute silvers across Delhi & the NCR by collecting woollens for them. Do your bit—contact Agewell Foundation to find a collection centre near you. Tel: 011-29836486, 29840484. Email: [agewellfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:agewellfoundation@gmail.com). If you don't live in Delhi, why not start your own collection drive?



## Then: Old Magazines Now: Pen Holder

Don't know what to do with old magazines? Turn them into a striking pen holder. Lay the page of a magazine, colourful side down, on a table and place a long pencil or knitting needle on the torn edge of the paper. Apply a small amount of glue onto the page, being careful not to glue the pencil or knitting needle. Begin rolling the paper away from you; when you reach halfway, glue the other half of the paper. Keep pressing the paper as you roll, to form a strong and sturdy cylindrical roll of paper. Roll up about 20 pages. Now, cut off the top of a plastic 2-litre soda bottle depending on the size of pencil holder you want. Cut the paper rolls according to the size of the bottle bottom. Cover the bottom of a bottle with paper. Then, apply a coat of glue onto it and start sticking the paper rolls around it, making sure they are straight. Let it dry and voila... your pen holder is ready!



### FACTS

- » The amount of wood and paper we throw away each year is enough to heat 50 million homes for 20 years. The average household throws away 13,000 separate pieces of paper each year. Most is packaging and junk mail.
- » Each tonne (2,000 pounds) of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, three cubic yards of landfill space, 4,000 kw of energy and 7,000 gallons of water. This represents 64 per cent energy saving, 58 per cent water saving, and 60 pounds less of air pollution.
- » Magazines are 100 per cent recyclable.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. INSTEAD OF CUTTING THE BOTTLE AND PAPER ROLLS TO THE SIZE OF A PENCIL, KEEP THEM LONGER TO MAKE A FLOWER VASE. IT WILL BE A WATERTIGHT VASE, WHICH WILL MAKE IT EXCELLENT FOR FRESH FLOWERS TOO.
2. CUTTING THE LEFTOVER MAGAZINE PAGES INTO COLOURFUL PETALS AND STICKING THEM ON TO ONE OF THE PAPER ROLLS WILL MAKE A NICE PAPER FLOWER FOR YOUR PAPER VASE.

Haresh Patel



# Twice as lucky

Silvers from across the country are battling for love a second time

Speed dating may sound a tad unconventional for someone in their 60s but isn't love all about taking your chances? So, at a first-of-its-kind meet in India, an astonishing 320 senior men and women from across the country turned up for a 'Live-in Sammelan' in Ahmedabad recently.

They arrived dressed in their classiest best—the women in their finest make-up and expensive saris, and the men in blazers and suits. Most participants were widowers and divorcees, who converged at the Mehdi Nawaz Jung Hall to boldly give love a second chance.

Many of these silvers were accompanied by sons and daughters and other relatives, and were looking for either a bride or groom or a live-in relationship. The man playing Cupid was 62 year-old Natubhai Patel, founder of the Vina Mulya Amulya Sewa, a social service NGO. An old hand at matchmaking, Patel has been running a marriage bureau for nine years. But speed-dating is a first. "If things don't work between the couple, parting ways is easier this way," he explains.

As the silvers took their seats, an air of anticipation filled the air. Many were nervous, others nonchalant, while some a little bashful. Most participants were not expecting a match made in heaven but looking for companionship. Like the oldest, 78 year-old Prabhakar Rawal, who came all the way from Veraval in Saurashtra. "I simply say 'why not?' to people who scoff at me and wonder why I would want a live-in relationship at this age."



## THE LUCKY SEVEN

Among the seven new 'live-in' couples is 60 year-old Natu Thakkar, who runs a rice mill on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, and found a partner in Jyotsna Dave, 53. "I was on the lookout for someone with whom I could spend the rest of my life," he says. "Sex is not a consideration at my age." For his part, Jeetendra Brahmbhatt, 62, a widower from Ahmedabad, chose 52 year-old Ami Pandya, a divorcee. Brahmbhatt, a corporate consultant, says he was longing for a partner ever since his wife died many years ago. "Both my children and I are well settled. Feeling, sharing and connecting with a person are important."

*The seven couples are looking forward to a picnic to picturesque Rajpipla, on the banks of the Narmada River in South Gujarat*

Their priorities vary. Some wanted a "secure future"; a large number of men said their partner should be able to "take care of the home" while many a nervous woman said she was looking for a "true gentleman who is financially stable". Suddenly, a hushed silence descended on the hall as the silvers took centre-stage one by one. Each participant wore a numbered badge and waited while the stage manager read out their profile. During the introductions, members of the audience mentally checked off potential matches and frantically jotted down telephone numbers. Once the introductions were over, prospective matches met each other—but only for five minutes. It's speed dating, remember? "Some took a decision quickly while others opted to wait and watch," says Patel, who adds that a large number of participants were from smaller towns and villages in Gujarat.

"Many of these elders are lonely as their children have settled abroad. We had just two rules: the participants had to be financially secure and should have the consent of their children, if any," Patel explains, adding that the participants were from diverse backgrounds, including businessmen, farmers, teachers, journalists, consultants and singers. There were even eight NRIs, seven male and one woman, who had flown in from the US on behalf of her NRI sister!

There were no stars in Asha Pandya's eyes but the 51 year-old divorcee from Ahmedabad said she was looking for a partner who loved life like she does. "I like going to the movies, eating out and



travelling,” she explained. “A live-in relationship would give me the time and space to check out if the relationship is going to work. Loneliness was a big issue with me after my only daughter’s marriage.” Pandya was an exception among the 70-odd women as most of the others preferred marriage over a live-in arrangement. Interestingly, all the women from Mumbai categorically insisted their partners would have to live with them in Mumbai only!

As for the male participants, well, most of them were on the look-out for live-in partners. Like Ramesh Shah, a widower from Bengaluru, who was “pestered” by his children to find a companion so that he could live a more “complete life”. Then, there’s 62 year-old G R Monga, an academician from Salchar in Assam, who was here to find “a good, loving companion” as he has been living alone for 15 years. And Alpesh Parikh, 62, a retired bank officer, who revealed, “I live with my son and daughter-in-law, and if I find the right lady, I would like to move out.”

At the end of the day-long event, a visibly tired but satisfied Patel says the success of the meet has encouraged him to plan similar events in five other cities across India. “Next, Bhopal in February. This will be followed by Pune, New Delhi, Kolkata and Mumbai.” Patel says even he is surprised at the enthusiasm for live-in partners among silvers. “The concept may be new to India but silvers are opening up to it. These people are genuinely interested in it, for many reasons,” he muses. “Marriage raises the prospect of legal wrangles and disputes pertaining to succession. People are also apprehensive of getting stuck with an incompatible partner at this age, and the accompanying social and legal complications.” As if to prove his point, he says that of the 3,000-odd applications for a partner, over 1,000 preferred a live-in relationship. Live and let live-in?

—Nayeem Qadri

# More sweet talk!



Harmony for Silvers Foundation organised two more in its series of **Diabetes Health Talks—Meethi Baatein (Sweet Talk)**—in association with diversified global healthcare provider sanofi-aventis in Hyderabad (*above*) on 29 November and Kolkata (*below*) on 6 December. Earlier events were held in Mumbai and New Delhi. The next event will be held in Chennai in January. **To be a part of it, email us at [contact.us@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.us@harmonyindia.org)**





# Striking end

Alzheimer's disease accounts for 50-70 per cent of cases of dementia.

According to the World Health Organisation, there are currently about 18 million people worldwide with Alzheimer's. This figure is projected to nearly double by 2025 to 34 million.

Currently, over 50 per cent of people with Alzheimer's disease live in developing countries; by 2025, this will go up to over 70 per cent.

India is being projected as the capital of Alzheimer's disease and dementia by the year 2030.

**R**eleased by Pune-based Chaitanya Mental Healthcare Centre (CHMC), ***Dementia India Report 2010 reveals some harsh realities*** about our ageing population. According to the study, 20 per cent of people in the 75-84 age bracket and 3 per cent of the 65-75 age group suffer from Alzheimer's. This works out to about 500,000 people over the age of 60. Unfortunately, not much has been done in terms of awareness and preventive measures. Experts claim that early detection, access to treatment and trained family care are of great significance and yet Pune, where the study was conducted, has just two Alzheimer's support centres: a memory clinic at Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital and the CHMC residential treatment centre in Katraj with 25 patients. "The number of Alzheimer's patients is on a steady rise," acknowledges Dr Himani Kulkar-

ni, Alzheimer's specialist at Pune Hospital. "Though the city has two support centres, we still do not have a proper social structure and staff to meet patients' needs, which are different from others." Telling us about the National Conference for Alzheimer's held in the first week of December 2011, where the importance of rehabilitation centres was emphasised, Dr Kulkarni adds, "Expenses for each patient being admitted to these centres are huge. In a country like India, where the family structure is still intact, one could train family members on how to take care of Alzheimer's patients." The conference, she rues, was poorly attended by central, state and civic representatives. With India being projected as the capital of Alzheimer's and dementia by 2030, there is an urgent need for awareness and remedial immediate steps to address this grey area, she concludes.



# Home remedies

According to a study by American journal *Archives of Internal Medicine*, **simple activities like climbing stairs and folding clothes can help prevent dementia and cognitive disorders.** Researchers



divided 197 silvers with an average age of 75 into three groups based on daily energy expenditure minus the amount the body needs at rest. The most active group burnt about 1,000 calories a day and was 91 per cent less likely to experience cognitive decline after five years compared to the least active group. Dr Annu Aggarwal, consultant neurologist at Mumbai-based Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and Research Institute, says this study applies to Indians too. "Any cardiovascular exercise that includes at least 20 minutes three to five days a week can keep your heart healthy and keeps dementia at bay," she says. Forget vigorous exercise, even walking or standing increases heart rate, makes your blood vessels pump blood and burns calories—any activity, really, apart from sitting still, or sleeping.



**APOLLO HOSPITALS IN DELHI HAS LAUNCHED A TREATMENT KNOWN AS AUTOLOGOUS CHONDROCYTE IMPLANTATION (ACI) FOR KNEE DAMAGE. PRACTISED AT MEDICAL CENTRES ACROSS THE WORLD, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME ACI WILL BE USED IN INDIA.**

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Dignity for the aged

# IN VERSE

“Let one be recognised and remembered for posterity by one’s work.” **Ramchandra Shankar Nagarkar**, 79, lives his life by this motto. The septuagenarian retired as a subeditor for the *Bharatiya Sanskruti Kosh* in Pune; during his tenure, he also compiled 10 volumes of cultural encyclopaedias. He used his working years as a journalist to study Saint Literature. He realised then that though there were numerous couplets in various religious books, there was no single compilation of five of Maharashtra’s most significant saint-poets: Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Ramdas, Eknath and Namdeo. He set out to do just that in 1990. His bachelor’s with Marathi and Sanskrit and vast experience came in handy while writing the *Sant Subhashit Kosh* or encyclopaedia of saints’ couplets. It took him two decades to write this *kosh* (treasury). This 500-page encyclopaedia in Marathi (with a 50-page introduction) consists of 5,147 couplets with their meanings and alphabetical classifications. It was published in August 2011 and is winning him considerable acclaim. “The obvious difficulty one would face in such a daunting endeavour is to source books on the subject. I have a personal collection of 10,000 books from over 50 years. My wife Kusum and elder daughter Vidya helped me select the couplets for the final volume,” says Nagarkar, whose family in Pandharpur was involved in *seva* (service) for Lord Vithoba and reading scriptures. “It was a part of my *gharana*. But I felt that I should not just read but write and spread the knowledge.” At present, Nagarkar is working on a handwritten *gatha* (story) of Sant Tukaram and wants to reintroduce it in Marathi.

—*Khursheed Dinshaw*



Hemant Patil

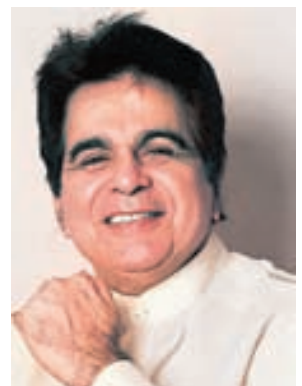
## MILESTONES

● On 19 November, on the occasion of late prime minister Indira Gandhi’s 94<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary, social activist **Ela Ben Bhatt** (right), the face of SEWA, was selected for the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development 2011. Bhatt is 78.



Harmony Archives

● Legendary actor **Dilip Kumar** (right), astrophysicist **Jayant Narlikar**, scholar **Mohammad Hanif Khan Shastri** and BJP leader **Murli Manohar Joshi** were conferred with the 14th SIES Chandrasekarendra Saraswati National Eminence Award on 9 December. The award is in the memory of the eminent seer who died in 1994.





## BIRTHDAYS

● Comedian par excellence **Asrani** (right) turns 72 on 1 January.

● American actor, director and screen-writer **Diane Keaton** turns 66 on 5 January.



● British actor **Rowan Atkinson** of 'Mr Bean' fame turns 57 on 6 January.

● **Javed Akhtar** (left), who has brought classicism to contemporary lyrics, turns 67 on 17 January.

● Talk show queen **Oprah Winfrey** turns 58 on 29 January.



## OVERHEARD

"It's easier to be a European actress than an American actress as far as age is concerned. I think it's difficult to have a career in the States because the appeal for youth is so intense and it's very difficult for an actress to grow older in American cinemas."

*French actor Catherine Deneuve, 68, to Paris Match magazine*

## IN PASSING



● The sarangi lost its foremost devotee with the passing of **Ustad Sultan Khan** (left). He succumbed to kidney failure on 27 November. He was 75.

● Known simply as 'The Voice', the king of voiceover and advertising **Partap Sharma** succumbed to a long

illness on 30 November. Sharma, who was also a playwright and actor, was 72.

● The word 'ever-green' was tailor-made for **Dev Anand** (right). The actor-filmmaker passed away in London on 4 December. He was 88.

● No-nonsense cosmopolitan cartoonist **Mario Miranda** died in his sleep on 11 December. He was 85.




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### IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

When I retired in March this year, I decided to take stock of my life and realised I had so much to be grateful for. I used to teach physical education at St. Louis Convent in Mumbai and, after retirement, I have been focusing on my first love: the healing arts.

Life deals all of us some tough blows but I believe it's important to pick oneself up and look ahead. My husband, who was in the merchant navy, sank with his ship more than 25 years ago and left me three lovely daughters to raise on my own. Today, all my girls are well educated and settled abroad.

I learnt yoga so I could treat my daughter who fell ill frequently. Doctor's bills were unaffordable and yoga healed her. I went on to become a yoga instructor at school while also taking courses in spirituality. I believe in this healing art so much that I attended a yoga workshop in Dubai

#### Lata Patney: a measure of healing

recently and now I have my home brimming with housewives, senior citizens and youngsters and even new mothers, to whom I teach this alternative system of healing. My interest in healing also encouraged me to learn reiki, naturopathy and meditation, and I offer lifestyle counseling for better health. Apart from this, I enjoy writing and I found a great platform in the school magazine, where I would write on subjects like children, family relationships, family values and parenting.

Another lesson I've learnt is to laugh at life, even when you have to take it on the chin. I didn't dream I would get 'official recognition' for this philosophy! This was more than a decade ago, when I bagged the prize for Best Laughter (Women) by the Laughter Club. Fortunately, I am a people person and love helping people feel better through yoga and other alternative therapies—like a 31 year-old mother-of-two I treated. She was very weak and looked haggard



all the time. After treating her for six months, she says she's much better and even feels positive about life. I guess it's because I've been through so much myself that I can empathise with others and love nothing more than to help ease their pain.

All this gives me special energy and I am proud to say that I can skip, run and jump and, yes, I believe that life starts now, at the age of 61.

—Lata Patney, Mumbai

## WING AND A PRAYER

I had always dreamt of a career as an airhostess but my parents wouldn't hear of it. Then I met my dear husband, Dinky, who flew transport aircraft for the Indian Air Force and my own life took wing. His love for music and dancing complimented my passion for the same, and the fact that he was a pilot tilted the scales in his favor—and the fact that he is also a wonderful caring human being!

While in the Air Force, we had a wonderful life. There were times when we had no roof, half a room and no beds but there was always fun and laughter. And we thrived on it. I had no idea then but the get-togethers of alumni of Dinky's pilot's course were to open a new door in our lives. The first one took place in Delhi in 1981, to celebrate the silver jubilee of the course. We had such a blast meeting all the people with whom we had spent so many happy times together that we wanted more.

So ever since then, there's been a get-together in a different city every single year. Two Air Force stalwarts based in Delhi take the initiative and emails and phone calls criss-cross for months; there's always a local contact to make sure the networking is on course. The get-togethers themselves include loads of sightseeing, binges on local food and finally the gala party—the Reunion Dinner—where those who are no more are remembered before the party begins. Those who cannot make it for the entire occasion make it a point to attend the gala dinner, at least. At the end of it all, everyone goes their own way for another year, feeling absolutely rejuvenated.

The best part for me, though, is meeting people with whom we have shared so much. There's a special 'we' feeling that's



**Merlyn Fialho is having a blast with husband Dinky**

hard to describe. We attend them for the warmth and caring we have always shared with Dinky's course mates and their wives over the years.

Now my health is not what it used to be but Dinky and I wouldn't miss these gatherings for anything in the world. I am 69 now and my ailments have restricted my mobility—I have severe arthritis and I have a problem with the curvature of my spine owing to obesity—and I cannot walk unless I use a stick for support. But I love to dance and you will still find me on the dance floor for at least one number. Of course, my stick is always at arm's length!

Next year, we are supposed to meet in Thailand! God willing, Dinky and I will be there.

—Merlyn Fialho, Hyderabad

# CHAMPIONS AGAINST DIABETES.

Affecting more than 50 million Indians, Diabetes has gained epidemic proportions in India. This disease alters the lives of all age groups, from young children to senior citizens. Worse still is the fact that not only does Diabetes affect the patients, but it also has a major impact on the families and friends of these patients. Many diabetics feel that once they have been diagnosed, life is a downhill battle and all is lost. But our Champs have proved this wrong.

These spirited individuals have not only demonstrated that Diabetes can be controlled and life can continue to be fulfilling, but are also 'exceptional champs' because they have inspired and motivated others to manage their Diabetes well.

From Hyderabad, Sanofi brings to you its 'Champs' - Mr. Thakur Uday Singh, Mr. Murali Mohan. S, Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Shareef, Mr. N. Veeresh and Ms. N. Kanaka Durga, who have proved that Diabetes is a manageable condition. Their 'never say die' attitude has earned them the title of a 'Champ' at the 'I Am A Champ' Awards - India's first National Diabetes Awards instituted by Sanofi, to celebrate Diabetes control.



Our first 'Champ', 48 year old Mr. Thakur Uday Singh, was, like every other diabetic, shocked to know about his diagnosis and, at the time, felt as if his life



had come to a complete halt. But, after witnessing a few members of his family already suffering from the disease, he decided to take it head-on, and not let it hamper his spirit.

He says that a regular session of yoga, brisk walks, eating moderately at regular intervals, checking blood sugar levels regularly and taking medication is his strategy to take control of his Diabetes. Today he feels much more confident and has erased his fear of Diabetes.

When he was told that he was selected a 'Champ', he was ecstatic on being given a platform to share his views and experience. His advice to other patients is, "One should take care of Diabetes right from the start. Do not ignore any symptoms. Otherwise the illness will take over you."

Our second 'Champ', Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Shareef, has been a diabetic for the past



11 years. During the initial phases of his disease, he lacked awareness, which was a great cause of worry for him. He decided to educate himself, in order to help him manage his disease better. Prior to being diagnosed, Mr. Shareef admits that he led a very erratic lifestyle, by not eating and sleeping on time. However, soon after he realised the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and altered it to remain on top of his game.

"I believe that in order to tackle a problem, one needs to have confidence to face it in the first place. Hence I educated myself about Diabetes. I chose a good doctor and following his instructions, I began to lead a much more controlled lifestyle."

While talking about his inspiration, he says,

"Even after being a diabetic, my good health inspires me to control Diabetes on a daily basis! Diabetes is not a killer disease. People who think so are definitely wrong. My only message to fellow diabetics is to always keep your sugar level in normal range. That's the only way one can take control of Diabetes."





Diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes over 4 years ago, 28 year old Mr. Murali Mohan. S, is our third 'Champ'. When initially diagnosed, he was not sure how to react to such major news. Murali

tells us that accepting the diagnosis was very difficult for him as he was the only person in the history of his family who had been diagnosed with this condition. However, his optimistic attitude led him to come to terms with it. His strategy towards controlling Diabetes was to first confide in a doctor. He says, "Only by confiding in a doctor will one be able to bust the myths surrounding Diabetes and understand the care and medication required. It's also important that diabetics visit a counselor, so that they can come to terms with his/her diagnosis and get habituated to tiny modifications that will bring about a change in their life. This won't just bring about a change in their health, but will also give them a lot of positive energy!"

He believes that controlling Diabetes is a lifelong challenge. "It doesn't take a day or a month to control it. Temptations come my way everyday, but my consistent sugar levels make the effort and abstinence worth it."

**His message to fellow diabetics is, "Accept it! Know the conditions and challenges of Diabetes. And maintain it by keeping a tension-free mind and a controlled lifestyle."**

Our next 'Champ', Mr. N. Veeresh was extremely disappointed when he received his diagnosis. "When I came to know, I was in tears, because it was very unexpected. I always felt active, but this diagnosis proved to be a shocker to me."



**Post Diabetes, his life changed drastically.**

**"My friends would poke fun at me and I would constantly stress about it. So much so, that I was unable to focus on work. But then, I decided to stop being the problem – and be the solution instead. I looked at my relatives, who were managing their Diabetes, and made up my mind to lead a healthy life and keep sugar levels under check."**

Mr. Veeresh concentrated on a regular diet and exercise as a strategy to get his life back on track. "I visited my doctor

regularly for check ups and ensured that I would follow every piece of advice he gave me."

Today as a 'Champ', Mr. Veeresh feels elated.

"I am very happy that I have broken the mental block that I had about Diabetes. I hope my story will inspire others to take control of their Diabetes as well. I am very proud to be a 'Champ'!"

"I love my family and they are my reason for a happy life. This was one of inspirations for being able to control my disease. I want all diabetics to know that taking control of Diabetes doesn't just help you, but your family as well."

60 year old Ms.

Kanaka Durga was diagnosed with Diabetes 26 years ago.

"I was very upset upon knowing about my diagnosis", she says.

She tells us that it was the fear and lack of knowledge of Diabetes that made her feel vulnerable.

Post her diagnosis she confided in a relative, who is a doctor. "My relative explained everything about Diabetes and gave me a strategy to control my blood sugar. Thanks to that, my fear of Diabetes decreased considerably."

Taking the advice of her doctor, she formed a diet plan and an exercise regime that didn't just lower her sugar level, but gave her the confidence to face life head on.

"It is in our hands to control Diabetes. I was very strong and with my will power and family support, I was able to manage my Diabetes."

She believes that being depressed and thinking about Diabetes will not get anyone anywhere and will not solve any problems. Rather, it would just aggravate the situation and the patient's condition.



**Her mantra towards managing her condition is, "Fear and tension should be kept aside. One should lead a peaceful life with regular check ups, exercise and a proper diet."**

Our 'Champs' show us that Diabetes is a controllable disease, and will-power, along with a positive outlook, helps you overcome any burden. Their motivation and determination makes them 'Champions'. Diabetes is a lifestyle disorder, that can be managed with a healthy diet, exercise and regular medication. Their stories inspire us, telling us that if one has the will, nothing is impossible to achieve!

# Window of opportunity

**VIMLA MEHTA, 85, DELHI**



**L**iving in Delhi's Panchsheel Park with high windows, finding ways to decorate these windows was always a tedious task. When I was 57, I went to visit my daughter Deepa in Canada. In my three year-old granddaughter Deviyani's room, I saw an Ikea blind. I loved the idea. On my return to Delhi, I got hold of a tailor and designed some blinds for myself.

My friends complimented me and asked me to get some made for them. Deepa and my son Dilip always encouraged me. They helped me design new blinds and choose the right fabric. Initially, word of mouth helped

***"I enjoy holding brainstorming sessions with my team to create new blinds"***

me get orders. Soon, Mini Goga of Taaru furniture store in Delhi's up-market Green Park started picking up my blinds for her store. She put me in touch with Fab India. She even helped me get orders for a number of guest-houses in Green Park.

When I initially moved to Delhi from Amritsar in 1966, I had opened a boutique for teenagers in partnership

with fashion designer Ritu Kumar, my mother Leela and aunt Neena. This business closed down after a long run of about 23 years, when Ritu wanted to expand into other retail formats.

With my experience of retail and encouragement from my family, I decided to open a showroom for blinds. Dilip chose the name 'Blind Love' and took the initiative to set up the



## FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

**I am a bank officer and will retire soon. I am already fluent in many national and international languages such as Hindi, Marathi, English, Gujarati, Spanish and Chinese, and am currently learning French. I want to become a translator. How should I go about it?**

A translator needs to be fluent in two or more languages and should have the ability to read, write, speak and think in a minimum of two languages. Though there's no specific educational requirement, it is an advantage to have a degree in one of the languages. Despite the profusion of opportunities, you will need to put in a lot of legwork initially. For starters, you need to contact the embassies concerned and register yourself as a translator and contact language institutes for a listing of opportunities. Other options include business organisations that require translators and websites on the Net that offer translation services. You can advertise on some sites listing the languages you wish to work in—create a profile for the site by providing your educational background and contact details. After you settle on the community that you will join, start tracking new assignments that match your ability. You can also apply to publishing companies who translate books and newspapers with regional editions. Remember that this is not a high-paying job, so money shouldn't be your focus. I would advise that you stick to one language that you excel in and not spread yourself too wide.

*—Amit Shirodkar co-owns a translation and interpretation agency, Shakti Enterprise, in Mumbai*



Anju Mohan

showroom and office in our garage in Panchsheel. We set up a factory in Khirki Gaon. My husband joined me in the venture and worked with me until his death in 2007.

Those who care for quality began to appreciate and love our products. Orders were pouring in from Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai so we decided to expand. We set up factories in Chennai and Bengaluru.

After a government ruling, the showroom in the garage was sealed about four years ago. As Dilip wanted me to move closer to his home, he chose

and furnished a shop in Nizamuddin East Market and got me a furnished house in his neighbourhood. This has worked out even better. Breakfast or dinner with my son everyday; work whenever it's convenient; loving friends and relatives...life has just panned out perfectly.

I am grateful to God for the life he has given me. Even today, I enjoy holding brainstorming sessions to create new blinds. I love my work and the freedom it gives me. I have been telling Dilip that even after I am gone, he should keep 'Blind Love' going.

*—As told to Anju Mohan*



## Perk up your appetite: Diagnose the cause behind it before acting on it

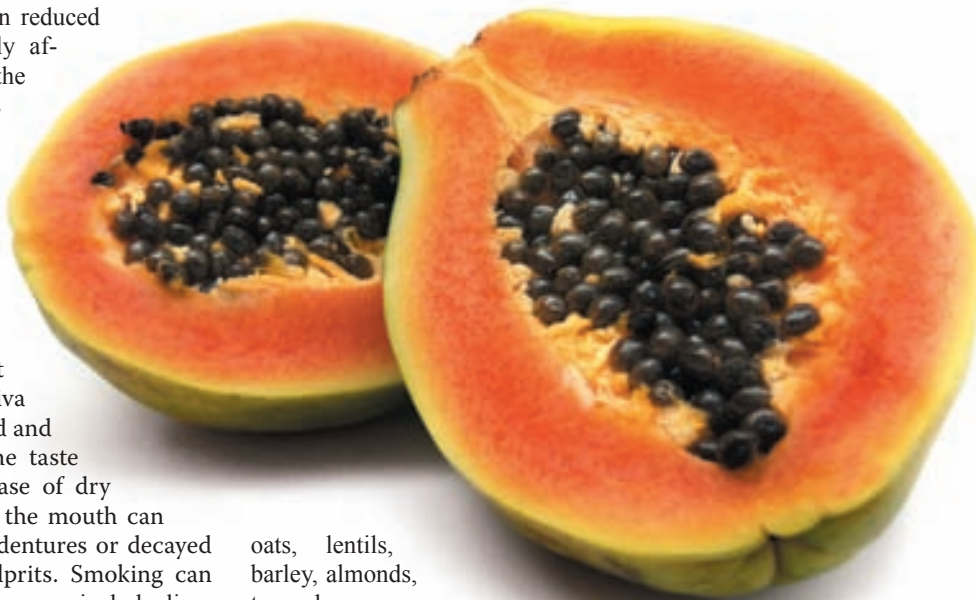
**Suddenly, food does not taste as good. I hardly enjoyed my own 70th birthday cake last month. Loss of taste has also made me lose my appetite. What can I do or add to my diet to perk up my appetite?**

With age, our taste buds seem to shrivel. Diminishing sense of taste usually starts with sweet and salty flavours, and then progresses to affect bitter and sour flavours as well. It makes food less enjoyable, resulting in reduced desire to eat and sometimes seriously affecting overall health. Very often, the cause of loss of taste is related to loss of smell, which could be disrupted by conditions that affect the lining of the nose, such as common cold or chronic rhinitis. In rare cases, it can be triggered by nerve problems.

Loss of taste could also be related to conditions afflicting teeth or saliva. Any condition that brings about dry mouth can cause difficulty, as saliva is essential for taste. Chemicals in food and drinks mix with saliva and reach the taste buds. This process is inhibited in case of dry mouth. Any type of inflammation in the mouth can also impair the taste buds. Ill-fitting dentures or decayed teeth and gums are some major culprits. Smoking can also eliminate taste. Some rare causes can include liver disease, extreme vitamin deficiency, certain drugs and medications, depression and tumours too. Depending on your case, the following suggestions might help get your appetite back on track:

**Zinc to your rescue:** The most likely cause is zinc deficiency and/or deficiency of vitamins A, B-6, and B-12, and copper. Improper levels of zinc could also cut down your desire for sweets—a boon if you are trying to lose weight. This happens because zinc maximises your sensitivity to taste, thus helping you to feel satisfied with much smaller quantities. Good sources of zinc include wheat germ, sesame seeds, liver, soybeans, sunflower seeds, egg yolk, chicken, brewer's yeast, oats, whole wheat, corn, coconut, beets, walnuts, barley, beans, avocados, peas, mangoes, millet, rice, almonds and

salmon. Apart from red, orange, yellow and purple coloured fruits and vegetables, Vitamin A can be found in cod liver oil, parsley, turnip, spinach, egg yolk, apricots and broccoli. Brewer's yeast, brown rice, whole wheat, soya beans, lentils, sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, alfalfa, salmon, wheat germ, tuna, walnuts, peas, liver, avocados, beans, cashews, peanuts, oats, chicken, banana, corn and egg yolk are good sources of Vitamin B-6. Vitamin B-12 can be found in sardines, mackerel, salmon, Swiss cheese, eggs and lamb. Wheat germ, thyme, honey, hazelnuts, walnuts, salmon, cashews, ginseng,



oats, lentils, barley, almonds, tuna, banana, avocados, coconut, brown rice, eggplant and chicken are good sources of copper.

**Get your medication reviewed:** Medicines can cause appetite or taste problems. Consult your physician for possible dietary changes.

**Drink plenty of water:** Dehydration can cause loss of appetite. Aim to drink seven to eight glasses of water every day, unless you need to restrict fluid intake.

**Keep yourself mentally and physically active:** Follow a regular exercise regime if you do not have physical restraints. Exercise helps alleviate mood and perk up appetite



at the same time. Read good books and exercise your brain with puzzles and word games.

**Make a change:** Try different menus in each meal to overcome boredom; like an omelette for dinner or veggie soup for breakfast.

**Try different flavours:** Use flavours like garlic, onions, cinnamon, cloves, ginger and turmeric to enliven your taste buds.

**Vitamin deficiency:** A nutritional deficiency of vitamins A, C or E can also cause poor appetite and troubled digestion. The elderly are most vulnerable to nutritional deficiencies, especially if their diet does not include adequate fruits and vegetables. Lemon juice with water is a very refreshing and appetite-stimulating drink. Pineapple juice is also a good choice of drink to precede a meal. In

Any condition that brings about dry mouth can cause difficulty, as saliva is essential for taste. Chemicals in food and drinks mix with saliva and reach the taste buds. This is inhibited in case of dry mouth. Any inflammation in the mouth can also impair the taste buds

addition to stimulating the appetite and providing Vitamin C, pineapple contains an enzyme called bromelain which facilitates digestion.

Here are a few other substances that help improve nutrition and revive the taste buds:

**Brewer's yeast:** Brewer's yeast contains beneficial bacteria. It is a live food that provides Vitamin B-12 for increased energy and B vitamins that stimulate the appetite. Half a teaspoon can be taken with water or fruit juice.

**Household herbs:** Household herbs like peppermint leaves, fennel seeds and ginger root awaken taste buds, improve digestion and are a quick remedy for nausea.

**Papaya fruit** and seeds also contain helpful digestive enzymes. Its leaves are used to stimulate appetite.

Following these steps will quickly and effectively increase your appetite. Make small improvements in meals and presentation to make food more appealing. With a little more thought you can gradually increase your desire to eat. In case the symptoms persist, consult your physician.



**How important is Vitamin E for an active 58 year-old woman. What should I include in my diet to get sufficient amount of Vitamin E?**

Vitamin E is the collective name for a group of fat-soluble compounds with distinct antioxidant activities. Antioxidants protect cells from free radicals. Free radicals damage cells and contribute to development of cardiovascular disease and cancer. By limiting free-radical production, Vitamin E helps prevent or delay chronic diseases linked with free radicals. It is also involved in immune function, regulation of gene expression and other metabolic processes. Vitamin E is found naturally in foods like almonds, walnuts, peanuts, wheat germ, soybean, whole grains and pulses. It will help in skin problems and menopausal complaints and benefit the cardiovascular system.

**Do canned vegetables and fruits have sufficient amount of proteins and minerals for a 70 year-old?**

From a nutritional point of view, fruits and vegetables are low in proteins, calories and fat and are important dietary sources of vitamins and minerals. They contribute substantially to fibre intake. Canned fruits and vegetables compare very well against fresh ones. Although there is some loss of Vitamin C during heat processing, canning usually results in stable levels of most essential nutrients. The amount of vitamins, minerals or fibre in canned food remains the same, even after long duration of storage. No preservatives are used in canning. Fruits may have sugar or syrup added to enhance flavour and maintain texture, so caloric value is increased. Salt is added to some vegetables and mixed foods. If you need to watch sodium and sugar intake, use them cautiously.

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



## WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

### Simply stretch... but remember not to overdo it

I am a 57 year-old man in a job that requires me to be in front of the computer for long hours. As a result, I experience acute pain in my shoulders and neck; recently the condition was diagnosed as myofascial pain syndrome (MPS). Please suggest some exercises to control this condition as well as reduce muscle stiffness.

This is a deep, aching, spreading, and sometimes sharp pain. When you rub or massage the painful area, you may feel a painful, tight band or a 'knot'. These knots are known as 'trigger points' as pressing on them can trigger more pain. This pain can be right at the knot or it may spread. For instance, pressing a trigger point at the top of the shoulder may cause pain in both the shoulders and the upper arm.

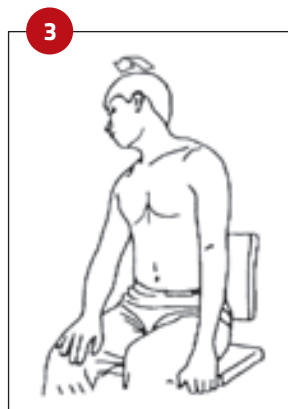
This kind of pain can have many causes. Poor posture, overuse of muscles, and injury to muscles or nearby joints can all cause this kind of pain. Sometimes, trigger points come from injuries to the spine or to the nerves supplying a muscle. This pain can involve a single muscle or many muscles. It may be present while you are active or when you are at rest. Although almost any muscle can be involved, some of the most common sites are the neck, shoulders, the head and lower back.

There are two types of treatment for it. The first, and most important, is exercise. To reduce or get rid of myofascial pain, you can stretch the painful muscle, improve your posture and restore healthy muscle use. Your physiotherapist or healthcare team at the gym can teach you

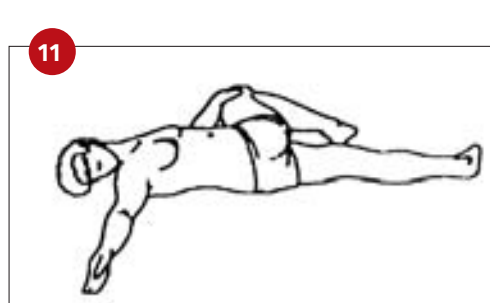
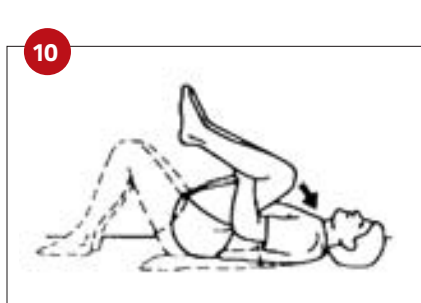
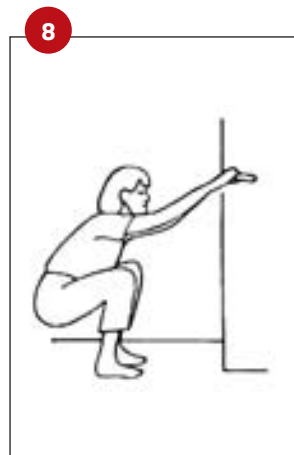
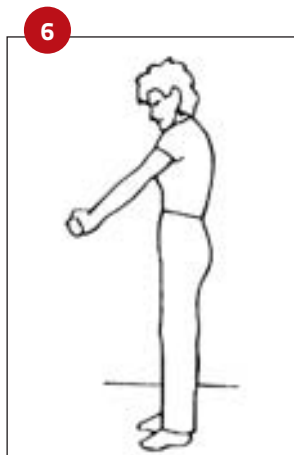
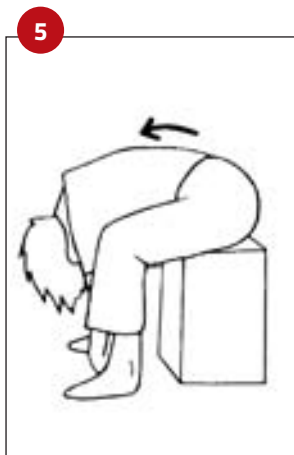
some stretches and exercises to do at home. If you keep exercising even after the pain is better, you will help prevent the problem from coming back. The second type of treatment—ice, moist heat, and massage—lessens the pain at the trigger points and can be very helpful.

During the exercises I have illustrated here, there should be a sense of pull or stretch but no pain. Move slowly and with care during these movements. When you finish a stretch, you should feel slightly better; you should not have more pain on the next day. If you feel sorer, you might have stretched with too much force or the stretch may simply not be right for you.

- 1 Sit with your hands clasped behind your head. Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch in the back of your neck. Gently pull your head further forward. Hold for about 10 seconds. Repeat three times.
- 2 Sit holding your hands together behind your back. Tilt your ear towards your shoulder and raise your chin towards the ceiling. This will stretch the other side. Repeat three times.
- 3 Sit on a chair. Hold on to the chair as shown. Lean your head and torso away from the fixed arm. Repeat three times.
- 4 Inhale. While exhaling, push your upper ribs down with your hand and lift your head away, while rotating your head towards the muscle to be stretched. Repeat three times.
- 5 Sit on a chair with your legs apart. Bend your head and torso down between your knees, round-







ing your upper body as much as possible. Hold for about 20 seconds.

**6** Stand or sit, as you prefer. Push shoulders forward, stretch the arms diagonally forward and down keeping your chin in. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds and repeat thrice.

**7** Stand and put one arm out to the side away from your body, with the elbow straight as shown. Stretch the fingers towards the floor and drop the shoulder. Gradually, stretch your head sideways away from your outstretched arm. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat three times.

**8** Stand straight facing the edge of a door holding on to its handles. Bend your knees as shown and stretch your back.

**9** Stand straight with one hand on your hip and the other straight up. Bend to the side with the opposite arm reaching overhead. Keep your pelvis in mid-position. Repeat three times.

**10** Lie with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Lift your knees towards your chest. Place your hands

behind both the knees and draw them towards your chest. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat three times.

**11** Lie on your back with one leg bent. Bring your bent knee over the other leg and push your knee against the floor with the opposite hand. Then, reach with the other arm to the opposite side looking in the same direction. You will feel your lower back and bottom stretching. Hold for about 20 seconds and relax.

#### Joint rotation

The test of this exercise is that the joint should rotate as a hinge and no clicking should take place.

- Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth.
- Guide your tongue as far back as it can go.
- Keep the tongue in that position and gently try to open your mouth.
- Avoid the movement of your lower jaw throughout.

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



## YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

# In with the new: New poses can help you learn new things

Feeling a sense of déjà vu with life? Well, lack of joy can be easily rectified, even on the mat. Learning new variations of the same poses you have done for years is an ideal way to break through the monotony of daily *sadhana* (practice). This may be very important, not just physically by encouraging involvement in your exercise, but emotionally and socially too.

Strangely, some yoga practitioners stick to the same set of practices for years. While the discipline of daily practice is commendable, it is equally important to invigorate your practice with new poses. Though even instructors are wary of experimenting with new poses, many variations of basic poses are actually rather simple, exciting, playful and easy to negotiate. In yoga, it is said (though this may be part of the hyperbole that surrounds it) that there are over 8.4 million practices—sticking to just 10 or 12 out of such an immense variety seems such a waste!

Also, learning new poses has an interesting and powerful fallout on your mind and body. At the level of the nervous system, learning anything new releases the reward neurotransmitter called dopamine. This is also a chemical messenger that, if its release is not organised, can cause attention deficit, learning disabilities, loss of cognitive ability, addictions, Parkinson's diseases, autism, even failure in co-

ordinated motion. When you appreciate this immense link between learning new things and mind-body health, it will make it easier to experiment on the mat.

The other reason for learning new yogic practices is simple: your muscles get 'bored' with a certain set of poses and stop responding. Thus, while you may be doing the moves right in an old pose, your muscles would be more engaged if you challenge yourself further. The benefits would multiply, instead of remaining static. Where you would earlier just get plain health, in the latter when you decide to experiment and learn you will get the bonus of vitality.

Another aspect of adding freshness to your practice is that muscle tone happens only when you focus on a particular muscle or group. If the mind is doing a pose blankly, the nervous coordination will not perk up muscle tone. Having taut, firm muscles is better than having flaccid ones simply because muscles have tremendous capacity for natural healing, releasing water into the body, and boosting stamina and vitality. Indeed, adding more balancers to your practice, variations in twists and forward bends, and attempting to learn a new pose every few weeks will add zest to your practice, help release dopamine, boost your cognitive ability and improve your confidence and social skills.

### YOGIC MOVES

#### Flying bird pose (*pashnee*)

Stand up straight. Bend right leg lightly at the knee. Place hands alongside, as shown, palms up ideally. Then, lift the left leg high, as shown. Initially, you may

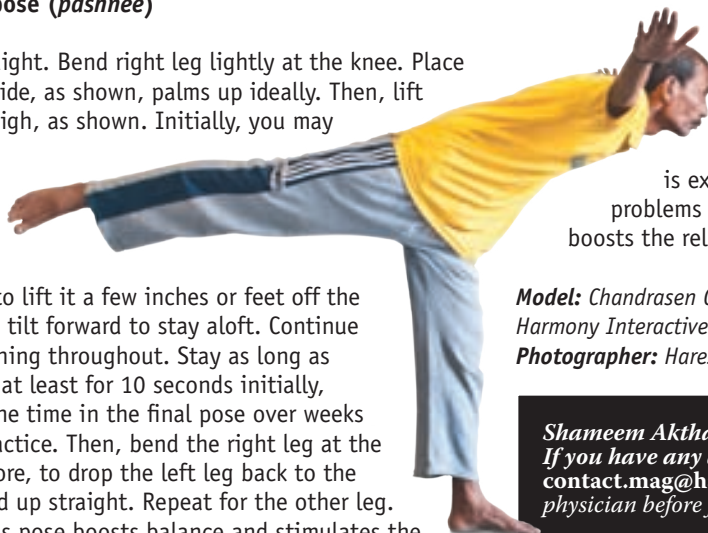
just be able to lift it a few inches or feet off the ground. Then tilt forward to stay aloft. Continue normal breathing throughout. Stay as long as comfortable, at least for 10 seconds initially, working up the time in the final pose over weeks of regular practice. Then, bend the right leg at the knee once more, to drop the left leg back to the ground. Stand up straight. Repeat for the other leg.

**Benefits:** This pose boosts balance and stimulates the

mind. It balances both the left and right brain hemispheres. It rectifies postural defects and improves mental focus and stamina when time is extended. It prevents and controls spinal problems and makes the legs strong. Further, it boosts the release of feel-good hormones.

**Model:** Chandrasen Chavan  
Harmony Interactive Centre  
**Photographer:** Haresh Patel

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







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## SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET NEETA AND SUMTHIMAL LODHA, AJMER

### An exclusive series about life, love and food that unites hearts

Enter the city of Ajmer and ask anyone where the Lodha Haveli is and you will be instantly guided to the 150 year-old *haveli* whose occupants are as well known as the residence. Our expectations were sky high even before we met Neeta, 55, and Sumthimal Lodha, 60; their hospitality and warmth left us speechless. But it was their mutual love and respect that inspired us to feature them this month. Both of them are Rajasthani Jains; she belongs to the Baldota family of Mumbai, while his family is one of the most renowned and revered families in Ajmer.

**As both of you are from the same community, is your family background similar?**

**Neeta Lodha:** I grew up in Mumbai in a rather cosmopolitan atmosphere, while his family is more conservative. When we got married, I found their customs and lifestyle very different from mine but I adjusted quite easily.

**Sumthimal Lodha:** Our background is very different. She came from a forward-looking family. You may have heard of the Baldotas; they are known as the metal kings.

**She:** I graduated from Poddar College in Mumbai (then Bombay), whereas he studied in Chennai. My family was very keen that I marry someone with good educational qualifications.

**He:** In 1974, I completed my chemical engineering at AC Tech in Chennai; I went to Khamgaon in Maharashtra for intensive training in solvent extraction processing. After some laboratory experiments, our team worked on the processing of mango kernel to extract oil (10 per cent) and suc-



ceeded. After refining, it can be used as a substitute for cocoa butter and the waste is used as cattle feed.

**How did you meet?**

**She:** We were married in December 1978. Ours was an arranged marriage. In 1982, we shifted to Tadapalligudam in Vijayawada. Our twin sons, Sahil and Suhel, were born in 1985.

**He:** My family tried hard to find me a suitable life partner, but I was rather fussy. When I met Neeta, I knew she was the one for me.

**Lodhaji, your family lineage is legendary. Can you describe it in a nutshell?**

In 1818, my great-grandfather's father Hamirsinghji and his father Kawnainji moved from Alwar to Jaipur and then Ajmer. Hamirsinghji's son Samirmalji Lodha served as treasurer for BB&CI Railway (Metre Gauge) and this post was held by our family until 1940. From 1890 to 1898, he was also the vice-chairman of the municipal council and an honorary magistrate. He was honoured with the title of 'Raibahadur'. Samirmalji's



grandson Jatanmalji is my father. The construction of this *haveli* started in 1850 and since then it has been our ancestral home.

#### Is this where you grew up?

**He:** No, I grew up in Chennai where my parents lived. But in 1993, all of us decided to return to Ajmer to manage our property. I am glad I chose to come back.

#### Name a tradition you truly cherish.

**He:** In the olden days, the royal families (Rajwada) would get independent cremation grounds. Our family was bestowed the same honour and we have a cremation ground situated over acres of land. For me, this place is like a temple. I come here ever so often, specifically on *amavasya*, and spend time in silence. I find a great connection with my history here. Whatever I am today is because of the blessings of my elders.

**She:** In fact, it is a family tradition that every bride who comes into our family is first taken to this place.

#### Many people tell us that you are a 'made-for-each-other couple.'

**He:** Even though we got married without matching our horoscopes, when we checked them much later, we were told that 29 qualities out of 36 matched well [laughs].

**She:** As you may be aware, this is considered very lucky.

**He:** What I really like about her is her ability to adjust. I have never known her to be negative about anything.

**She:** I like the fact that he always asks for my opinion. He does have a short temper but he cools down very easily. He likes to argue but eventually he will heed my suggestions.

**He:** She easily adjusted into my family with her smiling nature, which is

something she seems to be naturally gifted with.

#### Tell us Neetaji, how do you manage to keep this palatial house so elegant and beautiful, and yet look so calm and composed at all times?

**She:** Thank you [smiles]. I think I am a lot like my father. He was a very simple and calm person. I have never seen him angry.

**He:** However angry I may get, she will just smile serenely.

#### The secret of living happily in a joint family....

**She:** Living in a joint family requires positive outlook and sacrifice. It is necessary for a couple to respect each other and have mutual trust. Most problems happen because we don't let go of our ego and try to dominate.

---

**“Living in a joint family requires sacrifice and a positive outlook. Most problems happen because we don't let go of our ego and try to dominate”**

---

**He:** I think her secret lies in her cooking and food presentation. I always admire the way she and Anju [younger brother Rajendra's wife] present every single dish.

#### So, food is the way to your heart! What are your favourite preparations?

**He:** I enjoy her south Indian dishes and her continental and Chinese fare. Her puddings and *sandesh* are quite famous. But if there is one dish that all our guests enjoy, it is the *dal* in our meals.

#### Do you like home-cooked food or eating out?

**She:** He loves home meals but I enjoy eating out once in a while.

**He:** And I am happy enough going along with her.

#### From Neeta Lodha's kitchen

### Aloo Pyaaz with Tikkad

A traditional favourite in Rajasthan, this combination of potatoes and onions with *paratha* is one of Neeta Lodha's favourites. A sure success, it can enhance the menu of any party.

#### For Aloo-Pyaaz Sabzi Ingredients

- Potatoes: ½ kg;
- Onions: ½ kg;
- Garlic: 7-8 cloves
- Ginger: 1-inch piece
- Tomatoes: ½ kg
- Cumin seeds: 1 heaped tsp
- Bay leaves: 2
- Asafoetida powder: ¼ tsp
- Chilli powder: 1 tbsp
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- *Garam masala*: ¼ tsp
- Yogurt: 250 ml; beaten
- Fresh cream: ½ cup
- Coriander leaves (for garnishing)
- Ghee: 3 tbsp, and for deep frying
- Salt to taste

#### Method

Peel and wash the potatoes and ¼ kg onions; slice lengthwise and set aside. Grind the tomatoes into a puree and set aside. Grind the remaining onions and garlic into a fine paste and set aside. Grind green chillies and ginger into a fine paste and set aside. Heat ghee for deep frying in a pan; add potatoes and onions, a few at a time, and deep fry until golden. Remove on an absorbent paper. Heat 3 tbsp ghee in a pan and add cumin, asafoetida and bay leaves. Add the onion-garlic paste and sauté until the aroma rises and the raw smell disappears.



Now add chillies-ginger paste and the remaining spices and sauté for a few minutes. Add tomato puree and cook until well cooked. Add yogurt and cream and sauté until the ghee separates. Add fried potatoes and onions and cook for a few minutes. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves. Serve hot with *paratha*, known as *tikkad* in Rajasthan.

#### For Tikkad Ingredients

Wheat flour (coarsely ground): 4 cups

[in most shops of Rajasthan, you can ask for *baati ka aata* and get coarsely ground wheat flour; otherwise, use regular wheat flour—if finely ground, then use 3 cups and add ½ cup sooji and ½ cup bengal gram flour]

- Fennel seed powder (*saunf*): 1 tbsp
- Coriander seed powder: 1 tbsp
- Ghee: 2 tbsp, and for shallow frying
- Milk: 1 cup, for kneading the dough
- Salt to taste

#### Method

Mix ingredients and knead into soft dough. Add more milk if necessary. Roll into six-inch thick *roti* and shallow fry on both sides until well done. Serve with the *aloo-pyaaz sabzi*.

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



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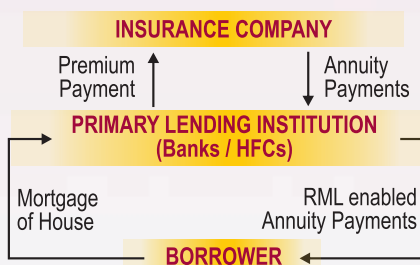
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# GURU *dakshina*

While most of us nurture fond memories of school, not many consider 'serving' our teachers.

The alumni of Kolkata's South Point show it can be a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Partha and Priyanka Mukherjee report

As they come out of the hallowed portal and turn their heads for a glimpse of their alma mater, a wave of nostalgia swells in them. But the motion of life wins over emotion; they walk ahead to reach the crossroads where a new turn, a new journey awaits. However, despite their demanding lives, they realise that they should come back to pay their debts to those who made them see the magic in mathematics, lyrics in literature, and heroic characters in history.

In 1995, former students of South Point School in Kolkata, fondly called Pointers, joined hands to establish a





Ever conscious of the way she looks, South Point teacher Gopa Burman (in blue sari) enjoys the company of her former students

Photographs by Shilbhadra Datta

not-for-profit association called ASPEXS (Association of South Point Ex-Students). After some Pointers who had become names to reckon with in the field of medicine agreed to volunteer their services, ASPEXS decided to form an advisory board under the guidance of eminent physicians like Dr Mrinmay Nandi, Dr Saumitra Ray, Dr Gautam Biswas and Dr Shubhanakar Chowdhury, to name a few. One fine morning in April 2007, ASPEXS organised a medical camp in the school building for retired teachers.

While running the camp, the Pointers noticed it was not only 'medical support' that their teachers needed; they also needed the warmth of com-

panionship to keep loneliness at bay. "We learnt how to walk holding their hands, now let us give them ours," says Sandeep Kothari, a student of the 1981 batch and now a practising chartered accountant and visiting professor at Calcutta University. "We discovered loneliness in the eyes of our teachers and decided to establish another ASPEXS branch called CARE Wing in June 2008," informs Krishna Damini of the 1987 batch and the current president of ASPEXS. "We made a list of teachers in the age group of 60 to 85. While most of them were financially well-off, they needed emotional support and companionship. So we decided to bring them in the fold of CARE Wing to make them feel part of a large and extended family," says Rupa Chakraborty, an active volunteer and teacher in a rural college in West Bengal.

Today, when Chandra Gupta, a retired South Point junior teacher, draws her student Sharmila Roy close to her bosom, past melts into present. "If I don't see her for a day or two, I miss her," says the septuagenarian overcome by nostalgia. "No one can stay untouched by Chandra Auntie's affection," says Roy, her eyes glistening with tears. After her master's in applied mathematics, Roy taught at a different school for a few years;

but when it was time for her daughter's admission, she couldn't think of any other school but South Point. "I might have been attached to another school professionally, but my heart was chained to my alma mater," says Roy who now teaches mathematics at South Point.

"We stay in constant touch with many of our teachers even after leaving school. With prolonged interaction, these relations grow into strong bonds of dependence and trust," says CARE Wing convenor Prasun Hazra who left school in 1982 and now runs his own business. "In the ocean of knowledge, our teachers guide our journeys like a lighthouse; without them we would be aimless ships." Highlighting CARE Wing's effort to reconnect with retired teachers, 1981 student Amarnath Banerjee says it has brought meaning to students' lives as well. "We don't need any prior appointment to meet them," observes Sandeep Kothari. "They always welcome us with open arms. As parents, they await the arrival of their children."

When we visited Somesh Dasgupta at his residence, he managed to sit on his bed, crouching on the shoulders of his students, and smiled. Plundered of his agility, Dasgupta, who taught history



**Former South point teachers Aniruddha Lahiri, Chandra Gupta and Somesh and Nandita Dasgupta with their students**

for more than 25 years, still possesses a photographic memory. We also have Gopa Burman, the evergreen Gopa Aunty, who has not allowed age to rob her of the fizz she was famous for. "Take care so I look beautiful in your shots," she says, flashing a smile that subdues the neon lights in her room. Then there's Aniruddha Lahiri living in a nondescript by lane in South Kolkata. A teacher of English literature at South Point, his mastery over the subject is still the talk of the town.



"Lahiri Sir is a fountain of knowledge—films, music, literature, sports..." says his former student Anjan Mazumder who is now a pharmacist. "We would literally bathe ourselves in the rays of his erudition," adds Anupam Sen, a 1981 batch student and now a Care volunteer. "Somesh Sir would literally bring back those moments in world history. Those classes were a session of reading poetry written by time on his memory [as Shelley would describe it]," says Haimanti Deb, a 1991 student. "Quite a few of our students are famous in different fields; among them are several reputed medical practitioners who visit us often. What else can we expect from them? One phone call and one of them is at our doorstep squeezing time from their busy schedules. We are among those fortunate few," says Somesh Dasgupta.



"At CARE Wing, the relationship between a teacher and a student is now more like between two friends," says a reticent Sharmila Roy. The idea is to stand by their teachers. "Though we have left that phase of life, it was imperative to find the way back to serve our gurus. There's very little that we can do, but this little effort brings them joy," says Anindita Roy, who attends every CARE Wing activity religiously. "With our little effort, we have achieved one thing for sure—narrowing the generation gap." ✨



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# NO FULL STOPS

India with its chaos and challenges remains home for veteran journalist Mark Tully, discovers Sudha Tilak





Shivay Bhandari

**I**t's easy to spot Sir William Mark Tully's home in Delhi's Nizamuddin West colony. As we navigate through narrow lanes, we spot a group of men in lungis and caps walking back from their *namaaz*. "The *gora* lives in the house with the red gate," they point cheerfully with nods from *rickshawallah*. As we enter, we don't hear the trusted voice of the BBC from India for over 30 years. Instead two healthy looking Labradors greet us with a volley of barks and some affectionate licks.

Today, even after his resignation from the BBC, Tully continues to be connected with the service. But his association with India goes beyond his work—his home is testimony to this. From his cup of Darjeeling and prints of old Calcutta (where he was born) and Gond paintings to his easy smattering of Hindustani while he speaks, this home, which he shares with his partner Gillian Wright, may well be the home of an Indian. Obviously, with Sir Tully, there are no full stops to his life in India. Excerpts from an extended conversation:

**You wrote *No Full Stops in India* 20 years ago. And now your new offering *Non Stop India* has hit the stands. What's been constant and what's changed in these two decades?**

We'd thought of the second book years ago. We'd wanted to see what things are like after 20 years. The fundamental difference in these years has been two contrasts: despair and passion. At that time during Licence Raj, it seemed that India didn't go anywhere. Rajiv Gandhi succeeded a bit at leading the nation towards modernity. Twenty years since then we began to hear about 'India the Great', 'the Great Hope', 'Future World Power'. We thought a look at all these changes will tell us if all this talk was valid. The more I thought of this kind of talk, I saw the danger in it, in that people will believe everything is fine. I think we have a whole lot of problems. Many people think that if we only attend to politicians and governance, things will be fine. There is also a lot of faith in luck and judgement that things will work out.

**How long has this book been in the making? Is it a collection of your recent published work or the labour of your travels and reports specifically done for the book?**

The book was longer than three years in the making. Our travels and reportage were largely for the book except the story of Tamil language issues in the state or the chapter on elections, which was done for a special report earlier. Most of the book's travels were to learn first-hand about areas of governance that pose a major problem.

**Your book warns about the breaks in this non-stop juggernaut called India including poor governance and *jugaad*, the attitude of a people who make do. How have you learnt to deal with this exasperating aspect of all these years of living and working in India?**



My whole attitude to life has changed since moving into India. When I first landed here, if a train were two hours late it would exasperate me. Now I am OK with it. It does not frustrate me as it did before. It's not that I like to sit back and enjoy it, but I see it as a matter of balance. It has a good side when you're not too bound by time, efficiency, and it has a bad side that it seems to accept inefficiency. Rigid structures can shackle creativity. One of my favourite characters is the *tent-wallah* from *Monsoon Wedding* who could improvise. That's one of the things I love here.

**Caste, vote-bank politics, environmental issues, language allegiance, televised Hindutva are part of the many concerns of the informed circle of India. What new insights did you want your book to reveal on these aspects?**

With each chapter, I wanted to look at many issues of India anew. For example, religion is a bee in my bonnet. In a secular nation like India, I think

religion is an irrelevant issue created by politicians on both sides of the major political parties. A party like the Congress ups these issues and the people let politicians get away. The reason I believe religion is of huge irrelevance to India is because I believe, fundamentally, a culture of religious pluralism exists in India.

Take the Maoist issue. So much of the talk ignores one or two simple facts relating to the support among the people: whether they receive wholehearted support from the forest people and the fact that we've had no huge uprising on their behalf. Much of the problem is due to old-fashioned policing and lack of governance in the Maoist areas. But the government has a different attitude towards Maoists. The police force needs massive reforms from above. The Maoist problem needs to be dealt in the right away. The answer is not sending in the CRPF. Similarly with regard to the Dalits and conversion, I believe we need to restore both their rights and pride in their community.

I tried to look at things with a balanced perspective.

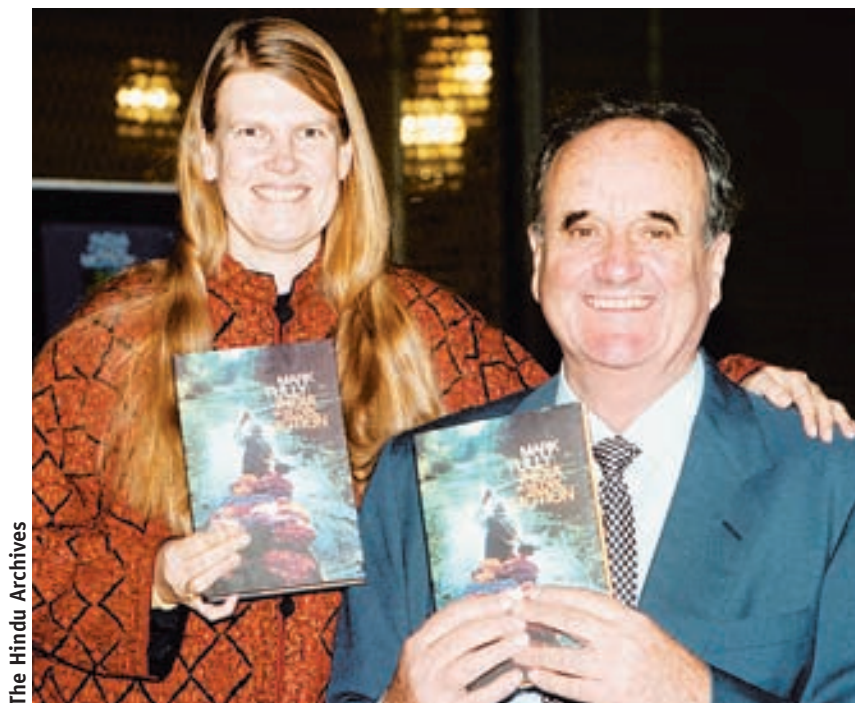
**You worked with the BBC for three decades and resigned in 1994. How did you deal with that?**

I began with the BBC as an administrator. Officially, my first radio piece was in 1962 when I was 32. I am a good example of *jugaar*! I never knew what I wanted to do before I became a journalist. Besides, I was also bad at typing so broadcasting suited me as I could read my typing. Unlike the computer where correction is easier, typing was a damn nuisance. Even today, I prefer to write by hand. One of the reasons I fought with the BBC before leaving was that I found the structure too constricting. That's what happens when management structures interfere with a creative organisation. Perhaps the BBC needs some *jugaar*. In my speech, when I resigned, I had suggested there is a difference between biscuit-making and broadcasting. But it was a big decision to leave the BBC for me.

**There has been vociferous protest about the BBC Hindi radio service shutting down. The BBC did and continues to evoke emotive responses of trust and affection among Indians. Have you had similar responses in your working years with the service?**

The BBC is widely trusted in villages. I recall once asking villagers, 'Why BBC?' and they replied that the BBC gave them news that was true and *sabse pehle* [before anyone else]. This reputation was enhanced when Satish Jacob scooped the world with the news of Indira Gandhi's assassination. A special reason in my days for that was that there was no alternative to government radio and the rural folk did look upon *sarkari* radio as being the government's mouthpiece and not an independent voice.

One has many memories, especially the tumultuous time during Indira



The Hindu Archives

With partner Gillian Wright



Gandhi's rule. I remember her interview with me in 1983. It was the last I met her before she was assassinated and she did something she had never done before. After the interview, she asked me to switch off the recorder and said, 'Talk to me'. And it was lovely as we had a free-wheeling talk.

I once went into a village with [Saeed] Naqvi and he asked a villager if he had any predictions about who would win the election; the villager replied that he had not heard the BBC and thus could not offer an opinion. You had that kind of faith from people that was truly humbling. I also remember the funny occasion during the Janata crisis over who would win. I walked into a political rally to have people boo us, crying, 'Hai hai BBC, Tully Saab Murdabad'.

**How did you feel about being the trusted face of the BBC?**

Truly, what was important was that it didn't go to my head. Satish and I were involved in the whole thing and I was only a part of a great institution called BBC World Service. It brought responsibility and fear; I knew that if something was reported wrong, the repercussions would be big.

**What do you miss most?**

The thing I miss most about the BBC is chasing the story. You felt always part of the pack and I enjoyed that. I had great times and fun with colleagues. I probably miss that the most.

**What do you think is the most significant change in media and communication in India in the past two decades?**

It's harder to control the changes of today. The dangers in journalism are that mistakes are made, fear is created, and things are exaggerated in the name of breaking news, like in the case of 26/11 in Mumbai. Despite the ease of communication, the problem of the Internet is that material is pub-

*"Religion is a bee in my bonnet. In a secular nation like India, I think it is an irrelevant issue created by politicians"*

lished without journalistic filter. That means many people deliberately manufacture news. For example, we found that time and again rumours were put out on Hindu-Muslim riot figures that led to further unrest. Now, Twitter is on the job too. What is important is that media set these events in context; writing and broadcasting are responsibilities that need to be set in context so the medium can be trusted to put out verified news.

**How many modern forms of communication do you use?**

[Laughs] I don't tweet or blog. I had an email a while ago that was floated claiming a despatch by me was untrue. I didn't know how to stop it. Responding would have given it undue importance. That is the danger of the medium. As for Facebook, I don't have the time because I have to churn out my bits and do my work.

**You've received the Padmashri and Padma Bhushan, and you were knighted in 2002. What do these honours mean to you?**

Obviously it would be ungenerous to say that I am not grateful for these honours. The more you get

recognised, the more things happen. Somehow one is afraid that one is an ordinary person doing ordinary things; and why should one receive such honours? I can honestly say I am embarrassed though I am greatly grateful as well.

**What are the best parts of living in India? Will you return to the UK?**

I had no desire to leave the BBC or India. However it is 17 years since I resigned from the BBC and I'm quite well settled here. I never contemplate seriously about going back to England. Yet I will never say with finality that I won't because as one who is believing of God's hand, who knows what will come tomorrow? There is nothing that I dislike about India or Britain. I am seen as one who has cut off my links there and, horror of horrors, a person who is more *desi* than *desis* themselves!

**You live in Delhi and have family in London. Do you get to meet your children and grandchildren as much as you would like?**

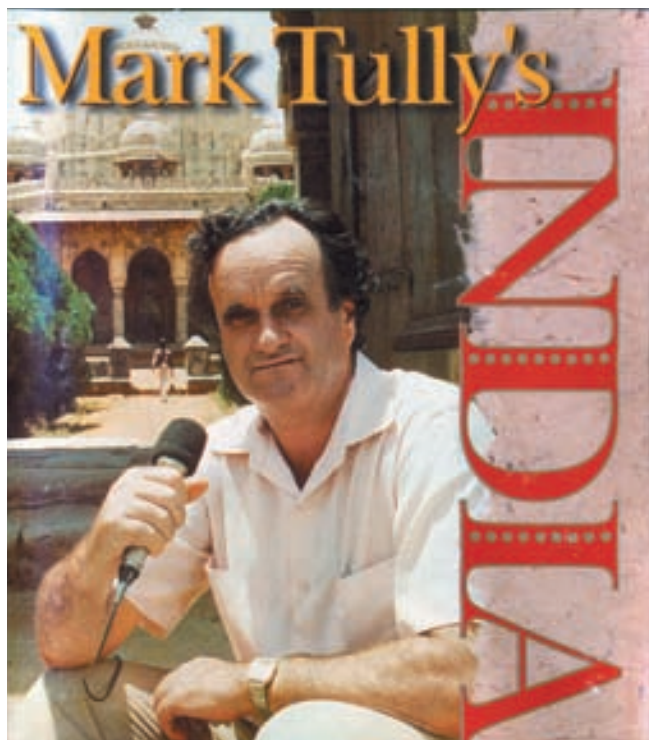
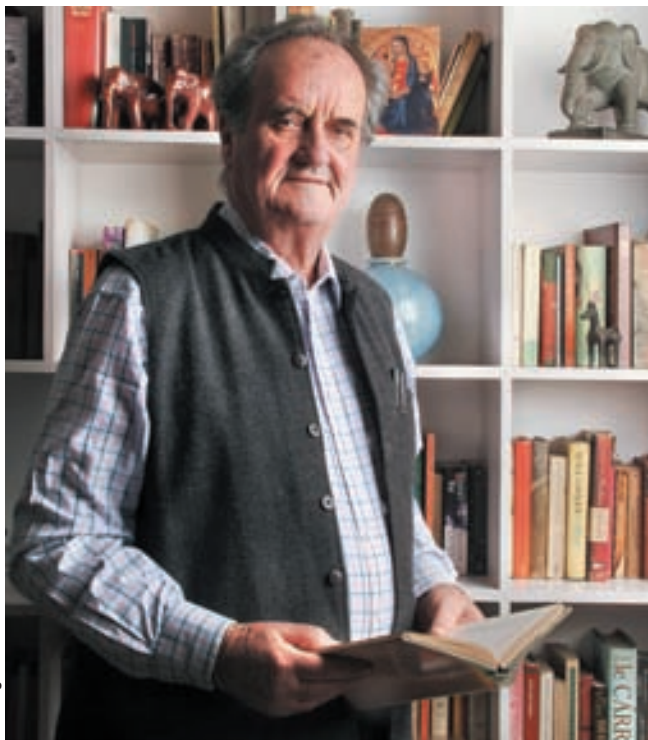
I have four grandchildren. One of the minuses of my life is that I don't get to spend as much time as I must with my children. Continuing to live and work in India meant less time spent with them. There is a cost to everything.

**Woody Allen in his trademark moody pessimism said, "It's a bad business of getting old, and I would advise you to avoid it." What are your thoughts on turning old?**

At 76, I am growing old. I can't look back and say I've made big mistakes. Sometimes, like a good Hindu, I think I should stop writing, reading and retreat to thinking. Sometimes I do recall the beautiful countryside I grew up as a child in England and think I would like to spend my last days in the country. I do regret the passing of things. I am quite lame, growing hard of hearing, but age brings with it many compensations. When you look back,



Shivay Bhandari



you realise some of your ambitions were stupid and all that goes away because you're aware of the fleeting nature of life. The lovely thing about looking back is the many changes you've witnessed that your generation will miss. I've seen farming move from animals to tractors; I remember the beauty and power of watching the steam engines, the locomotives at the Howrah. I am delighted to have lived those times. There is sadness in it as well. A lot that was worthwhile has gone away from our lives.

**How do you deal with the challenge of younger people looking at elders as outdated?**

It is true. There is danger in England with ageism. It is important to get the balance right. One of the things I protested when I left the BBC was the fact that older correspondents were fired and their notion that the only correspondents who were worthy were in their 30s.

**An old man like Anna Hazare has many youth drawn to him. Religion**

**“What I miss most about the BBC is chasing the story. Being part of such an institution brought responsibility and fear”**

**too has many followers among the young in India. Don't we need younger people in Indian politics?**

India has a traditional attitude to age. In the West, we find no respect for age. You can see it in the way grandchildren talk to their grandparents. I have always argued that insisting only on young people all the time is a huge mistake. We need a mix of elder people with valuable experience and bright young people who think they can turn things on the head. I am fundamentally religious. I go to church and am a member of the cathedral in Delhi. I like it that Indian youth think about religion or have respect for their elders. It's a change from other

sorts of goals of the western world. There, they are now going on a search for spirituality and having arguments about being religious and spiritual. I do believe that this aspect gives Indian youth an extra dimension to them. It can only be for their good.

**What do you look forward to each day? Are you relishing the slow approach to savouring the day compared to the briskness of your younger working days?**

I don't have definite plans. I look forward to the Sunday morning programmes I do for the BBC and would like them to continue. I don't want to write a column as it would be too constraining and I would be forced to say something each week.

**The year 2012 is upon us. It has been variously called a year of apocalyptic upheavals and portends. Tell us about a wish list for the year ahead.**

[Laughs and thinks hard] Umm...get up early and do more yoga regularly. ✨



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# THE BUCKET LIST!

Mayans, mystics and new-agers alike have predicted that 2012 will be the year of the apocalypse—an end to the world as we know it, a cataclysmic event wrought perhaps by man, nature, or even a vengeful god who decides to hit the stop button. While we at *Harmony-Celebrate Age* refuse to subscribe to any doomsday predictions, we couldn't help being intrigued by the premise. What would you do if you had just one year left to live out your dreams...eat that large cheese pizza, dance on a helipad or just pick up that phone and make a date with a long-ignored friend? We asked 12 exceptional people to share their 'bucket list' with us—the things they wished to do before the curtain falls. Here's what they told Radhika Raje

## AMJAD ALI KHAN 66

He's given the world a timeless interpretation of the sarod, inspiring His Holiness the Dalai Lama to say, "When he performs, he carries with him a deep human spirit." But for Amjad Ali Khan, Doomsday has brought personal issues to the fore.

### LOVE, LOVE, LOVE

First up, like any kindly gentleman, is a message of peace and love. "Even if we all are going to be destroyed, I would really want to spread one message: end hatred and arrogance. If the world ends, it should end in love."

But like any concerned silver, Khan *sahib* has a special word of advice for the young—and, wouldn't you know, it involves politics. "I want the next generation to stop seeing politics as a profession and see it as an expression of love for the country. No one must enter politics to make money."

### TIE THE KNOT...QUICK!

As the parent of two talented grown sons, there is one loose end that must be tied. "I would want to see my elder son Amaan married; I would want to meet my elder daughter-in-law."

A loving family man, the maestro would also like to spend a day taking family and friends to his ancestral home in Gwalior. "I believe man was born alone and will die alone. But there have been many people who have brought happiness to me. So a day would be spent with them."

Birds make him very happy too, especially pigeons. So a day is set aside to feed and care for them too.

### THE LAST LAUGH

And only a true blue Indian wouldn't leave out cricket and Hindi films. "I would like to watch *Padosan* one last time. Watching some cricket on TV would also be time well spent."

Finally, a lavish last meal: *paratha* laden with ghee. "Ghee is my weakness."



Suvo Das

**W**hen you think of Indian gay rights activists, naturally Ashok Row Kavi comes to mind. But if the world were to end, there's something cricketer Rahul Dravid should know. Among Row Kavi's last wishes: "To spend a whole day, and night, with Dravid."

A votary for the legal emancipation of homosexuality in India, Row Kavi is also the founder of the Humsafar Trust, a male sexual health NGO. "I have lot of people to thank, those who have made things easier for me. That includes my family, my friends, my staff, my board of directors and volunteers at Humsafar Trust."

#### **APOLOGIES? NAH!**

"I don't think I have done anything to be sorry about."

#### **RECONNECTING? NAH!**

"I wanted to reconnect with my old classmates. But when I met them at an alumni meet, I was horrified at the people they have become. So no more reconnecting."

#### **IF ONLY...**

He has a lot to say to women. "I have met many beautiful women who have become good friends. I see them as missed opportunities because I'm gay. I have nothing against women. I particularly like Rekha. I cried when I watched *Pakeezah*."

#### **SWEET GOODBYE**

"If I could gift myself one thing, I would be rid of my family tradition of diabetes. Also the insanity genes that we carry or maybe get a double dose of them!"

For a man who launched *Debonair* magazine, India's *Playboy* clone, the *Kamasutra* would have to figure on his list. "One book I want to read is the original version of the *Kamasutra*. Over the years it has been changed so much. I want to show the world that the very first sex book in the world carried homosexuality in it."

And two books the world should read before it all ends. "I want to write my autobiography but without any changes made during publishing. Another book I want to write is on doctors who think they are slightly above God."

## ASHOK ROW KAVI 63



Hindustan Times



A portrait of actress Saroja Devi. She is smiling, wearing a red and white patterned saree over a white blouse. She has a bindi on her forehead and is wearing a nose ring and a necklace. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# SAROJA DEVI 74

**T**here's no need for struggle, no point in further ambition, with Apocalypse around the corner. But southern actor Saroja Devi says she has learnt all she needs to learn anyway—and she has no unfulfilled aspirations. “If the world ends, it will be a happy ending for me.”

## ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

It would also be a good time to make amends, reconnect and say every ‘thank you’. “I would want to thank my mother for being so supportive and caring but she is no more. I would also like to thank my daughter Indira for the same reasons.”

For her son, apologies for all the motherly nagging—though that too is a sign of love, is it not? “I want to say sorry to my son. He lives in London and I cannot travel there to see him often. And when he is here, we argue a lot. I still keep badgering him about his eating habits and coming home late. To him, I say a heartfelt ‘sorry.’”

## A BED OF ROSES

Flowers are great for weddings, funerals—and the end of the world? “I have a thing for flowers; I can spend hours staring at them and talking to them. If the world was ending, I would pack up everything, gather my friends and sit in a garden. I would then tell God how creative he is when I meet him the next day.”

## OM SHANTI OM

With nothing to fight for, peace would be only logical at the end of the world. Hopefully. “If there was one thing I could change about the world, it would be the endless jealousy and fighting all around us. That should end. Everybody thinks they are right. It's important to be at peace with the inner you to accept the truth.”

## THAT'S A WRAP

What better way to end it all than a wholesome family film? “I would spend one whole day only watching family movies, starting with *Hum Aapke Hai Kaun*. I only wish I could change today's film industry, make it more entertaining and less full of sex and violence. It would be nice to see this change before the world ends.”

Chennai Pix



# PALLAVI JAIKISHAN 65

**I**f the end is imminent, there's no point worrying about it. Just be happy...well, that's the philosophy of extremely sanguine fashion designer Pallavi Jaikishan. "I believe in not stressing myself. Whatever happens, being happy is important."

## HISTORY LESSON

If it's all soon going to be history anyway, it's not a bad idea to spend your last few days reviewing mankind's most treasured possessions. "Before the end, I want to make sure I see all the beautiful museums in the world. St. Petersburg is on top of my list."

Looking back with nostalgia also seems like an apt choice. "I'm a big antiques fan. I would like to spend a whole day in an antique market, followed by a dinner with family where we could talk for hours. That would be perfect."

## WORK AS WORSHIP

No matter how good you are, you can always get better, right? Perfecting her renowned skills as a designer is high on her priority list. "I feel there is still a little left to learn, to reach perfection."

## A VOTE OF THANKS

"To people who have helped me and supported me in my times of need, and a huge vote of thanks to my family." Also a shout out to old friends: "I have lost touch with a lot of my old friends. It would be nice to reconnect with them and relive our moments together."

## A LITTLE BLING

"If the world were to end soon, the first thing I would do is gift myself a nice gold watch."

## A WHOLE LOTTA LOVE

Finally, a day for her late husband, music director Jaikishan. "I would dedicate one day to watching all his movies and listening to his music."







## SUREKHA SIKRI 65

She's lit up the stage and the small screen for decades and shot to fame with the Hindi television series, *Banegi Apni Baat*, in 1994. She's also won the National Film Award for Best Supporting Actress twice. Now, Surekha Sikri is best recognised as Daadisa in the cult TV serial *Balika Vadhu*. But for an actress who's won a National Award for Best Actress in a 'Negative Role', Sikri is amazingly positive about the end of the world. "If there are any survivors, they should enjoy the rest of their lives and leave the rest to God."

Fame and glory have sought her out all through her illustrious career. Now it's time for her to seek the Divine. "Before the world ends I want to meet Shirdi Sai Baba. I want

to spend time in his vicinity and soak up some spirituality."

### MYSTERY OF LIFE

"I want to learn the secret of life before I die. Life is a mysterious thing; I want to solve this mystery."

### ACT OF CONTRITION

Every play has a denouement. Likewise, the circle of life is incomplete unless you make amends. "I want to apologise to heaps of people. Some I have hurt knowingly, while others unintentionally. When you have hurt someone, you can never be sorry enough."

"One day before the end, I will gather all my friends and my family and just sing and celebrate life. It

will be nice to just spend a day with all those who matter."

### TILL THE COW COMES HOME...

Sometimes, Doomsday's wish list is very unique! And Sikri's is no exception.

"I want to adopt a white *desi* cow who will give a lot of milk. That would be really nice. I wouldn't mind adopting a horse too."

Finally, Sikri has a message we can all empathise with. "If I could change anything about the world, it would be the mentality of the rich. These honchos are playing with nature and Mother Nature will strike back some day. I want to change their minds and put some sense into them."

## FARRUKH DHONDY 65

Can your soul rest in peace if you haven't watched dinosaurs having sex? It's an image Pune-born, British-based, award-winning author and playwright Farrukh Dhondy would love to have etched in his mind when Apocalypse comes a-calling. The writer has many other, well, unique priorities. "If I could take one person with me, it would be this Indian writer I know who has very bad English prose. I think the world should be rid of such people."

Here's one for a special 'lady friend': "I want to spend a whole day with this particular lady, who shall be nameless. I want to sit and read the *Zend Avesta*, the holy book of Zoroastrians, with her."

#### THANK YOU...DARWIN

If he were to pen a final 'Thank You' note, friends and family wouldn't get Dhondy's vote! "Charles Darwin is the only person I want to thank. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for evolution."

But the author would definitely make one last-ditch effort to save his skin. "I would read *The Book of Sand*, which according to [the author] Jorge Luis Borges, contains all the other books ever written. As these are quite a few, would this reading postpone my bucket hour?"

#### EXTRA TIME, PLEASE!

And if he can buy sufficient time, Dhondy would write a book on the history of Zoroastrianism. "In my list, the last thing would be to rewrite the screenplay of *Dr Zhivago* with a happy ending where he converts to Islam and lives happily ever after with his wife and Lara."

When all is wiped out, the survivors can take heart. "There's no lesson I want to give survivors. Everybody has to start from scratch." But there's something Dhondy would love to take with him: "I want to learn the Human Genome Code. Also, I want to gift myself a painting by Caravaggio before the end of the world."

#### WOMEN ON TOP

Dhondy's last words: "Does the imagination dwell the most upon the woman won or the woman lost...?"



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## YAMINI KRISHNAMURTHY 71

**A** visit to a temple was the first thing on renowned Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancer Yamini Krishnamurthy's list—not a bad idea, if you're preparing for the end of the world.

"I want to make a trip to my favourite temple of Natarajan in Chennai. After being born and brought up there, going there before the end makes sense. I want to thank the Almighty for giving my life a special purpose in the form of dance."

### 'ME' TIME

Up next would be quality time with the self, contemplating a life lived beautifully. "I feel this would be a

great thing to do before the world pauses. Silence is the best virtue. It has inspired my life in many ways."

Also on the list is a wish for more acknowledgment, a sentiment that most classical Indian artists would empathise with. "There is so much I would like to give, but one thing I want is appreciation. I feel I have contributed so much to the country's culture and yet haven't been appreciated enough."

### THEY ARE THE WORLD

When your money will soon be useless, it's probably a good idea to spend all of it on something worthwhile. For Krishnamurthy, that would

be a hearty meal for India's many hungry children. "I would want to feed every poor hungry child. I would need some help financially but I would still want to do it."

### FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

There's no need to diet at the end of the world, so a sumptuous meal would be in order. "Knowing that this is the last chance to eat what I love to eat, I would eat several spicy *dosa*."

Finally, it might not avert Apocalypse but it might make it easier to accept. "I would take the opportunity to write a book; the title would be *How to Overcome Your Problems with Willpower and Detachment*."

# USHA GANGULI 66

**I**f there's one thing theatre has gifted Usha Ganguli, it's a positive attitude. The award-winning founder of theatre group Rangkarmee says, "I don't think the world will end. I would rather be optimistic about it." But deep down, she knows this is no one-act play. So, when the curtain descends, cry for help. "If I could scream, as of now, I would say, 'I don't want to die!' I will make sure everybody hears that loud and clear."

Then, Ganguli's artistic side takes over. "I would like to learn how to paint. It's one thing I haven't tried my hand at. It will be good to die as a good painter."

## CHINESE CHECKOUT

Well, she must have one last adventurous fling. With this country making world economies quiver, why not check out what the fuss is all about? "If I had to visit any place, it would be China."

Ganguli is only one of two noted theatre directors to engage in Hindi theatre in Kolkata. So there's no better time to be true to one's roots. "I love to cook, so a lot of cooking will happen. My favourite dish is *ilesh mach*. It's a Bengali dish."

And while indulging the taste buds, why leave out the other senses? "I would surround myself with flowers and perfume in the last few days of existence. I will go shopping and buy myself Rush by Gucci."

## YOU AND ME

It's also time for sombre reflection and some gratitude. "I have had such a great life. So first, thanks would go to my mother. Next, to my audience, who love me and appreciate me for what I am."

But enough about others. "I wouldn't mind writing my autobiography before the end. I have been planning to do that for a long time."

## HYPOCRITES ALL!

Finally, honesty is the best policy. "I would like to see a change in the way the middle-class thinks. There is too much hypocrisy. People should be more plain and simple. That would make a lot of difference."

Shilbhadra Datta







## DAGGUBATI RAMANAIDU 75

**T**elugu superstar and film producer Daggubati Ramanaidu's life has revolved around celluloid fiction. Not surprisingly, this winner of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award occasionally finds it difficult to stomach hard facts. "I refuse to believe the world will end. But if it is really going to, I would want to finish this Punjabi movie I am working on."

Next, a note of appreciation for an industry that gave him the chance to corner a page in *Guinness World Records*, for being the world's most prolific producer. "I only want to see cinema flourishing. My sons and

grandsons are all doing a great job. I think I have seen it all."

### THANK GOD!

A prayer of thanks would be the next order of business...not a bad idea, if you're preparing to meet the Maker. "I want to wholeheartedly thank my God, Tirupathi, who has given me all that I have today. I often go to him and offer prayers. It is because of him that I am where I am."

### THE CHOSEN FEW

"One whole day before I die would be spent with my wife, sons and grandsons. My last wish would be to go on a trip with them. I have travelled so

much on account of my work. I've been abroad and seen many things, so any place I visit with my family would be a good place."

He's also produced films in other languages including Hindi, so he's made some close friends in Bollywood like Hema Malini and Rajesh Khanna. "I want to call them up and say 'hi!'"

### A LITTLE HARMONY

Doomsday can be unpredictable. But Ramanaidu hopes it arrives after the first week of January 2012. "I am not much into reading but I would like to read my own interview once this copy of *Harmony* is printed."

**F**or the first Indian who climbed Everest, Bachendri Pal couldn't be more down-to-earth. Pal has earned many other laurels as a mountaineer and has also led an Indo-Nepalese Everest Expedition for women, which set seven world records.

"I want to complete a North Pole trip planned for next year. I hope the world ends after I finish that. I would also like to visit Bhutan, but with my family." We all have unfulfilled dreams but for Pal, taking a road trip to the Karakoram Pass has special meaning. "I have been there before but we were climbing and once we reached the top after 10 days, we saw the Chinese driving up there."

#### BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

What's the use of all that glory if you can't record it for posterity...a new alien nation, perhaps? "I hope I am able to publish a book I am writing about an all-women expedition we took to the Himalaya. It was a big deal because civilians were allowed there for the first time."

#### FRIENDS AND FILMS

World records mean little if you can't thank those who helped you get there. Now a trainer at TATA Steel Foundation, Pal wants to say a special 'thank you'. "In my early days, when I was struggling as a mountaineer, my old friend Rita Gombu Maruch helped me a lot. But we are scarcely in touch now. I would like to reconnect with her."

When silent mountains and snow-capped peaks get monotonous, a dose of Bollywood can be very invigorating! "I am a very emotional person and my last movie would be *Dosti*. I watched it in my village as a child and I still love it. I love Shah Rukh Khan so maybe I will watch his movies too."

#### OH BABY!

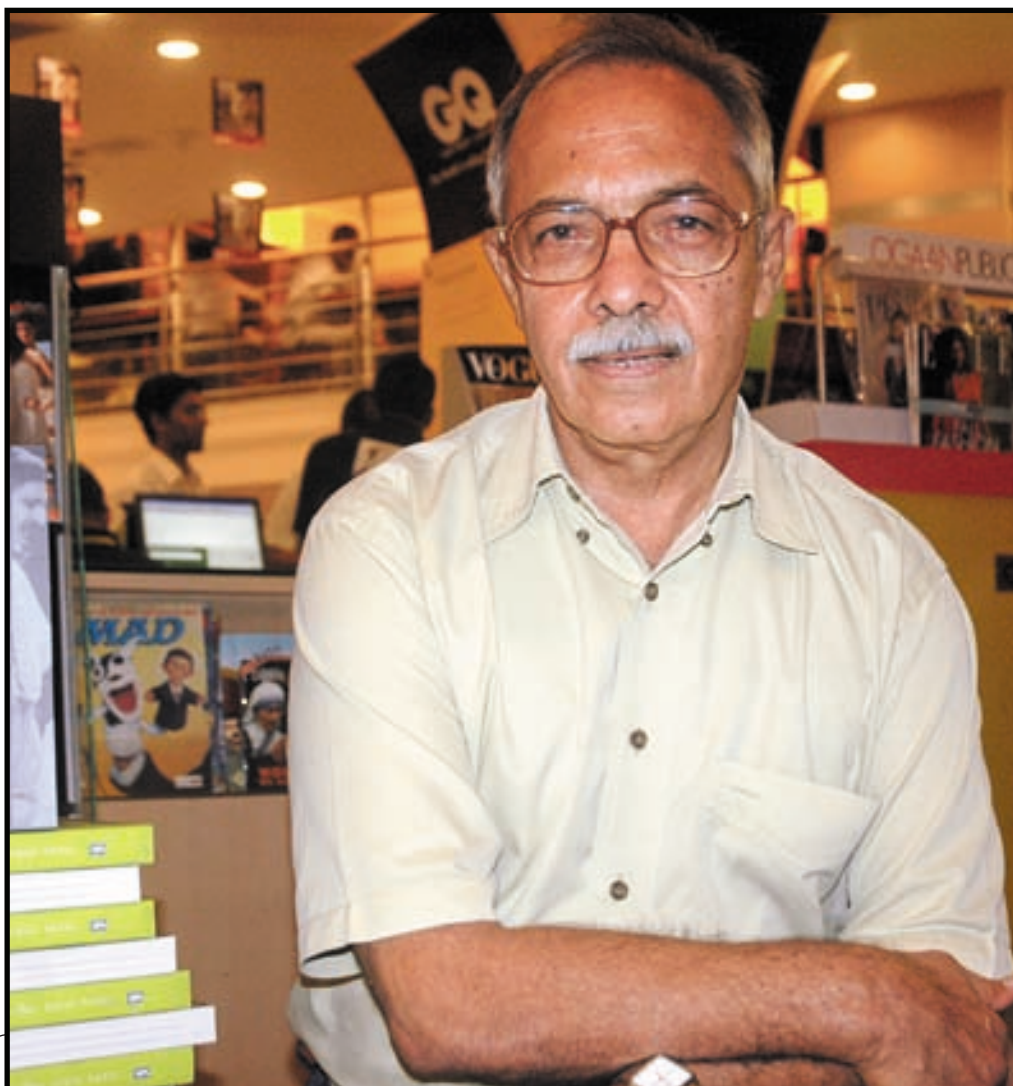
Pal has stormed many a male bastion but there's a soft side to her the world doesn't often see. "I would look for someone to take care of all my adopted daughters. I focus on female development. Everest can be climbed every day; it's these minor things that need to be settled."

## BACHENDRI PAL 56



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## GIEVE PATEL 60

**W**riter, painter, poet, playwright and doctor, Gieve Patel has wowed audiences the world over. But if the world were to end, he would yearn for some alone time.

"I would take a long holiday to spend some time with myself. It would also be nice to see Tibet. I've never been there and have always wanted to go."

### A THOUSAND APOLOGIES

Up next, a faithful rendering of thanks and apologies. "I am usually very prompt with my 'thank yous' but I would like to say 'thank you'

to everybody again. There are many people I want to say 'sorry' to as well. I have been nasty to many growing artists, which must have left a lasting impression. I would say 'sorry' to all of them."

### DJ, PLAY MY SONG

A party in the park is next on Patel's Bucket List. "If the officials at the Hanging Gardens would agree to let the music blast there, I would like to spend a whole day at such a concert."

### LAST WORDS

As the world draws to a close, Patel would pen another book of poetry,

and a play. "I would also watch lots and lots of movies."

### A SUGARY FAREWELL

What better way to end it all than with chocolate cake? "I want to eat the most delicious chocolate cake in the world. I did try to tick this off my wishlist once. There is a cake shop in New York called Best Chocolate Cake in the World and everybody told me it was really good so I went and had a cake there. But it was dreadful!"

Finally, a dream meal—but not at home. "I wouldn't want to cook anything. Instead, I would go to Joss in Mumbai and eat everything there."



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## JIGGS KALRA 62

**H**e is the 'Czar of Indian Cuisine', a celebrated food columnist, television presenter and the first Asian to be inducted into the International Food & Beverage Gourmet Hall of Fame. Naturally, Jiggs Kalra would love to see his legacy appreciated by one and all. "I want to scream out to the world to learn from Indian food; it's the best on the planet. I would like to see Indian food on the dining tables in homes around the world."

Next up would be a vote of thanks for his diners and his TV audience. "I have had a full life. I would like to thank the dining community of India,

which has a very sophisticated palate and has kept me on my toes."

### FOOD FOR ALL

It seems particularly painful for chefs to see hunger and starvation. So this gastronome says, "If I could change anything about the world, it would be hunger. I would like to see full bellies; no hunger should remain."

### GOING 'GLOCAL'

Kalra would also set aside time to share the spotlight. "I would spend the rest of my days with regional chefs who are very close to me and are unknown at the moment." And, of course, a trip to the world's gastro-

nomie capital. "I would like to go to France, to experience the nuances of the cuisine and use the knowledge to refine Indian food further."

### A TV DINNER?

For his last meal, a royal treat. "My last dish would be the real *shahi tukda*, cooked by my favourite *halwai* in Lucknow. I would also watch *Lawrence of Arabia*."

### GO, TIGERS!

And what better time to learn a new skill, and adopt an exotic pet? "If I had enough time, I would like to master basketball. And it would be nice to adopt a tiger cub."



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

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# A citizen's call

At 82, S Sitarama Swamy keeps the RTI flame burning, reports **Shyamola Khanna**

**L**osing one's way in the narrow lanes of Gautam Nagar in Secunderabad's Malkajgiri is a surprisingly pleasant experience. Awe-inspiringly clean and green, the maintenance of these lanes is the handiwork of 82 year-old S Sitarama Swamy, a recipient of the Andhra Pradesh government's 'Lifetime Achievement Award'. After 40 years with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway (GIPR)—he first started as a 20 year-old Grade A fireman, rising to the level of Driver (A) Special—Swamy retired in 1988.

Since then, he has dedicated all his time to common people. Initially he looked into their water woes and power problems. In 1992, with the help of a few like-minded people, he formed the Consumers' Welfare Association, which has since made several representations to the state government and the Centre. The introduction of the Citizens' Charter in 2001 offered him a larger scope to deal with the municipal corporation, the police department and the Mandal Revenue Officers (MRO). In 2005, when the Right to Information Act (RTI) came into force, he began to use the platform to further the cause.

"One doesn't need a degree to argue a case," says Swamy, who spends a great deal of time understanding every case and then prepares his arguments. "I have basic education, but through the years I have read so much legal correspondence at the Consumers' Association that I have developed a keen eye for detail and a sense of logical conclusion. Experience has made me an 'almost-lawyer'!"

Of the many battles fought against the cussedness of the establishment, he counts two as his biggest so far. The first, when he fought to register his

local Consumers' Welfare Association with the state body. The second was against the "injustice of dismantling 'illegal' structures, where the poor were the biggest victims". In 2007, the local High Court gave a ruling that all 'illegal structures' needed to be dismantled. This affected most of the members in his association, who had the relevant permissions but were on the threshold of losing their dwellings. He approached the High Court and exposed the illegal activities of the higher and lower bureaucrats in the Town Planning Department, the Electricity Board, the MRO, and others. After several representations, an order was issued in 2009 to regularise the so-called 'illegal' structures. The affected parties had to pay a penalty under the 'building penalisation system', but didn't need to worry about losing their dwellings.

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**"One doesn't need a degree to argue a case. I have read so much legal correspondence... experience has made me an 'almost-lawyer'!"**

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In 2009, Swamy's consumers' association was registered with the local body. Realising that it would be better to stay connected to the state body, the association put together a petition and asked the local Registrar to make the required change. For months they kept hedging and would not move the file. Finally, Swamy and his team met the State Information Officer to present a copy of the petition. The officer gave the required instructions to the local body and asked for the needful to be done within a week.

This special link has given the local association teeth, as it now has the right to give permission for extensions to buildings, electricity connections, and permissions for bore wells. The local bodies, and related dubious 'middlemen', have thus been eliminated. "In case anyone has issues, there's always the RTI to check any wrongdoing."

For his activism, Swamy was sought out for consultation. The Municipal Commissioner asked Swamy and his association to raise awareness in their wards about various environment issues and appeals to keep the city clean. On 18 February 2011, the state recognised his work and presented him with a memento designed as the 'Lifetime Achievement Award'. It rests prominently on his mantelpiece.

Swamy credits the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for discipline in his life. To date, he goes to the neighbourhood *shakha* for *pranayam* and to meet people. His wife passed away 10 years ago and he lives alone in his little apartment in Malkajgiri, Secunderabad. He has two sons and four daughters; one lives in an apartment on the same floor as his and looks after all his needs. "I am disciplined about my diet, as restrictions help me maintain the required balance. I also have a strong sense of nationalism that gives me the courage for my work," says Swamy. Under the aegis of the Malkajgiri CWA, six day centres for senior citizens have been established. Silvers are encouraged to come and spend time here from 9 am to 11 am every day. "At present, I am working on putting together a team of 'young' senior citizens—people who have just retired and have the energy and enthusiasm to volunteer their time for others. I strongly feel that younger people need to come forward and work so the fight can carry on." ❀





Anand Kumar Soma

DESTINATION

# Himalayan **secret**

Once you find it, Chakrata, off Dehradun,  
is a place you will never forget

📍 📷 Gautam Ruparel







If you are one of those travellers who catch up on your sleep on roads between destinations, there is a chance you may miss Chakrata completely. Nestled amid dense coniferous forests on a ridge in the Garhwal mountains, Chakrata (2,200 m above sea level) is not exactly a stone's throw from Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand—it's a four-hour drive. The road to this hill town via Vikas Nagar is much shorter, but after Kalsi it's quite narrow all the way up. The sluggish 30 km per hour speed of a creaky bus or a local cab, packed to capacity, gives you enough time to soak in the mountains; you could, however, opt for the greater comfort of a private car from Dehradun.

The other route is nightmarish, considering the traffic that piles up before Mussoorie. But once past the famous Kempty Falls to Yamuna Pul, the journey to Chakrata is a

delight. Covering the valley, clouds laze comfortably between two mountains. Once they clear, a peak welcomes the visitor, then a range and then a series of ranges that form the lesser Himalaya. As you go up, the forest grows denser, and so does the fog; honking, however, only gets more frequent around the bends. But once here, this sleepy hill settlement grows on you, much like its history.

Ever since Colonel Hume established this cantonment in 1866, the natives have grown up with a military presence around them. The signs of an English way of life can still be seen in the stone-walled houses, barracks, churches that stand as grand as the deodar and bahn, and a clearing on the adjacent plateau aptly called Polo Ground. The remnants of an old brewery are signs of the good times the rulers believed in. It's quite a feat to have built a filtration system that's up and running even today, supplying potable



(From left to right) A serene morning engulfed in clouds; local children have stories to share as well; and the famous Tiger Falls

water certified clean by scientists. After the British left, the Indian Army took this little haven under its wing.

In fact, military presence has ensured that Chakrata remains devoid of foreign travellers and, therefore, rampant development, providing a miraculously unobstructed view of Mussoorie to the east and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh to the west. A local schoolteacher claims that on a clear day you can see beyond the far end of the cascading ranges overlapping with China. If you care to delve into its history a little more, residents will tell you that in 1960 a few Tibetan refugees set up a temporary camp in Chakrata. When the Indo-China war broke out a couple of years later, the visitors were drafted into the Indian Army with a common enemy in sight.

Today, a 4,000-strong cadre of second-generation Tibetans believes Chakrata is their adopted home. They form the Special Frontier Force or 22 Establishment (fondly called 'tu-tu') that fought against Pakistan and was part of Operation Bluestar. It's hard to miss files of soldiers snaking their way up the mountain roads on their morning run.

Here opposites blend seamlessly—you see a cloth store selling army fatigues by the metre and the local tailor hanging up a newly stitched pair of military cargo pants outside

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**It takes a day's exploratory amble to realise the Tibetan flavour that Chakrata offers—whether it's the people or the delectable momos**

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his shop, while prayer flags run along the thatched roofs of some of the houses and your ears catch the sound of distant Buddhist chants. A five-minute walk on the half-kilometre main market stretch will lead you to One Gate, the official stop for Chakrata where the driver gets his much-needed break after a careful drive. The nomenclature comes from a gated system that existed till about five years ago. Civilian vehicles could pass through this gate only at specific hours, which inconvenienced the residents. The gates have been done away with ever since.

There have been other changes as well. Years ago, staying at the once-tranquil Mussoorie, also known as the Queen of the Hills, used to be the best option. But with its beauty now plundered, Chakrata offers the charm of the famous hill station. It takes only a day's exploratory amble to realise the Tibetan flavour Chakrata serves up—whether the





name tags on the soldiers or quite literally the town's number one culinary delight: momos at Chandana's.

An early morning walk to Chilmiri Neck, about 2 km from the main village, gives you a view worth soaking in—the sun rising over the ranges and a landscape dotted with exotic birds. In the distance stand the imposing Swargarohini and Banderpoonch peaks. About 10 km in the other direction is Tiger Falls, the second highest waterfall in India. The current approach is a 15-minute downhill tread but very soon a road, currently under construction, will lead straight up to the falls. Considering the churning stomachs, courtesy the bumpy roads, the sight of the falls credits all your efforts as more than worthy. Around the monsoon months, the intensity of the 96-m drop can be heard at a distance and sounds like the roar of a tiger, giving the waterfall its name.

In search for more options, take a leisurely walk with local children, who are more than happy to accompany you and exchange stories. For the real thing, lose your way in the forest of Deoban (3,025 m). About 16 km away through muddy roads, it boasts of some of the densest forests in the region and local tales have it that LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was trained here by the Indian Army. The Army's training centre en route forbids the use of cameras

but when you reach the top, a point called Vyas Shikhar, it's quite impossible to do without one. You can stay at the forest rest house here with prior reservations, but even otherwise the caretaker is more than happy to even entertain passers-by with sweet tea and a simple snack.

Chakrata enjoys pleasant summers, but the rest of the time the weather can get very cold for people from the plains. While out on a stroll, it's always a good idea to carry an extra layer. One moment you see a patch of sunlight seeping in through thick foliage; before you know it, though, you can get engulfed by a sea of clouds. For those who like a snowy winter, the season here can be very rewarding. It's perfect to snuggle between thick quilts, if that's your plan. And if it's the outdoors, you can include Kanasar in your list; a 28-km drive, it offers a breathtaking view of the Himalaya. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of the mountain fox, the Himalayan vulture and the serpent eagle. But before hitting the road again, remember to snatch a peaceful snooze after a meal under the century-old deodar trees that nestle little meadows. ☀

#### FACT FILE

##### WHEN TO VISIT

The summers are pleasant and breezy but light woollens are still recommended. Monsoon months are from July to September; while you may not get a clear view at all times, the forest is lush and buzzing with activity. Winters in Chakrata are cold. However, it is the best time to see the mountains.

##### GETTING THERE

- **By air:** Jolly Grant Airport is the closest airport, about 25 km from Dehradun
- **By rail:** Dehradun Railway station is the closest railhead and is well connected to New Delhi.
- **By road:** Chakrata is about four hours' drive from Dehradun. An overnight bus from New Delhi arrives in Dehradun early in the morning. From Delhi's ISBT bus stand, local buses run at regular intervals to Chakrata via Vikas Nagar. You can hail a share cab or a private cab from outside the bus stand.

##### WHERE TO STAY

- **Hotel Snow View:** Tucked inside the forest, it is the oldest hotel in Chakrata built by the British. It lies isolated from the main market, but offers the best view of the valley. Tel: (01360) 272241, (0) 9411363231, (0) 9627547001. Email: [chakratasnowview@gmail.com](mailto:chakratasnowview@gmail.com)
- **Hotel Himalayan Paradise:** (0) 9411106326, (0) 9837744244, (0) 8006552022. Email: [info@himalayanparadise.com](mailto:info@himalayanparadise.com)
- **Hotel Himgiri:** It lies in the main Chakrata market. Tel: (01360) 272406



Photographs by Gangadharan Menon

## DESERTED BEAUTY

KULDHARA'S LEGEND BELIES HISTORY, LOGIC AND BELIEF, REPORTS GANGADHARAN MENON

The inhabitants of most historical monuments, whether palace or fort, have been forcibly evacuated by invaders. Kuldhara in Rajasthan is probably the only place in the world where an entire population of over 17,000 people vacated en masse, of their own accord, and disappeared into the thick of a misty night.

It was with a great sense of mystery that I visited the twin villages of Kuldhara and Khaba, 30 km to the west of Jaisalmer. These two, and 82 other villages, were deserted overnight by the

### HISTORY

Paliwal Brahmins after living there for over five centuries: from 1291 CE to 1825 CE (Common Era, formerly referred to as AD). A Rajasthani folk song about this mass migration goes, 'Let's leave the calves in the stables, let's leave the cradles, let's leave the milk boiling on the cooking fire; let's leave all that we have here, never to come back again.'

The Paliwals were astute businessmen who controlled the trade on the Silk Route to Iran and the Arab land. They were also visionary farmers who were

ahead of their time in water conservation and rain harvesting, miraculously cultivating wheat and gram in the harsh desert. Then what made them make this supreme sacrifice of deserting their homeland, leaving behind colossal wealth?

Stories abound. One goes that Salum Singh, the prime minister of the king of Jaisalmer, was so envious of the prosperity of the Paliwals that he levied taxes so atrocious that it became the last straw on the camel's back. According to another, all Paliwal women were stunningly beautiful, but





the beauty of the chieftain's daughter had to be seen to be believed. The Rajput king of Jaisalmer was so smitten by her that he decided to kidnap and forcibly marry her. Be that as it may, the heads of all 84 villages decided to leave their homes overnight, never to come back again. But before they left, they buried their treasure with a damning curse that those who attempted to make these villages their home would drop down dead. And the

third story goes that once in many years, the skeletons of human bodies are found in the by-lanes of this ghostly village.

On my way out, I saw the Cactus Park near the main gate of Kuldhara village. I wondered if it was symbolic of the survival spirit of the Paliwals; or are the thorns symbolic of the harsh treatment meted out to them? Maybe, for all we know, it's both.

#### FOUR STRINGS

ONE OF THE FILMS THAT PREMIERED AT THE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA HELD IN GOA IN DECEMBER 2011 GENERATED INTEREST ABOUT A LONG-FORGOTTEN LEGEND. ANTHONY GONSALVES, THE 83 YEAR-OLD GOAN MUSICIAN TAUGHT PYARELAL (OF LAXMIKANT-PYARELAL FAME) THE VIOLIN AND, IN TURN, EARNED A TRIBUTE IN THE FORM OF THE CLASSIC SONG, *MY NAME IS ANTHONY GONSALVES*, FEATURING AMITABH BACHCHAN IN BLOCKBUSTER *AMAR, AKBAR, ANTHONY*. OF LATE, THOUGH, THE MUSICIAN HAS BEEN LIVING IN PENURY AND OBLIVION IN GOA. LOCATING THE CONDUCTOR-COMPOSER, THEREFORE, WAS QUITE A DIFFICULT SEARCH FOR PRODUCER SHRIKANT JOSHI. DIRECTED BY ASHOK RANE, *ANTHONY GONSALVES: THE MUSIC LEGEND* IS ABOUT THE MUSICIAN'S CHILDHOOD IN GOA, HIS STRUGGLE TO EARN TUTELAGE WITH LEGENDARY CLASSICAL MUSICIANS AND LIFE AS A VIOLINIST IN THE ORCHESTRAS OF PANKAJ MULLICK, MADAN MOHAN, S D BURMAN AND KHAYYAM. A CAREER HIGHLIGHT: HIS ARRANGEMENT OF THE CLASSIC SONG *HUM AAP KI AANKHON MEIN* IN GURU DUTT'S *PYAASA*. THE FILM WILL SOON TRAVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY FOR PUBLIC SCREENINGS.

# Culture of happiness

**T**he biggest ever cause of sorrow and happiness at the same time, our 'family' and the relations within are more complicated than the human genome. With nuclear structures suffering from lack of traditional and moral values, Jayantilal Shah, the 83 year-old patriarch of the illustrious Mumbai-based Sevantilal Kantilal family, has come up with a novel experiment of knitting the sub-cultures of various generations into one. Apart from staying close to one another and meeting regularly, Shah arranges a Diwali picnic for over a hundred members and guests every year. The latest in his 'social experiment' is a book on the family and business ethics of his kin. Meant only for 'private' circulation, the spiral-notebook format of the book, simple studio photographs of all family members and light-hearted banter within its pages reflect genuine warmth. We catch up with him for a little chat....

## What motivated you to document your family history?

Primarily written to record important events, it was also an opportunity to stay informed about the ethics and morals of our company and family, even recognising individual

performers and achievers. We, therefore, decided against publishing it as an actual book; it's like a spiral book right now and is only meant for private circulation.

## How did your family receive it?

It was quite a challenge putting it together but I decided to be honest and wrote from my heart. It was an experience learning the art of presenting it in a way that everybody understood. If I wrote only of our achievements, it would have been hypocrisy. So I included every aspect of our family and business life, highlighting how our joint family system has stood the test of time. While some of us appreciated the transparency of the document, the others were keen to get their photographs. I was surprised, though, that the younger members appreciated it the most.

## LEGACY

## Something like this can be an emotional experience.

## How did you personally feel about the project?

There were several roadblocks and sometimes I felt like discontinuing it. But as the head of the family I couldn't have let it go.







(Opposite page) The fourth generation of the Sevantilal Kantilal family; (top) Jayantilal and Mrudulaben Shah; (bottom) the ladies of the family

#### What kind of research did it entail?

I accessed the depths of my memory and read old letters, papers and documents. The idea was to highlight how each of us has contributed to the building of the family through an idea, innovation or even an unusual thought. And when I had a humongous amount of information, I decided to divide it into three parts—the first delves into the past and learnings; the second is a collection of our philosophies that have stemmed from our experiences; and the third looks into the future. The purpose was to know more, share, and thereby progress and prosper!

#### Any tips for those who want to emulate the idea?

Anyone who wants to write their family history should think about its relevance for the family and society at large. To undertake something like this, even if it's the head of the family, one should be a liberal person with an impeccable reputation.

—Dhanishta Shah

#### FLIGHT IN TIME

WE ARE WHO WE ARE DESPITE THE INEVITABLE EFFECT OF TIME. THERE COULDN'T BE A BETTER HEALER OF THE VAGARIES THAN IRINA WERNING. THE BUENOS AIRES-BASED PHOTOGRAPHER BRINGS BACK MEMORIES THROUGH PORTRAITS THAT HAVE 'OLD' REFERENCE POINTS. SHE RESHOOTS HER SUBJECTS IN THE SAME SETTING AS THE OLD PHOTOGRAPH OR—in the absence of those locations—REPLICATES THEM WITH SIMILAR SETS AND COLOURS OF ATTIRE. IN HER PROJECT CALLED 'BACK TO THE FUTURE', HER SUBJECTS SOMETIMES RE-ENACT CHILDHOOD MOODS AND EXPRESSIONS. AMAZINGLY DETAILED IN PROPS, IMAGE QUALITY AND COLOUR BALANCE, WERNING'S PHOTOGRAPHS ARE A HAUNTING REFLECTION, IF NOT



Irina Werning

A SPITTING IMAGE OF THE PAST. THIS INTERNATIONAL PROJECT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR SOME TIME, BUT WAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED IN DELHI BY THE ARGENTINEAN. VISIT [WWW.IRINAWERNING.COM](http://WWW.IRINAWERNING.COM) TO CHECK OUT HER PREVIOUS WORK; IF YOU WANT ONE OF YOUR PICTURES TO BE RE-CLICKED, SEND IN YOUR CHILDHOOD PICTURES AT [BACKTOTHEFUTUREPICS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:BACKTOTHEFUTUREPICS@GMAIL.COM) AND WAIT TILL WERNING SELECTS YOU.



CINEMA

# Director's first choice

Shilbhadra Datta

**A**t 86, Bengali actor **Haradhan Bandopadhyay** still has a kitty brimming with assignments. He has just signed *Barota Dasher Bongon Local* by Debadittya Banerjee and *Geetanjali* by Debi Bhattacharya; and he will soon be seen in television serials *Alpo Premer Golpo*, *Sansarer Panchali* and *Bhasha*. Still addicted to his craft, Bandopadhyay believes the younger generation lacks the emotions essential for wholesome cinema. Playing diverse roles, from a business executive to an arrogant father, se-

nile patriarch and paralytic landlord, he honed his skill with Satyajit Ray in *Mahanagar* (1963), *Kapurush O Mahapurush* (1965), *Seemabaddha* (1971), *Sonar Kella* (1974), *Joi Baba Felunath* (1979) and *Sakha Prosakha* (1992). Though late, recognition came his way in 2005 with the National Award for *Krantikal* by Sekhar Das, where he played an Alzheimer's patient. "It matters very little at this age. That they still want to see me act is more than any recognition."

—Partha Mukherjee



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Sameer Marathe



# Memories of food

Kaumudi Marathé shares her legacy of flavour—and love

Last September, my beautiful grandmother, appropriately named Surekha Sirsakar, slipped away at the ripe old age of 92. She sipped a cup of scalding hot tea and ate a piece of dark chocolate and died content, joining her beloved wherever he waited for her.

By the end of her life, *Aji* [see photo] had become stone deaf but when I saw her just days before her death she heard me say, “I love you.” She replied instantly, “I love you too.” There was an upward lilt in her voice, reassuring me. As I looked down at her, decades of memories welled up in me and emerged in a flood of tears that dropped onto her silky skin.

In her beloved face, I saw the 20 year-old bride learning how to cook from a critical mother-in-law, the young mother lovingly making four different breakfasts for her picky children, the uncomplaining hostess endlessly entertaining her charming husband's vast circle of friends. I saw the energetic grandma hitching up her sari and climbing a guava tree to pick ripe fruit for us with her big, strong hands.

*Aji's* kitchen cupboard was always full of homemade treats. She was neither sour nor short-tempered. Not once did she stop us from coming back for yet another toffee. On hot summer afternoons, she was not too tired to tell us stories or teach us card games. Life was busy but there was always time to take a break from her chores. She sat with my grandfather on the airy veranda tapping her foot and humming a tune, watching the world go by.

*Aji* was a cook, not an epicure like me. I crave sashimi, Vietnamese coffee, a Danish tart I ate years ago. My food memories are very strong. My grandmother could take or leave food. She was very disciplined about her diet and exercise. Cooking may not even have been a passion to begin with. It was what women of her generation did. But unlike some, she embraced her work and mastered the skills. Whatever came to the table tasted just right every time, no need for excuses or apologies. She had the rare knack of consistency. What made her cooking outstanding, however, was the love she stirred in. You can taste it, you know.

Whatever came to the table tasted just right every time, no excuses, no apologies. The love she stirred in made *Aji's* cooking outstanding

As a posthumous child, she had missed the love of her father and been shunned by her grieving mother. All the love she had to give found expression through her generous, tireless and meticulous cooking for her family and friends. It is a testament to this love that the flavours of her luxurious tomato-coconut soup, succulent *palak* meat, garlicky *patal bhaji*, tender fried pomphret and jewel-red guava toffee still linger on the tongues of those she fed.

Around the time that I got married in 1991, *Aji* was no longer cooking regularly. She began to forget recipes and did not consider her achievements as a cook significant. My need to connect with my roots propelled me to sit her down and insist she share the recipes for my favourites: *masurichi usal*, coriander chicken, *khobryachi vadi*. They appeared in my first cookbook, *Maharashtrian Cuisine: A Family Treasury* (Bombay: Zaika, BPI, 1998) and my second, *The Essential Marathi Cookbook* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2009). At my first catering gig in California in 2007, I served *Aji's* tomato-coconut soup, *Santosh* (contentment). Twenty guests raised their glasses of wine to toast her, 10,000 miles away. She deserved all the accolades.

But recipes are only part of *Aji's* legacy. Her generous and unconditional love was passed on to her daughter, Meera. And she schooled me, not by any dictum but by the selfless way she lived her life. There is always enough food to go around. Serve what you make with a smile. Never refuse a child something to eat. Share what you have—people are more important than things. Never go to bed angry because this might be your last day.

*Aji* and Mom made my childhood a joy and gave me memories I will always treasure. Today, when I cook with my daughter Keya, I tell her stories of her grandmother and great-grandmother. They keep her personal history bubbling fragrantly on the stove and, not surprisingly, her favourite soup is...Contentment.

Marathé is a Los Angeles-based journalist, cookbook author and chef

# Flaws and all

Understanding an imperfect world—not perfection itself—is the goal of Buddha's *Dhamma*, contends Stephen Batchelor

For traditional Buddhists, the Buddha has come to be seen as the perfect person. He is an example of what a human being can ultimately become through treading the eight-fold path. The Buddha is said to have eliminated from his mind every last trace of greed, hatred, and confusion, so that they are 'cut off at the root, made like a palm stump, so that they will never arise again'. At the same time, the Buddha is believed to have acquired faultless wisdom and boundless compassion. He is omniscient and unerringly loving. He has become God.

Yet the many passages in the Pali Canon that depict the Buddha's relations with Mara paint a different picture. On attaining awakening in Uruvela, Siddhattha Gotama did not 'conquer' Mara in the sense of literally destroying him. For Mara is a figure that continues to present himself to Gotama even after the awakening. He keeps reappearing under different guises until shortly before the Buddha's death in Kusinara. This implies that craving and the other 'armies of Mara' have not been literally deleted from Gotama's being. Rather, he has found a way of living with Mara that deprives the devil of his power. To be no longer manipulated by Mara is equivalent to being free from him. The Buddha's freedom is found not in destroying greed and hatred, but in comprehending them as transient, impersonal emotions that will pass away of their own accord as long as you do not cling to and identify with them.

In Pali, Mara means 'the killer'. The devil is a mythic way of talking about



**If Mara is a metaphor for death, Buddha is a metaphor for life. You can't have Buddha without Mara any more than you can have life without death**

whatever imposes limits on the realisation of one's potential as a human being. As well as physical death, Mara refers to anything that wears you down or causes your life to be reduced, blighted, or frustrated. Craving is a kind of inner death because it clings to what is safe and familiar, blocking one's capacity to enter the stream of the path. Yet other kinds of 'death' can be imposed by social pressures, political persecution, religious intolerance, war, famine, earthquakes, and so on. Mara permeates the fabric

of the world in which we struggle to realise our goals and achieve fulfilment. Siddhattha Gotama was no more exempt from these constraints than anyone else.

If Mara is a metaphor for death, Buddha, as his twin, is a metaphor for life. The two are inseparable. You cannot have Buddha without Mara any more than you can have life without death.... Instead of perfection or transcendence, the goal of Gotama's *Dhamma* was to embrace this suffering world without being overwhelmed by the attendant fear or attachment, craving or hatred, confusion or conceit that came in its wake.

A clue to how this might be done is found in the parable of the raft. Gotama compares the *Dhamma* to a draft that one assembles from pieces of driftwood, fallen branches and other bits of rubbish. Once it has taken you across the river that lies in your way, you leave it behind on the bank for someone else and proceed on your way. The *Dhamma* is a temporary expedient. To treat it as an object of reverence is as absurd as carrying the raft on your back even though you no longer need it. To practice the *Dhamma* is like making a collage. You collect ideas, images, insights, philosophical styles, meditation methods, and ethical values that you find here and there in Buddhism, bind them securely together, then launch your raft into the river of your life. As long as it does not sink or disintegrate and can get you to the other shore, it works. That is all that matters. It need not correspond to anyone else's idea of what 'Buddhism' is or should be.

Excerpt from *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* by Stephen Batchelor; published by HarperCollins (Rs 299; 302 pages)





# What's in STORE?

In the whole debate over foreign direct investment in retail that had the whole country in a tizzy and Parliament at a virtual standstill, one name resounded as both boon and bane, depending on which side of the fence you stand: Walmart. Established in 1962 by businessman Sam Walton in Arkansas, USA, the franchise—formerly known as Wal-Mart—has grown into the largest variety retail chain in the world. Walton, who learnt all about retail while working at his father's store after school hours, had a simple strategy: a profusion of brands, low prices and long working hours. It worked—and in-

credibly well at that. It was only a matter of time before a chain of Walmart stores sprang up across the country. And despite protests over the years by labour unions, religious organisations and environmental groups aplenty against the company's policies and business practices, the juggernaut has refused to stop. Today, Walmart has 4,100 outlets in the US and a further 3,100 in 13 countries around the world (sometimes operating under different names), apart from a successful online presence ([walmart.com](http://walmart.com)). Love it or hate it, you just can't ignore Walmart—as Indians are just beginning to discover.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JANUARY 1962

- On 10 January, an avalanche of ice and snow destroyed six villages in Peru located at the base of Mount Huascaran. Almost 4,000 people lost their lives in the tragedy.
- On 26 January, spacecraft Ranger 3 was launched to study the moon.
- On 30 January, the US performed a nuclear test at the Nevada Test Site, about 75 miles northwest of Las Vegas.

“With every experience, you alone are painting your own canvas, thought by thought, choice by choice.

—American talk-show queen  
Oprah Winfrey

## Mailstrom

*n.* An overwhelming amount of email; an email deluge.

**Example:** There are real advantages to email and incorporating risk management tips into your personal and firm email routines will help you enjoy the benefits while staying safe from the **mailstrom**.

—“Email: Preventing a mailstrom,”  
*The Law Society of British Columbia*,  
26 October 2009

## Smartphoneography

*n.* Photography using a smartphone's built-in camera.

**Example:** Taking pictures with a smartphone has become so popular; it even has its own name: iPhoneography, or **smartphoneography** for those with non-Apple mobile phones.

—Nick Bilton, “Say, can you make phone calls on that camera?,” *The New York Times*, 16 November 2011

## Diabulimia

*n.* An eating disorder in which a diabetic person attempts to lose weight by regularly omitting insulin injections.

**Example:** She is part of a recent wave of attention, activism, and research focused on Type 1 diabetics who restrict their insulin for weight control. In fact, there was no formal name for the dual diagnosis until three years ago, when an international group recommended “Eating Disorders-Diabetes Mellitus Type 1.” Patients and the media have embraced a catchier label: **diabulimia**.

—Marie McCullough, “How to treat diabulimics: Diabetics with eating disorders,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 April 2011

## Window Farm

*n.* A small, vertical, hydroponic garden installed by a window and used for growing crops such as herbs and vegetables.

**Example:** I put those designs on the Internet and made a social media site where people could comment on the design and give feedback. For three or four months, not much was happening. But people were buying the parts and creating their own **window farms**, so all of a sudden there was a flurry of posts.

—Britta Riley, “How to make a window garden, with crowd-sourced advice,” *The New York Times*, 17 August 2011

## DRUNKOREXIA

*n.* Eating less to offset the calories consumed while drinking alcohol.

**Example:** **Drunkorexia** is characterised by mostly restricting the day before, the day of, and the day after going out drinking. Restricting meaning skipping meals, not eating at all or eating very little in order to counterbalance or contradict the calories that alcohol contains.

—Hayley Hannan, “Women starving themselves to allow for booze calories,” *The New Zealand Herald*, 2 November 2011

## Call laundering

*pp.* Hiding the identity of a caller or making a phone call untraceable.

**Example:** Telemarketers increasingly are disguising their real identities and phone numbers to provoke people to pick up the phone. “Humane Soc.” may not be the Humane Society.... Regulators in Wisconsin and many other states are hearing a significant jump in complaints about what is often called ‘caller ID spoofing’ or **call laundering**.

—Matt Richtel, “Who’s on the line? Increasingly, caller ID is duped,” *The New York Times*, 22 November 2011



“Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present.

—American motivational speaker Jim Rohn

## Whale Fall

*n.* A whale carcass that has fallen to the ocean floor and now supports a wide variety of marine organisms.

**Example:** Scripps scientists, in association with the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute, discovered the worms living upon whale carcasses that had fallen to the ocean floor off Monterey, Calif. These **whale falls** spawn unique communities of marine animals that can feed off the carcass for decades.

—Jessica Crawford, “Help name new species of deep-sea worms”, *University of California at San Diego News*, 16 May 2011

## Snarking

*n.* Combination of “snide” and “remark”. Sarcastic comment.

**Example:** There is a word for it, this feeling of wanting to say something biting and nasty when you catch the day’s news, triggered by the constant sense of absurdity overwhelming logic, of contradictions without consistency, of shifting sands. The word is **snark**, and it has two origins, one perhaps from Low German or Swedish, meaning a snide remark; and the other from Lewis Carroll.

—Gautam Patel, “Guess what, you’ve been snarked”, *Mumbai Mirror*, 9 December 2011

## Apple Tourist

*n.* A person whose vacation consists of visiting apple orchards and purchasing apples and apple-related products.

**Example:** At harvest time, it is not uncommon to see enormous buses—the kind you see taking gamblers to casinos on the East Coast—pull up in front of roadside stands around the state and disgorge scores of **apple tourists**.

—John Seabrook, “Crunch”, *The New Yorker*, 21 November 2011

BUZZ

## SLAKE YOUR WANDERLUST

There’s no time like the present to dust off that passport. Hot on the heels of organising a landmark trip of 27 silvers from across India to South Africa in November, Mumbai-based Inorbit Tours Pvt Ltd has announced its itinerary of tours for silvers in the first half of 2012.

On the agenda:

- Dubai (5 days/4 nights); departure on 25 January and 14 May
- South Africa (7 days/6 nights); departure on 19 February and 19 April
- China (7 days/6 nights); departure on 18 March and 30 April
- Extension to Macau and Hong Kong (4 days/3 nights); departure on 24 March and 6 May
- Hong Kong, Macau and South China (6 days/5 nights); departure on 22 March and 4 May

All tours include airfare, accommodation in four-star hotels, transportation, meals, sightseeing, visa and travel insurance.

Incentives are available for bookings by senior citizens’ associations. Get more details from Om Prakash Sahgal, Director, Inorbit Tours Pvt Ltd, 16, Kamat Industrial Estate, 396, Veer Savarkar Marg, Prabhadevi, Mumbai-25; Tel: 022-24229281, (0) 9821719940; Email: [omprakash@inorbittours.com](mailto:omprakash@inorbittours.com); Website: [www.inorbittours.com](http://www.inorbittours.com)



## “It’s satisfying to pass on my musical legacy”

*K P K Kutty, 78, Palakkad, for bringing music to the lives of children*



**F**ormer director and chief mentor of Indo Asian News Service, K P K Kutty could have led a comfortable city life after retirement or continued to hold plum positions in the media industry. Instead, this inspiring silver, first featured in the July 2006 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* ('Showing the Way'), chose to teach music—about 350 young children attend his free classes every day at various temples and schools in the 25-km radius of his ancestral village Kavasserri, in Kerala's Palakkad district. Son of renowned music teacher and temple priest late Kavasserri Vaidyanathaier Parassurama Sasthrikal, Kutty took up a career with the Indian Air Force in 1949. “My father advised that I should learn English and take up a prestigious government job.” In his spare time,

Kutty completed his post-graduation in English literature in 1958 and began to write articles as a hobby; one of his letters, to the editor of the *Indian Express*, catapulted him into journalism. But music remained both a calling and a companion—he was first inspired to play the veena by his blind elder sister at the age of six. Today, ‘Kutty Sir,’ as he is endearingly called, begins his day at 4 am and visits temples and schools for his classes without fail. Except for the six 21-day chemotherapy sessions he underwent when he was suffering from cancer in 2006, he has never missed a class, or wavered from his mission. Indeed, music is his true sustenance—he lives in a small house near a temple that also provides him with food.

—Nisary Mahesh



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