Longevity of life of seniors and decreasing population growth will lead India to have a larger number of senior citizens and decreasing younger generation. Experts opine that this trend will lead to more social turmoil and increase the problem of managing the senior citizens especially in the absence of social security systems in India. We are catching up with China when it comes to taking care of senior citizens. Whereas in China the State has intervened to create five million dwelling per annum for the senior citizens, there is no such plan in India.

Senior communities in India were started as an act of charity. They were called ‘Old Age Homes’ or ‘Home for the Aged’. More than the elder citizens, the children and close family members resented the very idea of the elders moving into a ‘home’. Unlike in developed countries, India does not provide any social security. Senior citizens do not have the benefit of insurance cover for assisted, memory or continuous care. What we see today is a change in the perception of people and accepting the reality that the retirement communities are here to stay forever.

Team Covai has tried to analyse the effect of senior citizens of the middle-class population, which is expected to grow in huge numbers in the next decade, and tried to provide solutions without being a burden on their family or to the society. The Model will have to be refined to match the aspirations, customs and traditions of people who live in different part of India, where culture is different. Ultimately, the aim is to make senior citizens enjoy life, as they should! Why not?

For more information, visit www.covaiprop.com or contact sri@covaiprop.com or 9894317840.
It’s been a chilling winter—and the cold has had little to do with it. The massacre of innocents in Peshawar has driven home yet again the fact that the most vulnerable in society are soft targets, whether it is a terror attack or exploitation and abuse.

Consider the report released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at a conference on ageing in India that suggests that one in 10 silvers are subjected to verbal, physical or emotional abuse after turning 60. The survey, primarily conducted in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, where the silver population is higher than the national average, revealed that abuse was higher in rural India than urban centres. And while the main perpetrators were from outside the family for silver men, for women, much of the abuse came from within the family. A sobering note to end the year.

However, there is a glimmer of hope ahead with the new Government appearing to put silver advocacy on its agenda. Just last month, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment constituted the National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSrC), the new avatar of the toothless National Council for Older Persons (NPOP). According to a media release, the NCSrC will advise the Centre and state governments on the gamut of issues related to the welfare of senior citizens and enhancement of their quality of life, with special reference to policies, programmes and legislative measures; promotion of physical and financial security, health and independent and productive living; and awareness generation and community mobilisation.

Meanwhile, speaking at the UNFPA conference, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot reiterated the Government’s commitment “to doing everything we can to address the issue of the elderly”, saying it will strengthen convergence with all key social sector ministries, such as health and family welfare, rural development and panchayati raj and the Census Commission, to ensure a coordinated response to the multiple challenges of ageing.

These are heartening signs to be sure. But only the months ahead will tell whether the rhetoric translates into reality, whether propaganda becomes policy. If that happens, 2015 will indeed spell acche din for silvers in India. On behalf of the entire team at Harmony-Celebrate Age, I wish you and yours a happy new year!

Suresh Natarajan

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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DANCE FOR A CAUSE
Kathak dancer Jhelum Paranjape gives a fresh lease of life to her iconic institute Smitalay

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN
Jewellery-maker Vimala Ramani turns hobby into business
देश के सबसे लम्बे आगरा-लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस-वे का शिलान्यास सम्पन्न

यह प्रोजेक्ट की प्रक्रिया का दूसरा कदम बना, जिसका कार्यक्रम इस साल की शुरुआत में लगभग पूरा होगा। साथ ही, आगरा-लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस-वे के निर्माण के माध्यम से लोगों की यात्रा की गति की बढ़ति के साथ-साथ क्षेत्र के निवेश को बढ़ाने और ग्रामीणों के जीवन की स्थितियों पर आधारित है। यह प्रोजेक्ट का निर्माण उत्तर प्रदेश के विकास की गति को दूर करने के साथ-साथ आत्मनिर्भर निर्माण की ओर बढ़ाने के लिए आवश्यक है।

आगरा-लखनऊ एक्सप्रेस-वे निर्माण के कारण

- समस्त एक्सप्रेस-वे के माध्यम से आगरा-लखनऊ में गति से बढ़ती है।
- इस प्रोजेक्ट के माध्यम से आगरा-लखनऊ के बीच यातायात की संक्रमण को महसूली बनाना।
- यह प्रोजेक्ट के माध्यम से वाहनों की गति बढ़ाने के साथ-साथ उत्तर प्रदेश के विकास की गति को तेजी से बढ़ाने के लिए आवश्यक है।
- इस प्रोजेक्ट के माध्यम से वाहनों की गति बढ़ाने के साथ-साथ आत्मनिर्भर निर्माण का आयोजन होगा।
- यह प्रोजेक्ट के माध्यम से वाहनों की गति बढ़ाने के साथ-साथ आत्मनिर्भर निर्माण का आयोजन होगा।

वन रहा है आज, सेवर रहा है कल
January is a very special time when we reflect upon the past year and make resolutions for the one ahead, striving to celebrate each day and bring out the best in ourselves. This month, our featured silvers reflect that spirit of self-actualisation, each one entirely comfortable in their own skin and engaging with the world around them in their inimitable ways.

On the cover is filmmaker-painter-poet-fashion designer-revivalist-Sufi exponent-social worker Muzaffar Ali. He takes that long list of labels in his stride, preferring to define himself as “an artist in quest for a balance between humanity and beauty.” The legendary Ritha Devi tells us how she looks upon herself as the “dwararakshini, the gatekeeper whose duty it is to open doors for those who wish to enter the garden of Indian classical dance”. In an exclusive interview, Vijay Seshadri, the first Indian-American to win the Pulitzer for poetry, explains, “A poem is like an animal you are coaxing out of the forest to eat from your hand”—now he has the literary world eating out of his! And veteran adman Arun Chaudhuri chronicles the evolution of advertising, “which drives the engines of human desire” in India.

Elsewhere, we present highlights from Vijayanagar Empire: Ruins to Resurrection, ace photographer Raghu Rai’s paean to Hampi. And our beloved yoga columnist Shameem Akhtar kicks off the new year with a twist to her column: an exploration of the yoga-zodiac link. Just a taste of what’s to come this year—features to inform and inspire, delight and motivate. Keep reading and keep writing to tell us what you’d like from your magazine. Happy 2015!

—Arati Rajan Menon

My father Late Shri Chandratan Bagri established a school—Bhairav Ratan Matri Pathshala—in Bikaner, Rajasthan, on 15 April 1928 in the memory of my elder brother Bhairav Ratan and my first mother Sugani Devi. When my first mother breathed her last at a very young age, my father was pressurised to opt for a second marriage. He gave his consent to my maternal grandfather (nana) only on the condition that a major part of the traditional dowry be used for a good cause. In consultation with my nana, he opened the first girls’ school in Bikaner, an unacceptable idea for the times. Despite protests from our mohalla, they were determined to educate girls. The school was started with just four girls, including my sister Ratan Bai.

Today, Shri Bhairav Ratna Matri Senior Secondary School offers classes up to 12th standard. The strength of the school is 576 and the classrooms are equipped with CCTV and a voice control system. The tuition fee is fixed so low that even the underprivileged can afford to send their daughters. After my father’s and sister’s demise, for the past five years, I have been in charge of the school, managing it online and through personal inspections. As the school is older than me, I affectionately refer to it as my ‘elder sister’. Irrespective of age, we can make contributions to society while making a difference in our everyday lives.

Manmohan Bagri
Mumbai

Sutapa Patnaik is a researcher and writer on culture and dance (see ‘Encounter’ this month), and has deep editorial experience in various academic journals. She writes mostly on Indian art and culture. Her preferred areas include the arts and dance traditions of India; temple architecture; and temple traditions of Odisha. Supported by insight from her multilevel academic grounding of commerce, law, public administration, business and culture studies, she aims to build a critical commendation of Indian culture with proper documentation and adequate dissemination of information. She has worked extensively on the evolution, growth and decline of the Devadasi system of India. Currently, she is writing a book on the doyen of Odissi dance, Adiguru Pankaj Charan Das. Based in Hyderabad, she was previously the editorial lead (India operations) of a 100 year-old multinational company managing industry information. She now runs her own publishing firm. You can reach her at sutapapatnaik@gmail.com

Arun Chaudhuri, our columnist in ‘At Large’, began his career in advertising in the mid-1970s in Clarion McCann Advertising Services. He went on to work in other leading agencies like OBM and RK Swamy before setting up Campaign, a Kolkata-based agency. He divested his stake in the company in 1997 to start BRAND, an organisation that specialises in marketing research, rural marketing and creative services. Chaudhuri has been associated with a number of universities, teaching advertising and public relations since the early 1990s. He has authored Indian Advertising: Laughter & Tears (2014), Eleven New Plays (2013), Indian Advertising 1780 to 1950 (2007), ITC versus BAT (1997) and Revaluation (1992).
A cure for Alzheimer’s may soon be possible, if scientists at the Stanford School of Medicine have their way. Encouraged by similar trials on mice, they have begun the transfusion of blood from healthy people under the age of 30 to silvers suffering from mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease. In the animal trials, the transfusion improved the cognition and health of the receivers and actually made them look physically younger, as The Washington Post reports. Interestingly, reversing the process yielded similar effects—young animals who received blood from older mice started to age prematurely and experienced difficulty in healing from injuries. “A protein in blood plasma called GDF11 decreases with age in both animals and humans,” explains team leader Tony Wyss-Coray. “When mice received daily injections of the protein in experiments, their brain function improved. Our preliminary results suggest that human blood rejuvenates as well. We saw astounding effects. The human blood had beneficial effects on every organ we’ve studied so far. Of course, the experiment is still in its early stages. It will take months to follow through with patients to determine results and see if the hypothesis is worth pursuing further.”
SCENT OF DANGER

It’s not sensible to dismiss your olfactory sense. According to scientists at the University of Chicago, a poor sense of smell could well be a predictor of increased risk of death in elders. In their study of over 3,000 people aged 57 to 85, 39 per cent of respondents who failed a simple smelling test died within five years, compared to a 19 per cent rate within five years for those with moderate smell loss and 10 per cent for those with a healthy sense of smell. For the test, the team used ‘Sniffin’ Sticks’, felt-tip pens loaded with peppermint, fish, orange, rose and leather odours. “This test establishes that sense of smell is a great indicator of your overall health,” lead author Jayant Pinto writes in journal PLOS One. “Loss of the sense of smell is like the canary in the coal mine. It doesn’t cause death, but it’s an early warning that something has gone badly wrong. A healthy olfactory system has stem cells that self-regenerate while a loss of smell could signal a decrease in the body’s ability to rebuild key components.”

HORMONES THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY

**Serotonin**: Prevents depression and makes you feel happy. It can be released by exposure to sunlight, by eating foods rich in carbohydrates and by exercising.

**Dopamine**: Helps you to feel mentally alert. It can be released by eating foods that are rich in protein.

**Ghrelin**: Reduces stress and can help you relax. These hormone levels increase before consumption of meals and decrease after meals. That’s why we are in better moods after eating.

**Phenylethamine**: Results in the feelings we get in the early stages of a relationship. Cocoa beans contain phenylethamine.
The smart mirror can connect to your mobile devices and home ‘internet of things’ network, perhaps suggesting recipes to improve your skin based on ingredients in your fridge, or cooling the temperature of your home if you look hot.

In a move that channels the fable of *Snow White*, Panasonic unveiled its prototype ‘Smart Mirror’ at consumer goods and home appliances tradeshow IFA 2014 in Berlin. As news agency Reuters reports, the mirror uses sensors and facial recognition software to assess your face, determine key areas that require extra attention (wrinkles, bags under the eyes, blemishes) and recommend beauty tips to make you look younger, longer, displaying an actual list of online retailers that sell the products right for you. Watch this space for more on the product—and how much it would set you back!

In an engaging interview with Sky News, Peter Thiel, cofounder of international e-commerce giant PayPal, says the next wave of Silicon Valley start-ups will have just one goal in mind: zap ageing. “Can we treat ageing itself like a disease that can be slowed or possibly reversed?” he wonders. “I think there are a lot of surprisingly promising clues that there are things you can do on this—instead of acceptance or denial, we should be fighting it.” He cites the example of Google’s new biotech company Calico, dedicated to extending lifespan, and the Palo Alto Longevity Prize, a $1-million science competition dedicated to ending ageing.

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**TWO GOOD!**

The going is indeed good for Indian silvers who want to switch to smartphones with two new releases in the market: the Mitashi Play Senior Friend Android Smartphone at ₹ 4,999 and the Philips Xenium X2566 at ₹ 3,800. Here are the highlights:

- **Mitashi Play Senior Friend Android Smartphone:** Dual-SIM, 4-inch display; large font size; SOS button for emergencies, colour-coded icons; user-friendly interface to access the Internet and social networking apps; FM radio.
- **Philips Xenium X2566:** 2.4-inch display; SOS button; large font size; long-lasting battery; user-friendly interface to surf the Internet; high-volume speaker.

Now, you choose!

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**THE NEXT FRONTIER**

In an engaging interview with Sky News, Peter Thiel, cofounder of international e-commerce giant PayPal, says the next wave of Silicon Valley start-ups will have just one goal in mind: zap ageing. “Can we treat ageing itself like a disease that can be slowed or possibly reversed?” he wonders. “I think there are a lot of surprisingly promising clues that there are things you can do on this—instead of acceptance or denial, we should be fighting it.” He cites the example of Google’s new biotech company Calico, dedicated to extending lifespan, and the Palo Alto Longevity Prize, a $1-million science competition dedicated to ending ageing.

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When science melds with fantasy, reality can be magical indeed...
EUTHANASIA IN INDIA

1994
A two-judge bench of the Supreme Court struck down Section 309 of IPC (attempt to suicide) as unconstitutional

1996
A Constitution bench of the SC overruled the 1994 verdict and said right to life does not include right to die; the same judgement gave rise to debate on euthanasia of the terminally ill, saying it can be permitted only by legislation

27 April 2005
Law minister H R Bhardwaj entrusts Law Commission to come out with a legal paper

28 April 2006
Law Commission suggests a draft bill on passive euthanasia; pleas must be made to HC which should decide it after expert opinion

16 December 2009
SC notice on human rights activist Pinky Virani’s plea to permit euthanasia for Aruna Shanbaug, a nurse who was strangled and sodomised by a ward boy and had been in a vegetative state for 37 years

7 March 2011
SC allows passive euthanasia, recommends decriminalisation of attempt to suicide

THE EUTHANASIA TANGLE

THE JOHNS HOPKINS PRECURSORS STUDY ASKED A GROUP OF DOCTORS ABOUT WHAT MEASURES THEY WOULD HAVE TAKEN AT THEIR END OF LIFE, AND THE FOLLOWING WAS THE RESPONSE

FOR LONG, elder advocacy groups have bemoaned the ‘ageism’ prevalent in the UK. Now, they’re calling British attitudes to elders downright chilling after a new poll on euthanasia. The survey by ComRes, commissioned by disability campaign group ‘Not Dead Yet’ and anti-assisted suicide alliance ‘Care Not Killing’, finds that one in 10 British people believe silvers should be offered a ‘reward’ if they opt for assisted suicide. As London newspaper The Times reports, the majority of the public (54 per cent) support assisted dying while 58 per cent maintain that it would be impossible to create a system safe from abuse.

And close to 50 per cent believe hospitals should be allowed to administer fatal drugs to patients with no prospect of recovery. The poll assumes great significance with an Assisted Dying Bill recently returned to the British parliament for detailed scrutiny—it would allow terminally ill patients judged to have no more than six months to live and a “settled intention” to end their lives to be prescribed a lethal dose of drugs if two doctors agree. “The obvious conclusion is that while the public are broadly sympathetic to the rights-based argument in favour of ending lives at the time of a person’s choice, there is widespread concern about the abuse to which any system is likely to be open,” says Andrew Hawkins, chairman of ComRes.
Gentle TRANSITION

No one adapts to changing circumstances quite like the Japanese. In the 1960s, the country’s Kewpie Corp started selling canned baby food to cater to the burgeoning number of young families in the aftermath of World War II. Today, with the country’s silver population rapidly rising, Kewpie has launched a range of nursing care food called Gentle Menu, as news agency Reuters reports. These stewed or pureed ready-to-eat meals served in plastic pouches include favourites like beef sukiyaki and chicken teriyaki. The range includes 60 different products with each serving priced at 180 yen (about $90). Kewpie’s healthcare food unit head Tsutomu Morota expects the venture, which is less than a year old, to become a huge success with the right marketing strategies. “What we need to do is to make it easier for consumers to access our goods by securing stores that sell our products,” he reasons. “We need to work on direct marketing, which includes home deliveries.” Smart thinking, considering one in four people in Japan is over the age of 65.

Silverglades presents Melia First Citizen

Located at the foothills of the picturesque Aravallis, First Citizen is Delhi NCR’s first premium senior living community. The project is part of The Melia which is spread over 17.5 lush green acres. Strategically located at Sector 35, Gurgaon Extension, Sohna, First Citizen is quiet, safe and easily accessible from all parts of Gurgaon. The project is just a 10-minute drive from the high profile location of Golf Course Extension Road and is right next to the GD Goenka World School and KR Mangalam University. An enviable blend of sheer luxury and suburban lifestyle, First Citizen marks the next step in concept of retirement homes, offering convenient range of units in one and two-bedroom configurations.

The project is developed by Silverglades, one of India’s leading boutique developers, specializing in residential housing, commercial, township projects and golf-based leisure developments, and Age Ventures India (AVI), a non-profit organization that seeks to persuade developers to include a retirement wing in their residential developments.

Websites: http://silverglades.com

- 156 exclusive age friendly 1 & 2 BHK Air Conditioned Apartments.
- Separate Club with modern Dining, TV lounge & Hobby Room etc.
- Gated complex with CCTV security.
- Tie up with Artemis Hospital for all medical services like Visiting Doctors, 24x7 Nursing Station & Physiotherapy center.
A new British survey by Datamonitor says women are slowly moving away from 'anti-ageing' in favour of 'pro-ageing': celebrating their natural selves, looking healthy and being honest about their age.

YOUR ANTI-AGEING FIT COULD LIE IN YOUR GENES. Ace inventor Professor Chris Toumazou from London’s Imperial College has created a treatment tailor-made to a person’s DNA that can reduce wrinkles by a third in three months. Available at London clinic Genou, the process involves creating a genetic profile with a cheek swab and microchip that shows speed of degradation of collagen and level of antioxidants, and then manufacturing a bespoke serum to suit the individual’s needs. Besides collagen and antioxidants, the serum contains vitamins A and C, white mulberry root extract, red baron grass, tripeptides and amino acids. “In a way, it’s not about the serum, it’s about the science,” Toumazou, who also invented the cochlear ear implant, the artificial pancreas for Type 1 diabetics and the wireless heart monitor, tells London newspaper The Telegraph. “Too much collagen will damage the skin. You will get collagen overload. Too little and it won’t have an impact. This test shows exactly how much can be metabolised.” The treatment costs £ 600 (about $58,000) for a four-week course.

FROM BOTOX TO ‘NOTOX’

THE BOTOX BACKLASH appears to have begun. Against the backdrop of a rash of not-so-attractive celebrity sightings that have given plastic surgery a bad name—Donatella Versace and Renee Zellweger, for example—London newspaper Daily Mail tells us the sales of Botox have declined for the first time since its introduction 12 years ago. And, what's more, 'Notox' (non-invasive) treatments such as facials and spa therapies are up 200 per cent. "There has been a massive switch from injectables to anti-ageing treatments because women are concerned about the effects of overuse of injectables," says British beauty expert Dean Nathanson. "People are looking for more natural ways to hold back the years."
Nothing can dim the light that shines from within.
The silvers at Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, kept their inner light shining bright as they learnt the art of lantern making in a session held on 9 December (above). The activity was conducted by social worker Sayli Sarfare; she introduced the seniors to an innovative way of preparing lanterns at home using balloons and thread rolls. The Fevicol-dipped messy hands reminded many silvers of their childhood and they were delighted with the bright and colourful end result.

Earlier, on 28 November, the Centre celebrated Children’s Day (right) and the birthdays of members by organising a fancy dress competition for silvers and their grandchildren on the theme of nature. The event was a great success and helped the seniors bond with their grandchildren.

There was more than just fun and games in store, though. On 1 December, Chandrashekhar Thakur from Central Depository Services (India) Ltd conducted an Investors Awareness Programme for members at the centre. Many silvers actively participated at the event with queries regarding stock-market investments and returns. In his talk, Thakur explained the demat mechanism in simple and lucid language with a slide show. He suggested that silvers should not invest their entire capital in stocks but can put in a share of 20-25 per cent and increase their investment further in case of good returns. He also elaborated upon various protections available to investors from the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange.

A day later, Dr Suneeta Kushi and her team briefed members of the centre about the causes and symptoms of dengue. She explained that as it is a bacterial infection, it doesn’t have a direct cure but that the symptoms can be controlled through medication and, hence, prevention is important.
Learn a language. It’s time to enrol in that Spanish/French/German course that has always fascinated you. According to a study by the Pennsylvania State University in the US, learning a new vocabulary can strengthen your brain by rewiring your brain network both structurally and functionally. The team studied 39 native English speakers over six weeks, half of whom learnt Chinese vocabulary. At the end of the time, those learning the new vocabulary showed a more connected brain network. “Like physical exercise, the more you use specific areas of your brain, the more it grows and gets stronger,” writes study leader Ping Li in the *Journal of Neurolinguistics*. “The fact that we can still see anatomical changes in the brain in the elderly is very encouraging news.”

Then: Old denim pants

Now: Denim organiser

At last, a new use for worn-out jeans that are too disheveled to donate. No matter how full of holes the knees may be, chances are the legs along the sides are still intact. Repurpose your jeans and convert them into this fun denim organiser by simply using the legs of cut-off jeans and sewing them into multipurpose pockets for storage. You’ll need three pairs of jeans legs, plain denim fabric, hardboard, extra-strong jeans or all-purpose thread, a plastic or wood dowel, cord for hanging and basic sewing skills. To begin with, cut the plain denim fabric in the size you desire your organiser to be. Cut the pant’s leg sections apart at the outer seam, trimming away the seam. Trim three leg pieces of equal height and width and sew them together to form each pocket row, using seams and dividing them into three. Now, mark a line on the base fabric and place the pocket row on fabric and sew it to the base. Repeat the entire process to make more such pockets on the base fabric. Make curtain loops with the remaining denim fabric and attach to the completed base fabric. Insert a dowel and attach a cord for hanging. For better stability, use a curtain rod and brackets for hanging. You can decorate the pockets too.

RECYCLING FACTS

- Indians discard an estimated 15-20 million pair of jeans every year, of which 100 per cent is recyclable.
- It takes 1,500 gallons of water to produce less than 1 kg of cotton needed to make just one pair of jeans.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. **SIMPLY CUT DENIM SEAMS, COIL, AND GLUE THEM INTO STURDY COASTERS AND SET BENEATH YOUR WARM MUG OF COFFEE.**
2. **CONVERT AN OLD DENIM LEG INTO A CUTLERY POUCH BY SIMPLY CUTTING AND SEWING ITS EDGES INTO A POCKET AND ATTACH A VELCRO TAPE FOR EASY OPENING.**
Pushing through crowds, waiting in long queues to make payments, heaving bags of groceries...when did shopping become such a chore? Well, not anymore, with numerous India-based apps that can help you shop for your daily needs sitting in the comfort of your home. Online grocery stores such as LocalBanya, BigBasket, Jiffstore, and Indian Grocery have come up with easy-to-use apps for Android, Windows and iOS, and are upgrading their services to home deliver within hours. You can easily browse through the product catalogue, view the products on offer, and add them to your cart or shopping list to place orders. Most of these websites also mention the nutritional benefits of each product. Each app offers unique features. While BigBasket simplifies your search through ‘smart basket,’ which automatically includes products that you shop for most often, the Indian Grocery app enables you to search in 15 Indian languages and buy the product by the name you are familiar with.

**MEDWATCHER**

**Available for:** Android 2.3.3 and up; iOS 7.1 or later

**What it does:** MedWatcher is a free easy-to-use mobile tool for both the general public and healthcare professionals, developed in collaboration with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It is the only app that allows you to seek full information of a drug’s medical usage and known side-effects, description and its availability in the market. It also enables users to report information about a drug side-effects and view reports of adverse events submitted to the app.

**After installation:** Once the app is installed, you can make a quick list of all the drugs, vaccines and medical devices your family or patients use and track the latest developments in the app through push notifications or via email. The app notifies you when other users report side-effects of products used by you. Submit an adverse event report to FDA using the easy-to-use form on MedWatcher, or post to its online community to talk to others taking the same medicines.

**CLEVERMIND**

**Available for:** iOS 6.1 or later

**What it does:** This one’s more than just an app. It’s an interactive, easy-to-use and interesting way for silvers and people with cognitive impairments (such as Alzheimer’s and dementia) to surf the Internet, connect with their loved ones and stay independently entertained while strengthening their cognitive proficiency. Clevermind has a large interface with easy-to-read buttons and is guided by a voice-recognising, brain-training virtual assistant named MYIRA. The app is fairly basic; it’s essentially less complicated. The program works to challenge the user’s brain and improve memory, retention and cognitive proficiency.

**After installation:** Explore the multiple interactive options to stimulate the brain and revitalise the mind. The app offers simple games for entertainment, memory, thinking, and visual processing, besides quizzes to keep the brain active. Designed for silvers and people with cognitive disabilities, it has big buttons, large fonts and an intuitive interface. It enables you to maintain personalised journals and experience a simple way to connect through social networking sites like Facebook. The app comes with a simple Web browser and a password to protect the caregiver’s information.
Gluten Guilt

Common misconceptions surround the fad about going gluten-free, especially in later life, according to a new online report, The Truth About Gluten, by Consumer Reports National Research Centre. Avoiding gluten, a protein found mostly in wheat, barley, and rye, is not as healthy as it has been made out to be, especially if you aren’t gluten-sensitive. The non-profit organisation conducted a survey of about 1,000 Americans and found that at least one-third buy gluten-free products or actively try to avoid consuming gluten, citing reasons that they believed it improved digestion, led to healthy weight loss, lowered cholesterol and increased immunity. But the report, however, had several myths to bust with these conclusions:

- Food that is gluten-free does not mean it’s more nutritious—the nutritional value may actually be lesser than natural wheat flour products.
- Gluten-free diets could cause weight gain and not loss, as one tends to replace it with more sugar, fat or sodium to turn up the flavour of food.
- There’s a risk of more exposure to arsenic.
- Gluten-free products cost more.

The report also stated that going gluten-free does not have a positive effect on your health unless you’re allergic to it or have celiac disease (a condition in which gluten can cause major intestinal damage); it might be more of a negative dietary move. This was reiterated by a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) study that concluded that gluten-free did not mean a low-fat, low-sugar and low-sodium diet.

A WEIGHT LOSS of more than 10 per cent could up the risk of hip fractures in silvers by 56 per cent, says a Singapore-Chinese study from the National University of Singapore, which studied nearly 60,000 Chinese men and women between 45 and 75 years, with followups every five years. In both men and women, those with a weight loss that was 10 per cent or more had a higher chance of hip fractures compared to those with stable weight, described as loss or gain of 5 per cent or less. It was noted this applied less prominently to those who were lean-bodied from the beginning of the study. There was no relation between weight gain and hip fractures, however.

BREAKING UP WITH BREAD

With sales estimated to reach $10.5 billion in 2013, the gluten-free market is benefiting from consumers who choose their products thinking it is healthier.

Of those who eat gluten-free foods...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>do so for reasons other than sensitivity</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do so because they think it is healthier</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do so because they believe it aids in weight loss</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do so to help lower inflammation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do so to combat depression</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55% silvers who have dementia had never seen a doctor about their memory or cognitive problems before being diagnosed.

Early intervention would help them get better care and delay or lessen the cognitive decline. Out of the nearly 800 people over 70 years of age tested in the survey for dementia, about 297 had signs of dementia; out of those, 47 per cent had seen a doctor before about their memory problems. The study also found that those who were married were twice as likely to have seen a doctor; but those with less severe cognitive problems were less likely to have gone for a screening test.
Coffee against OBESITY

This is music to the ears of coffee lovers. Adding to research that says that coffee could lower the risk for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, a new study done on mice suggests that coffee could help prevent weight gain and fight obesity too. According to researchers at the University of Georgia, coffee contains a chemical compound, called chlorogenic acid or CGA, which reduces insulin resistance and accumulation of fat in the liver. For the study, the researchers fed their test mice with a high-fat diet for 15 weeks, and gave them a dose of CGA solution twice a week. They found that the dose of CGA, which acts like a powerful antioxidant that reduces inflammation, helped maintain blood sugar levels and liver composition, besides preventing weight gain. Obesity is caused by increased resistance to insulin and accumulation of fat in the liver, and is believed to up the risk of death by 30 per cent in silvers. Being overweight or obese is higher in Indian women, and is often associated with other diseases such as hypertension and diabetes. Could coffee fight all these ailments, or at least reduce their impact, all at once? The debate continues.
THE SUPPORT IN THE BLOOD VESSEL

If the blood vessel becomes narrow as a result of deposits, there is danger. Cardiologists use a catheter to place a stent at the danger point. The metal or plastic mesh is then expanded with a sort of bellows. The filigree wire mesh stabilises and supports the vessel so that the blood can flow through again unimpeded.

MAGICAL MEMORY

Your career could determine whether you are at a higher risk for dementia or not. People having complex mentally taxing jobs that involved analysis of data and management or negotiation with people had a higher likelihood of better memory than those who did less mentally challenging jobs, according to a Scottish study of 70 year-olds. Nearby in the UK, scientists have identified a weak spot for dementia in the brain which could lead to preventive action: this brain area develops in late adolescence and degenerates during early ageing. A team from

Take heart

STENT PATIENTS are likely to suffer from fewer heart attacks or clotting complications if they extend their anti-clotting medications and then a placebo drug for 18 months, and the other that took the medication for 30 months. The anti-clotting medications used were aspirin and clopidogrel or prasugrel. At the end, those who took the medications for longer were 0.5 times less at risk for instant thrombosis, while their risk for new heart attacks were halved, compared to those who took the medication for 12 months.

Medical Council Research, UK, studied MRI brain scans of 484 people between eight and 85 years-old, and found that those brain regions which were the last to develop were also the first to show decline owing to ageing, and were responsible for coordinating high order information relayed through different senses, such as sight and sound. The cognitive decline in these regions was seen in both Alzheimer’s and schizophrenic patients. Meanwhile, Washington University, which had established that sleep disorders are linked to Alzheimer’s, now has evidence of a protein that stimulates the brain to awaken, causing sleep loss and formation of plaques. Plaque formation increases the chance of developing dementia in humans and mice. For the study, the scientists eliminated the protein orexin in mice, which led to longer sleep and slower formation of plaques. They think that studying orexin in detail could lead to progress in reducing the chances of Alzheimer’s.

HAPPY HEART

Those suffering from coronary heart disease have a risk of being gloomy, which creates a circle of negativity and is likely to cause depression. The one way out of it is exercise—and it is more effective than we can imagine. A study at Hope College in Michigan, US, involved 324 coronary heart disease patients, with the average age of the group being 66. At the start of the study, current feelings of despair were recorded in 24 per cent of the patients, while 28 per cent expressed long-term feelings of hopelessness and 30 per cent had both types, from moderate to severe levels. In a year, it was seen that those who were involved in biking or walking at least thrice a week had experienced reduction in hopelessness by 12 per cent. It was also noted that hospital-based cardiovascular exercise therapy did not help in overcoming hopelessness; rather, it was home-based exercise that gave the silvers a boost.
Dr Nilen Shah, MS MCh Orthopaedics, gold medallist from Bombay University, has pioneered the use of performing knee replacements with minimal trauma to the body through the mini-subvastus method. While previously incisions for knee replacement ranged from nine to 12 inches, the incision through this method is only four inches.

Some of Dr Shah’s post-op patients have been able to walk on the same day after the surgery. He is also the first joint replacement surgeon in India to combine computer navigation with the mini-subvastus total knee replacement method.

Q—WHAT IS TKR?
A—TKR stands for total knee replacement, an operation devised to replace or resurface the arthritic, worn out, natural knee. When performed properly, it is an immensely successful operation, which can relieve pain and suffering due to arthritis, and transform the patient’s life.

Q—WHEN IS TKR NECESSARY?
A—TKR is necessary when the pain owing to knee arthritis is disturbing the daily lifestyle of the patient and does not get better through simple measures. Some people tend to stop using their knees when they get painful; they restrict walking or bending their knees. This is akin to not using the eye when the eye has a cataract; and of course, an eye with a cataract needs to have the cataract removed. Similarly, if there is pain when using the joint, the treatment is not to stop using the joint altogether, but to relieve the arthritis. Early intervention and surgery is always better for patients with painful arthritis.

Q—WHAT IS MINI TKR?
A—Although TKR is an immensely successful procedure, the recovery from the operation used to be long and painful. Many patients do not want to get operated because of the long recovery period. Mini TKR is devised to address this shortcoming by shortening the recovery period by causing less damage to the skin and underlying muscles while performing the operation.

Q—WHAT IS MINI-SUBVASTUS TKR?
A—In mini-subvastus TKR, no damage is caused to the quadriceps (thigh muscle) while performing the operation. This allows the patients to recover very quickly and almost without pain. Many patients are able to walk without any walking aid the day after the surgery. The patients also find it easier to bend their knee normally as the muscles have remained intact. They get back to their normal lifestyle much earlier, and are discharged home in only three to four days’ time.

Q—CAN MINI-SUBVASTUS TKR BE PERFORMED FOR ALL PATIENTS?
A—Yes, mini-subvastus TKR can be performed for all patients requiring a TKR. The approach has been successfully utilized for several obese patients and even for knees with severe deformities.

Q—WHAT IS HIGH-FLEX TKR?
A—Artificial knee joints, until a few years ago, would allow only a right angle bend of the knee which was clearly unacceptable to a large majority of the Indian patients. In high-flex TKR, the artificial joint is designed such that it would allow as much bend as the normal knee. After the replacement, the patients are able to perform routine daily activities such as sitting cross-legged, squatting and even kneeling.

Q—WHAT IS THE FREEDOM KNEE?
A—Freedom Knee is a variety of High-flex TKR that is especially designed for Asian patients.

Q—WHAT ARE THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH KNEE REPLACEMENT?
A—Infection and loosening are the surgical risks. There are some general risks of anaesthesia. However, the risk is less than one per cent.

Q—HOW LONG DOES THE JOINT REPLACEMENT LAST?
A—We have good results from joint replacements for as long as 20 years. With advanced joints and refined surgical techniques, the joint may last even longer.

Q—WHAT CARE NEEDS TO BE EXERCISED AFTER A JOINT REPLACEMENT?
A—Regular yearly follow-ups with the operating surgeon is essential. Care should be taken such that any infection within the body—urine, throat or tooth—is promptly treated. There are no restrictions as far as the use of the joint is concerned and the patient is allowed free and full use of it.

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For someone with no formal training in cinema or photography, professor Jeroo Mulla has proved that passion alone can take you to great heights. The vibrant 61 year-old recently won the Prof Satish Bahadur Lifetime Achievement Award for Outstanding Contribution to Film Education in South Asia, recognising her contribution to teaching film and photography at the Social Communications Media (SCM) diploma course at Mumbai’s Sophia College Polytechnic. “I barely knew what photography was;” she says, “I had barely picked up a camera. I taught myself photography and I taught myself films. There was no motive; just passion for films.”

As a student of educational media at Fairfield University in Connecticut in the US, she discovered her love for cinema when she chose Romanticism on the American Screen as one of her electives. She was introduced to the work of Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock, among others who defined the world of cinema.

Mulla had never thought that she would get into education, though. The journey of a lifetime began when her friend’s mother, who was the vice-principal of Sophia College, suggested her to teach film and photography. She recounts, “In my first year, they were highly satisfied with my overall performance. I was just 24 at that time, and quite kicked.” The SCM course is one of the earliest media courses in India and Mulla has played a major role in moulding it. It has been the springboard for many contemporary women journalists and film makers such as Maya Mirchandani and Reema Kagti, who trained under her. “I introduced practicals by initiating the idea of making a film. We made small films and showed them at the annual exhibition in the college.” Later, Mulla took over as course director and actively shaped the course in totality. She began to rope in people who were experts in various fields of media and invited them to teach as guest faculty. “When I retired in 2012, it was difficult for me to give up the department I shaped.” Now, Mulla is a visiting lecturer at Sophia Polytechnic, Xavier’s Institute of Communication and Symbiosis Institute of Mass Communication. She also runs her own month-long course, Cinema as Art.

Entering the field of cinema wasn’t easy. “It was a completely male-dominated profession when I started my career; I was the only woman in my entire editing set-up,” she says. “When I joined Sophia’s, I was quite shocked to discover the conservative background from which many of my students came and realised how biased the society was against women.”

Jeroo, who comes from a liberal background, is also a social activist and has inspired many of her students with her mission of gender equality, who are taking it forward. Mulla says she owes a lot to a few special people: her father, her husband, her dance guru Acharya Parvatikumar (she is also a trained Bharatanatyam dancer) and her teachers at Cathedral and St Xavier’s College. “A teacher plays a major role in a student’s life by making them realise how something is interesting, driving them to learn more about it. So, yes, teachers can do wonderful things.”

—Prarthana Uppal
BIRTHDAYS

Indian actor and filmmaker **Nana Patekar** turned 63 on 1 January.

West Bengal chief minister **Mamata Banerjee** turned 59 on 5 January.

Former Indian cricketer **Kapil Dev** turned 55 on 6 January.

Indian novelist and columnist **Shobhaa De** turned 66 on 7 January.

English theoretical physicist and cosmologist **Stephen Hawking** turns 72 on 8 January.

Leading Indian journalist **M J Akbar** turns 63 on 11 January.

Indian poet, lyricist and scriptwriter **Javed Akhtar** turns 69 on 17 January.

IN PASSING

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister **Murli Deora** died after prolonged illness on 24 November, at the age of 77.

Legendary Kathak dancer **Sitara Devi** (featured in the August 2005 issue) died after a prolonged illness on 25 November, at the age of 94.

Former Chief Minister of Maharashtra and veteran Congressman **Abdul Rahman Antulay** passed away on 2 December. He was 85.

Veteran Indian actor-comedian, director and producer **Deven Verma** died on 2 December. He was 78.

Former Supreme Court Judge and renowned social activist **Vaidyanathapura Rama Krishna Iyer** died on 4 December following cardiac failure, at the age of 100.

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**MILESTONES**

- **Veteran dancer-choreographer** Sudharani Raghupathy, 70, was awarded the Mudhra Award of Excellence at the 20th Mudhra Fine Arts Festival, for her commitment to the field of dance, on 6 December.

- **Playback singer** Asha Bhosle, 81, was given the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 11th Dubai International Film Festival for Her Contribution to Indian Film Industry, on 10 December.

- **Former Indian cricket captain** Dilip Vengsarkar, 58, received the prestigious BCCI-Instituted Colonel C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award, for his contribution to Indian cricket, on 21 November.

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**OVERHEARD**

British actor **Michael Palin**, 71, of Monty Python fame, in an interview to www.radiotimes.com

“One of the great things about getting older is that you just don’t feel as competitive any more. In my 20s and 30s, I was really competitive, all the time. Now I think the work I’ve done, I’ve done. Judge it one way or the other. Now it’s time to relax. Undoubtedly as the years go by, I’m aware that I read the medical pages more carefully—but to be honest, it seems to me my life is much more enjoyable, certainly better organised, now than it was when I was young. I think I have benefited, as I approach my 70s, from the jolts and jars of earlier ages.”
LITTLE PLEASURES

Working with Teach for India has given me a chance to be a child once again. The kids who attend this government school, Marvel at Begumpet, are from poor homes and the first generation to be schooled. They have no one to tell them about the world, expose them to a few possible dreams or even give them any idea of what they could aspire to.

I have been teaching at this school for nearly two years and it’s been one of the best phases of my life. I speak to the children in English and teach all the subjects except Telugu and Hindi. When my Class III kids moved up to Class IV, I was ‘promoted’ along with them!

After I retired from the Indian Air Force in 1997, I did various things. I worked with a transport company, developed my own farm and set up an academics centre in Hyderabad. During this time, I also acquired a PhD in international affairs and I realised I needed to be a teacher.

The Times of India’s Teach for India (TFI) campaign was beginning to gather momentum and I signed up. TFI volunteers teach in low-income schools where there is an ‘academic achievement gap’. These kids need mentoring and a lot of handholding, which their regular teachers cannot provide. I was used to teaching and mentoring youngsters in the Air Force, and this was a golden opportunity for me to step in and do my bit.

TFI has a very intense training programme for volunteers and I spent a month in Pune being trained for my mission. I was assigned Marvel with 27 children in the class. The first day at school was quite an eye-opener—some of the children did not even recognise the English alphabet, so how was I to take reading and writing further? But my biggest challenge was to motivate them enough to start taking an interest in learning. I also had to gain their trust and build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

There was this little boy who was completely disinterested in what was going on in class. The other kids told me that his father had passed away recently and he had gone from being the brightest spark in class to a dull child. It took me many months to draw him out of his shell but he finally returned to being his happy, spirited self.

Then there was this little girl who was obviously younger than the other kids. She had her older brother also in the same class. I made her sit in front and kept asking her questions, pushing her to give me answers. In about six months, she was on a par with the other children. So I gave her permission to sit at the back of the class, which means she no longer required special attention. That day, her smile lit up the room!

Rather than the academic experiences, it is experiences like these that I treasure. Children do not hold back their emotions and they express their feelings freely. If they are happy, their smiles say it all. If there is a problem, it shows up on their faces. This is what I love about teaching.

I am the oldest volunteer at TFI Hyderabad and I am proud of it. My two-year commitment ends in 2015, and if all goes well, I would like to continue for another couple of years.

Volunteering to work with children is a win-win and I wish more seniors would come forward. It gives seniors a channel to share their wisdom and experiences with little ones. The only requirement is that you have to become a child with them and that’s an amazing feeling!

—Group Capt P K Mulay (retd), Hyderabad
CREATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

I clearly remember my first full-fledged sketch. I was just 12 years old and it was the early 1950s. I seized some scrap paper and drew a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi. I have always been artistically inclined but never took any formal courses. I could play a few musical instruments and the flute was my favourite. When my father and friends would sit down to chat in our home, I would sit opposite them and sketch portraits of them. Slowly, I gained confidence and I began to explore different genres of art. During the pre-Independence era, there was an artist living in the house opposite ours and I spent several hours just watching him work. Thus, I honed my artistic skills purely through trial and error, and I enjoy sketching to this day.

I studied in Hubli and my penchant for mechanics prompted me to join the Indian Railways as an apprentice trainee in 1953. I eventually retired in 1993 as senior mechanical engineer. Once I started working, I had no time to sketch. My only connection to art was crafting miniature engines, which were handed over as gifts to visitors and dignitaries. Each miniature would take roughly 20 days to complete. When a special train was launched or a new track opened, we were asked to decorate the locomotive. I used to work with a local carpenter and blacksmith and also create decorative items in metal—like life-size birds and figures.

When I retired, I was not sure whether I should pursue my art as I had not practiced the skill for years. But it came back to me in a jiffy. After retirement, I seem to be busier than I was when I was working. I wake up at 4.30 am, then say my prayers, exercise and indulge in gardening till lunchtime. I take a short nap after lunch and then head out to my Sanskrit shloka class. Evening ends with another round of prayer. In between this strict schedule, I spend roughly two hours on my art every day.

The most difficult portrait I have created is Paramacharya of Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham and I prayed every day that it would turn out well. The first watercolour I did was based on an article I read in Reader’s Digest in 1970. It was from a small illustration about a lion, a cub and a little boy at the end of the article. I began with a pencil sketch and later decided to try watercolours. That boosted my morale and encouraged me to continue to hone my skill. I have bought some art books to read and watch tutorials online. As I draw and paint for personal contentment, I have still not enrolled for professional classes, nor have I dabbled in the art circuit.

Unlike many people my age, I do not engage in social service or teaching. I already have a busy schedule, and am strict about my diet and physical fitness. I believe it is very important for seniors to keep busy. After a certain age, health problems begin to crop up and it is crucial to keep fit, both physically and mentally. I take care of my mental health through prayer, which relieves me of all stress.

—A R Rajagopal, Chennai

Rajagopal experiences the joy of painting
Learning while teaching

U N GANGULY, 64, HYDERABAD

I have always loved sharing knowledge—as an instructor in the Indian Air Force (IAF) or while training children to speak English fluently, which I now do along with my wife.

After 33 glorious years of service, I retired from the IAF in 2003, and for the first six years after that, I tried out many different things—running a hostel and, later, starting aquaculture under the aegis of the Marine Products Export and Development Association (MPEDA). These were challenging ventures and although we had to wind them up, I enjoyed the experiences. Around this time, In Lingua, an international language training organisation, made inroads into India and came to Hyderabad to open shop here. I joined them in 2006 and thus began my second career as a teacher. I was engaged by various MNCs to train their personnel to speak better; remember, this was when BPOs were all the rage! Unfortunately, the recession of 2008 put an end to this and, eventually, In Lingua left Indian shores.

My wife Jayashree has been a teacher for many years and as both of us shared a passion for interacting with young people, we felt it was time to start our own venture where we could work with them, teach them the nuances of the language as well as soft skills to improve self-confidence, self-esteem and their overall personality. Thus, in 2009, we started The English School in Hyderabad, a bustling and vibrant centre in Hyderabad where young people from rural Hyderabad and smaller towns in Andhra Pradesh come to seek their fortune.

Jayshree heads the institution while I am head of studies. Thus, I plan the modules, customise them to the needs of clients and deliver them as well. I am also associated with various consultancies that call me to deliver training programmes for them. My association with Wipro’s Mission Ten X as a consultant trainer opened a whole new world and helped change the paradigm of teaching and learning. There is a huge gap between engineering graduates looking for jobs and what corporate houses require from these graduates. Wipro had researched this gap and found a deficit in the way teaching was conducted in engineering colleges.

Thus began an interesting chapter in my teaching path. I used to visit colleges and teach the professors to transform their students into better learners. I was, therefore, able to shift the focus from teachers to students. The teachers had been concentrating on how to be the ‘best teachers’ whereas they should have been focusing on making their students better learners and creative in their thinking and output.

I can never understand what people mean when they say they lead a ‘retired life’. I am doing so much—research, writing, planning my modules—and there is no time to spare! Only recently, I learnt a particular technique in sketching from one of my students. Now I find it so absorbing that I make time for this new hobby. Retired, how?

Of course, it has not always been smooth sailing but it has been worth every bit of the struggle. And it’s not always about the money. In fact, we have often worked for free. It is gratification of the mind that we seek. I am a diehard optimist, and friends and family know that I have scraped the bottom of the barrel, drawing on my savings and pension. I have come back from the brink many times, but I have never lost hope.

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

YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Hum for health
The simple act of humming is said to increase nitric oxide levels in the nostrils, according to recent research. The brahmari pranayama is a calming ‘humming’ practice. Increased nitric oxide levels give a slight high, mimicking an aphrodisiac effect. It also boosts oxygen absorption levels in the nostril. A simple and fun way to health and happiness.

Parivrtta ardha chandrasana
Revolved crescent pose
This is the one of the most challenging of the crescent pose series and appropriate for the challenge-loving Capricorn. Stand with feet a meter apart, right foot pointed ahead, left turned in. Inhale. Raise both hands up. Exhale, lower the hands on either side of the right foot. Inhale, and lift the left hand up in the air. Simultaneously, continuing normal breathing, lift the left leg up. If this pose is new to you, practice this stage till your balance is perfected. Then after a few days/weeks of practice, lift the right hand up. Again, invest time to practice this stage of the pose for a few days/weeks. Later, when strength and balance are achieved after lifting the right hand up, gently turn to look up at the hand. This can be a very tricky part of the practice and may make you feel like falling, so this stage has to be transited only after sufficient practice. After holding the pose for 10 seconds, you may drop the raised hand and leg back. Rest, repeat for the opposite side.

Benefits: This pose is used to treat all spinal problems, heart issues and insomnia.

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

We all tend to take a peek into astrology columns in our daily papers. Even the publicly rational and overtly sceptical tend to know a bit about the characteristics of their zodiac sign. In this new series, we take a playful shift to look at yoga from this perspective too. Though each column will focus on only one zodiac sign at a time, the physical issues discussed will be relevant for each reader. Also, even if you wish to overlook the zodiac link, you will find the physical issues and their remedies worth the read.

Capricorns are natural leaders, hard workers, and prone to seeing the dark lining in most clouds. Therefore, despite natural robustness, they will tend to suffer problems related to the root chakra (mooladhara) that rules instincts of survival such as high levels of anxieties that arise from their choice of challenges. The first suggestion in yoga for a Capricorn personality is to let go through meditation and breathing techniques. This should be a large part of their yoga practice (sadhana). As knee problems are likely to be chronic, prevention and control may be initiated by doing a lot of standing poses—balancers like the mountain pose (tadasana) and crescent (ardha chandrasana); inversions like the headstand (sirsasana) and shoulder stand (sarvangasana); and forward bends such as the down dog pose (adhomukhasvanasana) and seated forward bend (paschimottanasana). Not surprisingly, all these poses also work for skin problems and will help relieve or prevent outbreaks. A regular practice with solid investment in relaxation, meditation and breathing (pranayama) will take care of other health issues common to this sign, such as heart/circulatory problems. Calming pranayama like victory breath (ujjayi), alternative nostril breathing (anulom vilom) and humming bee (brahmari) are best.

CAPRICORN
22 December to 19 January

Hum for health
The simple act of humming is said to increase nitric oxide levels in the nostrils, according to recent research. The brahmari pranayama is a calming ‘humming’ practice. Increased nitric oxide levels give a slight high, mimicking an aphrodisiac effect. It also boosts oxygen absorption levels in the nostril. A simple and fun way to health and happiness.
Eggcellent! Eaten in moderation, eggs are nutritious and promote a healthy metabolism

I am a 66 year-old woman from an ‘eggetarian’ family! We don’t eat meat and look upon eggs as a good source of protein. But I am often confused about the conflicting dietary advice I read about consuming eggs. Are they good for me, or best avoided? Please advise me.

Eggs are a natural source of a number of nutrients. Every whole egg comes packed with 13 essential vitamins and minerals in varying amounts, 6 gm of high-quality protein, and antioxidants, all for just 70 calories. Eggs also contain choline, which is very important as our body can’t produce enough of it—one egg contains over 100 mg of choline.

Eggs are high in cholesterol but don’t adversely affect blood cholesterol. In fact, consumption of eggs appears to change the pattern of LDL particles from small, dense LDL (bad) to large LDL, which consistently leads to elevated levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, linked to reduced risk of many diseases. Eggs also contain lutein and zeaxanthin, antioxidants with major benefits for eye health. They contain all the essential amino acids humans need and tend to satiate, leading to consumption of fewer calories and aiding in weight loss. Further, eggs are rich in iodine, good for the thyroid, and phosphorus, essential for healthy bones and teeth. What’s more, eggs are one of the few natural sources of Vitamin D, which is important for the bones and teeth and aids absorption of calcium.
Yolk or white?

Egg whites are a low-calorie, fat-free food; the most abundant nutrient in egg white is protein at 3.6 gm. An egg white provides all the essential amino acids the body needs and a single egg white contributes 5 per cent of daily protein requirements. It also contains riboflavin (Vitamin B2), which is very important for a healthy metabolism, and provides modest amounts of other essential vitamins (B3, B5, B6) as well as negligible amounts of Vitamin B1, B9 and B12 that support metabolism and nourish other tissues.

It’s true that the yolk carries the cholesterol, fat and saturated fat of the egg but what is often overlooked are the many nutrients that come with that—in fact, the yolk contains most of the nutrients in an egg. It contains 100 per cent of the carotenoids, essential fatty acids and vitamins A, E, D and K and over 90 per cent of the calcium, iron, phosphorus, zinc, thiamine, B6, folate and B12 and 89 per cent of the pantothenic acid. It also contains essential fatty acids DHA and arachidonic acid essential for brain development and proper retinal eye function. While it contains cholesterol, cholesterol itself does not cause heart disease. Egg whites, on the other hand, contain far fewer nutrients. The only thing that could justify their consumption is their attachment to their companion yolk, so by keeping the egg white and discarding the egg yolk, a person is getting rid of the part of the egg with antioxidants, minerals and vitamins. Eating whole eggs doubles the protein intake you’d get eating egg whites only. Indeed, the combination of both the entire egg gives the most complete nutrition.

How much is good?

The exact amount of eggs one can eat without adverse effect will depend on overall health and individual sensitivity to dietary cholesterol. Have your blood cholesterol checked regularly. Ask to have the LDL and HDL fractions measured in addition to the total cholesterol and triglycerides. If the person is healthy, it’s recommended to limit dietary cholesterol to less than 300 milligrams (mg) a day. If a person has cardiovascular disease, diabetes or a high low-density lipoprotein (LDL or bad cholesterol) blood cholesterol level, it’s recommended to limit dietary cholesterol to less than 200 mg a day.

One large egg has about 186 mg of cholesterol—all of which is found in the yolk. Therefore, if you eat an egg on a given day, it’s important to limit other sources of cholesterol for the rest of that day. Consider substituting servings of vegetables for servings of meat, or avoid high-fat dairy products for that day. There is absolutely no reason to limit consumption of eggs to three to four per week as recommended by some heart-healthy nutritional guidelines. Eggs have long been maligned because of their cholesterol content. However, an extensive study by the University of Connecticut on the effects of eggs on cholesterol levels shows that when people consume 2-3 eggs per day, with yolk, virtually everyone experiences either no change or beneficial changes in cholesterol levels. However, it is important to be mindful about how much meat, chicken, cheese and other dairy products are consumed the rest of the day. In fact, consuming two to three eggs per day would provide a better boost to the health of silvers and protection against diseases than a multivitamin supplement. Eggs truly are one of nature’s super foods.

A person who already has high cholesterol, however, should not consume more than 200 mg of cholesterol daily, so just one large egg puts them near the limit. They should avoid eating egg yolks if they have cardiovascular disease or are at a higher risk for a heart problem, according to a study published in August 2012 in journal Atherosclerosis. The Harvard School of Public Health underlines that healthy people can eat up to one whole egg daily; moderate egg consumption does not increase heart disease risk in healthy individuals.

Get cooking!

Try this tasty and healthy recipe to get the most out of your eggs!

**SPINACH AND TOMATO SCRAMBLE**

**Ingredients**
- Egg whites: 2
- Olive oil: 1 tsp
- Spring onion: 1; sliced
- Cherry tomatoes: 4; halved
- Spinach: ½ cup; chopped and cooked
- Freshly ground black pepper

**Method**

Add oil to pan over medium heat. Add chopped spring onions and cook until transparent. Add the remaining vegetables. Add egg whites. Cook, stirring, until just set. Season to taste.

**Nutritional value**
- Calories: 113 kcal
- Fat: 0.7g
- Fibre: 2.4 g
- Protein: 8 g

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*Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist at Diet Mantra and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit www.dietmantra.in.*

*If you have any questions for Namita Jain, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org*
Just chill: Ways to a winsome winter

It’s that long-awaited and anticipated time of the year, when we take a blissful break from scorching days and sweaty nights. Winter is here, finally! However, winter also brings its share of seasonal ailments that affect children and silvers the most. Let us take a look at them and see how best we can tackle them.

Dry skin

Dry, itchy skin and chapped lips are common. Winter also sees a rise in dandruff cases and worsens eczema. The skin loses its glow and turns darker. To prevent it, follow these recommendations:
- Choose bathing bars that are skin-friendly.
- For dry and fissured skin surfaces, use creams/lotions that contain petroleum jelly.
- Keep skin moisturised using day and night creams.
- Keep warm with appropriate clothing.
- Apply oil to the scalp daily and wash the hair often with shampoo.

Itchy eyes

Eyes can feel dry and itchy. You may also feel your vision is dimming because of the absence of bright sunrays.
- If your daily routine includes a lot of eye-tiring work, take frequent breaks and give rest to your eyes.
- Wash your eyes with cold water thrice a day.
- Use goggles while stepping out.
- Avoid contact lenses.
- Use lubricant eye drops or artificial tears on ophthalmologist’s advice.

Stiff joints

Arthritic pain, particularly in rheumatoid arthritis, will increase owing to the cold. Stiffness in the joints will become more severe in the morning. In and around the joints, you may feel more pain and numbness.
- Regular walk or any other form of exercise is essential.
- Physiotherapy is advised.
Gut problems

As microbes like bacteria grow happily in cooler conditions, stomach and bowel ailments are more frequent in winter. This can result in food poisoning, dysentery, vomiting and vague stomach pains. Lack of physical activities and lesser intake of fluids can make silvers prone to constipation.

- Consume homemade food.
- If eating out becomes unavoidable, choose light and simple food.
- Say no to ice creams, cool drinks and chilled food.
- To prevent constipation, include food items that contain more fibre like green leafy vegetables, different varieties of beans and whole grains.

Breathing difficulties

Virus and bacteria can cause an irritating spectrum of symptoms from cough and cold to runny nose and fever. Asthma patients are more vulnerable to respiratory pathogens. Chest infections like pneumonia are more common in winter, particularly in those who are suffering from asthma or chronic bronchitis. Chest infections can be fatal for silvers.

- Asthmatics should use inhalers regularly.
- Avoid crowded areas to stay free from contagious infections.
- While stepping out, don’t forget warm clothing.
- An annual shot of influenza vaccine is a must, particularly for those with asthma and bronchitis. It is advisable to take the shot in September, even before winter sets in.
- Pneumonia is the leading cause of deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases. Getting just one shot of pneumonia vaccine can give you lifelong protection. In very rare cases, a revaccination will be required five years after the first dose. This vaccine has no troublesome side-effects.

Blood circulation

In winter, blood vessels become narrow and start shrinking. Shrinking of vessels in the leg can cause pain during prolonged walks. While the skin of leg and foot can turn a shade darker for everybody, it’s more so in diabetics. Cardiac patients might experience angina pain after long walks or climbing stairs.

For better blood flow:

- Diabetics should take extra care of their feet. Don’t miss your daily walks.
- Use socks to keep feet warm.
- Cardiac patients are advised to walk at a slower pace during winter.

More pointers

- Hypothyroid patients are intolerant to cold. If you notice even a slight change in health condition, immediately consult your family physician.
- Those suffering from Parkinson’s and paralysis should watch out for tightening of muscle mass, which can cause severe pain. Regular physiotherapy is advised throughout the season.
- Personal hygiene is very important to reduce the chance of infection.

Dietary dos and don’ts

- Extra calorie intake is essential to balance body temperature. A good amount of protein and essential fatty acids from nuts (almonds, pistachio and cashew), milk, pulses and vegetable oils will prevent skin shrinkage in winter. Seasonal vegetables and fruits should be taken in adequate quantities.
- Add more onions, beetroots and fresh greens to the diet. Among fruits, pomegranate and guava are extra good for winter.

As thirst reduces during winter, chances of dehydration increase. So make sure your water intake is adequate even if there is no thirst.

- Substitute fried oily foods with healthy and wholesome hot soups.
- Limit the intake of cold vegetables like okra, water-rich vegetables (gourd varieties) and citrus fruits, which may cause cold.
- Fruits can be included in salads and vegetables can be taken in the form of soups. Restrict the use of non-vegetarian refrigerated food items.
- Drink boiled, lukewarm water.
- Appetite increases slightly during winter. Take care of your calorie intake if you are obese.
- As thirst reduces during winter, chances of dehydration increase. So make sure your water intake is adequate even if there is no thirst.

Put to practice, all these little tips will enable us to welcome and experience a wonderful winter.
Fondly, Kamlesh Patel recalls how his mother would comment every evening on the sounds and aromas emanating from the kitchen where his father would be busy putting his culinary skills to test. Since then, the torch has passed hands; Patel is active in the kitchen now, and so are his sons.

In India, where kitchen has long been considered a woman’s preserve, the Patel family believes otherwise. I met up with Patel, 60, at his beautiful home in Chennai, to chat about family, food, and fun.

Hello, Kamlesh. I’ve heard much about your love for cooking from your cousin Jigyasa Giri, and have been looking forward to meeting you. To begin with, what comes to your mind when you think of food and family?

Dinner times! It was an unspoken law in our home that all of us must be present at the dinner table at 7.30 pm sharp. Though it was not explicitly stated, it was simply understood that dinner time was family time. My father prepared the dinner almost every day. He was an awesome cook and I would hang around in the kitchen with him.

What brought your father into the kitchen, considering that in most Indian families, men are only seen at the dining table and not near the gas stove?

Not really. But we all met up on Sundays at my uncle Jayendra Kaka’s place. He was also an awesome cook. Sundays were our pizza days. Relatives and friends would join in. Some would bring dishes from home while some others would cook in Kaka’s kitchen.

What are the specialties of your family?

Papa specialised in one-dish items, which we called ‘singleton’ items. He also made the best Gujarati dal. My brother, Srij, enjoys making rich Mughlai dishes. I like experimenting with Italian, Continental and Chinese cuisines. In Indian food, I enjoy preparing Andhra recipes taught by a friend. I also do lots of barbecuing when there are guests.

Let’s talk about your other passion—racing!

I raced and rallied from the age of 18 to 48. In 2002, I became the National Motor Racing Champion. Strangely, that was also when I quit. Actually, I studied to be a civil engineer, but finally ended up running an automobile service centre.

So your son Aditya has inherited his love for racing from you?

I think so. He has also inherited the joy of cooking [laughs]. He is always pottering around the kitchen while I am cooking. When he travels abroad and visits his cousins, he cooks for them. My younger son, Akshay, also seems to have a culinary inclination.

Do you still follow the dinner ritual with family?

Yes, it’s still the same unspoken rule when we are all in the same city. On Sundays, we go to our beach house and cook.

Do you eat out a lot?

Hardly, unless it is rava dosa at Sangeetha Hotel or masala dosa at Saravana Bhavan—dishes we don’t generally prepare at home. As a family, we like experimenting in our own kitchen.

What is it about food that has you so captivated?

I am very intrigued by the methodology and sequence of food. I also like travelling to other countries and bringing back unique ingredients. During our recent trip to Italy, we found this mega food store of fresh Italian ingredients—Eataly. I packed a suitcase full of stuff from there. I also enjoy guessing the ingredients in a dish. At a Chinese restaurant, once we
had tofu topped with a sauce. It was so delicious that when we returned to India, I tried a few variations until the taste was captured completely!

Tell me more about the nuances of this dish.

My wife Amita does not like tofu, so I use paneer in my version—a quarter-inch-thick slice of paneer. I roast this until it browns slightly. Next, I prepare a mixture of red chilli paste, chopped ginger and garlic, dark soy sauce, vegetarian oyster sauce and vinegar. I stir this mixture in a little oil on high flame for a minute and use it as a topping for the roasted paneer. That’s it. It’s now one of our favourites!

Do you use a lot of Ajinomoto, considering that you enjoy preparing Chinese dishes?

No, I don’t. But I don’t think it does greater harm than refined salt. Whenever I travel, I try and get sea salt. Apart from being a healthier option, it also transforms the taste of any dish!
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I am very intrigued by the methodology and sequence of food, and enjoy guessing the ingredients in a dish. I also like travelling to other countries and bringing back unique ingredients```

**Which Chinese vegetarian dish are you going to share with me today?**

During a holiday in Spain, we chanced upon a Chinese restaurant, where we had an amazing dish of thin noodles. I had never tasted anything like that before. I came back to India and searched for thin noodles. Finally, I decided to make the dish with vermicelli. It simply worked wonders! I’ll share that recipe with you.

**THIN NOODLES**

Loaded with vegetables, here is a fantastic flavoursome recipe of Chinese noodles made with Indian vermicelli. Prepared very frequently in his household, Patel says that once the vegetables are chopped, this dish can be ready in 10 minutes.

**Ingredients**

**For the noodles**
- Vermicelli—unbroken variety (or thin noodles): 250 gm
- Chinese sesame oil (or chilli oil): 1 tsp
- Cooking oil: 1 tbsp
- A dash of salt

**For the vegetables**
- Cooking oil: 2 tbsp
- Red chilli paste: 1 tsp
- Onion: 1 medium-sized; chopped fine
- Garlic: 2-3; chopped fine
- Green chillies: 2-3; chopped fine
- Red, yellow and green capsicum: 1 each
- Broccoli: 1 medium-sized
- Carrots: 2
- Beans: 10-12
- Zucchini: 1
- Cucumber: 1 small
- Cabbage: ½ medium-sized
- Rice wine (or vinegar): 2 tbsp
- Pepper powder (freshly ground): ¼ tsp
- Chilli powder: ¼ tsp (optional)
- Soy sauce (both dark and light varieties): 1 tbsp each
- Vegetarian oyster sauce: 1 tbsp

**METHOD**

**For the noodles**
Heat a litre of water. When the water starts boiling, add the vermicelli and cook for exactly 90 seconds. (Patel says that if you cook the vermicelli even for 30 seconds extra, it turns pasty.) Now drain the vermicelli and discard the water. Toss the vermicelli gently in a broad pan along with 1 tsp of Chinese sesame oil. (This step does not require any heating.) Set aside. When the vermicelli has cooled thoroughly, heat 1 tsp cooking oil in a broad pan. Add the vermicelli and pan fry for a minute. Set aside.

**For the vegetables**
Chop all the vegetables into thin slices and set aside. Steam broccoli for a minute and set aside. Heat 2 tbsp of any cooking oil and add red chilli paste. Immediately add the chopped onions and sauté for a minute. (Patel says adding the chopped onions along with chilli paste behaves like a transporter and coats the veggies with the sauces evenly.) Add the chopped garlic and green chillies and sauté for a minute. Now add the sliced vegetables, adding the tough ones first and the others gradually. The order is like this: carrots, beans and, after a few minutes, capsicums. Add salt and the rice wine and continue to sauté. Now add the broccoli and zucchini, sauté for a few minutes, and then the cucumber. Finally add the cabbage, so it remains crunchy. Add pepper and chilli powder. Combine 1 tbsp each of dark soy sauce, light soy sauce, vegetarian oyster sauce and rice wine (or vinegar). Drizzle this on the vegetables and toss gently. Switch off the flame. Arrange the noodles on a plate and cover with the vegetables. Serve immediately.

**Some tips**

- To thicken the sauce to the required consistency, mix 1 vegetable stock cube (Maggi cubes work well, according to Patel) and 1 tsp cornflour in 1 cup water and cook on medium flame. As soon as it starts thickening, remove from fire. Toss it into the vegetables at the end.

- Instead of vinegar, Patel recommends using rice wine, made by fermenting the starch found in grains like rice, which is not technically wine as such. He says that it does not have the sharp smell of synthetic vinegar. He particularly likes the flavour of Shaoxing wine, which is the rice wine commonly used in cooking.

- To get that perfect taste in noodles, use vegetarian oyster sauce prepared from oyster mushrooms.

imagery is shared with the author, Pratibha Jain.
A close friend who recently celebrated her 80th birthday seemed truly glad that she had crossed the milestone that freed her from the income-tax net. Evidently relieved that she would not have to file her tax returns any longer, she echoed the sentiments of her peers that "a big burden had been taken off the shoulders." The 2012-13 Budget, with its recommendation to free those in the above-80 age bracket from the IT dispensation, came as much-deserved relief for at least a section of our silver population.

Given the fact that silvers subsist on meagre finances that dwindle as the years pass by, it is not surprising that they scan the budget eagerly for tax incentives.

Exemptions matter

The fire of inflation has been blazing much brighter with each passing year, singeing the finances of silvers. With expenditure outpacing income, it’s no wonder that silvers look for exemptions in the budget. The July 2014 Budget offered some legroom to save on annual tax obligations. It provided for enhancement in exemptions and an addition to tax-saving facilities. Till last year, the basic exemption limit for silvers was ₹ 250,000. A sizeable ₹ 50,000 was added to this, upping the limit to ₹ 300,000. The tax exempt savings under 80C was also increased to ₹ 150,000 from ₹ 100,000.

Let us look at the tax-saving implications of these measures. An increase of ₹ 50,000 in the basic exemption limit translates into tax savings in the ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 15,000 range, depending on the individual’s tax bracket. If a person is able and willing to invest ₹ 50,000 in tax-saving instruments, it will add a double punch to their tax-saving efforts.

Two years ago, when the Government tried to rein in inflation with a tight monetary policy, interest rates shot up. But this elation was short-lived as the interest rates have been on the decline over the past few months. This has a negative impact on income from investments that mature as investors are compelled to reinvest in bank and corporate FDs at much lower interest rates.

If silvers want to keep their annual income glass topped, they will have to proactively reallocate their assets and add to their FDs. Generally, tax considerations restrict this type of asset reallocation and this is where tax exemption becomes the knight in shining armour.

Word of caution

Even when you take advantage of the added rope for tax saving, it’s important to maintain due caution. When the stock markets are buoyant as they are at present, mutual fund (MF) houses are in nitrous mode and are overenthusiastic while promoting their MFs. Equity-linked savings schemes (ELSS) and tax-saver MFs are covered under 80C for deduction from taxable income. Hence, it’s not unusual to see aggressive sales people approaching silvers trying to sell ELSS, while emphasising the fact that the dividends earned on these MFs in successive years are tax-free compared to the interest on FDs, which are taxable. Moreover, if the investment appreciates, there are additional benefits.

MFs come with a lock-in period of three years and can’t be redeemed before that. However, under the dividend option, if the company declares a dividend, the investor will be eligible for it. Tax-saver MFs have identical provisions. It is general knowledge that long-term capital gains on MFs or stocks are tax-free too.

Prima facie these appear attractive compared to FDs. But when you put them under a magnifying glass, there are certain caveats. If the stock index is very high (at 29,000 points, as it is at present), net asset values (NAV) too will be high. The one question an investor needs to ask is: "How long will the bull run continue and how will it affect my investment at the end of three years?"
Investment instrument | Interest per annum | Risk | Lock-in period | Minimum income earned in five years (in ₹)
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
FD – ₹ 100,000 (Nationalised/private/cooperative banks/National Housing Bank, etc) | 9% at present | Nil | 5 years | 45,000 + tax saved (10,000-30,000 in the first year); tax if liable to be paid on interest earned in subsequent years
ELSS/Tax-saver MF – ₹ 100,000 (invested at current NAV) | Dividend uncertain | Low to high risk | 3 years | Tax saved in 1st year – dividend income and capital gain/loss uncertain

**Risk factor**

The NAVs of MFs are subject to the same risk. This is because they essentially invest in equities that face this risk. When a person invests in MFs at these high prices, a market crash will catalyse a downside in the NAVs. This is a double whammy. Not only are the MFs unable to declare a dividend, the capital investments get eroded too.

Like any other equity-linked investment, investments in MFs need a considerable amount of follow-up. That is the only way an investor can exit at the opportune moment and come out unscathed.

**Figure it out**

In comparison, FDs are a much safer and popular option. The tax saving in the first year boosts average interest per annum by a minimum of 2 per cent. In turn, this results in very steady accretion for five years. The fact that there is no capital erosion is a definite plus. FDs are not necessarily the most tax-efficient instruments but are easy to understand (see table). It’s crucial that silvers weigh the pros and cons before investing in any of these tax-free investment avenues.

**More sops**

The July 2014 Budget came up with other benefits too, like extending the old-age pension scheme ‘Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana’ till 14 August 2015. Other measures included recommending ways to utilise unclaimed amounts lying with Public Provident Fund and Post Office Saving Schemes for silvers; a minimum pension of ₹ 1,000 to eligible silvers under the EPS95 scheme; and the establishment of National Institutes for Ageing in Delhi’s AIIMS and the Madras Medical College.

**A want list**

Even as economic changes gather momentum in India, silvers face new challenges. The realities of economic change have created a large hiatus in the income levels of silvers. This has delinked the world when silvers retired at fairly low levels of income with a small financial kitty and the present world of inflated income and price levels. A few suggestions to remedy this situation in the forthcoming budget are:

- Treat silvers above 70 years as a separate class and tailor tax provisions to suit their income and expenditure patterns.
- Enhancement of the basic exemption level to ₹ 500,000 to leave a little more income in the hands of silvers.
- A tax saving allowance higher than ₹ 20,000 under 80C sub clauses for mediclaim is urgently called for as insurance companies have disproportionately increased premium to suit the health of their companies.
- Most seniors spend large amounts on routine expenses like medicines and tests and many don’t have a medical insurance. Hence, a minimum allowance of ₹ 30,000 for tax exemption will lighten the financial burden of seniors in a small way.
- A budget is one of the most significant instruments to ensure this. Every budget should keep the changing needs of silvers in view. Hopefully, the 2015–16 Budget that will be presented next month will take some bold and concrete steps to help silvers keep up with the speeding economy.

*The writer is a Mumbai-based economist*
Occupying pride of place on her elegant front door is a tahita, the decorative headgear emblematic of Odissi dance. It is reminiscent of her classic description of herself a few years ago: “I look upon myself as the dwara-rakshini, the gatekeeper whose duty it is to open doors for those who wish to enter the garden of Indian classical dance.” And there she stood, internationally renowned Indian classical dancer, choreographer, scholar and critic, Ritha Devi.

She ushers us into her drawing room done up in East-meets-West style. The room overflows with framed photographs, awards and citations, mementos, books, and other symbols of her body of work. But one photograph on a corner table resonates louder than the rest: a very young Ritha Devi with her handsome little son Rahul, both standing yet seeming to support each other.

Indeed, Ritha Devi’s life is not only a saga of personal trials and triumphs but one inextricably linked to the resurgence and growth of Indian classical dance. She has rigorously studied all eight Indian classical dance forms from the best gurus—Manipuri, Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Mohiniattam, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Sattriya—but has had a passionate love affair with Odissi. For her lifelong contribution to this form, the Pune-based dancer will be conferred the title Odissi Ratna in December during the Odissi International Festival 2014 organised by Samskritiki, a premier cultural organisation in Odisha that hosts the festival in Bhubaneshwar every year.

“My relationship with this dance tradition has been emotional to the point of obsession, so much so that I believe I must have been a Mahari [devadasi in the Jagannath Temple in Puri, Odisha] in a previous birth,” says the 90 year-old. Granddaughter of Lakshminath Bezbaroa, the father of modern Assamese literature, and great-grandniece of Rabindranath Tagore, Ritha Devi was a member of the Indian elite in her time. Her father Satyavrat Mukhopadhyaya was an Oxford graduate, and her mother
Aruna Devi was known for her classic beauty and melodic voice. As a child, Ritha was exposed to dance performances in the royal court of Baroda, which was ruled by Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad. The Maharaja, who had met her father in London, invited him to work as a senior councillor in the erstwhile State of Baroda. It was here that Ritha was born and raised till the family moved to Shillong after her father’s retirement from the state’s administrative service.

“With my brother away in boarding school, I was tutored at home by my mother,” she recalls. “I matriculated at the age of 13 and graduated in English and Sanskrit from Bombay University at 17. My parents then started looking for a suitable match for me.” But young Ritha was intent on fulfilling her dream to learn Indian classical dance. When she tried to persuade her parents, they stoutly refused, pointing out that it just wasn’t something girls from good families did. She would weep in secret at their refusal. “My parents were not insensitive to my wish but it was an age when the canons of society were supreme,” she says. “I just happened to have been born before my time.”

Finally, even as her parents were busy finding a suitable match for her, she arranged to learn Manipuri dance in Shillong from Guru Howbom Athomba Singh. “I was finally on my way to realising my dream.” Soon after, Ritha was married to the suave Indra Chatterji. “He was an engineer and ended up as vice-chairman with Mahindra & Mahindra.” Before marriage, Ritha had told him, ‘Dance is my passion. I won’t give it up.’ And although he promised to encourage her in her pursuit, she soon learnt he had taken her for a ride. “While on our honeymoon in Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, my simple wish to watch a Kandyan dance performance at their gate, in the hope that their favourite student would help them set up a dance school in Kolkata. This was the beginning of a new chapter and, soon, Ritha Devi earned a name as a gifted Manipuri dancer. Even as her reputation grew, her husband kept threatening to take a transfer to a different city that would inevitably put an end to her dancing. As fate would have it, her husband was transferred to the land of Bharatanatyam, Chennai (then Madras).

Ritha Devi was elated. She trained under the renowned Padanallur Chokalingam Pillai and learnt the whole Bharatanatyam repertoire in just seven months. She also performed her arangetram (graduation ceremony). Even though her husband periodically threatened to get a ‘transfer,’ he had little to complain about as Ritha Devi played the role of a dutiful wife to the hilt.

When her husband was transferred to Mumbai, Ritha Devi was happy to return to the city where her career as a dancer had begun. She found her Kathakali guru, Asan Karunakaran Pillai, under whom she transformed from a docile society girl into an artist who was capable of holding her own. Around this time, sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, who had watched Ritha Devi dance, recommended her to various organisations in Europe. And, in 1958, Ritha Devi set off on a journey to Europe as a professional dancer for the first time—but not without a threat. This time, it was divorce!

Despite her husband’s angry words ringing in her ears, Ritha Devi delivered Manipuri, Bharatanatyam and Kathakali performances with aplomb in England, France, Germany and Denmark. “Wherever I danced, people liked me a lot,” she says with a gleam in her eye. She stayed on in Europe, with England as her base, for an entire year. But her husband came to England and persuaded her to return to Mumbai. “By now, I had stopped expecting my husband to change and I had reached a point of not caring about the consequences of resuming dance.” So, with new determination, Ritha Devi studied Mohiniattam from Kalamandalam Lakshmi Nair, Chinannmu Amma and Kalyani Kutty Amma.

In October 1959, her only child, Rahul, was born. “The feeling was indescribable. I felt as if God had sent this helpless little bundle to me. As I set my eyes on him, I smiled and said to myself, ‘He is my very own.’” After a moment’s pause, she adds, “Maternal love is like water. It is always downward flowing and don’t expect it to come back to you. Just give your entire love to your progeny and be happy with that.”

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Ritha Devi’s life is not only a saga of personal trials and triumphs but one inextricably linked to the resurgence and growth of Indian classical dance; she has rigorously studied all eight Indian classical dance forms.
In 1963, Ritha Devi got the opportunity to study Odissi. “In my quest for the ideal dance form that would answer the needs of my body, mind and soul, I had travelled all over India and studied all the other styles, till I found what I was seeking in Odissi. There was something in the dance that touched the core of my being,” she says. Her joy knew no bounds when Adiguru (guru of gurus) of Odissi dance Pankaj Charan Das accepted her invitation to come to Mumbai from Puri to teach her the ancient temple dance tradition of Odisha. Of course, she travelled to Puri several times to pick up the nuances of the dance. Soon after, Ritha Devi learnt the Sattriya dance, traditionally forbidden for women. “I was the first to take Sattriya dance out of its birthplace, Assam. I presented the sacred dance to audiences both within and outside India.” She further expanded her repertoire by learning Kuchipudi.

Finally, in 1970, her husband’s threat of divorce turned into reality. Now unfettered, Ritha Devi continued to enhance her reputation as a distinguished dancer, choreographer, dance scholar and dance critic in India. She had already travelled across Europe, even to Russia, to perform all the dance styles she had learnt. In 1968, she had even danced at the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, the world’s largest dance festival, in the US and landed an offer to teach dance at New York University.

Now, the world was her oyster and she let her creativity sing. Ritha Devi’s choreographic marvels include those based on Kalidas’ Kamarasambhavam, Meghadootam and Ritusamhara; Shudraka’s Mrichhakatikam (her favourite); Natya Shastra; Odia literature; and themes from mythology like Mary Magdalene, Bathsheba, Zeus and Leda. “I have danced solo to all of these in New York.” To choreograph themes from the Bible, she used fusion music composed by Pandit Ravi Shankar, Yehudi Menuhin and Jean-Pierre Rampal, set to the tabla of Ustad Allah Rakha Khan. Eventually, she returned to India in 2003, after the terror attacks in the US. “Life became difficult not only for me but for all Indians because of our skin colour,” she explains.

Today, at the age of 90, Ritha Devi continues to exude grace and pride. She cooks for herself and her son, does the household chores, performs elaborate rituals of prayer and worship, trains students, and never skips her daily three hours of dance practice. While occasionally watching dance performances in the city, she also writes on dance.

As we speak, Ritha Devi’s son Rahul walks into the room and her face lights up. A musician, Rahul lives with his mother. After a brief introduction, she says, “The bond between my son and me is so strong that I think he was meant for me and me alone. He and I are the only people who remain from that family. We have to stand by each other. He is the only thing I have loved more than my dance.”

As dusk approaches, a cuckoo calls out loudly. Ritha Devi flashes a smile and says, “Do you hear the cuckoo? The way it sings, it almost seems like it is calling out to me. I feel it’s my lover from a past life. I tell it, ‘Don’t worry, we’ll meet again!’”
Knowing exactly what I’ll get in the future lets me focus on more important things; like my son’s cricket practice."

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Filmmaker. Painter. Sufi exponent. Revivalist. Fashion designer. Music lover. Social worker. Just some of the ways Muzaffar Ali is described. But the man himself is loath to be labelled. For him, life is a singular pursuit: a quest for harmony and love as elucidated by the Sufi philosophy, "surrender of the highest order, which manifests through human compassion".

Our introduction to Ali takes place at his charming farmhouse in Gurgaon, where Barrack, his horse, runs freely in the grassy expanse while dogs laze contentedly in the morning sun. In another corner, vintage cars are parked in a shed, pregnant with stories of a royal past. Ali is the current Raja of Kotwara, a former princely state 160 km from Lucknow, but there is nothing pretentious about him or his lifestyle. Enter the farmhouse and you notice how mud, mortar and brick blend seamlessly, mirroring the owner’s constant quest for harmony and balance in keeping with the Sufi way of life. Inside the massive door, red pillars catch the eye, and once inside the glass doors, you are introduced to the sophisticated yet mellow world of a man with seemingly infinite creative nuances. Designed by his wife Meera, Ali’s farmhouse is a fusion of styles that perfectly capture the personality of the Raja—his paintings adorn the walls, old books lie open on tables, and a fireplace painted by Ali himself occupies pride of place in the centre of the room.

At the age of 70, white hair flowing across his elegant shoulders, Ali speaks with a quiet passion about his films, establishing the Kotwara clothing brand with Meera, spreading Sufism, creating beautiful minds, reinventing the lives of the people of Kotwara and his umbilical ties to the region. During the conversation, the Padma Shri (2005) recipient also sheds light on his soon-to-be-released film *Jaanisaar*, and receiving the Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award (2014) for promoting peace and harmony.
Muzaffar Ali wears many hats—filmmaker, painter, poet, fashion designer, revivalist, Sufi exponent, social worker—with consummate ease. As he prepares to release his latest labour of love, *Jaanisaar*, he speaks to Ambica Gulati about being in a ‘constant state of inspiration’.
EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

Who really is Muzzafar Ali?
I am my parent’s child, shaped by my father Syed Sajid Husain Ali’s progressive thinking and groomed by my mother Kaneez Hyder’s cultural feathers. I grew up in an era of turmoil, when India was all for independence. Awadh had a prominent Nawabi culture. My father was the head of Kotwara, but he thought like the common man. He had studied in Scotland where he dressed up like the British, drove a sports car and was influenced by the philosophy of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He believed in an egalitarian society, and focused on health, education and work for all. In 1937, he fought his first elections against the Muslim League as he believed in a secular, democratic India. Humanism and secularism were his principles.

My mother followed the purdah system. She was interested in art, culture, music and all the influences you see in Umrao Jaan. An artist in quest for a balance between humanity and beauty.

Were you groomed for the arts at home? And was the pursuit of creativity a deliberate career choice?
I was studying science at Aligarh Muslim University. My father believed in the Nehruvian vision, which was progress through science and technology. He wanted me to be a part of that. After the zamindari system was abolished in 1957, he locked himself up and studied law. During India’s transition, he also transformed. He gave up wearing mill-made clothes and opted for khadi. Suddenly, there was a perceptible shift from a lavish lifestyle to a Spartan one. I guess something similar happened to me in university. I discovered poetry and poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Rahi Masoom Raza, and my education became an art of science or perhaps it was the science of art that got to me. I read the works of Rumi and became passionate about the Sufi way of love and surrender.

I completed my BSc but went to Kolkata to work in an advertising agency headed by renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray. His thoughts and style were a strong influence on me. I realised that film was an interesting medium to express your beliefs. But my introduction to the arts was through painting. I loved to sketch and paint since childhood. I even won many prizes in school.

Do you still paint?
I still paint as much as I can create time for it. I like to live with my paintings, in constant dialogue with them. Therefore, I am in a constant state of inspiration. These works are in my own homes, mostly in the Gurgaon home. I have had 10 one-man shows; I would like to show soon if I meet the correct person through whom I should hold an exhibition.

Did you have any doubts when you chose a career different from the one you were being prepared for?
Nothing is impossible and I was brought up in an open-minded atmosphere. I had seen my father take a quantum leap from being a zamindar to giving people a voice and wearing hand-woven clothes. He did not believe in a capitalist society and always said ‘a penny saved is a penny earned’. My salary in Kolkata was ₹ 300 and my hostel fee was ₹ 150 per month. But I managed.

How did films happen?
The first film I made was Gaman. Working with Satyajit Ray, I had realised what a camera could do. So my journey was from sketching to moving images. Each film, therefore, became a milestone in my understanding and expression of life and has been rooted in the soil of Awadh, Lucknow and Kotwara. They have been shot there, with natives featuring in them.

I had started working with Air India in the communications department in the 1970s. I worked there for 11 years. I lived in Mumbai and I would see people coming from villages to the city. They would lose their identity to earn a living. This was the theme of my film Gaman. Social issues and cultural ethos always influenced me. In 1976, I started Umrao Jaan. The film captured the culture of Awadh and times of Wajid Ali Shah. All the detailing in the movie was what I had seen and learnt at home. All the poetry and love and surrender I was in love with found its way into the songs. In Anjuman, I explored the lives of chikan workers and the exploitation of women.

What about your famed film Zooni, which is yet to see the light of day?
Zooni was based on the folklore surrounding 16th century Kashmiri poetess Habba Khatoon. It was my way of expressing pride in the beautiful state of Kashmir, my way of showing that violence will lead us nowhere. Zooni is a big exploration into the people and culture of the Valley and something that neither I nor the people are ready to undertake because of what has happened since 1989. It is
an unfinished dream and if I meet the right people, it may become a reality. The script will need to be revisited to suit the audience of today but the spirit is universal and, therefore, it has to be a global film.

What can we expect in Jaanisaar? Is it a sequel to Umrao Jaan?
This film is centred on the siege of Awadh, the revolt of 1857, and romance between an Anglicised Raja and a courtesan. It stars newcomers Imran Abbas Naqvi and Pernia Qureshi. It is not a sequel to Umrao Jaan but takes off from where Umrao Jaan ends in the same region. This is my fifth feature film. Not
counting Zooni, I have done several serials and short films on Sufism.

Umroo Jaan established Rekha as one of the most beautiful women in the country. It also had classical songs such as Dil cheez kya hai.... Will Jaanisaar offer something similar?
The focus is on the culture of Awadh. The rest is up to the audience, to see where it goes.

What will be your next artistic endeavour after Jaanisaar?
Plans after Jaanisaar will become reality only after the film is released and accepted. I think big but take small, measured steps. Every film is a dialogue with my audience.

The creation of the Kotwara brand—how did that happen?
Ambience is very important for me. Kotwara is a beautiful 14-acre, green land with mango groves. In films, my actors always look beautiful, so I thought why not clothes in real life? Kotwara has been my studio for all my creative shades. It was where I began painting and it is where my work with the revival of chikan began. It also houses a school for children and Jaanisaar is also being shot there.

Fashion happened during the making of Zooni in 1988. American fashion designer Mary McFadden visited us back then and after seeing Kotwara, she said it could be a haven for crafts. Fashion was still evolving in those days and even known names like Suneet Verma worked with Mary. In 1991, my father passed away and I was wondering what to do next with his huge legacy. Meera supported me and helped turn Kotwara into an asset. Sugarcane farming was the mainstay of the region but there was never enough. We decided to revive the crafts and got a few people from Lucknow to train a few willing workers. We looked at how to make new motifs suited to the changing world and new works with zardozi. And ‘Dwar Pe Rozi’ [a charitable society] was born. Now, there are 300-400 people working on this in different pockets. Then, we built a small school for children; there are 300 children studying there.

How did the brand hit the limelight?
We started participating in fashion weeks in 2000, and the rest is history.

What do you feel is the biggest contribution to your hometown through the Kotwara brand?
Kotwara is a concept, an idea. Inspired by my first film Gaman, it aims to provide employment at one’s doorstep under the Dwar Pe Rozi vision. In Kotwara, I have tried to pour in my creative skills with human resources from the village to create craft and couture in which my films could add value. I think it is a very slow process and is succeeding because of the thought and style that is going into it, from both Meera and I.

“...In Kotwara, I have tried to pour in my creative skills with human resources from the village to create craft and couture in which my films could add value. I think it is a very slow process and is succeeding because of the thought and style that is going into it”
by Rumi. I received the support of then Delhi chief minister Sheila Dixit for the festival. Delhi is the land of Sufi saints and has the dargah of 36 saints. This festival was a natural way of felicitating the Sufi spirit of union. We started in 2000. Given the chance, I would also like to organise a Wajid Ali Shah festival in Lucknow. In 2005, I also started the Rumi Foundation and published two motivational journals and poetry.

Have you ever felt that you may not be able to live up to the expectations of the people around you?
I feel I could do more for the school. But I focus on creating more beautiful minds and let the doubts out.

How did you meet Meera? Does the age difference ever make you feel insecure?
I met Meera in Delhi when I was uprooted from Kashmir with an incomplete film. I found her an extremely powerful anchor in my life. I was making an hour-long film on the life of Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, called Seena Ba Seena (From the Heart to the Heart). I gave her a small role and we married soon after that. That was 25 years ago. Age did not matter then, nor does it now. She is honest and dedicated. She thinks out of the box, is a talented architect, and open and receptive to new things and ideas.

Are your children also involved in creative pursuits?
My eldest son Murad [from his first marriage] is based in Delhi and is an actor; Shaad [from his second marriage] lives in Mumbai and is directing films; and my daughter Sana [with Meera] has started helping us with the clothing brand. But now I look at the whole world as a child. I do not think about my biological children only, but in a broader scope of creating happier worlds.

What is a typical day like for you?

Has age made any difference to your life and work? Has it mellowed you or contributed to your growth?
By His grace, I have learnt to become sharper with age, and I believe this is the time to enlighten the youth with dreams to improve the world in which we live. Create open and questioning minds.

What is your future vision?
To create beautiful, open minds. I find pleasure in seeing the children in school. They are going to be the new harvest. In turn, they will create a happier world for others. I will keep sharing whatever I can, in my own way.

Are you also translating Sufi works? And how can Sufi music bring peace to the subcontinent?
For me, Sufi poetry is the final stage of love and surrender. Every time I use it in an album or in Jahan-e-Khusrau, I try to translate it. Although I am not very good at translation, I don’t want listeners to miss out on the meaning. Raqs-e-Bismil with Abida Parveen, selected, composed and translated by me, is one such effort.

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A Venetian reverie

A lone backpacker discovers the mystique of sparkling waterways, quaint bridges and gondola rides

Manjiri Prabhu

Venice had been beckoning me for long. Though I had been to some parts of Italy including Venice in 1998 with my husband, that trip had only tantalised my desire to repeat the experience. So when I planned a research-cum-writing trip to the Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, I decided I had to add two more days to my journey for a visit to Venice.

I admit I was a little nervous. On a previous occasion, I had been warned of theft of passport, money, etc, and unfortunately I did land in some trouble. So I knew that Venice would not be easy for me. Moreover, I would be travelling alone. Everyone at home concluded that I was either crazy or too bold. I believed I was neither. At some point in a sheltered life, a rebellious streak prompts you to touch new horizons, break established practices, and venture into the unknown. Precisely what I needed to do—travel on my own, taste the freedom while accepting self-inflicted responsibility and overcome the fear of being alone in a foreign land. Although nervous, I was mentally prepared to push the limits. On a lighter note, perhaps the movie Queen had a share in influencing my thoughts.

I did a lot of research on the Net, decided what I wanted to see and where I wanted to go. I booked myself a three-island tour and also bought the UNCLA 24-hour Venice Travel Card, which would allow limitless mobility in the city. Travelling light was a huge problem, especially as I had two weeks of extended stay, but I managed to fit everything in a suitcase and a backpack. Visa checked, ticket checked, Youth Hostel booking checked....
Gondolas, vaparetti and motorboats near Rialto Bridge
Needless to say, I was very excited when I landed at Marco Polo Airport. Venice, as everyone knows, has waterways and the public transport system is ‘vaporetto’ or water buses and water taxis. To reach any place in Venice, you either take one of these boats or walk. The Youth Hostel was on Giudecca Island, which meant I had to travel for another hour and 40 minutes to reach my temporary ‘home’. I had two options—either take the public boat Alilaguna Line (Blue Line) which would take a roundabout route or ride the ATVO bus to Venice Piazzale Roma (Euro 6 one way) and then take the vaporetto. The third was of course a private water taxi that would cost more than Euro 100. Not wanting to lug my luggage around too much, I chose the Alilaguna route, which cost Euro 15. It was a nice sunny morning and the motorboat packed with tourists and their suitcases passed along the outskirts island route, which meant I could see almost the whole of the Venetian lagoon on the trip. Of course, with a groggy brain and minus a guide it didn’t amount to much. The water churned in foamy waves, sprinkling on the glass-enclosed windows of the boat. Three bamboo poles tied and sunk triangularly into the sea on either side formed a kind of motor path and we passed down this route. Birds sat on top of these poles, staring at us tamely.

The Giudecca Island stop was called Zitelle, and was just one stop away from St. Mark’s Square, which was to be my main focus area. I stepped off the boat and walked the short distance to Ostello Venezia. A red brick warehouse with dark green doors and black grilled windows in white frames has been converted into a hotel for backpackers. I had stayed at this Youth Hostel in 1998, but had forgotten what a charming place it was. It was a welcoming world of wood, thick cushioning in warm red tones, a cafeteria and

Travelling is a good teacher; travelling alone is an even better one. At any age, it is liberating, can sometimes get tiring and lonely but, nonetheless, it’s enriching.
a smiling face behind the counter. I really admire the commitment of these volunteers who have to show maps, point out things, translate, and explain the same thing repeatedly to multiple guests that arrive and leave in a day.

Going to my dorm room on the third floor—which I was to share with 14 other travellers from across the world—became a bit of a pain because the elevator was only available till the second floor and I had to heave my luggage up all the way over the stairs. But the room itself, with its high roof and wooden beams and the huge window with a fascinating view of Venice, made it all worthwhile. Over the next two days, I made it a point to shoot a video and take stills of the same scene at all hours as the sun changed positions, and the colour of the water altered from a translucent blue in the morning to molten blue-green in the afternoon, to finally turn sparkly blue-black at night.

I dropped my luggage, settled my stuff around my bed, which was right next to the window, and set out to explore Venice. Travelling is a good teacher; travelling alone is an even better one. At any age, it is liberating. It can sometimes get tiring and lonely but, nonetheless, it’s enriching!

I validated my UNICA 24-hour ticket at the white machine and took a vaporetto to St. Mark's Square or Piazza San Marco as it's called in Italy. San Marco is the central point of attraction in Venice. It was like stepping into a tourist hub, where groups marched from one end of the long broad waterfront pavement with its innumerable bridges to the other. Guides led the groups, walking briskly with coloured flags held up high to keep their respective groups from straying. San Marco is a huge square—a prestige symbol of Venice—and is overlooked by the Basilica San Marco, the grand Doge's Palace and the Clock Tower.

Although there was a lot to see, with my limited time all I aimed to do was ‘soak’ in Venice—walk the lanes, mix with locals, and watch gondolas with couples float by under the bridges. I did want to see the Rialto Bridge though—
The moment I stepped out of the boat, I was greeted by a flash of colours. Quaint bridges with water flowing underneath and boats floating gently added more appeal to the already fascinating island of Burano.
The next morning I went back to San Marco for my three-island tour that was to begin at 9.30 am. I was very excited because I had read a lot about these islands: Murano, Burano and Torcello. The group of assorted tourists boarded the big motorboat and we were off, cutting across the vast expanse of the lagoon. Within 10 minutes, our first island Murano drew into sight. Murano is synonymous with Venetian glass and boasts many furnaces where glass production takes place. We were taken to a glass-blowing factory and I felt like a schoolgirl on an educational tour. The glass-blowing demo was fascinating as the artist created a horse out of a blob of glass. Glass-making is an art carried forward from one generation to another in a Venetian family and, as the guide informed us, it is not taught in any school. As such, it may soon be a dying art in Venice. The showroom, however, held the priciest glass articles, from key chains, trinkets and twisted candies to a wall-sized landscape. Unfortunately, we didn’t get to see any of the other parts of the islands or its famed churches.

The next island was more my type. Burano, famous for its lace-making, is an island to the northern side of Venice and worth visiting again and again. The moment I stepped out of the boat, I was greeted by a flash of colours. Each house was painted in vivid, assorted colours—there were red, blue, green, yellow and orange houses aligned close to each other, in one long stretch. Orange walls with green windows; red walls with yellow doors. Attractive contrasts, indeed! Quaint bridges with water flowing underneath and boats floating gently, flanked by restaurants and shops, added even more appeal to the already fascinating island.

After observing a middle-aged woman knitting lace with a pleasant smile on her plump face, I strolled down the cosy town, admiring the shops with an abundant display of lace, kerchiefs, table linen, tops and caps. The bright sun tempted me to take as many photos as I could. Burano is an artist’s paradise and added real flavour to my Venice trip. I was left wishing I could spend more time exploring the island.

The third island was Torcello, which is actually a more or less abandoned island where a handful of farmers and innkeepers still live. A path by the canal led past houses and restaurants to the church of Santa Fosca. It looked almost like a ruin; while others ambled along for a short exploration of the cathedral, I hung around the small stores and bought some more souvenirs.

When we returned to San Marco by late afternoon, I was content. I had booked a train ticket from Venice to Villach and Villach to Salzburg the next morning and had to check out the routes and validate my ticket. So after a quick lunch, I took the vaporetto again to the Santa Lucia train station. If you travel by train to Venice, this is where you would get off and take a vaporetto to your hotel. Venezia Santa Lucia station is actually the city’s historic centre and if you sit on the long flight of steps overlooking the Grand Canal like the majority of travellers, you get a panoramic view of the city and a piazza.

That night—my last in Venice—I thought of the people I had met on the island tour: a young South Indian couple living in Dubai who bought a beautiful vase in the Murano showroom; an enthusiastic Australian lady with her chatterbox granddaughter. In that short travel between two islands, we managed to exchange a lot about our cultures, about my novels and their lives. I would probably not remember their faces after a few years, nor would I ever meet them again, but I would always remember the ‘feel’ and ‘atmosphere’ of the interactions and associate them with my memory of the island tour. And this was what travelling alone in Venice had done to me. Created another me.

As I slept by the window, boats passed in the middle of the night, waves murmured gently and the sea whispered, speaking low and rhythmically. I felt a deep affinity and connection with the sounds and structures of the city. And I realised that travellers like me may come, admire, enjoy and depart, but the city of Venice never really pauses, nor sleeps. It merely beckons and touches the soul of the next admirer.
After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

The first time your eyes met.
The first time you mustered up the courage.
The first time you bared your heart.
The first time you heard “Yes”.
The first date.
The first time you held hands.
The first fight.
The first time you made up.
Shouldn’t you be celebrating, that first rush of love before life
and the babies and the bills intruded?
Because for the first time
you’re at an age when
you can fall in love with each other all over again.
If you're above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the magazine for you. Filled with human interest stories, exciting features and columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.
A journey in time

Bewitching yet forlorn, the ruins of Hampi are all that is left of the once mighty and majestic Vijayanagara empire (1336-1646). With its inspiring royal architecture and the outcrop of large boulders that set up a grand backdrop, Hampi exudes a magical mystique. Acclaimed photographer Raghu Rai, who has been training his lens on this world heritage site since the 1970s, captures the visual experience in Vijayanagara Empire: Ruins to Resurrection (Niyogi Books; ₹ 3,500; 139 pages). Here are some highlights...
Said to be home to the elephants that were used in the famed Dussehra procession, the elephant stables with 11 chambers and arcaded structure are an amalgamation of the Indo-Islamic style of architecture.

The Lakshminarasimha monolith with multi-headed naga hood symbolised the power and might of the Vijayanagara kingdom. Carved out of a single boulder, it had four arms—all of which have been broken—and sits on the coils of Adishesha or snake god with its seven hoods spread out like an umbrella over the deity's head. The figure of Lakshmi, the consort of the deity, sitting on his left lap has been broken and only the right arm of the goddess, encircling the waist of the god, is partly visible.
Brutalised figurines of dancers at Hazararama temple, a temple dedicated to Lord Rama. The moderate proportions, neat finish and exuberantly carved sculptural reliefs on the outer wall of the temple set it apart.

The interior of the queen’s bath in the zenana enclosure. The zenana enclosure represents the secular architecture of the Vijayanagara rulers. All that remains now of the queen’s palace is the basement; the roof, made of sandalwood, exuded fragrance until its destruction at the hands of invaders.
Excavations and conservation work being done by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in Hampi. For almost four centuries the ruins were buried in dust, till the ASI set about the job.

Carvings inside Mahamandapa in the spectacular Vitthala temple. Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, the complex has 56 musical pillars and represents the culmination of the Vijayanagara style of architecture.
Five metres tall, Badavalinga is a monolithic Shiva linga that sits on 3 ft of water. According to local lore, the linga survived the onslaught of invaders because people built a protective brick cover for it.

Sadhu on the platform at Hoochapaiya Mandapa
Colourful sculptures of gods and goddesses on the gate of Virupaksha temple, which overlooks the Hampi bazaar. The 1,000 year-old temple was the nerve centre of the religious-cultural activities of Hampi. Eleven storeys high, the temple predates the Vijayanagara Empire. Pampa, the consort of Shiva in the form of Virupaksha, is worshipped as the local goddess here.

Sculptures of warriors of the Vijayanagara Empire, restored by ASI, on the main gate of Krishna temple. These finely sculpted figures of warriors with shields, horses and elephants depict a scene from the Odisha campaign of Krishnadevaraya.
Experience

A second childhood

Wouldn’t it be great to have a second childhood? To start life afresh? Because at Harmony, a magazine for people above fifty five, we believe that age is in the mind. Which is why, you should live young.
Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org
Flying high

Dotted with kites of myriad sizes and shapes, the skies are eagerly turning into a kaleidoscope of colours. Annually, silver kite maker Murtuza Abdul Raheman looks forward to the Hindu harvest festival Makar Sankranti, the busiest season for him. “Kites bind people together, bringing a sense of camaraderie and peace,” says the 67-year-old, who works from a small workshop in Jamalpur, Ahmedabad. Currently, he is putting together an array of kites for the International Kite Festival to be held in Ahmedabad on 14 January. As the market for kites touches new heights, Raheman has introduced newer versions like chil (longitudinal), poniya (smaller than regular kites) and adadhiya (larger kites), and plastic kites. We couldn’t but agree when he said, “Kites inspire us to rise above our demons while keeping us grounded.”
SWEET TIDINGS

I grew up in Madurai where Pongal, marking the advent of the month of Thai, was celebrated with great cheer. I remember cartloads of fresh turmeric, sugarcane and winter vegetables heralding the arrival of Pongal. My mother would get busy spring cleaning the large house and getting it white-washed just before Pongal. We would wear new dresses made from handlooms and khadi—signifying the rural moorings of the festival—unlike the rich silks we wore during Deepawali.

Pongal literally means ‘boiling over’ as the milk is allowed to boil over, signifying abundance. Sarkarai pongal, a special, sweet khichadi, would be prepared with freshly harvested rice.

There would be a defined time each year for preparing this dish—varying from 6 am to 3 pm. My father was a doctor and many of his friends who owned land would send us gifts of the fresh crop. My mother and grandmother would prepare sarkarai pongal by cooking moong dal and rice in milk in a special bronze vessel known as urli. We would decorate the urli with turmeric and kumkum. As the milk would start boiling, all of us would shout together “Pongalo pongal”. Jaggery, spices, ghee and nuts would be added in the end and the dish would be offered to the Sun God.

I remember the large open courtyard where we drew suryanarayanavan kolam, where Pongal cooking and pooja would take place. In many houses, this would be done on the open terrace. With changing times, the preparation has also changed. Today, I make sarkarai pongal in a pressure cooker. This preserves the nutrients and reduces cooking time.

Popularly known as ChitVish, ardent cook and recipe writer Chithra Viswanathan reminisces about the age-old tradition of Pongal, and gives a modern touch to Sarkarai Pongal, a South Indian sweet delicacy.
SARKARAI PONGAL

**Ingredients**
- Rice: ½ cup
- Moong dal: ¼ cup
- Powdered jaggery: 2 cups
- Cashew nuts: 50 gm; broken
- Raisins: 50 gm
- Milk: 1½ cups
- Water: 2 cups
- Ghee: 3 tbsp (more is optional)
- Cardamom powder and nutmeg powder: ½ tsp each
- Edible camphor (pachai karpooram): one pinch (optional)

**Method**
- Dry roast the moong dal for a few minutes, and then soak with the rice for 15 minutes. Wash and strain.
- In a pressure cooker add water, milk, rice and dal. When the mixture starts boiling, close the cooker and put on the weight. Immediately, lower the flame and cook for 15 minutes.
- Place another pan on the stove with the powdered jaggery and half a cup of water. Stir continuously until the jaggery dissolves. Strain, set aside.
- When the pressure has dropped from the cooker, remove the rice-dal mixture and mash it lightly.
- Add the jaggery liquid to this pongal mixture. Place it again on the flame, add 2 tbsp of ghee. Allow to cook.
- Mix well; add the spices and switch off the flame.
- In a small pan, heat 1 tbsp ghee, lightly roast the cashew nuts and raisins and add as a garnish to the pongal.

—as told to Pratibha Jain

**Rural canvas**

In what could, perhaps, be termed the first attempt of this dimension, senior artist A Ramachandran’s oeuvre spanning over half a century was on view in two interlinked parts—*A Retrospective: Drawings, sketches and studies from 1958 to 2014* and *Ekalinji Fantasy: Paintings and sculptures from 2009 to 2014*—in Delhi last month. In *Ekalinji Fantasy*, the large paintings and sculptures are centred on the small temple town of Ekalinji in Rajasthan, where the ruined temples surrounded by Bhil villages became the artist’s focal point. “The changing seasons, festivals and the lives of the tribals have become a recurring motif to recreate magical realism,” he shares.

**FRUIT OF THE LOOM**

Social and political activist Jaya Jaitly recently released *Woven Textiles of Varanasi*, a book dedicated to the weavers of the oldest living city in the world. “We need to acknowledge the beauty of Varanasi’s textiles that is emerging out of age-old traditions and techniques,” says Jaitly. Making a powerful case for rediscovering and preserving textile treasures that are being wiped out in the wake of machine-made imitations, she adds, “If all who come to Varanasi to seek eternal bliss, enlightenment and salvation took time to explore the interiors of the city where weavers display their creations, they would be extending a helping hand to the tradition of fine weaving.”
If Carnatic music had been professionally more rewarding, P C Ramakrishna would perhaps be better known today for his prowess on the mridangam. In the 1960s, faced with the choice of continuing to play the instrument or taking the first steps towards a corporate career, Ramakrishna chose the latter. However, what has remained unchanged over the past 50 years is his commitment to his true calling: theatre.

Ramakrishna is part of The Madras Players, the oldest-running English theatre group in India that turns 60 in 2015. This span of time parallels perhaps the very growth of English theatre in the country.

"Initially, The Madras Players produced plays written by English, American, Russian and European writers," recounts Ramakrishna, "But since the 1970s, four Indian playwrights emerged—Badal Sircar, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad—who changed the métier forever. We enacted their plays translated to English, but today many of our plays are written in English by writers such as Sabita Radhakrishna, Chetan Shan, Timeri Murari and Shreekumar Varma."

Ramakrishna has been an integral part of productions such as Land of the Free, Silence! The Court is in Session, Rural Phantasy (based on Kalki's Kanayazhiyin Kanavu), Meghadootam and, more recently, Honour, which he directed. He has played innumerable characters, from the titular role in his first play, The Amazing Mr Scuttleboom to his most recent enactment of Mr Whymper in the Peter Hall adaptation of Animal Farm.

"In 1960 we had 50 to 60 people in the audience for English plays with Indian themes. Today, we have three shows running at full house. The audience's expectations of a theatre experience have also grown."

**SARI SAGA**

THE JOURNEY OF THE ETHNIC NINE YARDS FROM A COTTON POD TO A MAGNIFICENT FABRIC, AND GRADUALLY TRAVERSING INTO A RANGE OF WEARING STYLES, CAME ALIVE IN A STUNNING CONTEMPORARY DANCE PRESENTATION, SARI, BY DAKSHA SHETH DANCE COMPANY IN MUMBAI LAST MONTH. TRAPEZE DANCERS AND TIGHTROPE WALKERS HIGHLIGHTED THE SKILL AND WORKMANSHIP OF INDIAN WEAVERS, WHILE REITERATING THE PLAYFULNESS AND INDIVIDUALITY OF THE DRAPE.
Take for instance, our production of Mike Cullen’s *Anna Weiss* in 2000,” he says. The play on the subject of False Memory Syndrome is about a therapist whose young patient, in the midst of therapy, remembers being sexually molested by her father. “We rehearsed on camera because the actors playing the two women were not comfortable with onlookers. I found it traumatic to work on this play and return home to two teenage daughters. At the end of the performance, the audience stayed in their seats for almost 20 minutes, reluctant to leave without an interaction on the subject. Therapist Dr Vijay Nagaswami, who was part of the audience, spent some time answering the audience’s questions,” he adds.

Sivasankari’s *Karunai Kolai* was conceived as an English play by Ramakrishna and rendered a different ending with the author’s permission. “*Mercy* is a monologue I directed in 2005 about a couple who are very devoted to each other. The play features the predicament of the husband, as his wife shows no signs of recovering from coma following a mishap. I remember the audience opinion being clearly divided on the ending. The men predominately agreed with the husband’s point of view, empathising with the guilt of the caregiver. But the women in the audience believed that the ending was not fair to the character of the wife.”

He holds up *Water* as an example of the writer’s keen observation of a social situation. “Komal Swaminathan’s Tamil play *Thanneer Thanneer* moved me immensely when I first saw it. In 2012, we approached his daughter for producing it in English—coincidentally at the same time the thought occurred to her as well. The brilliance of *Water* is that the social situation and corruption depicted in it are as relevant today as they were when the play was first enacted 32 years ago.”

Ramakrishna retired from a corporate career in 1993 to devote more time to theatre. That year, he also dabbled briefly in Tamil cinema, with character roles in movies such as *May Madhham* and Mani Ratnam’s *Thiruda Thiruda*. With his accent-neutral diction and resonating voice, he is also a much sought after voice-over professional for corporate films and documentaries for organisations such as BHEL and ISRO; the latter’s videos on launch vehicles and satellites carry his distinctive voice.

Ramakrishna speaks of mike-friendliness, and the distinction between a singing voice and a speaking voice, which brings us to the care he takes to keep his voice sounding the way it does. “Speaking requires short breaths and singers take long breaths—the discipline is different. I do take care of my voice with some rudimentary breathing exercises. I drink liquids at room temperature and avoid spicy foods. I do not speak above the ambient noise level. I also stay silent when I can.”

The last statement catches us unawares. Elaborating on it, Ramakrishna says, “Silence is an active state, and it is not at all about shutting off. An hour of silence a day leaves the voice refreshed and the mind unclogged. This was, perhaps, why the rishis of yore undertook *mauna vratham* [vow of silence]. Silence is, indeed, the greatest rejuvenator.”

“I started as a painter, perhaps will end as one! A circle may emerge as a visual, though the path was never defined and linear. I lived through many forms—visible & invisible! The tangible success was fulfilling, but the pauses and blanks spanned through were equally intriguing… I have found consolation in the blank canvas, which triggers an introspective journey in search of those images hidden in my mind. My finished canvas with all its perceptible and untraceable possibilities will offer a confession! With my new beginning, I’m compelled to find myself again, and to lose myself anew!”

*Amol Palekar at his exhibition of abstracts in oil on the occasion of his 70th birthday*
often wonder whether men and women are disappointed if they perceive little or no change in their social or behavioural habits over time. The UPA government was shown the door because you and I felt that it showed the stolidity of a reluctant mule for 10 years. It is but natural that advertising, which drives the engines of human desire, will change with the times. This change is sometimes slow; sometimes it gathers pace; and in extraordinary times such as we are living in, the change shocks individuals into a state of helplessness.

Many early brands in India built up their franchisees amongst customers by word-of-mouth communication, which is the older version of social media. I remember a particular incident narrated by my team which was working in rural Bihar. Kafbin cough lozenges, promoted from a van, received vocal support from a farmer who had come from a neighbouring village. He told the locals, “They came to our village last week. My daughter had a bad cough. She took this medicine. Accha hai.” The sale, that day, was very good.

Likewise, iconic brands like Forhans (for gums), Cherry Blossom (shoe polish)—so unexciting without Charlie Chaplin—Cantharidine Hair Oil and Afghan Snow built their reputations on word-of-mouth communication and good distribution. Pheneol, developed and marketed by Bengal Chemical since the early 20th century, still commands a strong market presence. Unfortunately, the brand isn’t always available, but Indian markets still wait for it! This, despite the fact that there is hardly any advertising support for Pheneol, while Lizol ads take up so much TV time.

The difference between the 1950s and 2014 is that there are different engines that drive social communication now. In the past, there were no engines: social interaction between groups (mainly women) enabled brands to extend presence from one home into many. Today, a whole new world in advertising has opened up with digital media. As an ad man I have enormous faith in the power of advertising. This is based on my personal experience. Not once, but repeatedly!

I recall, for instance, that a company had diversified into dehydrated foods. I was briefed by the managing director who assured me there was no reason to see the plant he had set up. He said, it’s simple, the plant dehydrates anything, fish, meat, vegetables... name it and we instantly deliver what you want. The more graphic part of the brief was “we push in a goat at one end and it comes out packaged in dehydrated form at the other”.

We released a half-page ad in mainline English dailies across the country. A reply coupon was built in to judge response. The response was immediate. The client got trial orders from the Armed Forces, many different organisations, foreign countries, including exotic places in Africa where they obviously had plenty of wildebeeste that could enter at one end and be converted to dehydrated packs at the other end! The trial orders totalled to around 50 tes, while...
the capacity of the plant was a mere 3 tes per annum.

On yet another occasion, a company asked us to advertise their induction furnace. This was a major investment for them and no one in the works knew much about the furnace. The engineers who were to run it hadn’t joined. They were still haggling over pay and perks. The agency found out the details required from the furnace manufacturer. Once again an ad was released with a response coupon built in. Every major automaker in India seemed keen to tap another source for special steels. It took the client three full years to optimise return on investment. Therefore, if you underestimate the power of conventional advertising you do so at your own peril!

From the early 1950s to the early 1980s the strange thing about Indian advertising was the vast swathes of territory that advertising did not cover. Apart from the main metros the circulation of newspapers was limited to the municipal areas. In contiguous areas adjoining a metro in Bombay and Calcutta, which we generally refer to as greater Bombay or greater Calcutta, only the dominant papers like The Times of India in Bombay and The Statesman in Calcutta were available.

Magazines in the Indian languages fared better in their distribution, reaching out to smaller towns. Film magazines in Tamil, Hindi, Marathi and Bengali were popular among women, though early research on circulation indicated that more men read female magazines and film magazines than women. English magazines seemed to find a common home in Bombay. A greater number of these were printed and circulated out of Bombay. Filmfare, Femina, Eve’s Weekly were popular magazines catering to the upper crust. R K Karanjia’s Blitz, a tabloid with a nubile female on the back page, was lapped up by the sex-starved male youth of the country.

From the 1950s till the early 1980s when TV became the most popular medium (Hum Log was telecast in 1983; Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi in 1984) the bulk of advertising was in newspapers. That too in English dailies; generally, the national dailies were printed and circulated in the four metros. Language dailies emanating from the metros probably had higher circulation but had less credibility amongst advertisers and their agencies. I still do not know why.

Popular brands were advertised in the major newspapers and magazines with predictable frequency. Take

**ICONIC BRANDS LIKE FORHANS, CHERRY BLOSSOM, CANTHARIDINE HAIR OIL AND AFGHAN SNOW BUILT THEIR REPUTATIONS ON WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION AND GOOD DISTRIBUTION. PHENEOL STILL COMMANDS A STRONG MARKET PRESENCE**
biscuits, for instance. Parle G, named after a place in Bombay, Vile Parle, where the factory was located (the railway station is called Parla by commuters), became a brand that found its way into homes across the country. While the concept of brand positioning was still way into the future, the benefit sold in the advertisement was "for delicious nourishment." A child in the visual emphasised the point that kids like the taste and it is healthy for them. Britannia, the leading biscuit maker in India, also sold Glaxo biscuits. But their ad carried the insipid promise, "another better biscuit". No points for guessing who sold better!

Art directors and print managers from the 1950s to about the middle of the 1980s had to struggle with poor quality of newsprint used by newspapers. Magazines were printed on better quality paper. Therefore, the blocks made for printing in magazines had to be prepared separately with quarter tones having finer dots. Naturally, illustrations dominated visuals in press advertisements. Illustrators were revered by agencies and great illustrators developed their individual styles. The greatest among them all was Umesh Rao of JWT who created the Air India Maharaja, working closely with the fastidious advertising manager of Air India, Bobby Kooka.

Look at any Air India ad and enjoy the illustration. You will come across an ad that calls an elephant a pachyderm long before Asterix comics, and see the emotions drawn not only on the mahout's face but also on the face of the elephant. This particular advertisement for Reader's Digest magazine had far less space for the illustrator; yet he conjures magic with his pen. Speaking of an age when cigarette packs didn't carry health warnings, observe the creative team toying with lifestyle ideas through ads that celebrate good living.

Ovaltine was the number one beverage then, not Bournvita. Ovaltine Amateur Hours was played from Radio Ceylon. It was just like Binaca Geet Mala. I interviewed Ameen Sayani in Bombay in 2002, when he spoke about the popularity of his radio programmes over Radio Ceylon. All India Radio had too many hurdles in relaying ad messages, some frightfully silly, like they wouldn't allow jewellery ads over radio, so Radio Ceylon had a field day cornering all the business from India. Later AIR launched Vividh Bharati.

Post-Independence Indian society had very little access to entertainment. No wonder men and women went about doing what they could without government interference, which is having sex! This resulted in a population explosion that caught the government unawares. Despite the government's deep distrust of advertising, they had to use advertising for their population control campaigns. The slogan Hum Do Hamara Do, though, bored everyone to death.

The change in advertising has been in the way the consumer has changed. Advertising appeal has shifted from highlighting the product to focusing on brand benefits, to connecting with the consumer emotionally. Remember the famous Liril campaign in the 80s!

Similarly, media dominance has shifted from print to TV (from static to moving medium); while even in print media there has been a marked shift as new technology and availability of better quality of newsprint enabled agencies to rely on photography, compared to illustrations in the past. After the mid-1970s, photography has played a key role in most successful campaigns. Leading Bombay-based photographers led in helping agencies to transform advertising to real-life, model-dependent ads. Advertising has also shifted from mere brand advertising to brand-promotion advertising. It began with the colas, Thums Up, Coke and Pepsi. Gradually, others walked down this path.

Finally, the question: Has the consumer changed? Yes, she is very different in her lifestyle compared to the past. As society enters a phase of sex-lessness, where women and men believe they are the same despite the obvious biological differences, advertising will continue to address these new behavioural trends. The way ahead is exciting, although it is a difficult terrain to negotiate. I believe advertising will depend increasingly on research into the consumer psyche. Advertising will continue to address the tasks of niche marketing. India is not a homogeneous market and agencies are beginning to understand the importance of speaking to consumers in their language, not just in English!

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Chaudhuri is the author of Indian Advertising: Laughter & Tears (Niyogi Books; ₹795; 388 pages)
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Myth of Janus

We toast the New Year with an extract from Reginald C. Couzens's *The Stories of the Months and Days* (1923) that narrates the legend behind January

The first month was called Januarius by the Romans, after Janus, the god of doors and gates. We see the same word in *janua*, the Latin for a gate or opening. From the idea that a door is a way in, an entrance, it became a custom among the Romans to pray to Janus whenever they undertook a new work. He was also the god of the beginning of the day, and it was only natural that when a new month was added at the beginning of the year it should be named after him. During this month, offerings to the god were made of meal, frankincense, and wine, each of which had to be quite new.

Since a gate opens both ways, Janus was thought to be able to see back into the past, and forward into the future, and he was usually represented in pictures as having a double head that looked both ways. On the earliest Roman coins he is drawn with two bearded faces, with a staff in one hand, and a key in the other. He was also the protector of trade and shipping, and on some coins his head is shown with the prow of a ship. When people wished to picture him as the god of the year, they drew him holding the number 300 in one hand, and 65 in the other.

Janus was worshiped on the Janiculum (Hill of Janus), one of the seven hills on which Rome was built. Since he was the God of Gates, all the gates of Rome were under his care, especially the archway through which the army marched to war, and by which it returned. This archway was afterwards replaced by a temple which was called Janus Quadrifrons—that is, four-sided—because it was square. On each side of the building there were three windows and one door, making twelve windows and four doors, which represented the twelve months and the four seasons. In times of war the temple gates were kept wide open since people were continually making offerings to the god, but whenever there came a time of peace, the gates were at once closed. As we know the Romans were continually fighting, it does not surprise us to find that the gates of the temple were closed only three times in seven hundred years.

Janus was said to be the son of Apollo, the God of the Sun, whose daily task it was to drive across the sky in his chariot of fire. Each morning when Aurora, the Goddess of the Dawn, had opened the gates of the East, Apollo set forth, and when his task accomplished, he reached the Western Ocean, he returned to his palace in the East.

Ancient stories also link the sunflower to Apollo. A story says that there once lived a girl named Clytie, and that each day, with eyes full of love for the fair sun god, she watched him journey across the sky: but Apollo, knowing nothing of her love, took no heed of her as he passed. Clytie watched for him day after day on a river bank, and her heart sank as each evening she saw his chariot dip down into the West. She would not leave the river bank, but stayed all through the cold night, anxiously waiting for the first flash of the sun's rays from the glowing East. At last the gods took pity on her, and changed her into a sunflower. Her green dress became green leaves, and her golden hair became yellow petals. Now was she happy indeed, for she knew that she could always see Apollo, and you will find that to this day the sunflower turns its head towards the sun as it moves across the sky.

Interestingly, the name for the first month of the year among the Angles and Saxons was Wulfmonath (wolf month), since it was that time of the year when the wolves were unable to find food, and their hunger made them bold enough to come into the villages.
I usually start a poem with a phrase that suggests a whole complicated experience to me,” Vijay Seshadri, the first Indian-American to be awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for poetry, tells us. He won the prize in 2014 for 3 Sections—a collection of poems that examine human consciousness, from birth to dementia. Born in Bengaluru, Seshadri grew up in Columbus, Ohio, where his father taught chemistry at Ohio State University. His collection of poems includes James Laughlin Award winner The Long Meadow (see box) and Wild Kingdom. And his poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in prestigious publications including The American Scholar, The Nation, The New Yorker, The Paris Review, and Yale Review. Seshadri was also an editor at The New Yorker. An alumnus of Columbia University, Seshadri currently teaches poetry and non-fiction writing at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, and lives in Brooklyn with wife Suzanne Khuri and son. The 60 year-old, who recently visited the country of his birth after almost a decade to participate in Tata Literature Live! in Mumbai, talks about poetic expressions, solitary childhood and the imaginativeness of Indian myths to Srirekha Pillai in an email interview.

You have often said that a poem starts with a ‘mysterious phrase’ for you. Can you quote a couple of instances?

I can quote one. On my way in my car to my office at Sarah Lawrence one day, I saw a Yonkers city bus [Sarah Lawrence is on the edge of the city of Yonkers] that said ‘Dyre Avenue - To the Subway.’ The subway is the New York City subway at the border of Yonkers and the Bronx. These lines popped into my head, “You can take the Dyre Avenue bus to where the subway terminates just inside the Bronx.” Perfectly ordinary one might suppose. But somehow the deep rhythm, the deep sound of those lines, combined with their sense, were mysteriously suggestive, and when I got to my office I wrote most of one of my favourite poems, North of Manhattan, which begins with those lines. There was a time though when I actually willed poems. If I would see something beautiful, I would say, ‘I am going to write a poem,’ without any sort of linguistic bridge. I remember once being on a train and seeing an egret grazing the water of a pond as it was flying; one foot was grazing the water and I thought it was beautiful. I regarded that as a poetic occasion and for a long time I wrote in response to such experiences.

You have also talked about isolation while growing up in Ohio and the effect it had on your studies.

It would be a long, sad tale and you would have to publish it as a novel. Suffice to say that, like a lot of artists, I was a solitary child.

Are writers temperamental and lonely by nature?

No, I don’t think so. Some of the most social beings I know are writers. But you have to have the capacity to be alone, to withstand isolation, to be able to write, and I think an early training in loneliness helps with that.

You are at ease with both poetry and non-fiction. When an idea is born, does it also choose the form of narration?

I wouldn’t want to personify ideas in that way, as somehow possessing volition and the capacity to choose. I write prose when I have a long story
to tell. I could probably write that story in verse, but this is not an epoch of long stories in verse, as the classical age was.

When you are writing, does the poem seize control of you or is it vice versa?

Again, the personification, but in this case I think it makes more sense. A poem is like an animal you are coaxing out of the forest to eat from your hand, so it's a mutual interaction.

Do you subscribe to Wordsworth's famous quote on poetry being a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions?

He also says poems are made of emotions recollected in tranquility, doesn't he? Contradictory, but the latter rather than the former is one I would agree with.

What have been the Indian influences on you in terms of writings and thoughts?

I like Buddhism and the great Upanishads—Brihadaranyaka, Katha—and love the imaginativeness of Indian myth. It is the imaginativeness, rather than the specifics, that has influenced me. I don't think, though, that just because one is Indian one is required to be influenced by Indian texts. That seems to violate the promise of freedom.

For readers who are familiar with The Mahabharata, The Long Meadow ends with a twist. What was the idea that birthed the poem; was it your dog?

It was the identification of Yudhishtra's dog—who as you remember is Bhakti—with my dog, who I loved deeply and ascribed uncanny qualities to.

THE LONG MEADOW

Near the end of one of the old poems, the son of righteousness, the source of virtue and civility, on whose back the kingdom is carried as on the back of the tortoise the earth is carried, passes into the next world. The wood is dark. The wood is dark, and on the other side of the wood the sea is shallow, warm, endless. In and around it, there is no threat of life — so little is the atmosphere charged with possibility that he might as well be wading through a flooded basement. He wades for what seems like forever, and never stops to rest in the shade of the metal rain trees springing out of the water at fixed intervals. Time, though endless, is also short, so he wades on, until he walks out of the sea and into the mountains, where he burns on the windward slopes and freezes in the valleys. After unendurable struggles, he finally arrives at the celestial realm. The god waits there for him. The god invites him to enter. But looking through the glowing portal, he sees on that happy plain not those he thinks wait eagerly for him—his beloved, his brothers, his companions in war and exile, all long since dead and gone—but sitting pretty and enjoying the gorgeous sunset, his cousin and bitter enemy, the cause of that war, that exile, whose arrogance and vicious indolence plunged the world into grief. The god informs him that, yes, those he loved have been carried down the river of fire. Their thirst for justice offended the cosmic powers, who are jealous of justice. In their place in the celestial realm, called Alaukika in the ancient texts, the breaker of faith is now glorified. He, at least, acted in keeping with his nature. Who has not felt a little of the despair the son of righteousness now feels, staring wildly around him? The god watches, not without compassion and a certain wonder. This is the final illusion, the one to which all the others lead. He has to pierce through it himself, without divine assistance. He will take a long time about it, with only his dog to keep him company, the mongrel dog, celebrated down the millennia, who has waded with him, shivered and burned with him, and never abandoned him to his loneliness. That dog bears a slight resemblance to my dog, a skinny, restless, needy, overprotective mutt, who was rescued from a crack house by Suzanne. On weekends, and when I can shake free during the week, I take her to the Long Meadow, in Prospect Park, where dogs are allowed off the leash in the early morning. She's gray-muzzled and old now, but you can't tell that by the way she runs.
You also mention that the stories that came to you from your father were the gospels of science. Can you elaborate on that?

Gospel is, of course, used metaphorically. My father was a scientist who wanted me to be a scientist, so he told me stories about scientists, to inspire me, and also because he was inspired by great scientists. He was excited by the vocation of science, of basic research. It’s a common 20th century Indian experience.

*Wolf Soup* talks about changing values that reflect changing times. How does something as commonplace as a bedtime story inspire a thoughtful poem?

Bedtime stories are hardly commonplace. The perennial ones, the great ones, are filled with fantastic characters and incidents, and have tremendous psychological resonance, which is why psychologists and anthropologists have always been interested in the corpus of fairy tales. Hans Christian Anderson, the Brothers Grimm, the *Jataka Tales*, the *Panchatantra*—incredibly rich narrative and emotional material.

That poem, though, is incidentally about the *Three Little Pigs*, but is actually about narrative, about the act of storytelling itself.

You attempted a novel in your early 20s that never really took off. Is there a story waiting to be told?

There might be, but probably not the one I was trying to tell then, which was a conventional novel that a person in their early 20s would write, a coming-of-age story.

In your essay *My Pirate Boyhood*, you write about how you looked through your mother when she came to school on a parents’ day. Over the years have you made peace with your Indian roots?

I was at peace with my Indian roots. I wasn’t at peace with the difficulty of being different from everyone around me. But you just grow out of that, you grow up. Children are children!

Tell us about your family.

My son is a young economist. He’s an excellent writer but he grew up around writers, musicians, artists, and I think he decided early on that he wanted to strike out in a different direction.

My wife is an educator who works with learning-disabled children who need educational therapy and services from the school system. She does a complicated job that is hard to describe but crucial, and she’s one of the most useful people I know!
Naseeruddin Shah sketches his life in all its glory and shortcomings in his autobiography AND THEN ONE DAY (Penguin; ₹ 699; 316 pages). Written in a witty, self-deprecating manner—often taking recourse to a whimsical tone and deadpan drawl—it’s an account of the making of a laid-back theatre and film personality who gained celebrity status much later in life. From childhood misadventures to NSD and FTII days, his first film to the gamut of commercial hits and misses, and his plays, Shah gives us bits and pieces that he knows will interest us, along with a few scathingly honest opinions about people and films. He also humbly touches upon the relationships with important people in his life, including his father with whom he shared a rocky relationship, first wife Purveen and the love of his life, wife Ratna. The guilt he feels at abandoning Purveen and their child Heeba is almost tangible. The memoir ends right after his marriage to Ratna, when Heeba comes back into his life, and we’re left wanting to know more, wondering if there will be a sequel. At a time when ghost writing passes off as memoir writing, this book stands out with a voice that is intensely personal and unorthodox.

Such is the spell of The Ramayana and The Mahabharata that newer writers keep adapting them to modern times. With mythology evolving as a popular genre in Indian writing in English, writers such as Ashok Banker, Devdutt Pattanaik, Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi have been penning bestsellers. Kavita Kane, who previously hit the bull’s eye with Karna’s Wife, yet again picks up an overlooked and obscure character, dusts her off, and presents her as the central protagonist. SITA’S SISTER (Rupa Publications; ₹ 295; 309 pages) is The Ramayana told by Urmila. While Sita has always been held up as the epitome of the ideal Indian woman, this is an ode to Urmila, the scholarly, fiery, feminist daughter of King Janaka. Sita and Urmila are a study in contrasts. While one is sweet, placid and a culinary queen, the other is a freethinker, who stands up for the wronged women in her family and doesn’t mince words when it comes to taking up cudgels on their behalf. Kaikeyi, the much-vilified queen of the epic, also redeems herself in this tale that gives expression to the voices of the unheard in the epic saga.

Haruki Murakami’s latest visually enhanced novella, THE STRANGE LIBRARY (Random House; ₹ 994; 96 pages), is so short that you can finish it in one sitting. With the addition of visual cues such as the real-feel library card holder on the front cover and random pages from library books, it feels like a children’s picture book, but is as strange as Murakami can get. For readers who are used to his eccentric characters, strange places and dream-like sequences that could or could not have a deep cosmic truth to them, this one takes that mind-twisting journey to a whole new level. The story, at the outset, is about a boy who goes into a library and is coerced into a reading room jail cell by an old man who eats children’s brains; he has to try to escape from there along with a man in sheepskin and a girl who speaks with her hands. You might come off feeling that the story seemed incomplete, or worse, pointless, but deeper down this book deals with Murakami’s pet recurrent themes: alienation and loneliness.
Forget about those New Year resolutions in which you decide on the first day of January how you will be conducting your life in September, some nine months later. Here’s why: any resolution that involves you making decisions about long-range upcoming behaviour reinforces the self-defeating notion of living in the future rather than in the present moment. In fact, you can go about resolving until the cows come home, and you still have to live your life just like everyone else on this planet—ONE DAY AT A TIME. The important questions to be asking yourself are "How am I going to use my present moments this year?" and "Will I waste them in reviewing to myself how I used to behave, or how I would like to behave in the future, rather than resolving to live each day to the fullest?"

What you can do is set up day-to-day goals for yourself, and then resolve to begin living with present moment awareness for the rest of your life. For example, instead of deciding you are going to give up sugar for a year, resolve to go one day without eating sugar. Anyone can do virtually anything if it is for only one day. When you go for one whole day without eating sugar (or any other new behaviour), you are a totally different person at the end of that day. Learn to let that totally different person decide on the second day whether he or she wants to do it again on this new day, rather than letting the same old person decide that it is only going to be difficult in a couple of days anyhow, “so what’s the use.” Always let the new you make the decision, and then you’ll be living your present moments.

You know how easy it is to give up on a resolution, and you may have attributed this to some character flaw or personality weakness. Not so! You give up on your resolutions because your mind resists the notion of trying to live your life in long stretches, when it is patently impossible to do so. It is simply a matter of asking yourself at the beginning of the day, “How do I want to conduct my life today?” Then very directly begin to carry out your goals for the day. When you get good at living your present moments one day at a time, you’ll see yourself changing right before your own surprised eyes. Remember, anyone can do anything for just one day, so tune out the sentences that keep you locked into your old self-defeating ways and begin to enjoy each day of your bright new year.

*Present PERFECT*

_Enjoy the New Year by living the moment, says Dr Wayne W Dyer_

_Dyer (born 1940) is an American self-help author and motivational speaker. You can read his blogs on http://www.drwaynedyer.com/blog/

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WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU FIND SOMEONE ABOVE 55 YEARS WHO'S PERFECTLY IN TUNE WITH YOU?

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The sound of success

A nondescript, run-of-the-mill plot revolving around a vivacious governess, a bunch of unruly kids and a grouchy widower-dad is not the stuff Hollywood money spinners are associated with. But riding on magical melodies, *The Sound of Music* went on to displace *Gone with the Wind* as the highest-grossing film of all time. Indeed, the appeal of chartbusters by Rodgers and Hammerstein—Do-Re-Mi, *These are a few of my favourite things, I am sixteen going on seventeen, Edelweiss* and the title song—endures even today, 50 years after film premiered at Rivoli Theatre in New York City on 2 March 1965. With Julie Andrews and Christopher Plummer in the lead, *The Sound of Music* went on to win five Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Further, the accompanying soundtrack album was nominated for a Grammy Award for Album of the Year.

Based on the real life story of the Von Trapp family singers, one of the world’s best-known concert groups in the pre-World War II era, the movie, though adapted from the book *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers* by Maria Von Trapp, took liberties to weave in dramatic and interesting elements in the plot, including the romance between Maria and Captain Georg Von Trapp. In *Maria*, her autobiography, Maria Von Trapp admitted, “I really and truly was not in love. I liked him but didn’t love him. However, I loved the children, so in a way I really married the children.” Though the movie shows the Von Trapps travelling on foot over the Alps in the dead of night to escape the Nazis, in reality the family escaped Austria a full two years before the Anschluss (the annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938), leaving in a train in broad daylight! Also, the real family villa in Salzburg, though large and comfortable, was nowhere near as grand as the one depicted in the film. Left virtually bankrupt owing to the poor business decisions of the captain, the family was pushed into the music business. It’s believed that Plummer, who played the captain, made no effort to hide his dislike for his kid co-stars, referring to the film as “The Sound of Mucus!”

Dubbed saccharine sweet and corny by critics at the time of its release, the film, however, has made it to *TIME* magazine’s list of the 1,000 best movies ever made. In 2001, the United States Library of Congress selected the film for preservation in the National Film Registry as it was deemed ‘culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant’. In fact, Salzburg, where the Von Trapp home is situated, generates a substantial amount of its tourism revenue from ‘The Sound of Music tour’. The sing-alongs are a big draw too, with moviegoers viewing the film with the lyrics and singing along. And *Ländler*, the Austrian folkdance pictured in the movie between the captain and Maria Von Trapp, is popular with bridal couples even today and taught in dance studios. With its evergreen numbers, *The Sound of Music* continues to hit the right chord with one generation after another.

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**THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JANUARY 1965**

- On 5 January, Renault 16, the world’s first production hatchback car, was launched.
- On 26 January, anti-Hindi agitations broke out in Tamil Nadu (formerly Madras State) with mass protests, riots and political movements.
- On 28 January, Queen Elizabeth II proclaimed the Maple Leaf flag as the new Canadian flag.
under-happy

adj. Not as happy as one ought or would like to be.
Example. Many Singaporeans are under-happy at work, or so says a recently released survey. The people behind it coined the phrase under-happy to describe an in-between state between being happy and unhappy. ... Might being under-happy be worse than being unhappy, since misery might spur a person to change where mere dissatisfaction does not?

—Lydia Lim, “Happiness is not consuming but learning to thrive,” The Straits Times, 2 December 2014

Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering ‘it will be happier’

— English poet Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)

gastrophysics

n. The theories and experimental methodologies of physics applied to food, cooking, and eating.
Example. Spence and his peers have, through a line of scientific inquiry that is informally referred to as gastrophysics, studied in minute detail how we experience food and drink. Who we eat with; how food is arranged and described; the colour, texture and weight of plates and cutlery; background noise—all these things affect taste.


Happiness curve

n. The U-shaped curve obtained by graphing individual happiness levels over time, which typically drop until midlife, level off for a time, and then rise.
Example. The apes’ well-being bottomed out at ages comparable, in people, to between 45 and 50—implying that the happiness curve is not uniquely human.


webroom

v. To use the web to research a product and to then purchase the product in an offline store.
Example. Surveys from the consulting firms Deloitte and Accenture both indicate Lindsay’s shopping behavior is common. The Deloitte research found that nearly 70 per cent of shoppers webroom compared with less than 50 per cent who showroom before they buy.

—Taryn Luna, “Webrooming’ shoppers research online, then buy in stores,” The Boston Globe, 28 November 2014

BROCIALIST

n. A man who has progressive views, but who is also insensitive to women and dismissive of feminist issues.
Example. The brocialist is generally a good leftist. His heart is probably in the right place. But he has a gigantic blind spot when it comes to women, one that is both political (he is not sensitive to feminist concerns) and personal (he can be a pig).

—Marc Tracy, “How to talk to a brocialist,” The New Republic, 8 January 2014

pre-cation

n. A vacation taken before starting a new job, particularly a paid vacation.
Example. The pre-cation policy flows from Atlassian’s view that memorable perks and a livable workspace make for happy employees without busting the company’s budget.

—Will Oremus, “You deserve a pre-cation,” Slate, 30 September 2014
India’s first exclusively-for-silvers social networking website Verdurez.com now brings its members together beyond their virtual home. By organising local city-based events and an annual meetup, it gives members an opportunity to make new friends in the real world. The mastermind behind the website, Ishita Sukhadwala, says she decided on annual get-togethers after realising that silvers were inclined towards travelling and exploring new places, cultures and flavours. This February, Verdurez.com is organising a pocket-friendly trip and annual meetup in Coorg. This follows successful meetings in the Andamans (2012), Kerala (2013) and Kashmir (2014). The website has also added a new section called ‘Tweet-a-thought’, where members can post and share their thoughts and views with fellow members. To become part of this unique experience, log on to www.verdurez.com or write to ishita@verdurez.com

Ebolanoia

n. An unwarranted and overblown fear of the Ebola virus.
Example. When I wrote a few weeks ago about Ebolanoia and the ways the media has been fanning its flames, I suggested that the scary headlines and fear-mongering has been cooling off. I spoke too soon.
—Tara Haelle, "Ebola response can be rational, cruise ship passengers show," Forbes, 3 November 2014

KICKSTOPPER

n. An online fundraising campaign to help stop a project that is being financed through the Kickstarter crowdfunding website.
Example. Kickstarter to stop things = KICKSTOPPER. RT @katemon: Kickstarter to stop Papyrus font being used on anything vaguely historical.
—Stan Carey, “Kickstarter to stop…,” Twitter, 25 November 2014
“I wish I could teach everyone the art of self-defence and help them protect themselves”

Prakash R Wagh, 56, Mumbai, trains women and kids in self-defence techniques

With assault cases on women making front-page news everyday, it’s not surprising to see Prakash R Wagh, a self-defence instructor, getting into a proactive mode. Busy rolling up his sleeves to teach the vulnerable sections of the society to take matters in their hands, quite literally, the 56 year-old Assistant Police Sub Inspector with State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) in Maharashtra makes evident his displeasure with the current state of affairs. “It is indeed a disgrace that we are unable to protect our women; they are being harassed daily and newspapers are full of eve teasing and rape cases,” he says. “I feel the best way to put a stop to it is to attack the mindset of the attacker.” Wagh, who has conducted over 150 workshops for women and children in Gujarat, Delhi and Mumbai, works in close association with Tanishka Stree Pratishtha Abhiyan, an NGO working for the betterment of women. Currently, he has over 150 girls training with him and plans to take his workshops to many more schools and colleges in the new year. Wagh’s love affair with karate began in 1982, when he joined the SRPF and was selected for an intensive six-month training programme. The first black belt from Maharashtra police, Wagh went on to win trophies in various world tournaments held in Europe, Malaysia and Australia. After special training in 1989 in Japan, he became the chief instructor with the SRPF. Soon, many schools and colleges started approaching him to conduct workshops for their students. Wagh has thus far trained more than 50,000 people. “Self-defence should be compulsorily taught in schools and colleges,” he says, adding, “it can improve confidence levels dramatically.” On the personal front, his daughter Payal and son Sandeep, who are black belts in karate, help him with the workshops. A firm believer in the aphorism that knowledge multiplies when shared, Wagh plans to take his workshops nationwide once he retires in 2016.

—Prarthana Uppal
Experts opine that this trend will lead to more social turmoil and increase the problem of managing the senior citizens of the middle-class population, which is expected to grow in huge numbers in the next decade. We are catching up with China when it comes to taking care of senior citizens. Whereas in China the State has ensured that the financial security of elders is guaranteed along with care during various stages of life. India does not provide any social security. 'Old Age Homes' or 'Home for the Aged' were started as an act of charity. They were called as 'home'. Unlike in developed countries, more than the elder citizens, the children and close family members resented the change in the perception of people and accepting the reality that the retirement communities are here to stay forever.

Classification of Senior Care

 Assisted Living: Assisted Living/Care concierge may be provided.基本 medical services. Services like facilities for dining, recreation and concierge may be provided.

 Independent Living: These are the normal colonies that we see with doctor on regular call, emergency evacuation to hospital etc. Those who require long-term assistance is a 'pay and use' facility, for those who require long-term assistance. Doctor on regular call, emergency evacuation to hospital etc. The assistance during various stages of life is provided. Hip replacement etc. The assistance is given to the elder citizens from the time they enter the Retirement Village.

 Benefits of the Retirement communities are here to stay forever. Senior citizens enjoy life, as they should! Why not? Ultimately, the aim is to make senior citizens- knowledge economy. Emphasis on care, services and continuous care. What we see today is a larger like-minded group. Group cohesion and activity without compulsion.

Opportunities for social interaction Freedom and independence Dignity and respect

Give us what we need and not ask us to take what you want to give.

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