harmony
celebrate age
The magazine for silver citizens

APRIL 2016 ₹ 40

PROACTIVE

N C JANA rehabilitates
tiger widows of the Sundarbans

SPORT

The voice of cricket
SUSHIL DOSHI

CRAFT

The toy story of
CHANNAPATNA

LEGALEASE

Keys to make organ donation successful

Kiran Nagarkar
THE NARRATOR

THE WHISPERING HILL OF LANSDOWNE

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wor}k{ship

The idea of INDIA

Dabboo Ratnani

The idea of India is greater than the sum of its parts.

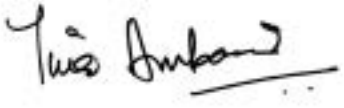
For centuries, we have been defined by assimilation and adaptation, absorbing myriad peoples, cultures and faiths, creating communities that are enriched by this osmosis, building a nation that prides itself on its diversity yet stands proud as a single, unified entity.

In this construct, when we hear concepts like 'tolerance' and its converse, 'intolerance', or 'nationalism' and 'anti-nationalism'—so ubiquitous in today's headlines—being used across the political spectrum, it is cause for concern. The politics of division and accusation may be the means to narrow political ends but, over the long term, they are inimical to the idea of India and threaten to tear the very fabric of the country.

Amid the inferno of accusation and counter-accusation, fanned eagerly by the media, who will address the real issues that plague the real India?

It's time for the national dialogue to shift to inclusion, not exclusion. It's time to ask the question: How 'tolerant' are we towards the marginalised and destitute, the physically challenged and silvers? It's time to create an enabling, barrier-free environment for everyone to flourish. It's time for our politicians and policymakers to get their act together and work for economic development that goes hand in hand with human development. It's time to build physical and social infrastructure that will stand the test of time. It's time to put issues before invective, progress before politics.

I believe, as we all must, that greatness is an intrinsic part of India's DNA. To realise it, however, we must work as one. We have the potential to break every barrier, conquer every challenge, evolve deeper, climb higher and reach further, if only we let ourselves. Give the idea of India a chance—and watch it take wing!



A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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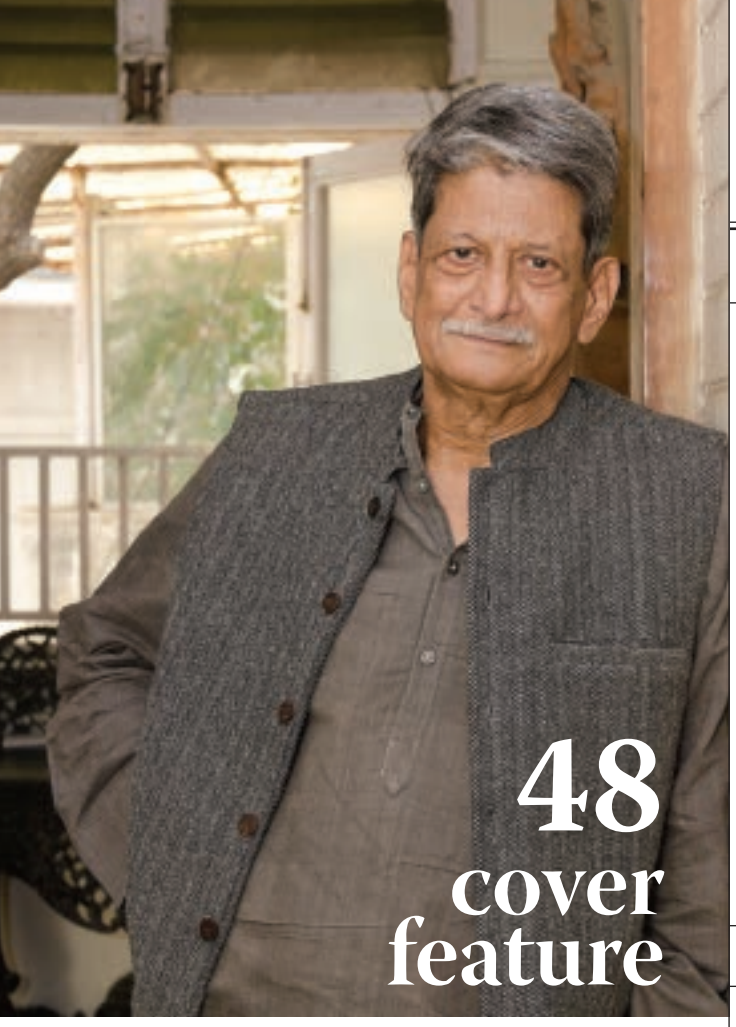

48 cover feature

Author-playwright Kiran Nagarkar on telling tales about unpalatable truths

Cover photograph: **Haresh Patel**

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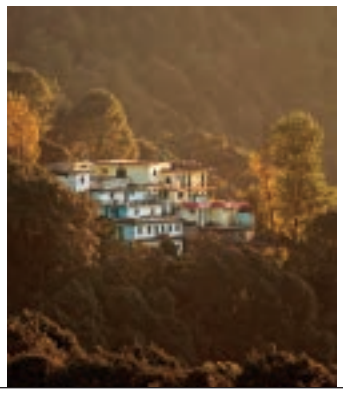

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Deepak Kalra uses community participation to educate the differently abled in Rajasthan

A PRACTICAL IDEALIST
T Ramu offers education and opportunities to children in Bengaluru

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Total number of pages in this issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, including covers: 84

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.
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column one

"The world is our responsibility and the world is our problem," asserts Kiran Nagarkar. The social conscience of this novelist-playwright-screenplay writer-critic has not manifested as a kneejerk reaction to current events—it has been resonant in his body of work from the get-go. Yet "The Narrator" never lets his works, laced with trademark dark humour, become didactic. As he explains, the creator in him allows his characters to forge their own destinies. As arresting and unapologetic as his work is his worldview, as you will discover in our cover feature.

Also in the spotlight this month is Sushil Doshi, who ruled the airways for over four decades from the commentary box, coining a distinct vocabulary and winning the hearts of cricket fans across India. Equally compelling is the story of the proactive N C Jana. For over a decade, this septuagenarian has journeyed regularly to the beautiful yet danger-filled Sundarbans to help rehabilitate 'tiger widows'—women who have lost their men to tiger and crocodile attacks—giving them a lifeline for the future.

As secluded and unspoilt as the lush mangroves in the Sundarbans—but less hazardous to navigate!—is Lansdowne. Home to the Indian Army's Garhwal Rifles, this cantonment town in Uttarakhand is our destination of choice. We also whisk you southwards to Channapatna near Bengaluru to experience its tradition of vivid, wooden lacquer-ware. And finally, a topic dear to our hearts: organ donation. Our 'Legalease' column will tell you why your intent to donate means little unless you convince your family of your decision. Leave a lasting legacy—and spread the word.

—Arati Rajan Menon

This year's Union Budget was interesting to watch. The various schemes launched for the poor must be strictly implemented and monitored to ensure that the benefits reach them. The objective of doubling farmers' income in five years is a step in the right direction, though it may seem difficult. It is unfortunate that the limit of basic exemptions for silvers has not been raised, especially because a large number of them are dependent on their children. Tax on their incomes from past savings eats into their monthly allowance and is too meagre to make ends meet. In my opinion, tax deducted at source (TDS) must be abolished for non-professional seniors. If the present savings bank interest is raised from ₹ 10,000 to ₹ 25,000, thereby including interest on term deposits, this shall be beneficial to silvers who mostly invest their money in fixed deposits with banks, as pointed out in your 'Money Matters' column titled "The FD Factor" (January 2016). Finally, taxes on medicines and medical facilities must be reduced for silvers; this is where a good amount of their monthly expenditure is spent.

Mahesh Kapasi
Via email

The February 2016 of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, featuring remarkable families of dance, music, art and, unexpectedly, yoga, was a good read. It makes one proud to know our country has honed such talented and skilled families. Of course, due credit goes to the matriarch and patriarch of those families who instilled the importance of their work on their children. For their part, the children and grandchildren seem to be basking in all the knowledge that they have been exposed to and are proudly carrying the mantle forward. The one lady that stood out for me was Dhan Palkhivala who at 83 appears to be doing a full split in the picture. Kudos to her!

Anurag Bajpai
Bengaluru

I came across the February 2016 issue of the magazine, which was a delight to read for me as an elder-care specialist. I work with a motley group of legendary elders in Mumbai and so the message of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* resonated with me.

Anastasia Dedhia
Via email

We at Varishta Nagrik Seva Sansthan started subscribing to *Harmony-Celebrate Age* four months ago and many of our members have been enthusiastically consuming your stories. But we do have one bone to pick with you: Why not publish a Hindi version of the magazine too? That way your readership can increase, not to mention the fact that all our members will then be able to enjoy the magazine too.

Varishta Nagrik Seva Sansthan
Via Facebook

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inside
P22: Championing a cause
P30: The wonders of Thai yoga

ORBIT

Demetrius Fordham

MEDIA WATCH

THE NAKED EYE

In a series of breathtaking (and un-retouched) images, American photographer **Demetrius Fordham** cocks a snook at convention and shatters stereotypes—his ***Ageless Beauty* series features nude portraits of women over 45**. "I wanted to challenge the belief that youth is synonymous with beauty," the 35 year-old tells website *www.huffingtonpost.com*. "I wanted to show women—despite what society tells them—that getting older only makes them stronger and more beautiful and that they should own that. Beauty really does come from the inside. If a woman feels confident and empowered on the inside, it radiates." You can see Fordham's work at ***www.instagram.com/demetriusfordham/***

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Do we want to live forever?

That's the question ***The New Immortals*** sought to answer. In this exhibition that ran at the Phoenix Gallery in Brighton, UK, in February and March, 10 artists explored the idea of immortality enabled by science using a variety of media. With this event, artist-curator Judith Alder urged us to consider what advances in biomedical science and technology might mean for us as humans. "Could indefinite human life become a reality?" she remarked in a media release. "Would we really want to live forever? And what difference would it make if we never died?"

SAFETY DANCE
Here's a really fun way to train against accidental falls. A nine-step funky dance routine for silvers to improve balance and posture and tone the muscles, devised by Swiss association BPA. Go to *www.equilibre-en-marche.ch/exercices/* and see for yourself. And don't worry; while the site is in French, these moves won't get lost in translation.

BEAUTIFUL MIND
The brainchild of Russia-born Vladi Ruppo, 52, Bengaluru-based *www.beautifulyears.com* is a platform for silvers to shop for gadgets, get information on caregiving services, and discuss age-related issues. As website *www.techinasia.com* reports, in the future, Ruppo aims to expand his chain of 'experience stores' to make silver living more accessible. Welcome to our world!

MED SCHOOL
A new American website, *letstalkaboutrx.com*, aims to stem the incorrect use or over dosage of medication among silvers, a worrying phenomenon that can lead to illness, hospitalisation, and even death.
In addition to detailed information about medicines, dosage and potential side-effects, the site features videos and interactive tools such as medicine trackers to help keep silvers safe. We hope someone in India follows suit.

DAREDEVIL!

If you ever needed inspiration to overcome your fears, look no further. In three short minutes, ***The 82 Year-Old Skydiver*** tells you the amazing story of Dilys Price who didn't let her age or misgivings come in the way of fulfilling her skydiving dream. Her take after the experience: "Better than sex!" Experience the thrill for yourself at *www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vTnoRdusYU&feature=youtu.be*

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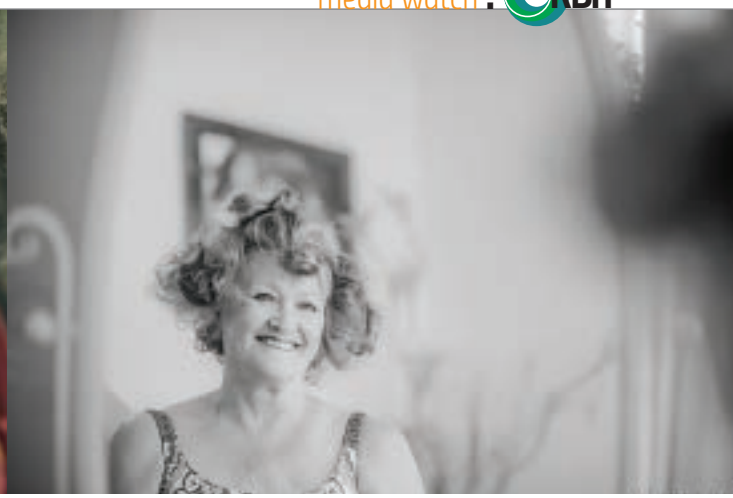
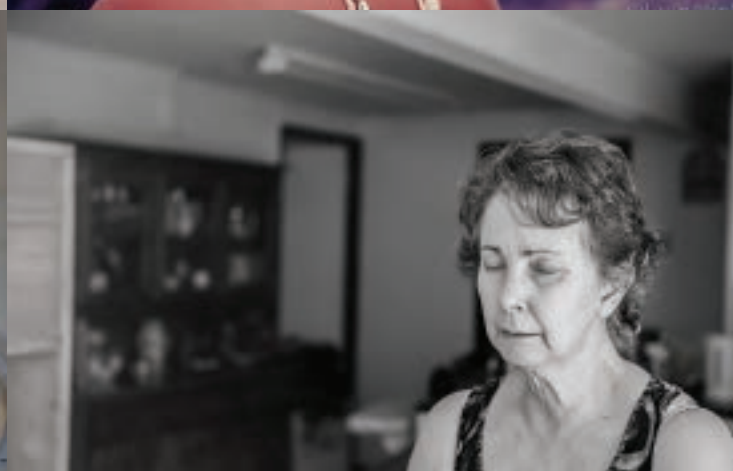


Photographs by Laurie Anne King

Reclaiming the crone

Turning a word with negative connotations into a positive affirmation, Canadian photographer **Laurie Anne King's project, *Resurrection of the Crone*, seeks to highlight the beauty and wisdom of older women.** Defining 'crone' as a wise woman of substance, strength and clarity, she has photographed six rural women above the age of 49 in the town of Carmila in central Queensland, Australia, imbuing her images with authenticity and abandon, inspiring awareness of the potential of women. "Type the word crone into a popular Internet search engine and the first definition that pops up is 'an ugly old woman'," she tells website *www.abc.net.au*. "It is very sad to me because that is the epitome of what has happened in our modern culture to the value of elders. Women of any age, especially as they get older, run and hide from a camera. I'm working with them, facilitating them at an emotional level to make these deeper connections that are so much more important. Elders should be photographed more often, but in a way that honours who they are and their authenticity in the world."



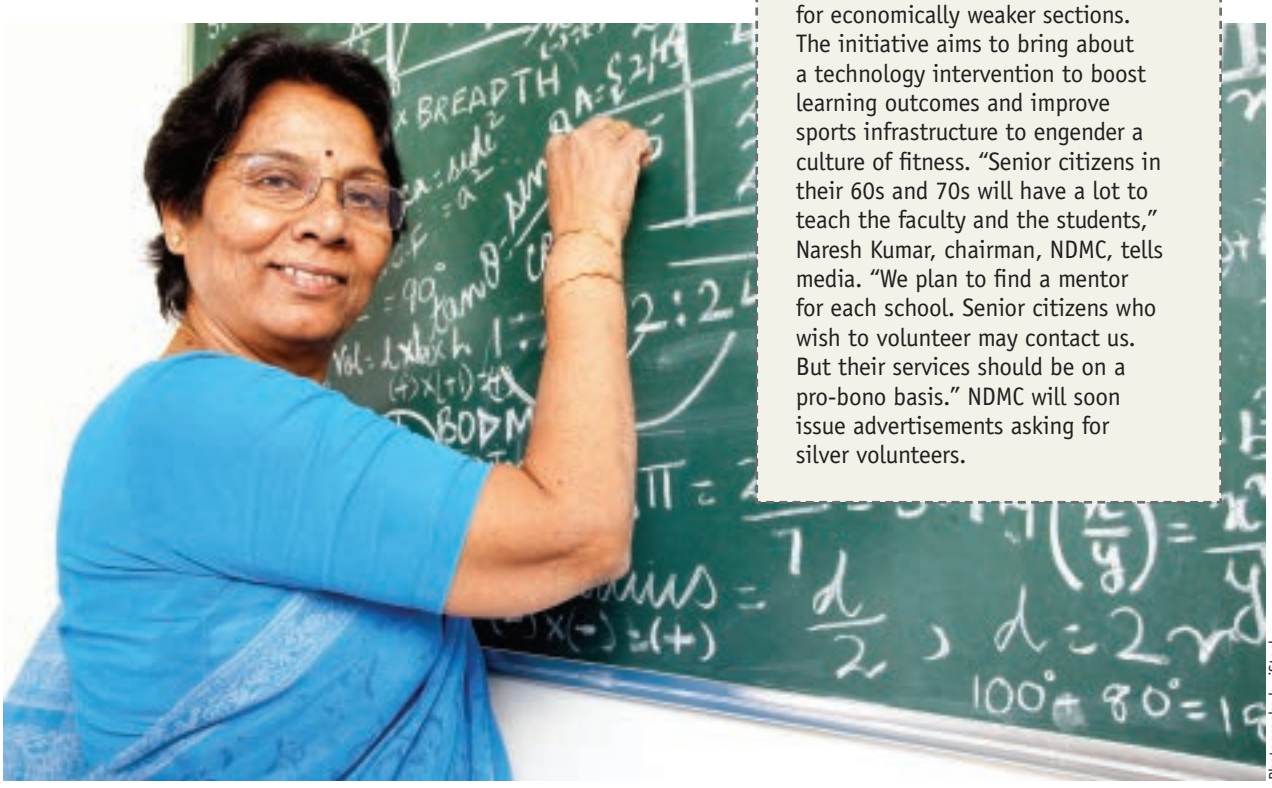
Bonds beyond borders

Here's an initiative worth replicating. As website *www.ynetnews.com* reports, **the HaVeDa project connects children and teenagers in the Israeli Diaspora with silvers back home**. Their weekly conversations have a twofold benefit: the silvers get to share their stories and benefit from the social contact while the youth get a chance to work on their Hebrew and keep in touch with events in their motherland. The project was launched by Israeli Gideon Fruchter, who relocated from his hometown of Herzliya to New Jersey in the US.

MADE TO ORDER: The Indian Diaspora just got a little help Down Under from a Netherlands-based old-age care provider. As website *australianetworknews.com* reports, company DutchCare came to the rescue to build the first Indian old age care centre in Melbourne after a provider from Victoria refused to accede to the Indian community's demands for a vegetarian kitchen and prayer rooms for Indian silvers.

A capital idea

This is smart thinking. **Close to 50 schools run by the New Delhi Municipal Corporation will feature 'smart features' in high-school classrooms (grades VI to XII) with silver volunteers serving as mentors.** Around 26,000 children study in 51 NDMC schools, of which 11 are Navyug schools designated for economically weaker sections. The initiative aims to bring about a technology intervention to boost learning outcomes and improve sports infrastructure to engender a culture of fitness. "Senior citizens in their 60s and 70s will have a lot to teach the faculty and the students," Naresh Kumar, chairman, NDMC, tells media. "We plan to find a mentor for each school. Senior citizens who wish to volunteer may contact us. But their services should be on a pro-bono basis." NDMC will soon issue advertisements asking for silver volunteers.



Photographs by iStock

Ride easy

Travel smooth and safe—that's the idea driving a **project to introduce special taxis and auto-rickshaws for silvers in Kochi**. As *The Hindu* reports, this initiative by city-based geriatrician Praveen G Pai aims to identify Good Samaritans from among the taxi and auto drivers of each locality with the help of Janamaithri police stations and empower them to support elders. These drivers will ensure the silvers are charged correctly in addition to going the extra mile for them, such as taking them inside hospitals or helping them collect their groceries and delivering them to their doorstep. The drivers will also be trained in basic life support and first aid. "The project is being conceived as a community-based effort to attend to the transportation needs of elders," Pai tells the newspaper. "The drivers of the senior-friendly taxis will ensure their passengers are accorded special treatment, akin to what they receive from their family members." A pilot project involving around 20 taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers is already being undertaken in Paravur. Going forward, the plan is to identify and train at least two drivers in every block and make their contact details available to silvers with the help of police stations and residents' associations.

special taxis and auto-rickshaws for silvers

B MINUS

Britain isn't doing quite so great—at least in terms of human development. According to a recent European study published in *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, **parts of the UK fare poorly on the longevity index compared to other European countries**. After examining 10-year survival rates in over 300 million people aged 75 to 84 in 4,404 small areas from 18 countries in Europe across two periods (1991-2001 and 2001-2011), the team found "clear and stubborn inequalities" across Europe. While people can expect to live long in northern Spain, north-eastern Italy and southern and western France, they fare less well in parts of the UK, especially the industrial regions of Glasgow, Manchester and Liverpool as well as London, and regions of the Netherlands and Scandinavia. The researchers attribute this disparity to a combination of factors including socioeconomic circumstances, genes, lifestyle, pollution, and access to healthcare.

SPACE FOR SILVERS: IN NAVI MUMBAI, CIDCO HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL BUILD A RECREATIONAL CENTRE FOR SILVERS IN EVERY GARDEN UNDER ITS JURISDICTION. THESE CENTRES, TO BE BUILT AT A COST OF ₹ 4 MILLION EACH, WILL BE BUILT ALONG THE LINES OF A FACILITY THAT RECENTLY OPENED IN SECTOR 20, KAMOTHE, WHICH IS EQUIPPED WITH A MULTIPURPOSE HALL AND TOILET, AND HAS FACILITIES FOR INDOOR GAMES. MEDIA REPORTS SUGGEST THAT WORK ON THREE MORE CENTRES IS UNDERWAY IN SECTORS 12, 19 AND 20, KHARGHAR.

BIRTHDAY BONUS: To mark her 68th birthday on 24 February, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa announced free bus travel for silvers in the Chennai metropolitan area.

SKIN SENSE

This discovery is being hailed as a major breakthrough. Scientists at Newcastle University have found that the **activity of 'mitochondrial complex 2', found in the batteries of human skin cells, declines with age.** If the decline of this metabolic enzyme could be arrested, it could pave the way for a host of anti-ageing treatments. "As our bodies age, we see that the batteries in our cells run down, known as decreased bio-energy, and harmful free radicals increase," team leader Mark Birch-Machin tells media. "This process is seen in our skin as fine lines, wrinkles and sagging appear. Our study shows, for the first time, in human skin that with increasing age there is a specific decrease in the activity of a key metabolic enzyme found in the batteries of the skin cells. This enzyme is the hinge between the two important ways of making energy in our cells and a decrease in its activity contributes to decreased bio-energy in ageing skin. Our research means that we now have a specific biomarker, or a target, for developing and screening anti-ageing treatments and cosmetic creams that may counter this decline in bio-energy." This opens the door to customised anti-ageing treatments as well as the hope of addressing other age-related diseases. The study has been published in *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*.

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'CHEAT SHEETS': The latest anti-ageing craze is popping up on celeb social media feeds world over. As London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, these **moisture-impregnated fabric, paper or silicone masks, called 'sheet masks'—or 'cheat sheets'**, as they instantly brighten the complexion—are designed to fit the face's contours with holes for the eyes and mouth. Depending on the brand, these masks contain different ingredients, such as hyaluronic acid, which plumps the skin, rejuvenating vitamins and minerals, and amino acids that are said to repair the connective tissue under the skin's surface. You keep the mask on for about 15 minutes, long enough for the ingredients to permeate the skin. Interested? They're available online in India as well—a search on websites like *www.amazon.in, www.purplle.com and www.nykaa.com*

Style guru

There's no expiry date on style. That's the credo of 77 year-old Sachiko Kawabe, a fashion concierge', who offers wardrobe and style advice to silvers in Tokyo's department stores in collaboration with Wacoal Corp, a Japanese manufacturer of women's underwear. "Women have beautiful features even when they get old, but most lose confidence as they age," she tells website *www.japantimes.co.jp*. "I want them to have the courage to enjoy their lives. The first rule is to maintain good posture and live a healthy life." Warning women against blindly choosing comfort over style, she says, "Don't say, 'Anything is fine.' The point is to pick items that make your silhouette look beautiful."

SIMPLY SEXY

This France-born, Corsica-raised model has taken Britain by storm with high-profile campaigns for retail giants like Marks & Spencer and J D Williams. **Sixty and very sexy, Yazemeenah Rossi, who got her big break as a model only after the age of 45, shares her beauty secrets** with London newspaper *The Daily Star*. Here are some highlights:

"There are no beauty products I couldn't live without as I can always find what I need anywhere. My basics are in the kitchen cabinet."

"I don't practice frustrating diets. Balance and discipline are the keys. I never eat processed, frozen, microwaved or low-fat foods. Most of the time I eat organic food and I cook it fresh every day. I eat mostly vegetables, fruits, nuts and some good-quality fish and meats."

"I come from a very simple background where we used olive oil to cook with. Olive oil was used on our hair and skin—nothing else." She rubs olive oil on her face; runs rapeseed oil through her silver hair; and concocts a homemade exfoliant from olive oil and fine sugar that she uses as a scrub once a week.

"My father's mother died at 96 years, fit like a ballet dancer, and she never put anything on her skin.... The media makes us believe that we need this or that to have great skin so products can be sold. They will never say that, in fact, the skin has an ability to produce its own protection from the inside. If we put things on the surface of the skin, it becomes 'lazy' in a way and doesn't work to protect itself anymore."

"It [defying the ageing process] won't happen in a day, it requires discipline and dedication. You need a healthy spirit and a curious mind."

"The best thing for the skin is to eat enough healthy fats on a daily basis and to oxygenate well while exercising. Walking and sweating are great for your skin because it's our biggest breathing organ."

Photo courtesy: J D Williams

THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE

According to a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, impatient people are at a greater risk of biological decline. What's more, women may be more susceptible to ageing as a result of psychological stress and impatience than males.

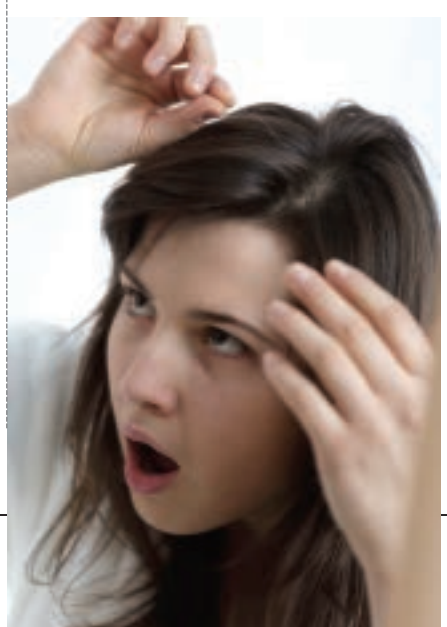
IN THE BEGINNING...

Photographs by iStock

We begin to age even before we are born. That's not a throwaway line, mind you, but the conclusion of researchers from the University of Cambridge, who claim **the process of ageing begins in the womb**. As they explain on the university website *www.cam.ac.uk*, the team used rats to model pregnancy and foetal development and found that providing mothers with antioxidants during pregnancy led to their offspring ageing more slowly in adulthood. And the offspring of mothers with lower levels of oxygen in the womb (a possible consequence of smoking) aged more quickly in adulthood. "We already know that our genes interact with environmental risk factors, such as smoking, obesity and lack of exercise to increase our risk of heart disease, but here we've shown that the environment we're exposed to in the womb may be just as, if not more, important in programming a risk of adult-onset cardiovascular disease," says senior author Dino Giussani. The study is published in *The FASEB Journal*.

THE GREY GENE

While we believe silver is the new black, grey apparently is down to your genes. Scientists at University College London claim to have pinpointed **the first gene linked with grey hair: IRF4**. This gene regulates the production and storage of the pigment melanin, whose absence causes hair to grey. The discovery occurred after their genetic analysis of over 6,000 people of mixed ancestry in Latin America, including mixed European (48 per cent), Native American (46 per cent) and African (6 per cent) ancestry. They also found additional genes associated with beard thickness and hair shape (EDAR), eyebrow thickness (FOXL2), and prevalence of a 'monobrow' (PAX3). "We already know several genes involved in balding and hair colour but this is the first time a gene for greying has been identified, as well as other genes influencing hair shape and density," researcher Kaustubh Adhikari tells the university website *www.ucl.ac.uk*. "It was only possible because we analysed a diverse melting pot of people, which hasn't been done before on this scale. These findings have potential forensic and cosmetic applications as we increase our knowledge on how genes influence the way we look." The study was published in journal *Nature Communications*.



Singing the blues

Much like heartbreak, the passage of time is something of a leitmotif in popular music. Lyrics abound with nostalgia about one's younger days or trepidation about the years to come. But such songs do more than just tug at the heartstrings, contend researchers from Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Hull in the UK. Their research, which analysed music from the 1930s to present day, suggests that **listening to songs about ageing can actually have an adverse impact on the health of silvers.** "Old age is associated with embarrassing physical decline in many of these songs, which could have a negative impact on confidence for the listener," lead researcher Jacinta Kelly tells the BBC. "Negative emotions experienced by older people are connected to poor outcomes in mental and physical health, particularly cardiac health." The study is published in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

Doggone it! Scientists at the University of Washington are conducting trials to establish whether the drug rapamycin can delay ageing in dogs and increase their lifespan by up to four years. Rapamycin, an anti-rejection drug used in patients who have undergone kidney transplants, has been recently proven to extend lifespan in mice by over 25 per cent. It also has an anti-inflammatory effect.

HOME AND HEALTH It should come as little surprise that homelessness has a direct impact on your health. A study at the University of California - San Francisco (UCSF) has established that **being homeless dramatically accelerates ageing.** Their study of over 350 itinerants in their 50s in Oakland, California, revealed that they suffered disabilities and challenges generally experienced by people decades older, exhibiting high rates of mental and visual impairment, hypertension and urinary incontinence and a greater propensity to falls and depression as well as addiction to drugs and alcohol. "Usually, we think of geriatric conditions as affecting much older adults in their 70s, 80s and 90s," explains team member Rebecca Brown on the university website *www.ucsf.edu*. "However, we found these conditions were very common in homeless adults with an average age of just 58. Our systems need to be responsive to the challenges these older adults have." The study is published in journal *The Gerontologist*.

Photographs by iStock

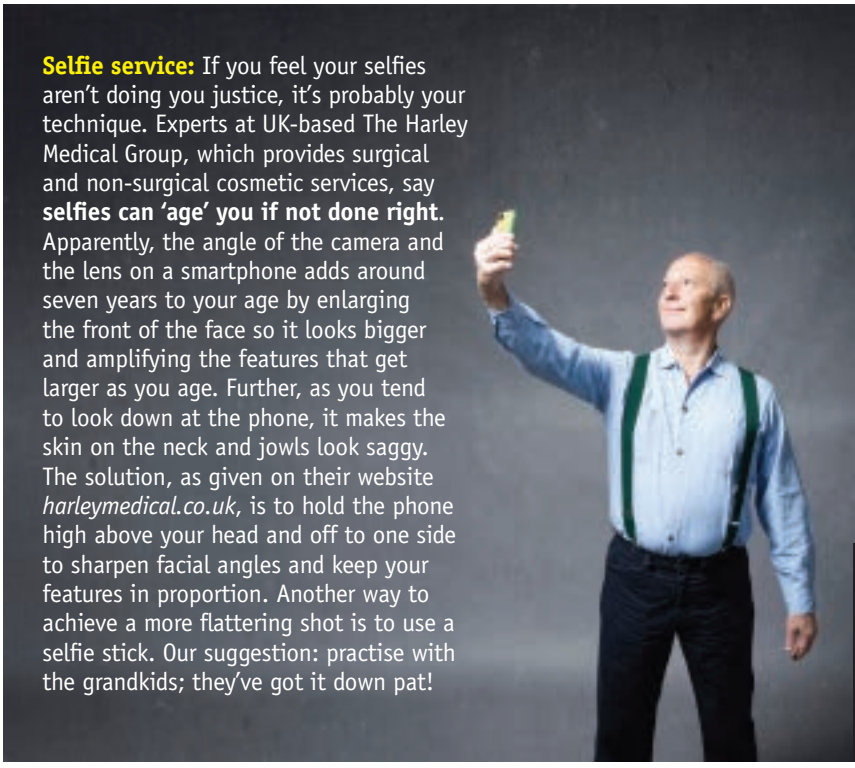
like interacting with robots?

Why robot?

While robotics appears to be the next big answer for elder care, an interesting study is asking a significant question: **Do silvers actually like interacting with robots?** As website *forbes.com* tells us, researchers at Pennsylvania State University's Media Effects Research Laboratory interviewed 45 silvers between the ages of 65 and 95 years old to ascertain their views, feelings and misgivings. The team found that while most respondents were comfortable with robots as service providers (helpers, butlers) or informational, interactional, physical and entertainment aides, they were wary of 'intelligent' or autonomous robots that needed no prompting from humans. "The question of how robotics could best (or worst) be integrated in human culture is one of those classic debates in a number of disciplines, ranging from philosophy to cognitive science," study leader S Shyam Sundar tells the site. "It is clear senior citizens want robots to play passive and non-confrontational roles. But they worry about the potential loss of control over social order to robots."

SKINNY DOES IT: It's old news that caloric restriction can slow down the ageing process. What's new is that a common skincare ingredient called allantoin can mimic the effect of caloric restriction. Scientists from the University of Liverpool in the UK have proven that the ingredient, found in botanical extracts of the comfrey plant and part of many anti-ageing creams, can increase lifespan in worms by over 20 per cent. "Calorie restriction has been shown to have health benefits in humans and, while more work is necessary, our findings could potentially result in human therapies for age-related diseases," says study leader Joao Pedro de Magalhaes from the University's Institute of Integrative Biology on its official website.

Sudden impact: Down Under, a study by The Australian Catholic University and Villa Maria Catholic Homes is seeking to investigate whether violent TV shows have a similar impact on patients with dementia as they do on children—such programming is already proven to affect the behaviour and sleep quality of kids. "In developmental psychology, researchers have studied exposure to violent television shows and video games and the impact on children's behaviour," Professor Colleen Doyle, a member of the team tells media. "We want to see whether this applies to people with dementia who may not understand what's on the television and may lead to them feeling more agitated."



Selfie service: If you feel your selfies aren't doing you justice, it's probably your technique. Experts at UK-based The Harley Medical Group, which provides surgical and non-surgical cosmetic services, say **selfies can 'age' you if not done right.** Apparently, the angle of the camera and the lens on a smartphone adds around seven years to your age by enlarging the front of the face so it looks bigger and amplifying the features that get larger as you age. Further, as you tend to look down at the phone, it makes the skin on the neck and jowls look saggy. The solution, as given on their website *harleymedical.co.uk*, is to hold the phone high above your head and off to one side to sharpen facial angles and keep your features in proportion. Another way to achieve a more flattering shot is to use a selfie stick. Our suggestion: practise with the grandkids; they've got it down pat!

iStock

Play ping pong. "Table tennis is an 'anti-ageing' game," 67 year-old Harminder Singh tells *The Tribune*. He was one of the participants in the National Veteran Table Tennis Tournament held from 27 February to 2 March at Panjab University in Ludhiana. Indeed, this fast-paced game promotes physical and mental agility; it burns calories, sharpens the brain, and improves balance and hand-eye coordination. And, as Singh would undoubtedly agree, it's also a lot of fun!

Then: Lego bricks
Now: Pen stand

Find yourself tripping over the grandkids' Lego bricks after their summer visit? Now you can put these bricks to good use by repurposing them into pencil and pen stands. You need several Lego bricks of many colours and a flat, wide, base plate. Chose the width of your base depending on how many pens you would like to put in. Start lining the edges of the base with Lego bricks and ensure that they are tightly locked together. Build it up to a suitable height depending on what you want to use it for. If you use it as a pencil stand, build it up to slightly more than half the height of the pencils, so they don't tip over easily.

RECYCLING FACTS

- Lego makes around 20 billion bricks each year and has produced over 600 billion bricks since the start of production in 1949.
- Lego bricks are made with a thermoplastic polymer called ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) that is also used to make numerous household and consumer goods, automotive and telecommunication components, as well as musical instruments such as the recorder.
- ABS is one of the main polymers used in 3D printing.
- The ABS polymer can be shredded and blended with virgin ABS to produce recycled plastic.

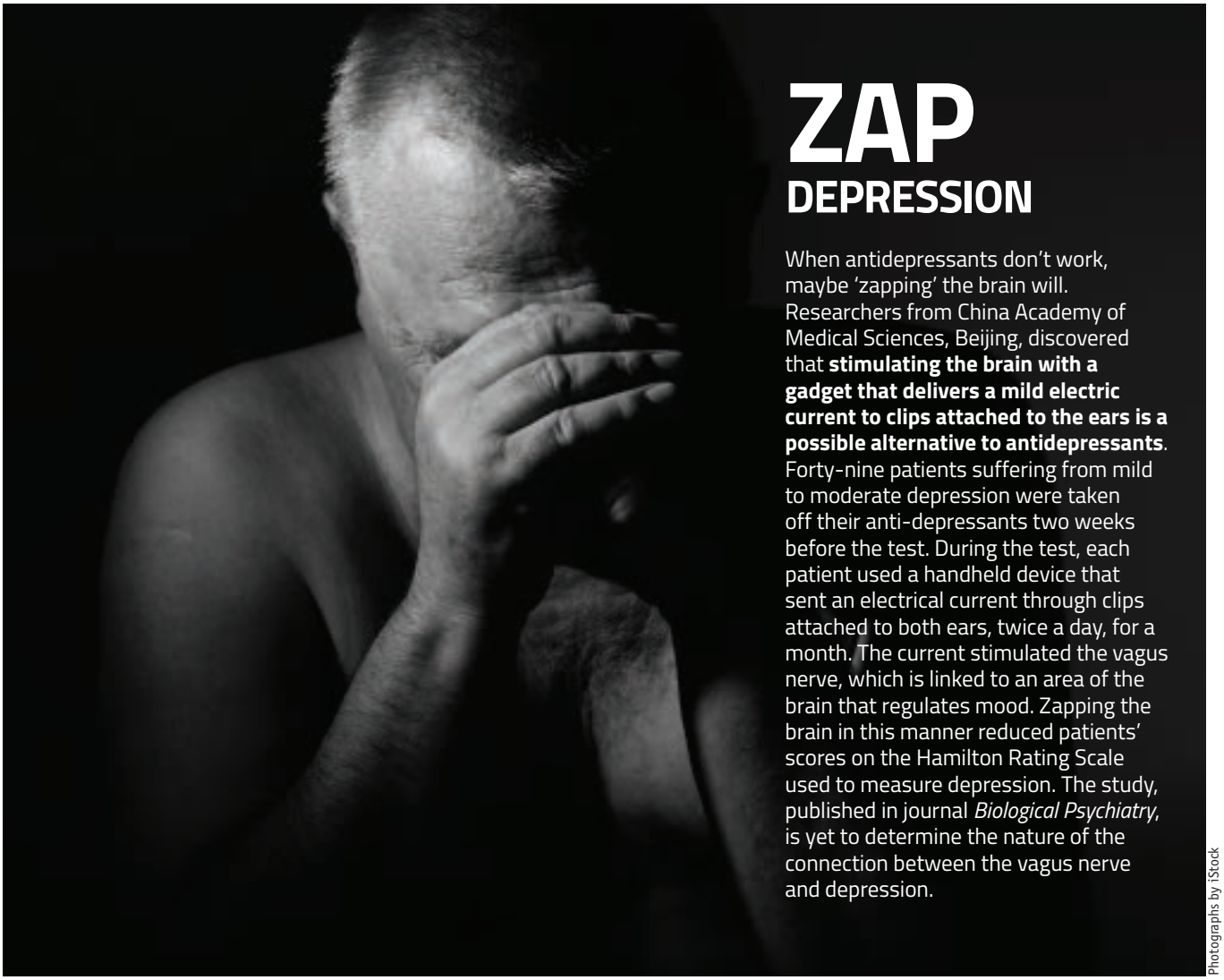
MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. YOU CAN DRILL A HOLE INTO A LEGO BRICK AND USE IT AS A KEYCHAIN. HANG A BASE PLATE ON A NAIL IN THE WALL AND LOCK YOUR KEYCHAIN ONTO IT, SO YOU'LL ALWAYS KNOW WHERE TO FIND THE KEYS.
2. DRILL A HOLE INTO THE CENTRE OF A FLAT LEGO BASE AND FIT IT WITH A CLOCK AND MOTOR. THIS WILL MAKE A CREATIVE, COLOURFUL CLOCK THAT CAN BE HUNG UP ON THE WALL OR JUST LEFT RESTING AGAINST THE WALL ON A CABINET.

Telltale mouth

It is a disorder that afflicts a large number of people. But now, it seems, **your dentist can detect the early signs of obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)**. For those unfamiliar with OSA, it is a disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep owing to a blocked upper airway. A new study by researchers from the University of Buffalo, New York, studied people with oversized tonsils and tongue indentations, which are actually teeth imprints along the tongue, indicating that it is too large for the mouth. The study found these individuals at high risk for OSA. It also found that the obese were 10 times more likely to report OSA than non-obese people. The data came from the analysis of 200 patients at the dental clinics at the University of Dammam's College of Dentistry in Saudi Arabia, using the Berlin Questionnaire, which is used to screen people for OSA. Participants were also assessed for potential risk factors such as weight, neck circumference, blood pressure, and size of the tongue, tonsil and uvula, the tissue that hangs at the back of the throat. The researchers found 23 per cent at risk of OSA, of which 80 per cent were male.

Another study focusing on oral hygiene found that **deterioration seen in Alzheimer's patients is six times faster if the patients' gums are diseased**. Researchers from King's College London and the University of Southampton analysed the health of 59 men and women, all of whom had mild or moderate Alzheimer's for six months. Participants underwent a dental examination at the start of the study, and cognitive and blood tests at the beginning and end of the study. Twenty participants had periodontitis, a disease that causes inflammation of the tissue around the teeth, and in turn shrinkage of the gums and loosening of the teeth. It was found that the memory of these participants declined much more rapidly. The blood test reports concluded that people who had gum diseases have more chemicals in their blood that cause inflammation, which can in turn damage the brain.



ZAP
DEPRESSION

When antidepressants don't work, maybe 'zapping' the brain will. Researchers from China Academy of Medical Sciences, Beijing, discovered that **stimulating the brain with a gadget that delivers a mild electric current to clips attached to the ears is a possible alternative to antidepressants**. Forty-nine patients suffering from mild to moderate depression were taken off their anti-depressants two weeks before the test. During the test, each patient used a handheld device that sent an electrical current through clips attached to both ears, twice a day, for a month. The current stimulated the vagus nerve, which is linked to an area of the brain that regulates mood. Zapping the brain in this manner reduced patients' scores on the Hamilton Rating Scale used to measure depression. The study, published in journal *Biological Psychiatry*, is yet to determine the nature of the connection between the vagus nerve and depression.

Photographs by iStock

Mute that gene

Scientists may have found a way to **halve the risk of heart disease by chemically switching off a gene called ANGPTL4** (angiopoietin-like 4) present in the body. While looking for correlations between gene mutations and coronary artery disease, researchers from Technical University of Munich, Germany, analysed 13,000 genes from a pool of 200,000 heart attack patients as well as healthy people. They found that subjects with a mutated ANGPTL4 gene had lower triglyceride values, a type of fat whose elevated blood values raise the risk of coronary disease. Of course, other factors such as nutrition and predisposition also influence the concentration of triglyceride in the blood, scientists point out, but this study opens new avenues in preventive heart medicine.

WATCH THE TALC: You could pay a very heavy price for a simple act of feminine hygiene. Researchers at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston say **applying talcum powder as a drying agent to genitals, underwear, sanitary napkins and tampons could increase your risk of ovarian cancer by as much as 33 per cent**. The findings are consistent with a lawsuit against pharmaceutical major Johnson & Johnson, which was recently ordered to pay $ 72 million in damages to the family of a woman who allegedly died of cancer after using the company's baby powder on her genitals. Talc, whose ingredients include magnesium, silicon and oxygen, can travel up the genital tract and lodge in the ovaries and remain trapped for years. These particles can cause inflammation and lead to the growth of ovarian cancer cells. The recent findings, published in the journal *Epidemiology*, were based on a study of 2,041 women participants with ovarian cancer and 2,100 women free of the disease.

Photographs by iStock

Vaccine kicks butt

Here's hope for those huffing and puffing in their struggle to quit smoking. As unbelievable as it sounds, researchers from the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, have designed a **vaccine that produces antibodies to nicotine that attach to the nicotine molecules themselves**. This reduces the effect of nicotine on the brain. The vaccine, yet to be refined enough to be tested in clinical trials, is based on two earlier trials that provided valuable clues to how nicotine antibodies work. Those trials had found that individuals who produced the highest anti-nicotine antibodies were more likely to refrain from smoking for over six months. Taking this one step further, their latest research, whose results were published in *Journal of Medicinal Chemistry*, led to the design of a vaccine to boost the antibodies that attach to the nicotine.

The tipple effect

Alcohol consumption is a tricky thing. According to a study by researchers from Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health in Cambridge, Massachusetts, **one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men increases the risk of heart attack or stroke—during the 60 minutes that follow**. After analysing the data of 23 studies that involved 30,000 participants, they found that for an hour after consumption, alcohol increased heart rate and blood pressure, and made blood platelets stickier. However, researchers are also of the view that regularly drinking small amounts of alcohol can lower cardiovascular risk as it increases 'good cholesterol' and reduces the tendency to form blood clots.

Terrific turmeric

Indian cuisine cannot do without it; now **turmeric is leading the charge in the treatment of colon or bowel cancer**. While the cancer-fighting properties of turmeric are well-known, researchers from Pondicherry University and the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute have discovered the mechanism that fights the disease. Apparently, curcumin, a bioactive ingredient in turmeric, kills hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer cells, while sparing normal cells. It triggers the death of cancer cells by increasing the level of a protein called GADD45a. The next step is to find combinations of curcumin with other natural compounds to enhance these cancer-fighting properties of turmeric. Interestingly, the study attributes the low incidence of bowel cancer in India to the widespread use of turmeric in Indian cuisine.

Double whammy

A drug used to control high blood pressure could also help tackle Alzheimer's disease, researchers from Georgetown University Medical Centre in Washington DC have found. They used neuronal cultures to find that the drug, candesartan, prevented neuronal inflammation and alterations in amyloid metabolism—a distinctive feature of Alzheimer's. The study was published in online journal *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy*. Researchers are now hopeful that the drug could slow the progression of Alzheimer's and perhaps even prevent its development.

YO YOGHURT! Here's a really 'cool' answer to lowering the risk of high blood pressure in women. According to a study by Boston University, **women who have five or more servings of yoghurt per week compared to one serving per month have a 20-per-cent reduced risk of hypertension.** The researchers point out that daily intake of dairy products lowers the risk of hypertension, a key factor in the development of heart diseases and stroke. They also found that the intake of five or more servings of yoghurt was more beneficial than a DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, which focuses on an intake of fruits, vegetables, nuts and beans. Individuals on the DASH diet who also consumed more than five servings of yoghurt per week had a 31-per-cent lower risk of developing high blood pressure than their counterparts.

Running for inclusion

Among the 40,000 participants at the Mumbai Marathon held in January this year, 53 year-old **Sankara Raman** glided confidently across the finish line. Raman was unlike the other runners. Afflicted by muscular dystrophy and wheelchair-bound, he completed the 1.75-km route in close to 30 minutes. The number that really mattered, though, was how much money he and his wife Ramani, 44, raised for Amar Seva Sangam, an NGO based in a village called Ayikudi, Tamil Nadu, which empowers and rehabilitates children with disabilities. "We took a count recently and it amounted to ₹ 1.23 crore," says Raman. "We are going to use the money to build a new block for the Std XII students in the Amar Seva Sangam inclusive school."

Courtesy: Sankara Raman

Pointing out that the Mumbai Marathon is a great platform for fundraising, Raman says he was sorely disappointed when he tried to enrol for the 2004 edition of the event but was told there was no provision for persons with disability. "So I watched from the sidelines as my wife took part," says the chartered accountant. Raman then wrote to the organisers and used media support to raise awareness about disabilities. He believed that if the London Marathon could have space for the disabled to participate, why not India's biggest marathon? He was, therefore, thrilled when the organisers created a new category called 'Champions with Disability' in 2005.

Muscular dystrophy is a disorder where muscles progressively degenerate and the individual eventually loses the ability to walk. Our champion was diagnosed with the illness when he was only three years old; by the age of 12, he was bound to a wheelchair. "I continued my education through correspondence and scored a distinction in chartered accountancy in 1985," he says.

Like all true champions, Raman turned his misfortune into a powerful advantage and has been on a mission ever since. A chance meeting in 1991 with S Ramakrishnan, founder-president of Amar Seva Sangam, sparked discussion, debate and ideas on how to create value for the disabled and facilitate inclusion. Ramakrishnan had suffered multiple injuries to his spine during naval recruitment exercises, which had left him paralysed neck-down.

After intense self-rehabilitation, he decided to set up Amar Seva Sangam, which now runs a rehabilitation centre for the disabled, a vocational training centre, medical testing unit, early intervention centre for toddlers, day-care centre for children, and many other facilities. Raman joined forces with Ramakrishnan; thanks to their combined vision, the organisation now works to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream society.

On 5 acre of land, they opened a residential school and day school in a village called Ayikudy in Thirunelveli district in 1991. "To start with, five of our 200 children were disabled. Today, the school has over 900 children, including 80 afflicted with physical disabilities. These children are not encouraged to stay more than five years. The idea is to train them to face their hurdles on their own." On fundraising for the NGO, Raman says, "For an organisation like ours, which runs multiple programmes, 70 per cent of funds come from supporters. Part of my role is to meet individuals and corporate firms to raise funds. Crowd-funding is another avenue we are exploring."

All considered, Raman loves participating in marathons most, a passion reflected in the fact that, over the past 12 years, he has raised over ₹ 4.1 crore by participating in marathons all over the country. His untiring commitment has earned him many plaudits, including the CNN Hero Award, Helen Keller Award and Best Social Worker Award given by the chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

—Jayanthi Somasundaram

Jeetendra

Jaya Bachchan

BIRTHDAYS

India-born British actor **Roshan Seth** turns 74 on 2 April.

Singer **Hariharan** turns 61 on 3 April.

actor and chairman of Balaji Telefilms **Jeetendra** turns 74 on 7 April.

Martial artist and actor **Jackie Chan** turns 62 on 7 April.

Actor **Jaya Bachchan** turns 68 on 9 April.

Actor **Moushumi Chatterjee** turns 68 on 26 April.

Orchestral conductor **Zubin Mehta** turns 80 on 29 April.

Paramesh Krishnan Nair

Ustad Ali Ahmad Hussain Khan

IN PASSING

Indian film archivist and scholar **Paramesh Krishnan Nair** died on 4 March. He was former director of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), which he established in 1964. Nair was 82.

Raymond Samuel Tomlinson, the inventor of email who picked the @ symbol for email addresses, passed away in Washington on 6 March. He was 74.

British music producer **George Henry Martin**, best known for his work with The Beatles, died on 8 March. He was 90.

Eminent shehnai exponent **Ustad Ali Ahmad Hussain Khan** died on 16 March 2016 in Kolkata. He was 77.

MILESTONES

- Cartoonist **B V Panduranga Rao**'s achievement of drawing 209 caricatures of all the cricketers of the ICC World Cup 2015 on 7"×5" drawing sheets using pencil and black ink has been recorded in *Limca Book of Records*. He took three months to complete the task.
- Supercentenarian Auschwitz survivor **Yisrael Kristal** has been named the world's oldest living man by the *Guinness World Records*. He was 112 years and 178 days old when he received his certificate in March, at his home in Haifa, Israel.
- Renowned Dogri poet and writer **Padma Sachdev** was awarded the Krutitava Smagra Samman for 2015 on 6 March. The award was given by the Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad in Kolkata for her outstanding contribution to the Dogri languages.

OVERHEARD

"The midlife crisis should be renamed the 'midlife celebration'.... The film industry presents a negative view of older women and perpetuates myths that 'older is ugly or less valuable'. Beauty appreciates, not depreciates. It grows, not fades."

—Actor Cameron Diaz, 43, in* Mail on Sunday's You *magazine; she has just released* The Longevity Book: Live Stronger, Live Better, The Art of Ageing Well, *which offers advice on ageing with strength through healthy eating, exercise and meditation

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HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

RUNNING FOR MY LIFE

I've been told that when I run, crowds gather to watch me. It doesn't make me nervous, simply because I cannot see them. But I do hope that a blind, 60 year-old man can inspire each one of them to take up running one day.

I was an average kid while growing up but everything changed during a routine eye check-up at the age of 13. I was diagnosed with macular degeneration, a disease of the eye for which there is no cure. My family was devastated when doctors said it was only a matter of time before I would go completely blind. After that, I visited a pantheon of doctors but, eventually, at the age of 40, I went completely blind. Life had to go on and I continued to work hard at the lottery stall I had set up in Malad, Mumbai and, by God's grace, I could even buy a shop. But I soon realised there was no point leading a mundane life. We have one life and must do something extraordinary with it. So when I received a message from the National Association for the Blind regarding the inaugural Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon in 2004, I dragged my wife Gurpreet to their office in Worli, and filled out a form for the 7-km Dream Run.

I was never into running but this challenge seemed worth attempting, even at 48 years of age. The organisers provided someone to lead me and it was a learning experience for both of us. At the 3-km mark, my escort announced, 'Sir, *aap ko* cricketer Kapil Dev *dekh rahein hai.*' Then she said, 'Sir, *woh aapke taraf chal ke aa rahe hai.*' (Cricketer Kapil Dev is looking at you and is now walking towards you.) Before I could react, I heard him ask my escort if he could lead me. He took my stick and accompanied me for the next half kilometre or so. He then made it a point to come visit me at the finish line, and even signed my cap. It made me very proud and I decided to build on this newfound spirit.

Three years later, at the same marathon, I had the good fortune of running with industrialist Anil Ambani, who took over from my escort and ran with me for a couple of kilometres. My escort told me I had four of Mr Ambani's bodyguards running with me. I corrected him, saying they weren't his bodyguards, but mine!

Next, I decided to pursue trekking, first conquering the 13,800-ft Sar Pass in Himachal Pradesh in 2004, and then doing other climbs in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, in addition to the Dolma Pass (18,500 ft) in Tibet. There have been times I've got cynical remarks like, '*Marne ke liye jaa raha hai, who bhi paisa dal ke.*' (He's paid to come and die.) But the feeling of connecting with nature is inexplicable, and I wouldn't bother explaining it to such people.

Shail Desai

47 and counting: Visual impairment hasn't stopped Chawla from running marathons

Running is a relatively easier proposition in terms of finances and finding an escort. So I started training regularly, and graduated to the half-marathon. One of my most satisfying moments was achieving my best half-marathon time of 1 hour, 42 minutes at the 2005 Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon.

I've run on twisted ankles and with bleeding knees but I've never quit a race. Injuries don't worry me; I am more concerned about how my wife will react upon seeing me! She always says, 'This is your last race!' But she also knows how stubborn I am.

It is the encouragement from various quarters that keeps me going. Sometimes it's the crowd and, sometimes, it's the music, which always makes me shake a leg. In Hyderabad, they call me 'The Dancing Sardar', and even play bhangra when I'm swinging by. I've been felicitated time and again by those who believe in me, and have been encouraged to run by the likes of Sachin Tendulkar. Then, there are generous souls who waive my entry fee for runs or offer me affordable accommodation when I run in other cities. I've run 47 half-marathons until now, and hope to hit 101 runs before I hang up my running shoes!

—Amarjeet Singh Chawla, Mumbai

STITCHES IN TIME

I was only 11 when my elder sister had a baby boy and was on cloud nine when I was allowed to hem my nephew's nappy. Remember, there were no diapers then! I was allowed to knit an under-vest for him but not a full sweater. That was my induction into knitting and stitching. We were living in Ambala, where every Punjabi woman worth her salt spent as much time knitting through the year as she did making *papad* and pickles.

Mukherjea is passionate about stitching and knitting

Shyamola Khanna

I am 76 now and, over the years, what started as a hobby became a passion and now borders on obsession. Shortly after my husband retired from the Army in 1985, I began to stitch *salwar kameez* on order and took on orders for sweaters as well. We had two school-going children and needed the extra money. After four years, I began to stitch only for pleasure and to gift hand-knitted stuff to friends and their kids.

Both my daughters are now married and living in the US. They love Indian silks and like wearing the blouses I stitch for them. I have three granddaughters and all their clothes are stitched by me. As I spend between six and eight months in the US every year, both my girls have sewing machines for me in their homes. When my younger daughter Karuna was expecting her first child, she called up her elder sister Ratna and asked for the entire knitted baby layette I had made for her two babies. She received a categorical, 'No way! These are mine and they will be preserved for my girls when they grow up and have their own kids. They should know their grandmother through the sweaters knitted by her. Now you go and negotiate with Mum and see what she can do for you!' I was very touched by her reply and sat down to do a full layette for my third granddaughter.

My good, old, faithful Singer sewing machine, the centenary model that came out in 1950, works like a whiz even now. This was my mother's machine and I learnt how to stitch on it. My two daughters have also learnt to use it. I had a fantastic offer from Singer—they wanted me to return my precious machine and in exchange they were willing to give me their latest model. They wanted to put my machine in their museum. But my 'museum piece' is not going anywhere while I am alive!

My current obsession is with finishing all the yarn and fabric I have. I lose control when I am in a yarn shop and have enough wool in my cupboard to make at least 20 more sweaters. With the fabric, I am making a *dohar*, the Indian version of a light, quilted covering sheet. Some people put a plain sheet on one side, line it with an old *sari* or a bed-sheet, and keep strips or patches on the main side. I am doing colourful strips on both the inside as well as the outside.

At any given time, I have a couple of projects going on. Between breaks with the *dohar*, I stitched a *salwar kameez* for myself. When I get a little tired of stitching, I pick up the sweater I am doing for a friend's grandson... thus it goes on.

—Pimi Mukherjea, Secunderabad

March towards meaning

ROHIT TIWARI, 55, PUNE

Getting a job is tough enough, but more so, finding socially meaningful work to earn a living. There was no guidance when I was an 18 year-old grappling with career issues. I ended up enrolling with the National Defence Academy and was commissioned into the Indian Army in 1981. There was also a lot of travel and if you are blessed with the spirit of adventure, it can be very rewarding. I also underwent professional training to take care of many specialised assignments, all of which help me even today.

Some of my major assignments included being a quality assurance officer, chief operations officer, chief training and security manager, and chief intelligence officer. I added to my professional qualifications by securing a diploma in personnel management from SIMS, Pune, a master's degree in sociology from Meerut University, and an MBA from FMS, Delhi University.

The Armed Forces give you ample opportunity to grow and learn and I also underwent several training programmes, some of which are

"We were always training our junior officers and I discovered that I liked the idea of passing on knowledge and skills to those who were hungry for them"

equivalent to an MTech in defence management. It was during the course of all that learning that I grew interested in teaching. We were always training our junior officers and I discovered that I liked the idea of passing on knowledge and skills to those who were hungry for them.

I arrived at a turning point in my life in 2004, when I decided to quit the Army. I was posted in Rajouri, not far from Jammu, and the threat of terrorism prevented my seven year-old daughter from attending school. It was heartbreaking to see the impact of these events on my daughter and so, ready or not, I took the plunge into civilian life in 2005.

As luck would have it, a friend convinced me to join his travel agency and I did. A year later, I received a socially meaningful offer, to work with an NGO called PRASDA (Philanthropic Relief, Altruistic Service and Development) in Vasai near Mumbai. They needed someone to take charge of their operations and, in 2006, I became their operations manager. The NGO ran a general hospital and other health centres and initiatives across 350 villages, and I was responsible for the gamut of HRD, programme management, operations and administration.

Alongside, I conceptualised and operationalised an informal 'not-for-profit' initiative called 'Saath-Saath' for 150 underprivileged children in Vasai, where we also lived. We provided basic education and health facilities in which my wife joined me. It was an extremely rewarding experience.

When we shut the 'school' due to political interference, I took a sabbatical and in 2010, I struck a deal that allowed me to teach as well as earn some butter for my bread. I thus took charge of a team of 90 employees in a Mumbai-based transport management company. I would have marched on in the same groove but, as fate would have it, we were to shift to Pune. In 2012, my daughter, now in high school, needed specialised training and coaching, and there were no facilities available to her where we lived. Even as I contemplated the move, another perfect opportunity came my way. It was a chance to train young men to secure a career as officers in the various defence services—at the Vishwabharati Gurukul Training Academy in Pune.

This was the city we had envisaged for our retirement and it seemed like a good time to move. One thing led to another and, soon, I also got involved in soft skills training in the transport management industry in Pune. By 2014, I was also teaching at the Symbiosis group of institutes, teaching organisational behaviour at their SIMC campus in Pune. The Saath-Saath initiative also moved along with us to Pune and we continue to teach children from the slums around where we live.

I have taken on other responsibilities and, with my wife, have launched a handful of other initiatives but nothing makes me happier than to teach. It is very gratifying to know that less privileged children can get access to good schools through the Right to Education, with a little effort from me. My teaching career is certainly not textbook but through teaching, I have experienced the joy one receives from doing socially meaningful work.

—As told to Suchismita Pai

BUSINESS IN A BOTTLE!

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am a retired schoolteacher interested in taking homemade jams to the market. I have perfected them over the years by making my colleagues taste the different flavours I try out. What should be my immediate next step?

You have already started with your first step of research; by making your colleagues taste your jam, you are already on the road to making it a business. The next step would be to come up with a marketing strategy. You need to decide whether you will take orders at an individual level or whether to include bulk orders as well. I would recommend that you start with individual orders at first and then decide on making jam in bulk quantities.

With so much competition, it is necessary to make your brand stand out. Choose a unique name that is easy enough to remember and give it a logo. The next thing is to figure out the selling point of your product. Taking the case of homemade jam in particular, I would say the selling point of your product is that the jam is homemade. I am assuming you don't use any preservatives. Make that your selling point and try to get that across to the customer as much as possible.

Next is registration. Once your profit margin rises, it is necessary to get your brand registered. Detailed research on this will be required once the business is in full swing. Once that is done, start advertising your product through flyers, posters and social media. Don't forget, in your initial days, word of mouth helps the most.

—Rita Ray runs a popular brand of homemade jams in Mumbai

Protect and defend: The right diet can help you combat yeast allergy

I am 70 years old. Recently, I have developed red, itchy rashes all over my body. After an allergy test, I have been diagnosed with yeast allergy (*Candida albicans*). What are the foods I can consume and what should I avoid to keep the allergy in check?

Allergies occur when your body reacts to any food or medicine by triggering an immune system. Reactions develop the first time you eat a potentially allergenic food; you do not usually have symptoms but your immune system mistakenly prepares to protect you against it. The next time you eat that food, you release chemicals that can cause symptoms such as eczema or even life-threatening anaphylaxis.

Candida albicans is a form of yeast present in our gastrointestinal system in normal condition. It is a group of microorganisms that live in the mouth, skin and intestine. It particularly starts to cause trouble when there is some change in your body that allows it to overgrow and release toxic byproducts in the body.

Cause and effect

The root causes of this kind of allergy may be any of the following:

- Reaction to some medicines or antibiotics
- A diet unfavourably rich in sugar and carbohydrates
- Old age or prolonged stress
- Obesity and diabetes (Type II)
- Unsuitable processed food and sweets

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The perfect diet for you should be high in fibre and protein with a judicious mix of complex carbohydrates and a small amount of fresh fruits. In some cases, consumption of probiotics helps restore normal bacterial balance in the body.

Dos

- Go for vegetables like broccoli, asparagus, avocado, zucchini, cauliflower and onions that have a low starch content and tend to starve the candida yeast of sugar. Eat your veggies raw, steamed or grilled.
- Include probiotics, like yoghurt, in your diet. The live bacteria in yoghurt attack candida yeast and restore balance to your system.
- Increase your intake of antioxidant-rich berries, like blueberries and strawberries. Guava and papaya are also good choices.
- Consume gluten-free grains like buckwheat and quinoa as they are very high in fibre content and excellent in eliminating the candida toxins from your body. All products made from these grains can be taken.
- Eat only fresh and organic meat. Buy eggs, salmon and sardines fresh and eat them grilled or baked.
- Rather than alcoholic beverages, opt for beverages with antifungal properties like cinnamon tea, ginger tea or peppermint tea. Chicory root coffee is also a great probiotic.
- Use natural sweeteners derived from plants, such as vegetable glycerine. Stevia xylitol has a much smaller effect on blood sugar level.
- Almonds, hazelnuts and walnuts are healthy, have low-mould content, and boost the immune system. Almond flour and coconut flour are healthy options.
- Apple cider vinegar (organic, raw and unfiltered) is helpful in avoiding candida growth. Lemon juice can also be taken.
- Herbs and spices such as basil, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, garlic and turmeric contain antioxidants and have antifungal properties. They can improve circulation and reduce inflammation in the body.

Don'ts

- High intake of cheese, cream, full-fat milk and whey products can aggravate symptoms.
- Consuming canned fruits, fruit juices or any sort of foods rich in sugar can feed candida.
- Avoid glutinous grains (wheat, barley, rye) and processed baked goods.
- Check food labels for hidden ingredients—artificially sweetened products, additives and preservatives allow the candida yeast to flourish.
- Intake of beans, legumes, chickpeas and soy should be avoided initially as they are high in carbohydrates; you can reintroduce them later.
- Ketchups, mayonnaise and soy sauce have a high amount of hidden sugars and preservatives. Instead, use lemon juice for salad dressings. Avoid vinegar as it is made in yeast culture and can cause inflammation.
- Avoid baked products such as bread and cakes.

Be alert and aware

Take care when eating out and watch out for trigger foods. If you suspect that you have a food allergy, keep a food diary to help you identify which foods may be the cause of your symptoms. Over a period of four or six weeks, you may be able to recognise foods that cause symptoms such as rashes. Under a doctor's care, try eliminating possibly offending foods to see if there is any improvement in your symptoms.

The purpose of the dietary restrictions given above is to starve the yeast organism causing symptoms on your skin. Continue on such a diet for a few months and you may find that the symptoms of candida yeast allergy diminish. However, ensure that important nutrients are not being left out and you get a balanced diet.

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**

READERS ASK

Please tell me what is better for health: rock salt or table salt?

Rock salt is less salty, not chemically processed, has more nutritional value, and is rich in minerals. It contains 84 trace minerals including a sufficient amount of iodine, an important dietary nutrient that prevents goitre, mental retardation and dwarfism. Most of these minerals present in rock salt are not present in table salt. A gram a day can help the body's metabolic processes and help reduce deposits that have built up in the arteries. It is good for people with cardiac problems and can be used as a substitute for common salt. Table salt is treated with additives and chemicals, and is refined to remove impurities. Rock salt does not undergo this process. This salt comes in a reddish or pink colour with some crystals and is known as Himalayan salt in the market. It is commonly used for cooking, similar to regular, iodised table salt. Reducing intake of table salt and choosing rock salt can be of great benefit to the body as it is known to control high blood pressure, stimulate blood circulation, aid in digestion, relieve gas and acidity and remove toxins from the human body.

Partner work

Thai yoga can help you deepen your poses and intensify your practice

Anybody who has ever experienced a Thai yoga massage knows how relaxing it is. For a yoga practitioner, it can be even more exciting to experience a greater opening up of the body through partner work. Essentially, it involves an experienced Thai yoga expert who uses his or her body like a tool (often sitting astride or standing astride the body of the patient/client) to exert a gentle but educated pressure and support to move their body deeper into yoga poses. History suggests that this was designed to help obese royalty catch their yoga practice through the help of medical experts who knew how to coax a great workout of their clients without too much exertion on their part.

If you were an observer watching a Thai yoga massage session, you may often think that it looks like the client is moving about more than normal in a massage session. But in the hands of an expert, this partner work can be not just extremely relaxing, but very healing. It is powered by the wisdom of yoga, married to the wisdom of acupressure points (called *marma* in India) and comes from great awareness of the body. In fact, even hardcore yoga practitioners will find that their poses are deepened without the exertion they normally experience while doing it alone on the mat.

The energy engaged in this yoga-related alternative therapy is called *chi* (in yoga it is the word *prana* that refers to this idea of life force or cosmic energy). Somewhat similar to the idea of yoga elements from nature is the Thai yoga belief in elements like wood, water, fire, metal and earth. Several eastern martial arts—born of or related to Kerala's Kalaripayattu—use similar tactics to release a fighter's muscle soreness and stiffness through such partner work. The sessions are normally rather expensive, but if you can afford them or find centres that offer them at reasonable rates, this is a type of yoga you want to experience regularly.

"Just as one learns the sciences by first practising the alphabet, one attains the knowledge of Truth by cultivating Yoga. The body always wears away like an unbaked clay pot placed in water. Therefore, one should cultivate bodily fitness by tempering it with the fire of Yoga."

Gheranda Samhita

Even today, there is a clash of opinions among practitioners of hatha yoga (yoga of the body) and *jnana* yoga (of the intellect). The yoga of the mind (*raja* yoga) is related more to the latter, and that too has pontificators who can chose to deny the physical aspect of yoga or denigrate it loftily as circus yoga! Opinionated groups within each are likely to trash the other as too ego/body-centric or too wimpy respectively!

But the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, an ancient yoga treatise, suggests that there is no hatha yoga without *raja* yoga and no *raja* yoga without hatha. Interestingly, *jnana* yoga masters like Ramana Maharishi may often tell some practitioners to focus on the pranayama—a transition point between body-mind yoga—to fully understand the secrets revealed in the esoteric texts of *jnana* yoga. All camps notwithstanding, for devotees of yoga such distinctions do not matter as all paths lead to the same goal. *Gheranda Samhita* is one of those exciting texts that are full of practices to help you realise how using the body to understand and tame the vagrant mind can be achieved. This explains why it is an enduring yoga classic even today.

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YOGIC MOVES

Cobra pose (*bhujangasana*) in Thai yoga

If you are doing this with a partner, sit astride the person's hips gently, without applying pressure—you can kneel with your knees on the ground on either side of the person's legs. The person should have their forehead on the ground, arms laid down beside the body. The legs may be lightly apart, with ankles flat on the mat. Let the person grip your wrists on either side. Now gently draw their chest up towards yourself, constantly checking with them to ensure that you are not exerting too much pressure. The person looks straight ahead. Hold for a few breaths, release them back on the mat, so their forehead is down. You can repeat this a few times. **Points to note**: This may be done only after sufficient warm-up for the practitioner. Steady inhalation and exhalation should be encouraged. Inhalation powers the chest lift, while exhalation deepens and relaxes the person. Avoid sitting heavily on the person; rather, kneel. Even standing astride over the back of the thighs may be attempted. This pose should be done only towards three-fourths of one's practice.

***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)*

An engaging series about silvers who believe nurturing the body and mind is the key to joy

Active, alert, alive!

Lakshmi Subramaniam • MUMBAI

What does it take to be a true *karma yogi*? This was the question I came back with after a conversation with Mrs Lakshmi Subramaniam, a Tamilian residing in Mumbai. Independent, articulate and hardworking, she lives life with a few simple rules and a disciplined attitude. A professional *vadam* (crispies) maker, at 88, she enjoys her mornings making and sun-drying them in her veranda, all on her own.

For Lakshmi *maami*, right action is not a choice, it is the only way. "Or else, I would also be lying down in bed and complaining of ailments, which many of my friends do," she quips, but the wisdom behind the remark shines through.

To comprehend the nuances of her thoughts in Tamil, my friend Priya Ramakrishnan assisted in the interview. As they shared a few light moments in their typical Tamil Brahmin accent, I could not help but appreciate her simple faith in God that gives her the equanimity to deal with life's hardships. She truly believes that one must perform one's duties as an offering at the lotus feet of the Lord. "My duty is to do my work sincerely," she declares. "Let Him decide the fruits."

***Vanakkam* Lakshmi *maami*, how are you today?**

As good as always. I woke up early, completed my prayers and then made some tasty *elai vadam*.

Who helps you make *vadam* and with your housework?

I don't require much help. I am quite fit and manage to complete my work on my own. Earlier, I used to make many varieties of *vadam*, but now I make only *elai vadam*.

> "I have been making and selling *vadam* for 18 years now. Many of my friends used to praise my *vadam* and pickles and that just got me moving ahead"

Have you always lived in Mumbai?

I have been living in Vile Parle for more than seven decades. I enjoy living in this city now. I was married when I was 14. My maternal family was very simple and, in fact, no dowry was given in my wedding. My husband passed away at a young age in 1971.

I am so sorry. That must have been tough on you.

It was. It was really difficult. Life is not always easy, but it is the will of the Lord. Our action alone is in our hands.

What about your children?

I have six children. Two of my sons are no more. One lives in Dubai while the other two are in Mumbai. One of them lives in the flat below and takes care of me as much as he can. My daughter too lives in Mumbai and visits me quite often.

Have any of them inherited your love for cooking?

My younger son, who is no more, enjoyed being in the kitchen. He worked in the hotel industry and had a flair for cooking.

When did you start making *vadam*? What prompted you?

I have been making and selling *vadam* for 18 years now. I like to be independent. Many of my friends used to praise my *vadam* and pickles and that just got me moving ahead.

So you must have been 70 when you started this venture. That is amazing. Hats off to you!

I always liked being busy. I used to sell liquid soap. I also enjoyed stitching my own blouses. But I like my quiet life. I have never hankered for publicity. If my customers are happy and speak with me warmly, I feel quite delighted. I am glad they appreciate my work. Perfection is important in whatever you do. Even when I would stitch blouses, I did them very meticulously and never left a loose thread anywhere. While making *vadam*, you have to ensure that they have dried fully. I have a balcony that is 21 ft in length and gets bright sunlight in the afternoons. By four in the evening, the *vadam* have dried well and I remove them.

Photographs by Hatesh Patel

For more details, call Lakshmi Subramaniam on 022-26108657

How do you take care of your health?

I have a few blocks in my heart, but I don't constantly dwell on that. I remain brisk and active. I enjoy my evening walks in the park below. I feel sad when I see some other women of my age staying in bed and complaining all day. Why should you complain? Get up and take care of yourself.

Do you have any other interests?

I am a member of a *satsang* group called Srividya Upasagar. I enjoy singing devotional *bhajan* with other people in that group. I have also visited many pilgrimages with travel groups. I have visited more than a hundred temples. I have visited Sabarimalai four times in my 70s.

***Maami*, that speaks of your amazing will power! That is quite a climb.**

It gave me so much joy. I climbed the entire stretch on my own. Praying is a very important part of my day as well as joyous activity. One of the most beautiful things we can do is buy fragrant flowers and offer them to the Devi.

***Maami*, you are truly immersed in *karmayog* and *bhakti*. One last question: what is the formula for being happy?**

Impartiality is an important quality, whether it is family or friends. You will then find peace.

ELUMICHAI OORUGAI (*lemon pickle*)

A simple and healthy pickle with fresh lemons, here is a recipe from Lakshmi *maami*'s kitchen. An excellent accompaniment to a meal, this pickle does not require any oil or tempering. Her special tip is to use coarse chilli powder.

Ingredients

- Lemon: 16 (juicy ones)
- Salt: ¾ cup
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- Coarse chilli powder: 2 tbsp
- Fenugreek seed powder: ¼ tsp

Method

Wash the lemons and pat them dry with a towel. Halve them and remove the seeds. Now cut them into small pieces with a sharp knife. Add 1 cup of water, salt and turmeric and cook in a thick-bottomed pan for 10 minutes. Do not cover while cooking. Add the fenugreek seed powder. (To prepare this, you can dry-roast fenugreek seeds and grind into a fine powder.) Allow to cool and add coarse chilli powder. (Lakshmi *maami* says you can grind whole chillies into a coarse powder or use chilli flakes.) Mix well and transfer to a glass jar. Serve with curd-rice or along with a meal. This recipe makes one jar of pickle; it stays fresh for up to three days but can be stored in the refrigerator for a couple of months.

Pratibha Jain, an author and translator from Chennai, is the co-author of two award-winning books **Cooking at Home with Pedatha** *and* **Sukham Ayu**. *Her area of specialisation is documenting Indian traditions through research, translation and writing*

The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
The first board meeting you addressed
The first day after retirement
BUTTERFLIES *never retire*
The first click of the mouse.
www.harmonyindia.org
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celebrate age

A gift of life

Though you may have pledged your organs, family validation holds the key to successful implementation of your last wishes, informs **Krishnaveni Sivagnanam**

Many of us have been inspired to pledge our organs after hearing the heroic deeds of families who chose to help others in the most adverse situation of their lives. But these good intentions cannot materialise into tangible gains if we do not inform our family members of the earnestness of our decision.

Two people were able to make a difference. Delhi-based Teja Ram, 88, a brave veteran from the China War, had spent a busy day shopping for a suit in preparation for his grandson's wedding. Later in theday, he was found unconscious and taken in a critical state to hospital where his CT scan revealed a massive left gangliothalamic bleed which resulted in brain death. His son and daughter came forward to donate his organs, as he had on many an occasion expressed his desire to be a donor. Similarly, when 87 year-old Radha Venkatraman from Coimbatore breathed her last in August 2012, her family did not arrange for the usual funeral. Venkatraman had pledged her eyes to the visually challenged and body to science, and had expressed her last wishes to her family. An article she had read way back in 1987 about the shortage of human bodies for research had motivated her to take the decision. She had prepared her daughter well and asked her to not be overcome by emotion during the 'golden hours.' Her family not just honoured her last wishes but, inspired by her act, followed suit and pledged their bodies to medical research.

Unfortunately, the wishes of all those who pledge to donate their organs are not carried out. Twenty year-old American Justin Lewis fell out of a car travelling 70 miles per hour and landed on his head, leading to brain death. He had an organ donor card in his wallet. However, while the organ donation agency and family members were informed, Lewis's mother interjected and adamantly opposed the donation as she was not ready.

> Unfortunately, the wishes of all those who desire or pledge to donate their organs are not carried out. Lack of awareness, myths and religious beliefs become impediments

Though Lewis remained on mechanical ventilation until a final decision was made, his organs couldn't be donated owing to the delay. Though we do not find documented cases of such nature in India, lack of awareness, myths and religious beliefs become impediments. A nephrologist at a Bengaluru hospital recalls how a family refused to donate the kidneys of a brain-dead relative because it was a new moon day (*Amavasya*), which they considered inauspicious. Preserving the kidney till the next day would have been difficult. Eventually, the donation did not take place as the doctors couldn't convince the family.

Informed consent

In the process of an organ donation, India follows the 'informed consent' mode where family consent is the deciding factor. No hierarchy of relatives has been specified under the Transplantation of Human Organ Act but the term includes a parent, spouse, son/daughter, brother or sister. The law has been interpreted to mean that the person legally in possession of the deceased has the authority to sign the consent form. In cases of differing views within the donor family, unanimity in concurrence is to be sought so precious time is not lost. Hence, it is imperative not just to inform the family of your decision to donate your organs but convince them that your decision is earnest and your last wish must be carried out wholeheartedly.

Presumed consent

Across the world, the form and method of obtaining consent for removal of organs from brain-dead individuals have evolved over the years. In Singapore, Malaysia, Israel and European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Spain and France, 'presumed consent' has been legalised and is practised. Under the presumed consent, doctors

are authorised to remove organs from brain-dead individuals provided the organs are healthy. Those who object to this procedure can opt out of it. In other countries, various strategies are now being considered to increase the donor pool.

In a situation where the donor has pledged his organs himself or expressed the desire to donate, what if the family does not support such a decision? In the US, most states have a 'first-person law' on organ donation; the family cannot override the wishes of the donor if the donor has clearly communicated (signed a donor card or other legal instrument) the intent to donate. However, despite these laws, if there is family opposition (as in the case of Justin), most hospitals will not harvest the organs as they would deem it unethical.

Indian regulations

In India, the Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994 and its Amendment in 2011 state that it is mandatory that the next of kin, parents, spouse, etc, should agree to donate the organs of a brain-dead family member. As health is a state subject, most states have initiated an organ sharing registry to coordinate within the state. The Government of India, under the aegis of the Directorate-General of Health Services and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, established the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO), which initially networked for Delhi and gradually expanded to include other states and regions of the country. For organ donation to take place, specific forms have to be filled and signed under the THOA (Transplantation of Human Organ Act) Rules. Form 7 (which can be obtained at *www.notto.nic.in*) has to be filled in to pledge organs and tissues and Form 8 is a consent form that the next to kin has to sign before the organ/tissues of a brain-dead person can be removed.

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KNOW YOUR LAW

- The primary legislation for organ donation in India is the Transplantation of Human Organ Act, 1994, which was subsequently amended in 2011
- The law is based on the informed consent model
- The consent of the parent or spouse, son or daughter, brother or sister for retrieval of organs is compulsory in case of brain death and natural death
- In the absence of the above-mentioned persons, the person legally in charge of the body has to give consent
- With or without prior registration to donate organs, family consent is the deciding factor in India
- If you resolve to donate, inform and convince your kith and kin of your decision to ensure your organs are donated

In cases of voluntary donation, to avoid legal tangles, the Government insists on prior submission of a letter by donors that they are donating their body/organ after death at their own will. A letter that the legal heirs and near relatives will not raise any objections after death and an identification certificate clearly indicating two identification marks of the said donor along with three passport-size photographs are to be submitted. Though the submission of legal heir certificates are necessary in some states in India, Tamil Nadu chose to delete this as there was no provision under law to issue a legal heir certificate for a person who is alive.

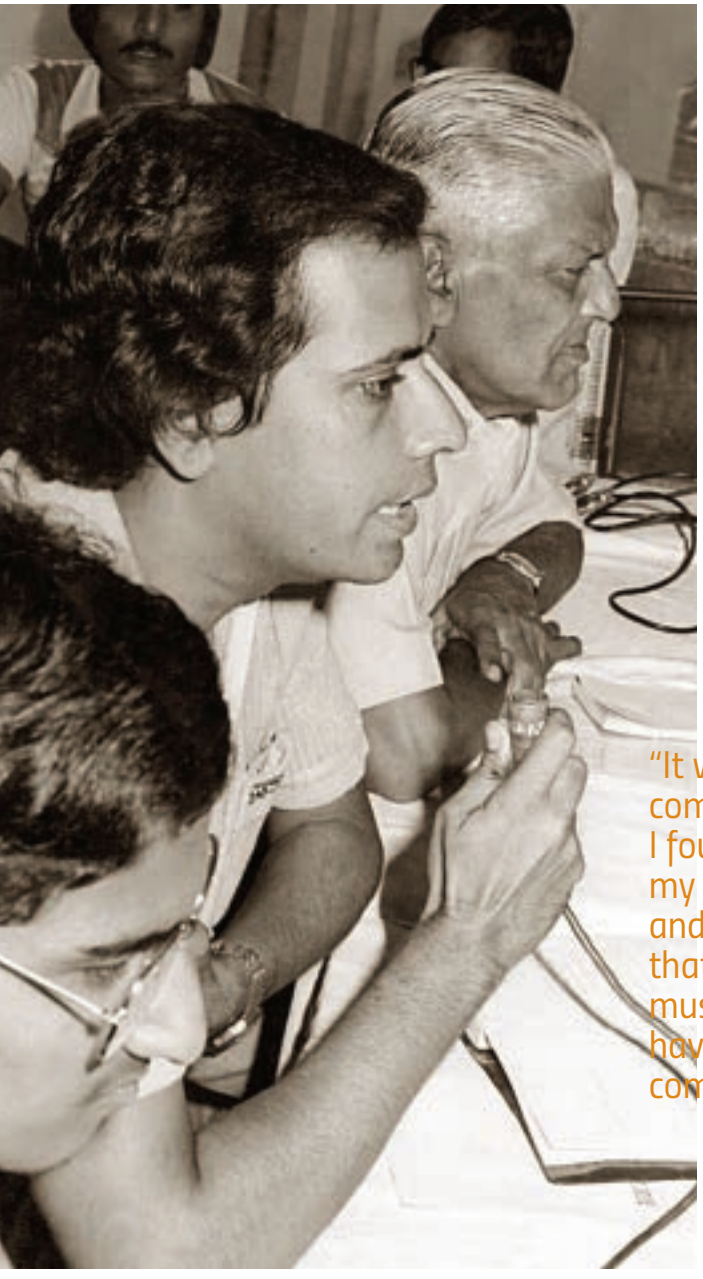
For full body donation to be successful, the death should be natural and/or owing to naturally occurring diseases. The body will not be accepted in cases of medico-legal issues, suicide and poisoning. In addition, bodies with certain contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, AIDS, tetanus, gas gangrene, etc, remain infective during embalming and/or after death. Donation of such bodies would not be accepted as they are a serious health hazard to the medical students and the staff handling them. With the newly amended provision of the Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act, 2011 that allows making requests to families of the dead to donate organs to help those in need, cadaver donation has received more legal recognition.

Cadaveric organ donation hinges on family consent for successful implementation. If you have made up your mind to be a donor, first and foremost, inform and convince your families of your noble decision and encourage them to honour it. This will save them the emotional turmoil of trying to ascertain your final wish and help them reach a consensus when the need arises.

The writer is head of research at Altacit Global, a law firm specialising in intellectual property, corporate law, real estate and franchising

For the love of the mic

After ruling the airwaves for four decades from the commentary box, Sushil Doshi shares his epic journey with **Partha** and **Priyanka Mukherjee**



His love for cricket is nothing short of poetic, a penchant that helped Sushil Doshi take a ball-by-ball account of the game and turn it into the lyrical art of storytelling. His spellbinding commentary delivered in his delightfully unique style took the game from stadia across the country straight into the hearts of millions for four long decades.

These were the 1980s and '90s and radio was the only mass medium in India back then. Many who hung on to Doshi's every word during those times will remember the iconic phrases he coined, such as *ankho dekha haal* (running commentary) in the language of cricket commentary. This, and much more, made the game's first Hindi cricket commentator a household name.

"Growing up in Indore, I played cricket with the neighbourhood boys but more than the game, I was focused on technique, types of catches, types of strokes. It was in commentary that I found expression for my love of literature and sport. I found that that cricket, music and literature have one thing in common—rhythm," says Doshi.

"It was in commentary that I found expression for my love of literature and sport. I found that that cricket, music and literature have one thing in common—rhythm"

Still a teenager in the early 1960s, Doshi would spend hours by the radio, dreaming of making it to a live cricket match one day. "In those days, radio commentators conjured up the action on the field with graphic descriptions. I was captivated by their modulated voices and delivery."

His faltering knowledge of the English language didn't stop him from seamlessly mimicking John Arlott, Brian Johnston and Alan McGilvray, each one in the global pantheon of cricket commentators.

Photographs courtesy: Sushil Doshi

With Mohinder Amarnath at Nehru Stadium, Indore; with Sir Gary Sobers (extreme left); opposite page: initial days of commentary, with late BCCI selector M M Jagdale (to his left)

"Although my boyhood idol was John Arlott, the voice of Suresh Saraiya still rings in my ears. His commentary was called 'Saraiya *raag*'," reminisces Doshi, who still goes behind the mic to commentate on television.

Unlike his three brothers, both engineers from the Indian Institute of Technology, Doshi wasn't academically inclined. But he occupied a special place in his father's heart. "My father doted on me and encouraged me to go ahead with any career I chose. Perhaps he realised that my low academic merit wouldn't get me far and wanted to keep the doors to other fields ajar so that I could excel in any of them."

Doshi's parents wholeheartedly indulged their son's passion for sports. Otherwise, his father would never have agreed to accompany the 10 year-old all the way to Bombay for an international Test match, with no tickets in hand! "It was 1957-58, when Australia, led by Richie Benaud, visited India to play a series of Test matches against India, captained by G S Ramchand. I pestered *papa* and he took me to Bombay," recalls Doshi, still moved by the memory.

But on reaching Brabourne Stadium, the Doshis had no way to get in. "After lining up outside for four days in vain, *papa* told a police officer that we had come all the way from Indore and asked if he would let us in. The police-man, who had noticed us earlier, said, 'I will allow only the boy inside, you wait here'." The trade-off was worth it. For the first time, Doshi saw players such as Norman O'Neill and Neil Harvey—cricket icons whose pictures he had pasted in an album—at the crease. "I was so ecstatic that I was oblivious even to my father waiting patiently outside. I was focused on the players with every ounce of concentration that I had."

The trip to Bombay turned out to be more than a doting dad's indulgence for his son. It was a turning point for the lad, for it was during that first game that young Doshi discovered a large wooden box just above his head. It housed Vijay Merchant and Bobby Talyarkhan delivering commentary in English. "It crossed my mind: what if I could one day occupy that commentary box?" As destiny would have it, Doshi would return to the same box, 15 years later, as a commentator for a Test match between India and England.

But his beginnings as a commentator were less than auspicious. As a nervous 18 year-old student of electrical engineering in Indore, Doshi walked into the office of the station director at All India Radio (AIR) with great trepidation and asked for a position as a Hindi cricket commentator. "He sized me up and said, 'Boy, grow some grey hair and then come back.' Then he showed me the door," recalls Doshi with a chuckle. As luck would have it, a few months later, the Government of India issued a directive to AIR to begin cricket commentary in Hindi. When no one came forward, the station director tracked down Doshi and offered him the job.

It was in 1968 that Doshi first leaned forward and spoke into the commentator's mic during the Ranji Trophy match between Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan at Nehru Stadium, Indore. But he did it with practiced ease. All those days, imitating his many idols, had paid off! But, as with all things new and radical, Doshi was not appreciated at first and received harsh criticism from the media. Pushed into a corner, he only bettered his skill and started inventing his own style. "I followed the rule of economy of words, keeping each sentence short and crisp and packed

Doshi (left, standing) with his parents (seated) and family; with doyens of Indian cricket

with detail. Then one day, Dharamvir Bharati, then editor of Hindi pictorial weekly *Dharmyug*, gave me a piece of invaluable advice. He told me to make it personal and suggested I connect with my listeners' hearts. I follow his advice to this day."

Doshi is known for developing his own, unique language to describe the game. "For example, while describing a 'square cut' boundary, I would say, 'short pitch *gend thi,* off stump *ke bahar* back foot *par gaye,* stroke *ke liye jagah banaye aur bahut khubsoorti ke saath* square cut *kar diya chaar run ke liye,*' because I knew that while making a square cut, a batsman has to remove himself from the line of the ball, make space for the stroke and then cut it to the boundary. I might have played only school-level cricket, but I was so focused on the game that I picked up its nuances very easily. Thus, my knowledge of technique reflected in my commentary."

As one of the few commentators with no professional cricketing experience in a commentary box crowded with former players, Doshi did not believe it was a disadvantage. "It is not necessary that a good commentator should play high-level cricket, but he should be articulate in the language of cricket and a consumer of literature. Otherwise, description will turn into a dull affair, shorn of rhythm and colour," says Doshi, a voracious reader of both Hindi and Western literature. It is this love for literature and language that also built a foundation for Doshi as a sports journalist. He has published over 1,000 articles on cricket with various print publications in the country.

After 75 Test matches, over 350 One-Day Internationals and T-20 matches in the past four decades, Doshi pulls out the following memory that will remain etched forever in his mind. It dates back to the Test match between India and England at The Oval in 1979, London. "Sunil Gavaskar was batting at 221 and India's victory was in sight," he says. "Suddenly, a group of spectators began to leave the stands. When I asked them why, they said their doctors had advised them to avoid any excitement. I couldn't help but share their predicament with my listeners." What Doshi said over the airwaves next went down in the annals of cricket commentary. "*Jin logon ko dil ki bimari hain, woh* commentary *na sune toh behtar hain, kyunki unke* doctor *unhe yeh salah de rahe honge ki yeh romaanch jo sar par chadh kar hawi ho raha hai, yeh unke dil ke liye hanikarak sabit ho sakta hain* [It would be better if those who have heart disease do not listen to the commentary because their doctors will tell them that the thrill of this game could be dangerous for their heart]."

Now all of 68 years, Doshi's list of milestones and awards is long but one of his most precious accolades came in 2005, when the Madhya Pradesh government named a commentary box at Holkar Cricket Stadium in Indore after him and gave him the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Cricket may be his passion but this sports lover is an all-rounder and has lent his voice to the game of lawn tennis too. Those who have heard his commentary on several Davis Cup matches over the years have no doubt revelled in the honeyed lilt of his voice that never ages.

This year, Doshi was conferred one of the most prestigious civilian awards the country has to offer: the Padma Shri. But equally moving are the worlds of legendary cricketer, Mohinder Amarnath, who once said, "As long as cricket is played in India, Sushil Doshi will be remembered with great respect by us.

What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson

to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.

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.

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celebrate age

UP GETS STRONG TOURISM PUSH AT

Established Indian and Foreign Tour Operators have fruitful and strategic discussions on ways to promote Uttar Pradesh as a leading tourist destination at UPTM 2016 organised by the UP government at Agra in partnership with FICCI

The engaging tagline of Uttar Pradesh Tourism 'Amazing Heritage, Grand Experiences' seems just right in pointing to a memorable legacy of Uttar Pradesh that can be relived enthusiastically in all its glory by insightful travellers.

For decades, millions of tourists from India and abroad have been visiting the state and admiring the multi-hued attractions cemented in the form of grand monuments, appealing culture and its glorious heritage. The world over, Uttar Pradesh is known with much reverence as 'The Land of the Taj' that gracefully occupies pride of place in the famous city of Agra.

It is under this backdrop of the glorious wonder of Taj Mahal that the Uttar Pradesh government organised the Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart (UPTM) 2016 from February 21-23 in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav's unstinted support to this initiative has been a big boost in underlining the importance of Uttar Pradesh as a visual treat to informed travellers and tour operators. The chief minister's support can also be found in black-and-white in the new Tourism Policy 2016 that was unveiled recently. Among significant points in this policy is the assurance to encourage private sector investment in UP tourism sector and provide good concessions and subsidies to such investors.

FOREIGN-INDIAN TOUR OPERATORS LINE UP

With the avowed objective of Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart 2016 being 'promotion of Uttar Pradesh as a leading tourist destination', both the UP government and FICCI put in much energy and planning to make the event a grand success. A number of important Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings between enthusiastic Indian sellers and foreign buyers from across the world and leading domestic tour operators from across India were organised in a leading hotel in Agra.

The inaugural session of the event was organised at Taj Viewpoint on February 21 in the backdrop of the dazzling Taj Mahal on the other side of Yamuna river. A cultural programme was organised on the occasion where participating artistes showcased 'Braj Vandana', Krishna's craze for makkhan and 'Latthmaar Holi' in front of the distinguished gathering.

UTTAR PRADESH TRAVEL MART 2016

Dignitaries present in the session also launched a knowledge paper titled 'Uttar Pradesh — Changing Perspectives' authored by MRSS India, a leading independent market research agency in India. This was followed by the inauguration of exhibition of UPTM 2016 and B2B meetings on February 22-23. Principal Secretary & Director General of Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Navneet Sehgal; Director, FICCI, Rahul Chakravarty; Divisional Commissioner, Agra, Pradeep Bhatnagar; District Magistrate, Agra, Pankaj Kumar and President, Uttar Pradesh Hotel & Restaurant Association (UPHRA), SK Jaiswal were among the important dignitaries who graced the event with their presence.

A fun family trip of 3 nights and 4 days was also organised from February 23 evening onwards for hosted foreign tour operators as part of the event. This was a splendid chance for foreign tour operators and their families to get a good idea of the delightful sights and sounds that one could enjoy in Agra, Varanasi, Kushinagar, Etawah lion safari, Chambal and Dudhwa National Park which they visited and enjoyed.

ROBUST GROWTH OF TOURISM

Principal Secretary & Director General of Uttar Pradesh Tourism, Navneet Sehgal who inaugurated the Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart 2016 said that a lot of potential in UP Tourism is yet to be explored and the state government is making all efforts to bring UP on the world tourism map. Talking about the implementation of Tourism Policy 2016, Sehgal said the new tourism policy would highlight job creation via tourism promotion and creation of good tourism packages.

It is to be mentioned that Uttar Pradesh occupies the second place among Indian states that attract tourists in the country. Many foreign tourists visiting UP are drawn to the immersive experiences of history and heritage to be had in Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi — the Heritage arc. With the state government showing robust commitment to growth of tourism potential in UP, the state is set to witness a footfall of almost 6,000 lakh (60 crore) tourists by 2027. These tourists would include weekend travellers, event-based travelers, rural tourists, adventure travellers and wildlife tourists.

For those with a spiritual bent of mind, Uttar Pradesh offers the Buddhist arc and the Sufi circuit, including the traditional spiritually enriched cities like Kashi (Varanasi), Mathura, Vrindavan, Sangam (Allahabad), Vindhyachal and Ayodhya.

By introducing destination management projects also, the state government has taken confident steps to attract a diverse range of tourists. Whether it is a lion safari at Etawah, Mughal Museum and theme park at Agra, Centre for Living Traditions at Varanasi or Bateshwar Convention Project — tourists have a delectable menu of places to visit in UP, besides the popular destinations.

GOOD PLATFORM FOR SPONSORS-SELLERS-BUYERS

Whether they were sponsors, sellers, buyers or exhibitors, UPTM 2016 emerged as a versatile mix of business opportunity and sharing of ideas for everyone. Healthy discussions among tour operators and inking of lucrative deals marked the event, which was attended by more than 50 buyers from foreign nations and around 10 leading domestic tour operators from across India.

The highlight of the event was pre-scheduled structured B2B meetings for two full days with buyers and sellers of tourism products of Uttar Pradesh. This meant that prospective Indian and foreign buyers could engage in serious and fruitful discussions on the business potential of promoting UP tourism to their long list of eclectic travellers.

Hashtag **#UPTM16**

Uttar Pradesh Travel Mart 2016 was skillfully promoted by UP Tourism on social media with the event hashtag #UPTM2016. Both Facebook and Twitter were utilised well with more than 40 good posts and tweets on the event having relevant photographs that were posted from February 18-23. Even the official Twitter handle of Taj Mahal, the Twitter-verified account *@TajMahal* pitched in to promote #UPTM16.

Photographs courtesy: N C Jana

WARRIOR for tiger widows

THE BEAUTY OF THE SUNDARBANS IS TINGED WITH TRAGEDY AS COUNTLESS VILLAGERS LOSE THEIR LIVES TO TIGER AND CROCODILE ATTACKS. SEPTUAGENARIAN N C JANA HAS MADE IT HIS MISSION TO REHABILITATE THE FAMILIES OF THESE VICTIMS, REPORTS **SHOMA A CHATTERJI**

FOR NAKUL CHANDRA JANA, waking up to the shrill sound of the phone ringing in the middle of the night is a dreaded but all too familiar experience. Whenever a Royal Bengal tiger drags away yet another victim in the Sundarbans, Jana swings into action to throw the 'tiger widow'—a woman who has lost her husband/father/brother/son to a tiger or crocodile—a much-needed lifeline.

"Two to three people lose their lives to tigers and crocodiles in the Sundarbans every day while fishing, collecting honey or gathering crabs in the shallows. I rush to the village every time I hear such news and try to talk to the 'tiger widow' who usually needs help desperately, both emotionally and financially," says the Kolkata-based Jana, who has been rehabilitating women and the families of men killed by wild animals in the Sunderbans for 10 years now. A retired engineer who worked on power projects in the Middle East for 30 years, Jana makes weekly visits to this beautiful region, and brings hope in times of tragedy.

It's been a tough journey for the 71 year-old but his persistence and commitment have seen him touch the lives of over 100 families. "The men knowingly walk into a potential death trap every time they step into the forests or the river," says Jana. "Life does not give them a choice." According to him, the population of the Sundarbans is

Destitute tiger widows in Gosaba; opposite page: Jana on his way to Hetalbari village

1.5 million. Of this, at least 10 per cent are fully dependent on the forest, for fishing, crab catching and honey collecting. They account for an average 8,000 to 11,000 trips per day of people crossing the waterways, the average changing with the trips made by the *meendhara* (tiger prawn seedling collectors), who cross the forest waterways only six months of the year. The locals are thus easy prey for the tigers and crocodiles that populate the Sundarbans.

Jana points out that there are numerous provisions in the law to compensate families struck by tiger deaths but the money simply does not reach them. Nevertheless, he has been compiling a list of tiger widows, a census of sorts, that he uses to crusade for their dues on their behalf. As the bureaucracy is notoriously complex and moves excruciatingly slow, Jana has also started self-help groups and programmes for tiger widows and their families. Through his NGO, the Sundarbans Tiger Widows Welfare Society, he encourages the locals to take up alternative livelihoods such as fish farming, poultry farming, horticulture, mushroom cultivation, sericulture, and pig and duck breeding.

1.5
million people in the Sundarbans

10%
dependent on the forest for a living

8,000 - 11,000
trips/day across waterways

How did a retired engineer become a saviour for tiger widows in the Sundarbans? "I am a licensed scuba diver and an ardent angler. While walking through the forests in Marich Jhanpi, on a fishing trip near Gosaba, I found women dragging a large net used to catch fish, a means to their livelihood. They told me about their tragedy and my life took a new turn," recounts Jana. "Visits to other villages with tiger widows revealed more tales of horror. Adding to their woes were the atrocities of forest guards and the apathy of people working in the government administration." Jana first tried to join forces with NGOs already working with the people of the Sundarbans but soon struck out on his own.

Jana uses a multi-pronged approach to help the tiger widows of the Sundarbans. It ranges from wading through

Jana says he has 11 self-help groups underway: five engaged in integrated fish and poultry farming; three in pig farming; and three in goat farming. "Each group comprises 10 families, which means 110 families of tiger victims already have alternative modes of livelihood"

complicated legal hassles and navigating an indifferent bureaucracy to simply helping the families of victims work through their grief. Take, for instance, the case of Milon Mandal of Madhagurguria village in Debipur; he died of a tiger attack in November 2015 at the age of 34, leaving behind a wife and three children. "I gave them financial assistance to buy groceries during the mourning period," says Jana. "Even crying becomes difficult on an empty stomach. Crying while mourning is a must to recover and start work again. Mandal's widow Bandana used to accompany her husband on crab collection trips and I know she will continue these trips after a fortnight as she has nothing to feed the children."

Hopefully, Bandana will join the legion of tiger widows who have been given a second chance by Jana. Among these is Minoti Roy, whose husband was attacked and killed by a tiger in 1999, leaving her to raise two young boys. Roy lives in Jharkhali, an island village that is home to close to 200 tiger widows. She works as domestic help but turns to the forest and rivers to help make ends meet. When her husband was killed by a tiger, the government gave her a meagre ₹ 15,000 as compensation. "There was no help from any quarter," she says. "Then, one day, Jana *da*, this old gentleman, came down from Kolkata, and taught us to form groups of 10. We were asked to open a bank account where we would deposit ₹ 30 every month for a fixed period, after which the bank would advance us a loan three times the money in our account. This loan helps us set up alternative sources of living but we have to repay the loan within a year. Jana *da* is so kind that on a sum of ₹ 30, he pays ₹ 20 from his own pocket, for each member, so that each of us pays only ₹ 10. He also pays our transport costs to go to the banks at Gosaba and Basanti. He is the only ray of hope for our families."

After six months, women with bank accounts, like Minoti, become eligible for loans from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), amounting to ₹ 15,000 per family. This works out to

The family of Bappa Buia who was killed on a fishing trip to Benefili Jungle—his brother (left) continues to go crab-hunting; Bandana, widow of Milon Mandal, with her children; opposite page: Jana with Puspa, Ranjan and Chuttu who lost their parents to tiger attacks

₹ 150,000 for each group, at a low interest of 2 per cent per annum through rural and nationalised banks.

Jana says he has 11 self-help groups underway: five engaged in integrated fish and poultry farming; three in pig farming; and three in goat farming. "Each group comprises 10 families, which means 110 families of tiger victims already have alternative modes of livelihood that will keep them away from the jungle and swamps, and making trips across rivers, where tigers and crocodiles lie in wait," he says, adding that 30 more self-help groups are in the process of being formed. Jana spends an average of ₹ 2,200 from his personal resources to create each group. In addition, he offers ₹ 5,000 when he visits a tiger widow family for the first time. He has already paid this sum to 100 tiger widows from the list he is compiling, in the six blocks that comprise the Sundarbans.

Jana often writes and files applications on behalf of the victims' families for compensation promised by the West Bengal Department of Forests. "According to the law, each family with a member killed by a wild animal is entitled to ₹ 2.5 lakh [₹ 250,000]," he reveals. "A person injured by wild animals is eligible for free medical treatment in a government hospital, and a person who is permanently disabled gets ₹ 1 lakh [₹ 100,000]. Most families are not aware of this, and those who are aware do not know how to fill up the forms and whom to approach."

"The Sundarbans Affairs Ministry and the Sundarbans Affairs Department have made no effort to provide alternative livelihood channels for the locals, who still depend on the forests and waterways," adds Jana. "Huge sums from funding agencies across the world have poured into Sundarbans projects for alternative livelihoods, including the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO and ADB, but the money has not reached the target people."

For his part, Pranabesh Sanyal, former director, Sundarbans Tiger Project, gives Jana due credit for listing the names of tiger widows to help track down the families and train them in alternative sources of livelihood. "Without such a list, it would be impossible to chalk out even a sketchy programme for their rehabilitation through alternative sources of income," says Sanyal. "The islands in the Sundarbans are spread out over wide areas divided by rivers. Besides, the thick forests are a big obstacle in compiling statistics of victims' families. Jana must be given credit for preparing the first such list, and this pioneering effort has led to others following suit."

Prasad Mandal, who lost his father to a tiger in 1991, has himself pioneered a tiger widows' project at Pakhiraloy in Sajnekhali, in Dayapur and in Antpur. Of Jana and his efforts, he says, "He has very good plans for the tiger widows and their families. Pakhiraloy in Sajnekhali alone has 36 tiger widows. I have helped Jana *da* prepare a list of widows in the three villages I am involved with." According to Mandal, government help comes only to those who own large tracts of land while the landless and the very poor are left to fend for themselves—but for the lifeline offered by Jana.

:: cover feature ::

UNAPOLOGETICALLY NAGARKAR

Soft-spoken but hard-hitting, Kiran Nagarkar revels in telling tales about unpalatable truths, writes Suparna-Saraswati Puri

Photograph: Sudharak Olwe/Courtesy: Nagarkar

For more than four decades, he has been trying to shake us out of stupor with themes that are real, riveting and thought-provoking. Adept at the art of making the reader uncomfortable with the truth, Kiran Nagarkar's understated demeanour complements his literary eloquence. To understand Nagarkar fully, humour is essential. Popularly hailed as an 'Indian writer you must read', Nagarkar is an acclaimed bilingual novelist, playwright and screenplay writer as well as social, political and literary critic of eminence.

His debut novel, *Saat Sakkam Trechalis*, written in 1973, is hailed as a landmark in Marathi literature, and is credited with reinventing the language. It revealed a new voice that told the story of urban angst and the confused nature of modern life. In the septuagenarian's words, "At that time, I thoroughly enjoyed writing in Marathi. For me, it was a romantic exercise. The novel was fragmented, elliptical, condensed and, up to a point, minimalistic. It indulged in black humour. As the novel featured lust and compassion in equal measure, it was described as a revolutionary first novel in Marathi." The book, translated into English as *Seven Sixes Are Forty-three*—first published in Australia by QUP—was followed by the controversial play *Bedtime Story*, completed in 1977, a modern take on the *Mahabharata*. It was written during and after the Emergency, and brought to stark reality themes like caste, religion and war, inviting objections from political parties and the self-appointed cultural custodians of Bombay. When the screenplay went to the Censor Board, 78 cuts were ordered and later scaled down to 24! However, with the actors developing cold feet, the play could not be staged. "I wrote this play as I was deeply concerned about the fact that we don't take responsibility for our actions. Anything that happens anywhere in the world is our responsibility. The world is our responsibility and the world is our problem," asserts the playwright who finally found a publisher for his four-decade-old theatre piece. *Bedtime Story* was published in 2015 as a two-in-one book, along with the screenplay *Black Tulip*. Nagarkar's recent novel, the last part in the Ravan & Eddie trilogy, *Rest in Peace Ravan and Eddie* (*HarperCollins; ₹ 599; 362 pages*), was also published last year.

> "Anything that happens anywhere in the world is our responsibility. The world is our responsibility and the world is our problem"

"The one thing that matters is whether my readers take cognisance of the fact that even my mad, farcical, black humour has an underlying seriousness and whether it makes them reflect upon the issues it raises"

A born storyteller with an unerring eye for detail, Nagarkar's novels—*Ravan and Eddie* (1994), *Cuckold* (1997), *God's Little Soldier* (2006) and *The Extras* (2012)—have been translated into Marathi, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. When the erogenous *Cuckold* won the Sahitya Akademi Award for best novel in 2000, the doyen of Indian literature Khushwant Singh remarked "…*Cuckold* written in English I regard as the best by an Indian". In 2012, when *The New York Review of Books* published *Ravan and Eddie,* Pulitzer prize-winning journalist and author Katherine Boo called it "Wicked, magical, hilarious, enduring: A masterpiece from one of world literature's great cult writers".

In November 2012, while bestowing Nagarkar with the prestigious 'Bundesverdienstkreuz' (Cross of the Order of Merit), Germany's highest civilian award, then German ambassador Michael Steiner said, "Kiran Nagarkar is one of India's best known authors in Germany. Nagarkar's works make a colourful, complex and, in many ways, complicated society tangible to our senses. Particularly his book *God's Little Soldier (Gottes Kleiner Krieger)* was a bestseller in Germany, offering a unique insight into the world of extremism…. At the crossroads between our cultures, he became a major voice of India in Germany and, I trust, also a resounding voice of Germany in India." In fact, in a recent survey of its members conducted by Litprom (the German Society for the Promotion of African, Asian and Latin American Literature), Nagarkar was ranked 12th in the list of the 'Best 30 authors', along with Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nadine Gordimer and Salman Rushdie. *God's Little Soldier* also featured among Litprom's '30 Best Books'.

With singer Shubha Mudgal at an event

Courtesy: Nagarkar

The chaos and contradictions of life as experienced by the writer meander subtly into all Nagarkar's writings, making each novel a memorable reading experience. Born in 1942 in Bombay, which was then "still full of trees", Nagarkar recollects an "anglicised, but very poor" childhood in Dadar Hindu Colony. His illustrious grandfather B B Nagarkar, Chitpavan Brahmin-turned-Brahmo, participated in the 1893 World Parliament of Religion in Chicago. A student of English literature, Nagarkar studied at Fergusson College, Pune, and S I E S, Mumbai, and then worked as a copywriter with the iconoclastic Mass Communications and Marketing (MCM) ad agency founded by Kersey Katrak in 1965, famous for its towel ad campaign with a young Maneka Gandhi. "The towel campaign was created in Delhi," recalls Nagarkar. "I suspect she was dating Sanjay at that time, but I don't think she was married to him."

From making a living as a freelance copywriter, penning his most controversial play during the Emergency and not writing for 15 years to churning out literary masterpieces and being recognised as one of the most significant writers of post-colonial India, Kiran Nagarkar's own story has the right ingredients for a marvellously exciting screenplay. At the recently held Tata Live Literature Festival in Mumbai, the author—who lives in Mumbai with his companion of more than three decades, Tulsi Vatsal—was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Flashes of his famed humour are on ample display in our interview as Nagarkar talks about things as disparate as his literary sensibilities, the fictional world and childhood memories.

EXCERPTS:

You have been described as 'one of the most significant writers of post-colonial India' ….

I'm trying hard to blush and lower my head modestly. On a serious note, the one thing that matters is whether my readers take cognisance of the fact that even my mad, farcical, black humour has an underlying seriousness and whether it makes them reflect upon the issues it raises, perhaps even change their hardcore beliefs.

Given the popularity of your books, is there a particular reason for steering clear of publicity, particularly in times when authors are treated as celebrities?

Haresh Patel

I am puzzled that the members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha and perhaps the denizens of the subcontinent too seem to believe that there is only one culture in this country and that is cinema, especially Bollywood. You hardly ever hear of the finest scientists, sociologists, historians and doctors being nominated to these august bodies. I believe that a book must speak for itself and the author should not be promoting it like a new brand. At the same time, I am conscious of the fact that I am anachronistic in my views. Times have changed and literature is today a highly endangered species.

You've been quoted as saying, "I am an instinctive writer; I'm a believer in the art of storytelling."

I don't choose a subject or a theme consciously; the subject always chooses me. When I set about telling a story, its contours are mostly unknown to me. Even when I wrote *God's Little Soldier*, I didn't have a readymade prior thesis. In the case of *Cuckold,* all I knew when I started writing was that if I ever wrote the book, its male protagonist would paint himself blue.

Take us through your childhood and your father's enthusiasm to educate poor children.

We were a nuclear family. My father got married only after all his siblings had either finished their education or were married. I have an older brother who left home almost immediately after finishing his master's as he had got a fellowship to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. My own educational career has been less than spectacular. As a kind of crowning glory, I got a third class for my master's. This was, I think, because I had heard that some universities abroad evaluated a master's student on the basis of just one essay in answer to half-a-dozen or a dozen questions. I knew damn well that that was not the case in our country but, hey, I was trying to be a secret hero [chuckles]. So much for false arrogance!

My father was a clerk in the Railways. He got a pathetically low salary and even though we could barely make it to the end of the month—actually we couldn't without help—I discovered rather late in life that even with our terribly straightened circumstances, he was always helping poor Dalit peons who had not made it past standard 10th. He gave them money to appear for school-leaving exams. More often than not, they failed; but my father continued to help them in the hope that that their salaries and prospects would improve substantially if they passed the exams.

How do you remember your grandfather B B Nagarkar? How do you think he would have reacted to your storytelling style?

Both my grandfathers died a long time before I was born. In that sense, they were barely even virtual grandfathers. However, while there was a big lacuna when there was talk of Balwant Nagarkar at home, some things stayed in my memory. For instance, as a child he was attached to a temple in Ahmednagar. I have no idea how he broke so radically with his past and came to join Wilson College or became, perhaps, the first Indian

professor of English at the prestigious Elphinstone College in Mumbai. More gaps in the story till we come to 1893, when he went to America to attend the World Conference of Religions. But, as we all know, the remarkable Swami Vivekananda stole the limelight there. Nevertheless, my grandfather must have made an impression on the delegates because he was asked to attend the next conference in 1903. Back in India, he seems to have taken on all kinds of jobs and assignments, but I need to ransack my cousins' brains to find out more about him! One thing is certain. I have always maintained that he was the main mover in the Nagarkar clan. It is because of his rebellious nature that, along with my family, I too did not have an orthodox Hindu upbringing and yet I am so beholden to an all-embracing notion of Hinduism. Would he have approved of my writing? Your guess is as good as mine. I know only one thing. He would not have praised my work, if at all, just because I happened to be family.

Is there any compelling recollection from your childhood that has contributed to your writing?

I must confess there are many compelling recollections, one of them being the nocturnal violence underneath the calm exterior in a family that stayed on the top floor in the building opposite and another being that of a man who brought a second wife to stay with his first wife and several children in their two-room apartment. Yet another is of the Prohibition Police Squad coming to the back of our building, opening the gutter covers and emptying large tin cans of fermenting dates and other ingredients, all of them crawling with cockroaches. Later in the day, a drunk servant turned up. He was in a mad rage at the loss of hooch and started throwing stones all around and swearing loudly. Windows were broken in all the surrounding houses and there was an eerie silence; no one dared to step out.

As a child, you nursed the ambition to be an actor. Much later, you happened to act in *Split Wide Open*, a feature film.

In primary school, I was the sole male and main actor in almost every production. I have no idea how rotten my acting was and whether I was the standard insufferable precocious brat, but some years ago I discovered several thin books the school had gifted me for my acting stints. Perhaps that's where I got the idea that I would become an actor, but by the age of 10 I had become so thin that sometimes you saw me and sometimes you didn't. A little girl of three or four in the neighbourhood used to call me *lambu*, and pretend she had not said it. I had turned self-conscious to the point that I telescoped all the words in a sentence into one when I spoke. And soon I lost the capacity to memorise even a simple paragraph. That's how India lost one of its finest actors even before he made his debut!

In *Split Wide Open*, I was a semi-priest called Brother Bono, a pederast who ultimately dies of AIDS. I got to improvise just one sentence as I talked to one of my victims called Cut-Price on my deathbed. "Ah Cut-Price, it's a cut-price death I'm in for." Brother Bono's funeral procession gets caught in the rain. As the funeral had to be shot from various angles, I was soaked to the bone. The only other problem was I could not remember my lines!

What intrigues you as a writer?

I'm fascinated by human beings and characters caught in a bind. For instance, Ravan in *Ravan & Eddie* must perpetually live with the dilemma of not knowing whether he is Ram or Ravan; similarly, Zia in *God's Little Soldier* can and does change religions or ideologies but is also perpetually true to extremism. In *Cuckold*, Maharaj Kumar's plight is truly tragic. On his marriage night itself he discovers that his wife is carrying on with someone else. As if that is not bad enough, it turns out that her paramour is none other than his sole guide and teacher, God Shri Krishna. Add to that, his second mother, Rani Karmavati, is Rana Sanga's favourite queen and is making sure that her son, Vikramaditya, will be the next king.

Do you share your draft with anybody? Also, does the anxiety of how your work will be received bother you?

You can't publish a book unless it is sent to an editor who decides whether she or he is willing to publish it. But as you are aware, I am the world's slowest writer. On the rare occasion when I've finished my first draft of a novel, I will show it to my companion and if she thinks it is okay after umpteen revisions and rewrites, I will show it to a very dear friend who was an editor abroad, and then get around to showing it to my chief editor at HarperCollins. As to anxiety, that comes with the territory.

What is of paramount importance to you while characterising for your novels and plays?

The most important condition is that the story behind the characters should be gripping. For me, the plot is a means of getting into the hearts and

"From all accounts, the writer is the creator. But the irony is that if he makes all the choices for his characters and decides their fates, they will turn out to be puppets"

minds of the main protagonists. Not just that, even the minor characters must be so powerfully created that they come alive and you want to follow them and their destinies. Now, here's the paradox that a writer must continually come to terms with. From all accounts, the writer is the creator. And yes he is, but the irony is that if he makes all the choices for his characters and decides their fates, they will turn out to be puppets. But on the other hand, if he is willing to follow wherever they lead him and gives them the freedom to live their own lives, make blunders and the right choices, there's a good chance they might come alive and become memorable. Who knows, you might have just written a classic!

Is your latest book *Rest in Peace* a departure from your previous works, even though it is a sequel to *Ravan & Eddie*?

I guess you could say it is for Ravan and Eddie as they have finally made it big time, not as superstars but as path-breaking music directors. They've also moved out of the *chawl* into three-bedroom apartments in high rises located in Pali Hill. Oddly, their mothers refuse to move in with them and stay behind in CWD Chawl No.17. But like all good things, these happy days will also pass and Ravan and Eddie once again hit rock bottom. It is important to remember here that Ravan and Eddie are not mere survivors; they don't know how to give up. The one thing

"It might be a good idea to think of writing as a vocation; what that means is that it's a gift and a calling. This, of course, implies that you owe it the highest possible integrity. One last thing, please don't forget that humour can be dead serious!"

that Mumbai and poverty have taught them is to keep reinventing.

Is advertising more about gimmickry today and less about creative responsibility?

I've only one thing to say about today's advertising. It seems as if the creative juices have run completely dry in the last 10 years or so. The only advertising that one runs into these days is the hybrid of the testimonial ad where some superstar or the other is vouching for the product. I've lost count of the number of products for which Amitabh Bachchan is the mascot. He sells cement, high-class suiting, jewellery and God knows how many other products. If it's not him, it's Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, Farhan Akhtar, Aishwarya Rai or Sachin Tendulkar. I'm unwilling to believe that creativity has abandoned the Indian advertising scene. So then, who is at fault? You tell me!

While scripting a novel in English, does your thought process oscillate between Marathi and English?

I'm sure it does every once in a while. But then, I must also add Hindi to the above-mentioned languages. After all, Bollywood is what makes the Indian world go round.

Are you guilty of any idiosyncrasy that interferes with your literary sensibilities?

I suspect, like most other authors, I too wonder what the point is of talking about a book whose future is completely in the dark. The only time you can be sure about a book is when it is published. And even then it can suffer from that American film noir term, DOA, Dead on Arrival!

A young Nagarkar

Courtesy: Nagarkar

What was most challenging while screenwriting for *The Broken Circle, The Widow and Her Friends* and *The Elephant on the Mouse* for children?

I wrote these screenplays a long time back and did not even show them to anybody except a couple of friends. I wouldn't be able to say offhand whether these old screenplays need an endless amount of reworking or they should be just dumped. I wrote *Black Tulip* originally in 2000 and then forgot it to the extent that I did not even think that the manuscript was anywhere around. Luckily for me, I rediscovered it in 2013 and revised it dozens or more times. It's a caper, a genre I like very much if it's without hi-tech. Looking back, I feel it might make for a tense but fun heist movie.

How do you view the young Indian reader?

The young Indian reader is a highly endangered species. Frankly, come to think of it, I can hardly think of any other species as endangered as a reader. I am aware that there are authors today whose work sells in lakhs and they're *crorepatis*. But that is a totally different breed. By and large, bookshops and bookshop chains across the world are closing down. Mumbai has been rather lucky that some years back we actually got perhaps the

finest bookshop in the country called Kitab Khana, which is totally devoted to books and not a hodgepodge of CDs, DVDs, children's toys and God knows what else!

What would be your advice to aspirants of regional literature?

My uncalled advice for both regional and English writers would be the same. Please remember that barring a very few authors, the majority of us have to take up a regular 9-to-6 job and manage our writing on the side. There is no need for breast-beating on this score. It's not a bad idea to remember someone like William Faulkner whose books are now considered classics and yet he hardly sold during his lifetime and had to work at various other jobs to make a living. Having said that, it might be a good idea to think of writing as a vocation; what that means is that it's a gift and a calling. This, of course, implies that you owe it the highest possible integrity. One last thing, please don't forget that humour can be dead serious!

What kind of discipline do you observe as a writer?

This is a confession I'm most loathe to make. I suffer from that disease called zero discipline! For me, writing is sheer masochism. The only time I can enjoy it is in retrospect and that too on the rare occasions when you think you might have written something memorable.

How do you unwind?

I used to be a movie fiend. Believe it or not, I used to watch six or seven films a day during film festivals. It has been a long time since I indulged in such non-stop film-watching or reading. And this is not because I'm working on something. Let's just say that there are dozens of books waiting either by my bedside or on the shelves. And I haven't got around to reading them. I wish I could offer you a good reason why that is. But I don't have one!

What does an ordinary day look like for you?

What it looks like is a total absence of routine and discipline. There is just no end to the editors who call asking for articles. They mean well and it is often difficult to say no. And so, one's own work gets happily sidetracked.

Do you have any food preferences?

I'm not a foodie. You could say I'm singularly uncultured when it comes to gourmet food. I eat to quieten the pangs of hunger. Every once in a while I'll enjoy a superb *biryani* or lightly fried Bombay duck. My biggest problem, of course, is that I don't have a single sweet tooth—all 32 are totally addicted to sweets. As you can imagine, this is a prescription for disaster. I'm not sure that I can claim to be in control of excesses.

What infuriates you as an individual and is totally unacceptable as a writer?

At the moment, what is going on in our country makes me despair. The sad part is that the entire world seems to have lost its humanity. One has rarely seen anything as horrendous as the ISIS notion of brutality. But at the same time, one cannot forget that it was the United States who attacked Iraq on totally false charges and look where it has led. The entire Middle East is turning out to be a problem without any solution in sight. America and its allies in Europe have no idea and no policy about how to end the appalling quagmire of violence and the displacement of millions of people.

Awards and honours

- *The Extras* - shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize 2013
- Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany 2012
- *Cuckold* - Sahitya Akademi Award 2001

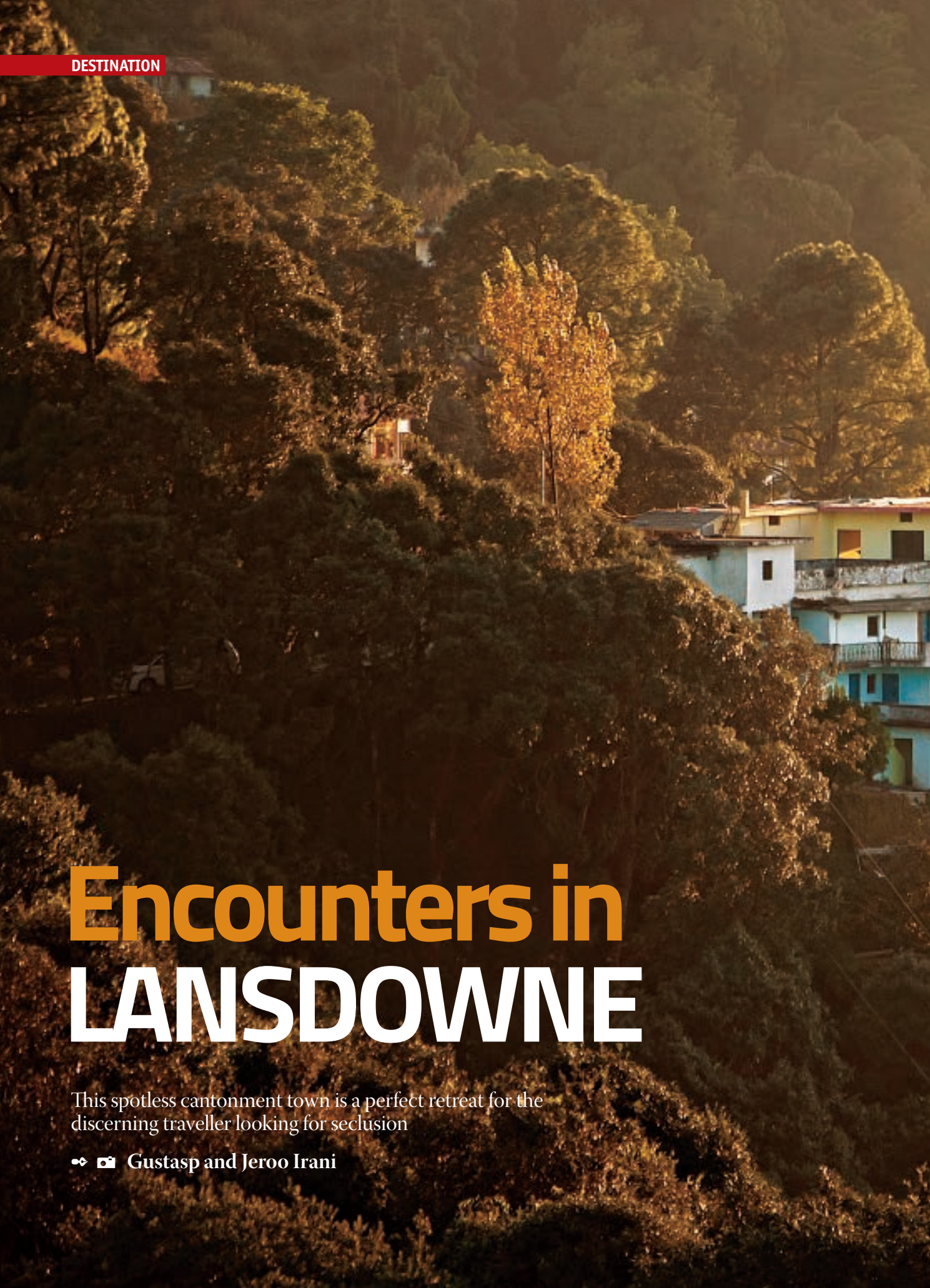
Novels

- *Seven Sixes are Forty Three* (1980); translation of *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* (1974)
- *Ravan & Eddie* (1995)
- *Cuckold* (1997)
- *God's Little Soldier* (2006)
- *The Extras* (2012)

Plays and screenplays

- *Bedtime Story*
- *Kabirache Kay Karayche*
- *Stranger Amongst Us*
- *The Broken Circle*
- *The Widow and Her Friends*
- *The Elephant on the Mouse*

Let me add one more thing. I do believe that writers and artists of every variety bear a special responsibility. They must stand up and raise their voices, not once, but again and again. As I've said in my play *Bedtime Story*, whatever happens in our backyard, in our country, in any part of the world starting from Palestine, the Philippines or the United States, you and I are responsible for it. Just think about it. We human beings have brought the disaster called climate change upon humankind. We know its consequences, we are suffering from them and yet we are either in denial or making such pathetic gestures that it is highly unlikely that we will reverse the calamitous consequences of abusing Mother Earth.



Encounters in LANSDOWNE

This spotless cantonment town is a perfect retreat for the discerning traveller looking for seclusion

Gustasp and Jeroo Irani

"This is a very sacred space. Tonight is a full moon night; come at midnight and feel the vibrations," a long-haired, bearded gentleman told us, almost daring us to pick up the challenge. We were at Tarkeshwar Mahadev Temple, 40 km away from the hill resort of Lansdowne, located in the Pauri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. He had the intense air of a mystic and his fiery eyes were aglow with a strange light. "Look at the moon filtering through the trees; feel the chilly mountain air and the embrace of the night.... After that experience you will never be the same again."

His words sent a chill down the spine but the hilltop (2,092 m) temple's picturesque setting enthralled us. Tarkeshwar Mahadev snuggles in a kind of hollow and is enfolded in a cedar forest, giving it an air of ineffable purity and a sense of being pervaded by a divine, other-worldly presence. Incessant birdsong, trees that soar heavenwards with their branches raised as though in prayer, and the gentle tolling of bells that were strung along a pathway were reassuring earthy sounds.

A stroll amid the flower-spangled lawns yields glimpses of the distant snow-shrouded Himalayas and birds, as colourful as a child's painting... Forests of oak and blue pine provide welcome shade on long walks where you may encounter an Army man with a jaunty step walking his dog

"This temple was never meant to be a place of regular worship. It was the site of Tantric meditation. Tantra is the fastest route to attaining *moksha*," continued our self-appointed guide. Was the stranger, an English-speaking Tantric, seasoned in the dark arcane rituals of Tantra? A charlatan, perhaps? "When I lived in these parts, I made sure that people did not come here and disrupt the peace. Now it's become a picnic spot where noisy families hang out. It affects the sanctity of the place." We were riveted as much by his penetrating gaze as by the torrent of words and his barely leashed anger. The charming hill town of Lansdowne beckoned but the magical forest temple held us back.

On a less theatrical note, the man added that the idol was between 800 and 1,500 years old, but he could not be certain about the antiquity. According to legend, when attempts were made to unearth the Shiva *lingam* believed to lie buried beneath the idol, snakes slithered out to prevent it from being dislodged.

Soon, a pair of newly-weds, a blushing bride and her groom in a shiny suit, arrived on the scene to seek the blessings of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, the main deities. More mundane concerns like clicking their photographs overtook us; they smiled and brimmed with the optimism of new love! In the meanwhile, the man melted away mysteriously into the surrounding forest as suddenly as he had appeared.

The temple and the feral forest did emanate inexplicable 'vibrations' and a mysterious pull especially after the handful of devotees had left. We drove back to the hill resort town of Lansdowne via serpentine roads that fell away into deep ravines and later gave way to terraced fields and rural homes perched precipitously on giddy ledges.

At the Tip-N-Top Huts, where we were staying, the world seemed less enigmatic and achingly beautiful. The government facility of Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) is a cluster of 18 pine wood log huts (including suites, huts and two *machan*) with simple wooden interiors. Located at Tip-N-Top and Snow View Point, mountain vistas take centre-stage there. A stroll amid the flower-spangled lawns yields glimpses of the distant snow-shrouded Himalayas and birds, as colourful as a child's painting.

Yet, Lansdowne, a spotless cantonment town, home and training ground of the Garhwal Rifles division of the Indian Army, does not sweep you off your feet. The picturesque town works its charm with slow seductive moves. There's the St Mary's Church whose weathered stones could tell many a tale of romances that sparked during the mass in the colonial era and of elegant town weddings that took place in its cosy confines. Forests of oak and blue pine provide welcome shade on long walks where you may encounter an Army man with a bristling moustache and a jaunty step walking his dog; say 'hello' to an elderly couple out for a morning walk; hear the sounds of young cadets marching in the Parade Grounds.

While parts of Lansdowne are out of bounds for the casual visitor and we were often requested not to take photographs of sensitive Army facilities, there is something charming and innocent about this hill resort that does not revolve on an axis of commerce and the tourist dollar. Incidentally, there were no signs of indiscriminate haphazard development.

In the muffled quiet of the town we were happy just to inhale a lung-full of fresh air, gaze at the gasp-inducing vistas, and absorb the day-to-day serenity of life in the mountains. Early morning, mist would gather in the valleys and drift upwards like veils aflutter. A wan sun filtering through the oak and pine trees; the wind whooshing past, sounding like the wing beats of eagles in flight; and a poor phone network seal the town in a cocoon of tranquillity.

If you would like some more 'action', explore the Regimental Museum, also called the Darwan Singh Sanghralaya. Darwan Singh was a Garhwali who won the Victoria Cross in 1914, as did Gabar Singh Negi for his bravery in the battlefield. Indeed, the Garhwal Rifles division participated in the two World Wars and a few other battles. The museum's stash of historic artefacts, such as photographs, arms, captured weapons and medals, tell vivid tales of the Garhwali's courage in battle, their war cry *Jai Badri Vishal* that could curdle the blood of enemies, and their fierce loyalty to their commander.

Lansdowne's original name was Kalu Daunda or Black Hill but it was renamed in 1887-1888 after the then Viceroy

Clockwise from top left: An Indian representation of the Virgin Mary at the Jeevan Dhara Ashram; the 19th century St Mary's Church; a group of women practising a Garba-like dance; the Tarkeshwar Mahadev Temple; bells offered by devotees at the temple

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of India, Lord Lansdowne, when the first battalion of the Garhwal Rifles migrated from Almora to Lansdowne. Today, the place has metamorphosed into a retreat for the discerning traveller looking for seclusion.

The hill town, located at 1,780 m, is also the epicentre of some exhilarating treks and excursions that may lead to some serendipitous encounters. Our visit to the Jeevan Dhara Ashram, a 5-km drive from Lansdowne, led to a hilltop playing field encircled by mountains where children played football. We walked past the playground and a cluster of fairly prosperous homes, where we saw an amazing sight—a group of women practising a Garba-like dance in the living room of one of the homes. They invited us in, served us cups of tea, seemed delighted to have an audience, and even put up an impromptu sing-along of *bhajan*!

A short walk from the settlement and soon we arrived at the Jeevan Dhara Ashram and chapel, 8 km from Lansdowne. As evening set in, the sun was sliding off the sky haemorrhaged with streaks of red. We stepped into the leafy environs of the ashram grounds, where a shuttered green-roofed bungalow snoozed. A pebbly path led us to a milk-white statue of Virgin Mary. Someone in the village had told us was the Indian representation of Virgin Mary—lissom with almond-shaped eyes, long hair, clad in a sari-like robe and a crown of stars. She stood on a pedestal and was crushing a serpent underfoot.

In that leafy glade, backlit by the setting sun, the statue seemed to take on a life of its own; its eyes beckoned and in the dying light, it acquired a rosy

Children play football on a hilltop field near the Jeevan Dhara Ashram; opposite page: the Garhwal Rifles Regimental War Memorial

factfile

WHEN TO GO

The best time to visit is between March and November as winters can be very cold with snowfall converting the hill town into a winter wonderland.

GETTING THERE

By air: The nearest airport is Jolly Grant Airport, Dehradun, 145 km away.
By rail: The nearest railway station is Kotdwara, 45 km away.
By road: Lansdowne is connected by road to most important towns in Uttarakhand. Delhi is around 236 km away.

ACCOMMODATION

There are a few private hotels in Lansdowne but the most picturesque is Tip-N-Top Huts, owned and run by GMVN (Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam).
Tel: (0) 9312402981
Or visit *http://gmvnl.com/newgmvn*

glow. Suddenly, a silver, sporting white *kurta-pyjama*, appeared out of the clotted darkness, lithe and sure-footed as a gazelle. He introduced himself as Father Thomas. He told us how meditation, *satsang* and sessions of reading from the Bible are held at the ashram. "Everyone is welcome irrespective of caste, creed and religion." The ashram was started by Vandana Mata*ji* who was originally of the Zoroastrian faith and had converted to Christianity. "We only request that the people who come here to stay maintain silence and meditate on the divine in this enchanted space." Father Thomas's face radiated gentleness and on our request, he showed us an Indian representation of Christ, a remarkable one of him in a yogic pose with one palm held upwards in benediction. The statue had a Zen-like quality and was kept indoors in another room.

On our last day, we walked around one-and-a-half kilometres to Bhulla Tal, a scenic man-made lake via a twisting leafy path. The trees gave us shade, birds called from unseen boughs and we felt as light as ether—the world was just perfect.

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
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columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.
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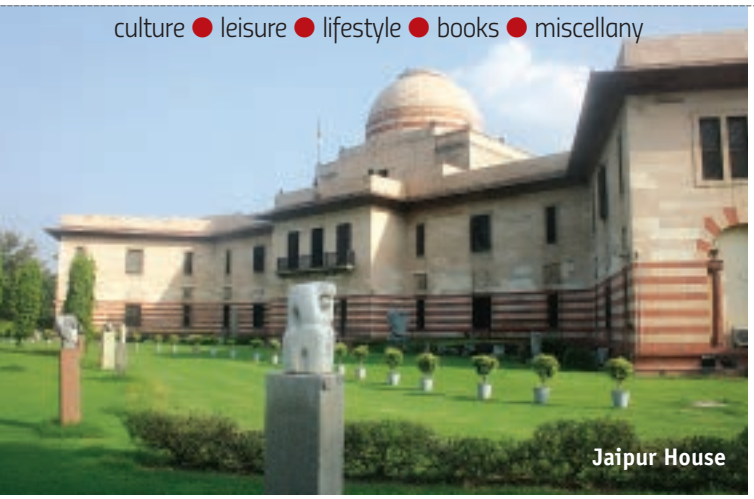
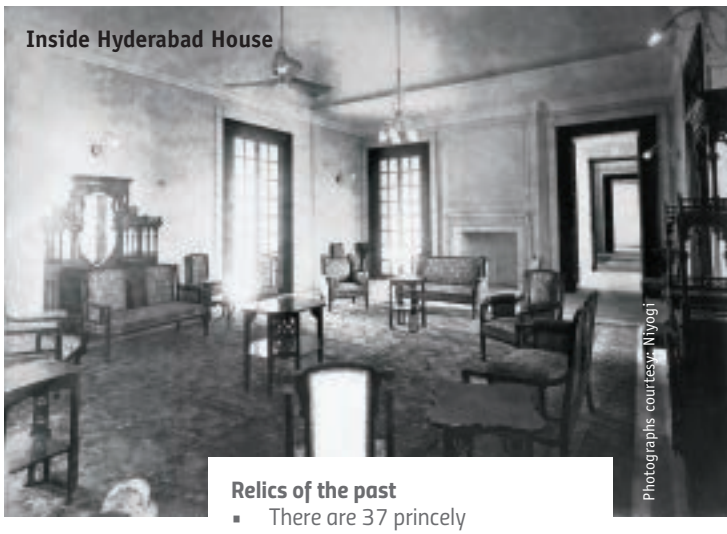
inside
p68: Channapatna's toy legacy
p76: Baby on board!


Jaipur House

Kerala House

Baroda House


Inside Hyderabad House

Photographs courtesy: Niyogi

Royal legacy

heritage

A drive down Delhi's India Gate reveals a landscape of majestic princely palaces—Hyderabad House, Baroda House, Patiala House, Jaipur House among others—that are an integral part of the capital's urban topography. Yet so little is known about their history. "Who were the architects of these buildings? Why did the government allot prime land to the princes and how? What kind of relationship did the princes have with the British Crown and the government? These questions set me thinking," says Sumanta K Bhowmick, author of the recently released *Princely Palaces in New Delhi* (Niyogi; ₹ 2,500; 263 pages). While documenting their history, Bhowmick delved deep into the fascinating world of regal India by meeting members of royal families and their loyal officers who opened up their private archives to him. "The Delhi palaces were built for purposes that may not have relevance to us at present," he says, "but we need to preserve them in their original beauty, if not their associated glory."

Relics of the past

- There are 37 princely palaces in Delhi, including 28 in New Delhi, six in Civil Lines and three older palaces in Old Delhi.
- The official name of the India Gate area was Prince's Park.
- The palaces were designed by eminent British architects such as Sir Edwin Lutyens and C G Blomfield.
- The princely palaces were used as embassies for many years before they got permanent addresses in Chanakyapuri.
- The palaces are now being used for various official purposes: Hyderabad House is now the prime minister's guest house for foreign dignitaries; Baroda House is the Northern Railway HQ; and Jaipur House accommodates the National Gallery of Modern Art.

"India is my colour palette"

Contemporary artist Nilofer Suleman tells **Asha Nambisan** how the rich colours of small streets inspire her work

Photographs courtesy: Art Musings Gallery

A young Waheeda Rehman in consultation with a *jyotish* as a bearded *sadhu* sits holding a film magazine with Guru Dutt on the cover. A roadside quack doctor displaying a cure-for-all board '*Yoginaath Kamdev's Khandani Dawakhana*'. A shop 'Dragon Mom Chainese Corner' with its promise of 'Veg moms' and 'Cheken moms' along with a plethora of gods' images…when contemporary artist Nilofer Suleman sees the world through the eyes of an amused observer, the vibrant Indian canvas comes alive and daily life acquires interesting dimensions.

We meet the versatile artist at her Indiranagar house in Bengaluru. There's art in every corner—drawing boards stacked against the wall; her dog Sufi's bowl placed on the side; huge shelves holding books on art, fiction and non-fiction; a large painting mounted on the wall. "This is one of my first," says Suleman, pointing to a painting of a young couple. Over the years, as we notice, her work has become complex; her use of brighter colours often display a whacky sense of humour.

Suleman was brought up in a family of seven children in Indore, which was then a small town. "On weekends, we would clamber on to the backseat of our Fiat and go with our parents to movies in a theatre called the Milky Way. We would rush to occupy the front seats of the movie hall. During the song-and-dance sequences, oblivious of the rodents darting across the hall, people would throw money at the screen—as during live performances," she reminisces with a smile. "On some other occasions, our father would take us to see the wrestling bouts of Dara Singh." These half-forgotten memories colour her work today. And her paintings reflect many of the characteristics of small towns in India.

After acquiring a postgraduate degree in psychology in Bombay, she started work on a doctorate, but had to give it up after marriage and two children. Twenty years ago, she returned to Indore and enrolled for a diploma course in art in Chandu Nafde's Art School. Under the able guidance of artist Chandu Nafde, who had taught at the Baroda School of Art, she learnt the nuances of fine miniatures in Western and Indian styles using rotoring ink and a single hairbrush. What made her prefer art after psychology? "I had always been fascinated by cartography and miniatures," she says. "Apart from the fine detailing and brushstrokes, I like the beautiful colours and romanticism of miniatures as well as the poetic depiction of scenes from history and mythology. It's another genre, another world."

art

Suleman's vivid interest in cartography as well as love for drawing maps brought her assignments to create new maps in the style of old maps. These were collectors' pieces—delicate and beautifully defined.

Eighteen years ago, when Suleman relocated to Bangalore, she started working on lithographs and oleographs, most of them commissioned by art collectors and corporates. Though her exposure to painting had been influenced heavily by Western art, over time she realised she enjoyed Indian art—and the things around her. "I particularly liked the narrow streets and bazaars of towns, and returned to what I loved best—miniatures." This time, she experimented with acrylic paints, using the same techniques taught by Nafde. "And India became my colour palette."

***Astro Vishnu*, acrylic on canvas**

Drawing inspiration from street art, signboards, truck graphics and film posters, her canvases juxtapose the ludicrous with the solemn, glitz with the sordid, Bollywood with reality, and religion with hypocrisy. "The only hope in India is God and Bollywood," she says with a laugh. "Indians are ingenuous and superstitious. They deify actors who do mythological roles and are happy to escape the problems of life by vicariously enjoying the antics of Bollywood characters."

Much like Charles Lamb's essays, her works poke gentle fun at society as she endeavours to communicate the seriousness of her concept in a light-hearted way. "Otherwise, art has become too esoteric; it is not really for the layperson," she expresses. She recently displayed her work at the annual India Art Summit in Delhi.

A perfectionist, she paints for about 12 hours a day. For painting minute details, she takes the help of a magnifying glass. But don't the gruelling sessions working on delicate brushstrokes hurt her eyes? "No," she smiles. "I want to do as much as I can while I can. I don't see myself doing such work when I'm 70!"

Today, Suleman's elite clientele includes celebrities such as Sachin Tendulkar, Mahesh Bhupathi and Amitabh Bachchan. In fact, when Bachchan commissioned a painting for his 70th birthday, she did an exquisite piece mapping his career in films. Apart from a young Bachchan, it featured his wife Jaya and co-actor Nirupa Roy among a host of other stars. And when Suleman was invited to his birthday celebrations, "it was a surreal experience being there with all the stars who found their way into the corners of my paintings".

"The only hope in India is God and Bollywood. Indians are ingenuous and superstitious. They deify actors who do mythological roles and are happy to escape the problems of life by vicariously enjoying the antics of Bollywood characters"

For the past six to seven years, her weekends are devoted to teaching art to children. "Children are like wild horses," she says. "They are original, very talented, and their colour schemes are just crazy!"

As a single mother for the past 15 years, Suleman has brought up her children to be "kind and compassionate human beings", imbibing a love for art just like her. Her daughter Shilo Shiv Suleman has already made a name for herself as a prolific and gifted contemporary artist and a fearless activist. Her son Shaan is a budding graphic designer and is in the final year of college.

Suleman's immediate plans for the future include an exhibition of her students' work. She is also planning an exhibition of her work in Bengaluru after a gap of 15 years. "It's still in the concept stage, and I'm planning to take it to Mumbai too."

Shyamola Khanna

GAME ON

AT THE BRIDGE ROOM in Secunderabad Club, the excitement in the air was palpable. The floor was set for an interesting game as the four corners were occupied by square tables, each taken by four silver ladies with a deck of cards distributed among them. The event: an all-women bridge tournament on the occasion of International Women's Day last month.

For the silver members of Secunderabad Club, their periodic bridge meetings serve a dual purpose: they stimulate the mind, and they are fun. "It is interesting and enjoyable to play the game; I like its cerebral nature. You have to mentally track the game and visualise the cards that your partner has," says Shubhu Mohanty, a participant of the tournament. A recent entrant to the game, Mohanty took bridge classes for a year before she started playing at club tournaments. "I work at it for three hours every day."

The Club holds regular bridge tournaments for its members where partners are often drawn at random from a lucky dip. "The biggest thrill," says 72 year-old Sulochana Reddy, the second runner-up who has been playing bridge for the past 25 years, "is when you partner with a complete stranger who knows the conventions."

activity

Indeed, there's always an understanding between regular partners, as in the case of the large Chinoy family, who are long-standing members. "Our grandfather made us play the game even when we were kids. To play a strategic game, you must learn to determine your partner's cards and keep track of every card played. It sharpens one's memory," says Gul, an 86 year-old participant from the family. Little wonder then, that Ashu Chinoy, 56, and her partner Zareen Chinoy, 76, emerged winners of the tournament. "Though most bridge players would not agree with me, I personally feel a bit of luck goes a long way in winning a tournament. Of course, skill, memory and good understanding with the partner completes a winning combination," says Ashu.

For the golden anniversary of bridge at the Club, it is hosting an Open Bridge Tournament this August with teams expected from across the country.

—Shyamola Khanna

How to play BRIDGE

Contract bridge, or bridge, is a trick-taking game played by four people, in two partnerships. Once the cards are dealt, the players start the 'bidding' process that, in the language of bridge, reveals the strengths and weaknesses of a partner's hand. This also determines the 'contract' made between the players that will finally determine the winner.

FLAVOURS OF GOA

Courtesy: Goa Tourism Development Corporation

In keeping with the Goan spirit of good food and customary revelry, the Goa Food and Cultural Festival 2016 will kick off in the capital Panaji on 6 April. Celebrating the state's rich culinary heritage, the festival will run for five days at the D B Bandodkar Grounds hosting restaurateurs, hoteliers, food guilds and eateries. A dazzling stage will showcase the state's folklore and performances by local artists. "We're expecting about 50,000 festival goers a day. Apart from the hoteliers, we will rope in local self-help groups to serve scrumptious home-cooked Goan seafood," Deepak Narvekar, public relations officer of the Goa Tourism Development Corporation, tells us.

ARC LIGHTS, AGAIN

Veteran actor Zeenat Aman is making her digital debut in an upcoming web series, *Love, Life and Screw-ups*, a comic caper that revolves around eight friends and their struggles with maintaining relationships. Dressed in alluring '70s fashion, Aman plays Joana, a beautiful spinster who befriends young men. "We were looking for a glamorous actress with great comic timing and Zeenat*ji* fit the bill perfectly. She is a diva who can connect with any generation," debut director Kapil Kaustubh Sharma, who worked with Aman in the 2010 bilingual film *Dunno Y... Na Jaane Kyon*, tells media. "This could have been a movie," Aman is believed to have said after hearing the concept of the series. *Love, Life and Screw-ups* will go online soon.

Courtesy: TRIFED

Creative narrative

The walls of Coomaraswamy Hall at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, were recently adorned with evocative images depicting flora, fauna, deities and the human lifecycle. Some of India's most well-preserved tribal art forms—Gond from Madhya Pradesh, Warli from Maharashtra, Pithora from Gujarat and Saura from Orissa—were recently displayed at *Aadi Chitra*, an exhibition conducted by the Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED). "Such exhibitions create business opportunities for tribal artists and improve their livelihood while ensuring fair, equitable remuneration. We usually have live demos by artists, where patrons get to learn about the materials used to create the art pieces they were taking home," says J S Shekhawat, regional manager of TRIFED. For more info, visit *www.tribesindia.com* or call 022-27463826/20

Toystory

The vivid, wooden lacquer-ware of Channapatna is experiencing a revival

Natasha Rego

craft

The sleepy town of Channapatna, just 60 km from Bengaluru, has always been rich with one special skill: crafting brightly coloured, wooden lacquer-ware toys. Centuries before Barbie, Fischer-Price, Lego and Funskool tapped the wallets of parents in Bengaluru, Mysuru and surrounding towns, children were playing with the stacker toy and abacus, and infants were gleefully waving an egg-shaped wooden rattle.

Legend has it that Tipu Sultan, the 18th century ruler of the kingdom of Mysore, invited artisans from Persia to teach their craft to the locals. Whether fact or fiction, it set Channapatna firmly on the map while the toys crafted here travelled to markets in faraway lands. In the 1970s, business was booming, and the craftsmen even found an international market for very specific products. Dominant among these were napkin rings in clean, flat tones. While the craftsmen were busy meeting the needs of this new and lucrative market, they began to lose their ingenuity and sense of innovation. They also lost certain finer skills, such as the tonal gradation of lacquering that would regain interest many decades later. The town started churning out products to meet the demands of middlemen, and enjoyed a golden era of production. Tourist season in Mysuru also ensured local, seasonal revenue.

However, as times changed, so did tastes and Channapatna's craftsmen were badly affected. When the global

Clockwise from bottom left: A craftsman calculates the required width with an instrument to make a bangle; the instrument is measured against the wood; the bangle is carved out as the wood is turning on the lathe; when the lac (dye) comes in contact with the turning wood, heat is generated and the wood acquires the colour; the product is then polished with a palm leaf for a smooth, glossy look

Opposite page: The traditional stacker toy and rattles at the Maya Organic factory at Channapatna; a clock designed by art-and-craft designer Atul Johri

economic crisis hit, the international market was no longer interested in handcrafted napkin rings from halfway across the world even as they moved on to plastic toys.

As it always happens with dying indigenous crafts, the craftsmen struggled to make ends meet. Worse still, the Channapatna toys found a new rival in Chinese replicas, which lacked both craftsmanship and the use of natural dyes. These cheap imitations aggressively penetrated the market and there was a tragic lull in the industry.

Mechanisation revived operations, increased the speed of production and left the craftsman with both hands free to concentrate on workmanship. But this came at a price. Small manufacturing units fitted with four to six lathe machines sprouted in garage-like spaces, where the craftsmen began to work as labourers. There are over 500 such units operating in Channapatna today, although revenue is a far cry from what it once was.

In recent times, social entrepreneurs and urban designers have come to recognise the potential of the Channapatna toy story; increased exposure and savvy marketing have spelt good news for the craft. Craftsmen are now being exposed to a new and niche market for kitschy, handmade goods. By attempting to revive the tonal gradation of their lacquering skill and assisting designers to produce new products such as clocks, lamps, jewellery and much more, the Channapatna craftsman is finding new ground on which to turn his wood and colour it bright.

Clockwise from top left: Over 60 per cent of the workforce at Maya Organic, a social enterprise with a manufacturing unit in Channapatna, comprises local women who are trained and then employed—their products such as stackers, push-pull toys and rattles are primarily exported, and also sold through e-commerce sites and retailers; craftswoman Bhagyamma, who lives in Neelsandra village, outputs over 400 beads a day along with her husband using a manual lathe—Neelsandra is known for producing beads, that are strung together to make car seat covers, using this traditional method; hollow logs of a light wood locally known as *hale* (*Wrightia tinctoria*) are dried for months before they are used on the lathe

Top to bottom: Shops with an assortment of Channapatna products are a common sight on Mysore Road; the lac sticks that are used to colour the wood are made of a resin secreted by lac insects found on trees in West Bengal and Orissa—the resin is boiled with vegetable dyes and hardened

"Twenty years ago, our goods were expensive and our output was less. Now our output has increased manifold, but our goods have become cheap"

—Mushtaq Ahmed, craftsman

Enid, Agatha and I

The fictional worlds of Enid Blyton and Agatha Christie had her booked hook, line and sinker, writes **Manjiri Prabhu**

It is easy to be a dreamer at age seven, but definitely more challenging to be a writer. But for me—a passionate dreamer lost in my own world—both were an effortless fit, for the simple reason that I knew from the very beginning that I was born to be a writer.

I was a voracious reader, reading anything and everything that had printed words on it. My favourite author was Enid Blyton and I loved her books. In fact, as a child, I was completely convinced that I was Enid Blyton reborn, until I came to know that she was still around when I was born! I connected so strongly with her characters that I believed only I could've created them. My best friends were characters from her books, and I lived in their world. Enid Blyton inspired values of friendship and love and the belief that good always triumphs over evil. I loved the adventures and the happy endings. I was upset that I couldn't live in the storybook world. I pined for the seaside and countryside scenarios narrated by her. And I think that is what really triggered my need to write. A craving to be sucked into the world of stories with lovable characters and adventures. She instilled in me a love for reading and a strong desire to write.

As I grew a little older, I saw a Hindi film, *Gumnam*. The story and the plot fascinated me so much that I was amazed at its ingenuity. I discovered that the movie was based on Agatha Christie's novel, *And Then There Were None*. That got me hooked to the Queen of Crime's novels. As I wrote from instinct and a creative and imaginative point inside of me, Agatha opened a world of technique for me. Each novel was a piece of art in mystery writing. The exquisite layering of characters, the element of surprise that she kept intact till the last page, the double twists in the end, her style—each zone of mystery writing unfolded before me as I read more and more of her novels. It was a lesson in self-learning. The novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, especially, is unique. It is a masterpiece and I treat it like my Bible.

Enid Blyton brought out the natural writer in me, triggered my imagination and a love for mystery. But Agatha introduced me to the craft, the deeper intricacies of mystery writing, the games people play, and exposed the depth of human psychology. I realised that mystery is an all-encompassing genre

Enid Blyton brought out the natural writer in me, triggered my imagination and a love for mystery. She introduced me to a genre that made me feel complete as an author. But Agatha introduced me to the craft, the deeper intricacies of mystery writing, the games people play, and exposed the depth of human psychology. She explained the 'why' behind the mystery to me. I realised that mystery is an all-encompassing genre. The insights into human psyche, political upheavals, societal attitudes and issues, gender complexes, relationships and many more subjects can fall within the realm of this storytelling.

I feel that I don't create my books but every book that I write creates me anew. I learn a lot about myself, life and the world around me while writing. Simply put, I write novels from my heart. I stick to complicated plots, but with an unpretentious, direct, and sometimes racy style of writing. I don't remember consciously adopting any style because, luckily, I found my writing 'voice' quite naturally and very early on in life.

That the Indian media compared my novels with Agatha's, labelling me the 'Desi Agatha Christie', was one of the high points and at the same time the most humbling moment of my life. The icing on the cake was being invited late last year for Agatha's 125th birth anniversary at the International Agatha Christie Festival at Torquay in the UK.

I did a reading from one of her novels and spoke about her influence on my work. The 'Torre Abbey' and its grand gardens where the Litfest

took place was a picture of extreme elegance, illuminated with colourful lights and artists playing out roles in the dramatic settings. To be actually present in Torquay where Agatha was born and to witness her 125th birthday cake cut by her grandson were exhilarating.

I had always felt an unusual connect with Agatha's work. But it was when I was researching for my session at the Literature Festival that I discovered some startling similarities between her life and mine. These related to our parents, childhood penchants, love for dogs, being born in the same month, and even the fact that she married the son of a judge born in India. My husband is the son of a judge too!

It just didn't stop there. When in Torquay, I visited her holiday home 'Greenway' and experienced a sense of belonging and peace. Her favourite chair, piano, the little path that ran down the hill to the boathouse—they were all strangely familiar! I felt a cosmic connection with her that surpassed time and age, which probably explained my initial pull towards her. What remained indisputable was that Agatha, through her work, had opened new depths of writing for me. My mentor—with a legacy of masterpieces—was in the form of a guiding spirit.

Particularly, I remember one incident. I was writing my mystery novel, *The Cosmic Clues*, about Pune-based lady detective Sonia Samarth who solves cases with the help of astrology. One of the cases takes place in a bungalow amidst a set of suspicious characters and unfolds entirely within two to three hours of a stormy, rainy night. It was a difficult task to accomplish, as a murder was to be secretly and deviously attempted in front of everyone, including Sonia, and she had to solve the mystery right there and then. It was a kind of locked-room mystery. After racking my brain over the 'whys' and 'hows' for a long time in vain, I finally did the most logical thing: I categorically and systematically asked myself some questions. How would have Agatha written this story? What kind of clues would have she introduced? And how would she have used them to decipher the story? As the answers bloomed, so did the nuances of the plot. It was as simple as that!

I became a writer for several reasons—because of the good books I devoured as a child; my wild imagination and my capacity to lose myself daydreaming; the need to express myself; the need to create magical worlds that I could control; and my desire to see happy endings in stories, besides the need to create happy memories in the lives of readers. It was an inherent craving to create a world that was entirely mine but that would grow and last beyond me.

Memories are the only things that survive change, distance and age. They are proof of your existence. Ultimately a human being lives on in the form of memories that are passed on from generation to generation. If some of my characters live on in the hearts of my readers, I would feel that I have fulfilled my goals as a writer. And, I shall have two authors to thank for it: Enid and Agatha!

Prabhu is acknowledged as the first woman writer of mystery fiction in India

In April

As the earth spruces up to welcome spring, we present a poem by **James Hearst** (1900-1983) celebrating country life

This I saw on an April day:
Warm rain spilt from a sun-lined cloud,
A sky-flung wave of gold at evening,
And a cock pheasant treading a dusty path
Shy and proud.

And this I found in an April field:
A new white calf in the sun at noon,
A flash of blue in a cool moss bank,
And tips of tulips promising flowers
To a blue-winged loon.

And this I tried to understand
As I scrubbed the rust from my brightening plow:
The movement of seed in furrowed earth,
And a blackbird whistling sweet and clear
From a green-sprayed bough.

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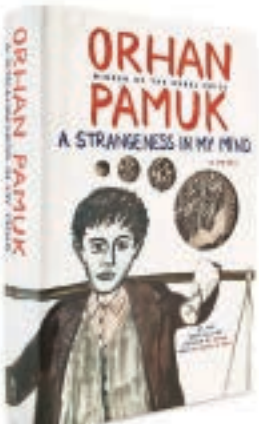
American poet, philosopher and professor, Hearst was referred to as the 'Robert Frost of the Midwest'



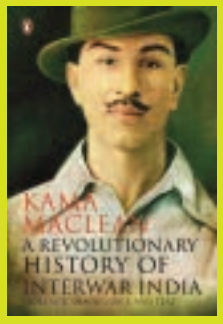
Told from the perspectives of many beguiling characters, **A STRANGENESS IN MY MIND (Penguin; ₹ 699; 591 pages)** is a modern epic on coming of age in the Turkish city of Istanbul. **Orhan Pamuk** captures not just the look and feel of the city but its culture and values. It won't be wrong to claim that this is an ode by the author to this ancient city in all its faded, dusty glory. At the centre of the story, however, is street vendor Mevlut Karatas, who trades in yoghurt, rice and peas, and *boza*, the emblematic Turkish drink of fermented wheat. Yellowish and thick, often topped with cinnamon and roasted chickpeas, *boza* has a low alcohol content, making it, as one character comments, "just something someone invented so Muslims could drink alcohol". The reader follows the story and Mevlut through the sprawling plot that winds its way in and out of the narrow alleys of the messy city. Though there are feuds, frauds and heartaches aplenty, at the heart of the novel is an unconventional love story. Mevlut is hoodwinked into eloping with the less-attractive older sister of the girl he loved, but he learns to cherish her and the family they beget.

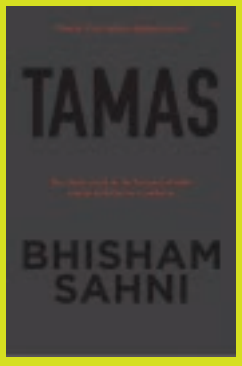
Journalist-turned-author **Kavita Kane** is known for bringing to life sketchy characters from the fringes and fleshing them out with desires and expectations. While it was Uruvi in *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*, and Urmila in *Sita's Sister*, in **MENAKA'S CHOICE (Rupa Publications; ₹ 295; 290 pages),** Kane retells the beauteous apsara's trials and tribulations in her own voice. Pieced together from numerous mythological sources, this is not just the story of Menaka but the arrogant and insecure Indra who, blinded by his ego and selfishness, blurs the distinction between right and wrong. At yet another level, it's also the story of another king, Kaushik, who willingly relinquishes his kingdom to become the revered Vishwamitra. In this feminist rendering of Menaka's tale, the apsara, constantly whittled down to the role of seductress and temptress, craves an independent space for herself as wife and mother. In essence, this is a tale of intrigue, obsession and longing.

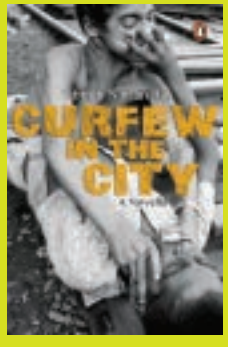
Also on stands

A Revolutionary History of Interwar India
Kama Maclean
Penguin; ₹ 599; 368 pages

A comprehensive look into the ideologies and politics of Indian revolutionaries, it gives fresh perspective to the freedom struggle by drawing on a range of evidence including recently declassified government files, memoirs and interviews, besides analysing the photography and visual culture of the period.







Curfew in the City
Vibhuti Narain Rai
Translated by C M Naim
Penguin; ₹ 132; 128 pages

The story of a Muslim household of bidi workers stuck in a claustrophobic city, this novella narrates how curfew affects simple and ordinary lives even as administrative authorities fan insecurities to further their own interest.

Tamas
Bhisham Sahni
Translated by Daisy Rockwell
Penguin; ₹ 399; 360 pages

A timeless classic about the Partition of India, this iconic novel is also a chilling reminder of the consequences of religious intolerance and communal prejudice.

Great expectations

Over the years, a few experiences related to pregnancy may have changed, but the joy it delivers stays the same, writes **Ruth Pennebaker**

My daughter, my own darling girl, is pregnant with a firstborn daughter. Being around her has brought back so many vivid memories of my pregnancy with her that sometimes I can't tell whether it's 1982 or 2015.

Still! It's impossible not to be absorbed into her expectant world. We sit and fold laundry one hot afternoon and I feel relaxed and dreamily content and fulfilled. Since when does housework make me feel relaxed and content and fulfilled? Since never, that's when.

The nesting syndrome, I decide, must be contagious.

****

The sonograms are eerily precise and, praise the lord, more obstetricians are women. In so many other ways, though, the experience of pregnancy hasn't changed at all: For some reason, a pregnant woman is everybody's business. The rest of the world notices and judges and comments.

"Wow! You've really put on the pounds!"
"You'd better get your sleep now!"
"Good grief, you're about to pop!"

"They were saying 'get your sleep now' 33 years ago," I tell her. "Three decades and they can't come up with a better line?"

Much of the attention is kind and well-meaning—mostly from older, sympathetic women who smile and ask her how she's feeling and when the baby's due. They nod and say yes, they remember what it was like. And yes, it seems like it goes on forever, doesn't it?

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But I love it that this generation of pregnant women is more defiant and in-your-face than my generation ever was. Thirty years ago, we shrouded our expanding girth in acres of perky floral material and prim little bows.

Our larger bodies, too, were a little embarrassing and unseemly. Feminists or not, nobody wanted to be a woman who took up too much space or who looked as if she were letting herself go.

Today—God, it's so different! I love the pride in the baby bumps. I love the sheer insolence of my daughter's friend Carolina who danced up a storm at my daughter's wedding in a tight, brilliantly red dress that hugged her pregnant stomach. Or my daughter herself, whose wonderfully confident attitude seemed to proclaim, "Hey, world: this is what an 8½ months' pregnant woman looks like. Deal with it."

So maybe it's taken women millennia to get to that better place. But the point is, we're finally arriving.

****

My husband and I leave Seattle on a beautiful summer day, our daughter still pregnant. I am convinced she will go into labour the moment our flight leaves the ground, but she doesn't. She waits five days.

The hours pass. At first, I think our daughter is going to be live-tweeting her baby's birth. Then the contractions get more serious. Our son-in-law sends a photo of our daughter, relieved and relaxed after her epidural. "I am a great fan of modern drugs," she texts later.

Elizabeth Teal Blodgett, six pounds and 15 ounces, is born. I stare obsessively at the photos my son-in-law sends—the perfect, round head, the furrowed little brow, the open rosebud mouth. It's so funny when you notice that a wildly thumping little piece of your heart has suddenly taken up residence two thousand miles away.

Pennebaker is the author of Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakthrough. *She blogs at* www.geezersisters.com

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The crash of Kanchenjunga

The crash of an Air India Boeing 707 on 24 January 1966, carrying among others the father of India's nuclear programme, Homi Bhabha (see pic), remains one of the most baffling air disasters in civil aviation history. On a routine flight from Mumbai to London via New Delhi and Beirut with 106 passengers on board, 'Kanchenjunga' slammed into Mont Blanc between France and Italy, killing all passengers and crew. Bhabha, who was then chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission, was on his way to Vienna for an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meeting. Just three months before the mishap, in October 1965, Bhabha had announced on All India Radio that India could start rolling out nuclear weapons in 18 months.

After leaving Bombay, the plane made scheduled stops at Delhi and Beirut. As the plane was preparing to make its descent at Geneva, the captain, one of the most experienced pilots of the airline, radioed the control tower saying that the instruments were functional and the aircraft was flying at 19,000 ft. Shortly thereafter, it crashed into Mont Blanc. No debris was found. However, in 2012, a jute bag of diplomatic mail, stamped 'On India Government Service' was recovered. In 2013, a French Alpinist found a metal box containing the Air India logo at the crash site with rubies, sapphires and emeralds worth over $ 300,000 inside, which he handed over to the police.

Though pilot error is often cited as the reason for the crash, in the past 50 years conspiracy theories have also abounded, accusing the CIA and Italian Air Force of trying to impede India's nuclear programme by eliminating Bhabha, who had gone public saying India was ready to produce nuclear weapons in a short time. Bhabha's death set India's nuclear programme back eight years, with New Delhi conducting its first nuclear detonation only in 1974 at Pokhran.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: APRIL 1966

- On 6 April, Indian Mihir Sen became the first person to swim across the 33-mile Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka.
- On 7 April, after an 80-day operation, the US recovered a hydrogen bomb that had been lost off the coast of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea.
- On 8 April, on the occasion of Good Friday, TIME magazine, in one of its most controversial covers, asked "Is God Dead?" in bold red letters printed over a black background.
- On 21 April, the opening of the UK Parliament was televised for the first time.

O2O

adj. Relating to a business model that uses online resources to drive consumers into a company's offline locations.
Example: The **O2O** market—where mainland Internet retailers are increasingly opting to partner with offline firms to offer traditional brick-and-mortar services in a bid to give shoppers better service—has featured three high-profile deals in 2015 alone.
—See Kit Tang, "What's O2O? The driver behind Alibaba's $ 4.6 B deal, that's what", *CNBC*, 11 August 2015

Workfarce

n. A workplace or workforce that is ridiculous or worthy of mockery.
Example: So on to a different world, that of Sydney and the public sector. More suburbanites. A few tolerable people, sure, but the social scene was still at Genitalia R Us level. In my mid 20s, I was now meeting "the workforce", or "**workfarce**" as I continue to think of many of them.
—Paul Wallis, "The problem with being raised to be a real person", *Sydney Media Jam*, 17 May 2015

Hellabyte

n. An extremely large but unspecified amount of data.
Example: "We need a new way to think about analytics. Analytics needs to be about fast, smart decisions", said Tom Davenport. What is next if we continue to call it big data—**hellabyte**, muchabyte, and lots of byte?
—Myles Suer, "Pearls of wisdom for digital disruptors", *Informatica*, 21 May 2015

Library of things

n. A library that lends tools, equipment, and other objects in addition to or instead of books.
Example: Tentatively scheduled for a spring launch, the Sharing Depot is planned as a community hub where people can lease things like camping gear, sports equipment, kids toys or even supplies for your next house party. "This will be a real **library of things**," said co-founder Ryan Dyment.
—Gilbert Ngabo, "The Sharing Depot: Toronto company wants to bring 'library of stuff' to city", *Metro (Toronto)*, 24 February 2016

Pluto-populism

n. A political movement in which a wealthy individual offers ideas and policies that appeal to the common person.
Example: Why has this happened? The answer is that this is how a wealthy donor class, dedicated to the aims of slashing taxes and shrinking the state, obtained the foot soldiers and voters it required. This, then, is **pluto-populism**: the marriage of plutocracy with rightwing populism.
—Martin Wolf, "Donald Trump embodies how great republics meet their end", *Financial Times*, 1 March 2016

"Your face is marked with lines of life, put there by love and laughter, suffering and tears. It's beautiful."
—Canadian author Lynsay Sands

PROGNOSTALGIA

n. Nostalgia for an unrealised future that was predicted in the past.
Example: But in addition to our retreat into wishfulness, something else was brewing: a sense that the past was not only better than the present, but that the past's predictions for the future were also better than what had actually become the present. No longer content to live in (or through) our memories of the past, we also yearned to live in the past's vision of the future. We were nostalgic for yesterday's prognostications: You could say that we succumbed to **prognostalgia**.
—Eric Schulmiller, "The future sure looks better from the past", *The New York Times Magazine*, 11 July 2014

Ramen profitable

adj. Of a start-up company: making a profit, but not enough to pay salaries to the founders.
Example: "We didn't actually need the money in terms of survival," he said. "We're already placing enough people to profitable per month, and we're not talking '**Ramen profitable**.'"

—Kim-Mai Cutler, "Triplebyte, The technical recruiting platform from former YC partner Harj Taggar, raises $ 3 M", *TechCrunch*, 28 September 2015

Set-jetting

pp. Travelling to locations that have been featured in movies, TV shows, or other media.
Example: Set-jetting is the latest travel trend that puts you on the set of your favourite movies, TV shows or even book settings.

—"Set-Jetting", *WMAR (Baltimore)*, 8 February 2016

TRYSTORMING

pp. Rapidly and repeatedly prototyping or implementing new products and processes.
Example: Instead of just brainstorming, 2015 was all about **trystorming**—a fun way of saying that we tested new ideas even if those ideas hadn't been completely vetted or perfected yet.

—"[Opower] How we use data to optimize our talent acquisition team", *HR Open Source*, 8 February 2016

Courtesy: Liber-arte Central

Back to SCHOOL

BUZZ

Revive your zest for learning at Liber-arte Central, a Mumbai-based academy established specifically for 'the older generation to grow young'. The academy is the brainchild of Tehzeeb Doctor, a writer and former editor who was struck by the idea on a vacation to London over a couple of drinks with friends. The academy offers a variety of classess conducted by professionals, including different mediums of art, music, dance and theatre as part of the creative curriculum. It also has a 'liber-arted' spin on subjects like sociology, psychology, economics, languages and digital technology. In the technology class, for instance, students bring their own gadgets and learn to navigate the smart world, including downloading information, paying bills online, and using Skype and other applications. The academy, which opened in January, has 25 students right now; the best part is you can join most classes any time. Fees range from ₹ 2,000 to ₹ 7,000 depending on the class you choose. For more details, call (0) 9167029688/ 022 26416612 or email *liberartecentral@gmail.com*.

"Yoga helps inculcate a selfless attitude with a desire to serve humanity"

Ashok, 78, and Bhagyashri Baser, 72, Pune, on spreading mental and physical well-being through yoga

Courtesy: Bharatiya Yog Sansthan

For **Ashok Baser**, 78, and 72 year-old **Bhagyashri**, waking up in the wee hours to practise yoga is a sacrosanct ritual; one they haven't missed in 20 years. As *karyakarta* of Bharatiya Yog Sansthan–a non-sectarian, social, cultural and non-profit organisation that believes in serving humanity by teaching yoga free of cost—the couple has been instrumental in spreading awareness about its psychological and physiological benefits since 1996. Baser vividly remembers his first brush with the organisation. "It was during our routine walk in Saras Baug that we met four practitioners from the Delhi-based Bharatiya Yog Sansthan at the park." Initially, it was curiosity that drew the couple to the yoga sessions being held in the park. But soon they were hooked. "Before they returned to Delhi, the practitioners requested us to start a centre in Pune." With the couple's elder children—a daughter and son, both engineers—already settled, and the youngest son in college, they decided to utilise their free time productively by accepting the offer. With this, life took a different turn for Ashok, an engineer and industrialist with several manufacturing units in Pune.

The rest, as they say, is history. Over the years, the couple has opened over 70 centres of Bharatiya Yog Sansthan in Pune, along with centres in Nagpur, Nashik, Aurangabad, Kolhapur, Sholapur and Navi Mumbai. Though Ashok still clocks an eight-hour working day at his business units, yoga comes first. As his wife shares, "Rising at 4.30 am every day, we visit at least one or two centres in Pune between 6 am and 7 am. We return by 7.30 am to indulge in an hour of sadhana before getting on with our daily lives." Bhagyashri is also passionate about flower arrangements (for which she has won many awards), gardening and photography. But yoga still occupies pride of place in her life. Held in open-air spaces, the couple's yoga sessions draw multitudes from different walks of life. "The one-hour programme includes asana, pranayama, *dhyan* and chanting of mantras for all-round physical and mental fitness," says Ashok. "We draw inspiration from the lofty ideals of our culture such as *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the entire universe is our family) and *Lokasamastasukhinobhavantu*—may all beings rejoice in joy and live for the service of humanity."

—Mita Banerjee

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