

harmony

JULY 2017 ₹ 40

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens



TENNIS ACE
NARESH KUMAR

SILVERS ON A
YOGA-HIGH

NO PLACE LIKE
NORWAY

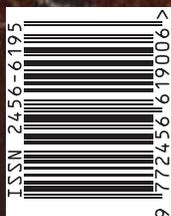
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Beauty's Queen SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

MONEY MATTERS
The benefits of reverse
mortgage of house

FOOTSTEPS
Dhruvpad exponents
Dr Madhu and Pandit
Laxman Bhatt Tailang

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YOGA, for life

Some things in life are better experienced than expressed. The practice of yoga is one of them. Terming it 'exercise' would be far too reductive; it is a transformative life-changer.

The most wonderful thing is that yoga can be your best friend. It demands only what you are able to give it and it embraces you again with no questions asked even if you have been away for long! Indeed, my own association with yoga goes back decades; lately, I have renewed my engagement with consistency, vigour and passion. In fact, coupling my practice with the chanting of shlokas has intensified the experience, imbuing me with inner strength and enhanced clarity. My most beloved part is the *suryanamaskar*, a full body workout that is so inspiring as it salutes the sun, the giver of life. In addition, every component of my regimen fortifies me in myriad ways, providing nutrition for mind, body and soul—from pranayama for breathing and poses that strengthen, stretch, firm and soothe the body like *tadasana* (the palm-tree pose), *tiryaka tadasana* (swaying palm-tree pose); *kati chakrasana* (standing spinal twist pose), *marjariasana* (cat pose), *makarasana* (crocodile pose) and *vyaghrasana* (tiger pose); to the anti-gastric *pavan muktasana* and the calming yoga *nidra* meditation.

At *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, we've always reinforced the importance of yoga and its healing potential for silvers with 'Yoga Rx' by Shameem Akthar—our oldest column, which has been running since the inception of the magazine! So this year, when wellness guru Dr Mickey Mehta invited us to be part of his 'Yoga by the Bay' event on Mumbai's Marine Drive, on International Yoga Day, we were delighted. Over 50 silvers participated in the



Dabboo Ratnani

event with great enthusiasm, delighted to soak in the experience. I would like to thank Mickey for including us on this special day—and apologise that I couldn't be there personally owing to a prior commitment.

That said, it gives me great pleasure to share that there will be more opportunities to explore the synergy between Mickey's 'Be Stronger, Live Longer' credo and our own mantra of active ageing. Going forward, we envisage a series of activities together and you will see much more of Mickey on our pages!

Coming back to yoga, it's heartening that one of India's greatest gifts to the world is now being given its rightful importance at home. Calendar event aside, though, we must endeavour to make each day a yoga day! I urge every reader to embrace this practice. Make it your own and take control of your wellness—for life.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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index

features

40 . Footsteps: Dhruvpad exponent Dr Madhu Bhatt Tailang in sync with father-guru Pandit Laxman

44 . Encounter: A trip down memory lane with tennis legend Naresh Kumar

56 . Destination: With ruffled fjords and green belts, Norway is paradise on earth



48
cover
feature

A pioneer in herbal cosmetic care, Shahnaz Husain is on a mission to make beauty eternal through Ayurveda

Cover photograph courtesy: **Shahnaz Husain**

every issue

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

24 . YOUR SPACE: Reach out to fellow silvers with your inspiring stories

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

82 . SPEAK: Col G B Sethi and Brigadier C S Vidyasagar in Hyderabad help ex-servicemen get their dues

columns

26 . YOGA RX: Shameem Akhtar illustrates the use of wheel as a prop for higher lifts and deepening backbends

28 . IT'S NEVER 2 LATE: In the first in a series, international columnist Jack York shares the incredible life of Vivian Tellis Nayak, a champion for the rights of the elderly

30 . NUTRITALK: Wellness consultant Naini Setalvad says organic foods are safe and sustainable

38 . MONEY MATTERS: Economist Priya Desai discusses the benefits of reverse mortgage of house

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Retired Justice K Chandru in Chennai introduces kids to the joy of learning

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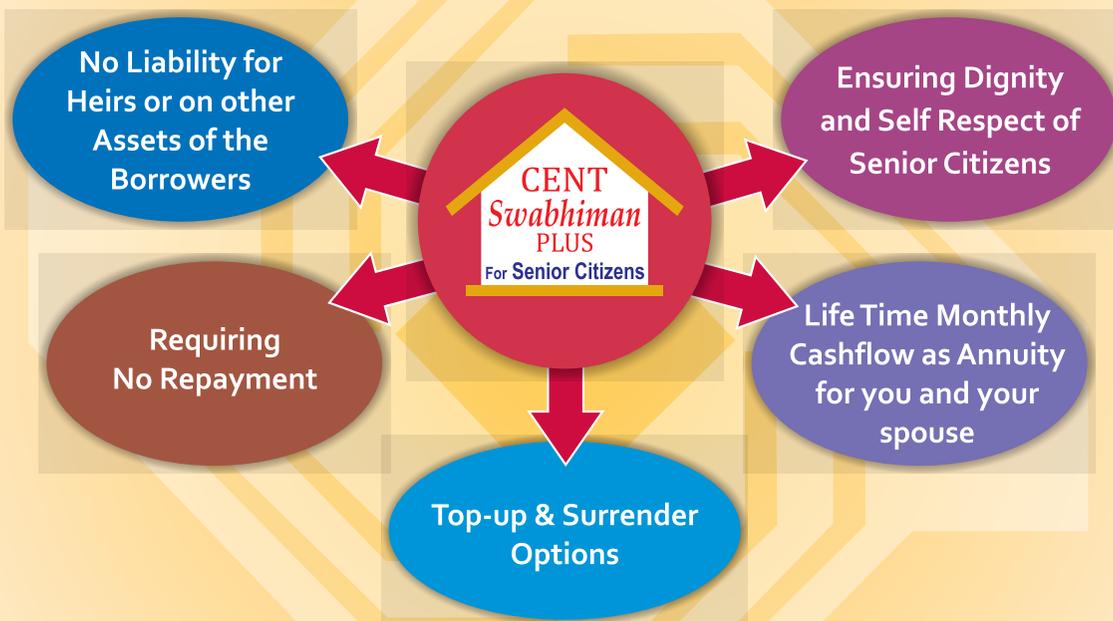
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column one

About 25 years ago, a friend gifted me a gorgeous beauty hamper bursting with 'Flower Power' products. I was fairly unlettered in these matters then but even I knew this was a big deal because of the brand: Shahnaz Husain. Remarkably, that brand continues to endure, her name and products commanding respect world over and her own story, admiration. Still prolific and driven, this pioneer of herbal beauty is a perfectionist who "aims for the sky" while remaining rooted and warm, as you will discover in our cover feature.

Another pioneer on our pages this month is tennis ace Naresh Kumar, who was instrumental in taking Indian tennis to the international stage, his doubles partnership with Ram-anathan Krishnan the stuff of legend. A poster boy for active ageing, this 89 year-old sports commentator-entrepreneur-fish breeder-art collector clearly doesn't believe in expiry dates!

Elsewhere, we learn how Dr Madhu Bhatt Tailang is following in the footsteps of her father Pandit Laxman Bhatt Tailang to give the tradition of Dhruvpada a more resonant voice; meet masterchef Imtiaz Qureshi who has popularised Awadhi cuisine in India and overseas; explore the potential of reverse mortgage of house as a financial option; and experience the dazzling delights of Norway.

Finally, a shout-out to Jack York of It's Never 2 Late, who has made it his life's work to help silvers remain engaged through technology. It was a pleasure to meet Jack recently at a conference in Hyderabad; it is a privilege to introduce him as a columnist. Another inspiring addition to the magazine—keep reading!

—Arati Rajan Menon

The Dance of the Danube" ('Destination') in the April issue of the magazine was a very descriptive and captivating read. The small details, nooks and crannies of the neighbouring towns were evocatively described, with a bit of history and architecture thrown in. I have my eye on the tea lounge and patisserie and the other teatime stopover at the ferry! I will plan my trip soon.

Aman Dewan

Via www.harmonyindia.org

The Dance of the Danube" was very well-written. Tempts me to plan a trip next year!

Gurumani Vaiyacheri S

Via www.harmonyindia.org

The 10th edition of the Senior Citizens' Run supported by the Harmony for Silvers Foundation was a joyful event, especially for the Sri Raghathan Laughter Club, which takes part in the run every year. The relentless rain the previous day threatened to make the marathon morning difficult for runners. But when D-Day arrived, everyone enthusiastically got on their Harmony T-shirts and bibs. We gathered at Kanteerava Stadium

and were off by 7.15 am. The run took us through traffic-free streets, past the General Post Office, the magnificent Vidhan Sardha Central Library and back to the finishing line near the marquee. Through the morning, we were cheered on by some amazing DJs, a radio jockey, music band, a *dollu kunitha* troupe...so we joined in, with the "hoo-haa, hoo-haa" slogan of the laughter club. The lucky draw was arranged and the team leaders of respective clubs were honoured with a plaque. The Reliance Communications team and Sri Shivalingappa showed their team spirit for the event. Long live Harmony! Our club has just one request: we have been getting Harmony's signature yellow T-shirts for the past 10 years. Let them be sky-blue next year.

Poonam P Shenoy

President, Sri Raghathan Laughter Club, Bengaluru

HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in June 2017 on

www.harmonyindia.org

1. A mystery named Monghyr
2. Amma's kitchen
3. Salute the soldier

CONTRIBUTOR



"I'm delighted to be a regular contributor for *Harmony-Celebrate Age*," says **Jack York**, co-founder of It's Never 2 Late (iN2L), who kicks off his column with us this month. After a 15-year career in Silicon Valley, he started It's Never 2 Late in 1999 with a simple belief that older adults, regardless of physical or cognitive disabilities, have the right to stay connected and engaged through technology. The company, which has its systems

spread out across 2,700+ senior living communities in the US and Canada, has developed a unique niche in working with individuals dealing with dementia. Further, York is a sought-after national and international speaker on technology as a means to create personalised experiences that engage and connect residents to their loved ones and the world at large. iN2L's work has been recognised by the *Wall Street Journal*, *NPR*, and dozens of senior living publications.

inside

P18: Celebrating Yoga Day

P28: A champion for silver rights

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



▶ MEDIA WATCH

DJ IN THE HOUSE

Meet **DJ Sumirock**. She spins rock, techno and jazz once a month at Tokyo's Decabarz club. She wears funky clothes. She's fun and cool. And she's 82. Yup! As website www.thetimes.co.uk tells us, after spending more than 50 years running a fried dumpling restaurant, **Sumiko Iwamura** discovered her calling at a birthday party for her son where she chose the music. She was hooked and went to DJ school—at the age of 70! "When I spin the tables, I just want to match the beat, choose the right music, but the best thing is see my audience enjoying themselves," she says. Check her out in action at <https://youtu.be/Cgbz-HwKWZo>

Through the LENS

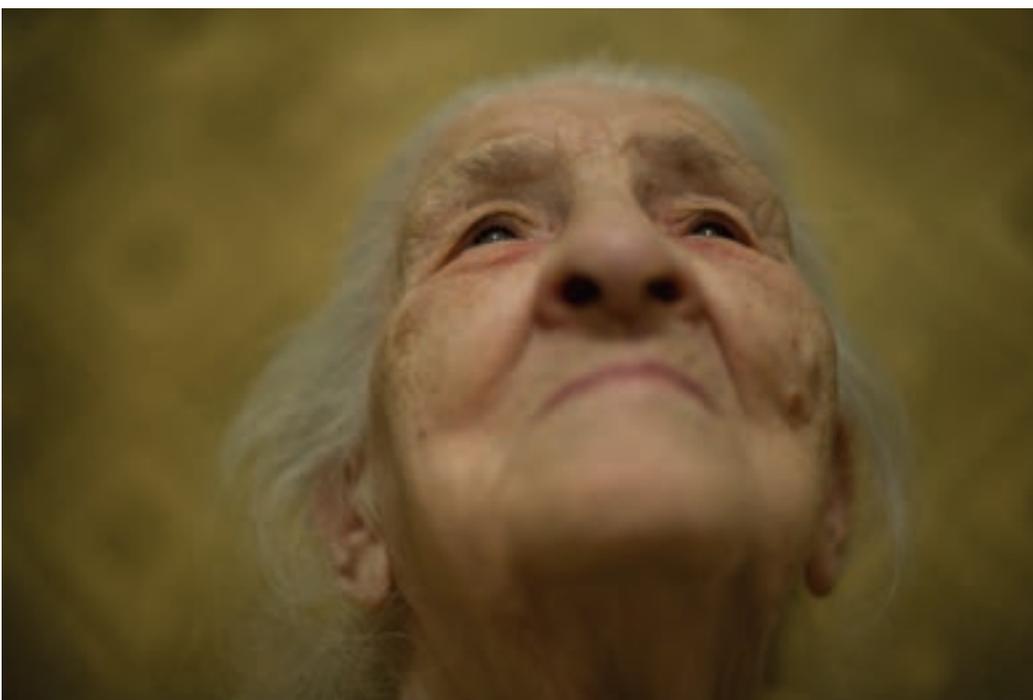
This is a tribute like no other. Beginning 2011, Russian photographer **Natalya Reznik** has been documenting the life of her 92 year-old grandmother Nadezda Pavlovna, in a project-in-progress called *Ageing*, as website *calvertjournal.com* reports. And while this is a moving chronicle of diminishing physical capacity and increasing frailty, Nadezda's strength of spirit and slivers of optimism shine through in many of the images. See for yourself at www.reznikdavydov.com/projects/aging/

Photographs by Natalya Reznik



Clockwise from top left: "My grandma likes to buy and test every new 'healing' gadget on the market. The Eyes Care Massager is supposed to heal tired eyes. She believes that the massager can help her to see again."

"My grandmother has always been interested in fashion. Even during the USSR years, when there were not many clothes to buy, she tailored everything for herself and her children. Now, despite being almost blind, she sometimes tries to sew something. For instance, she made this hat!"



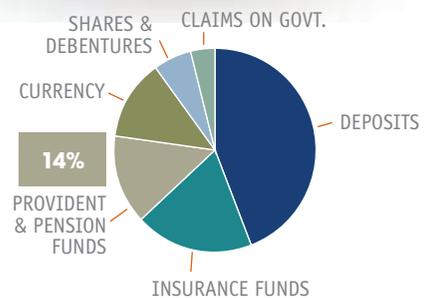
"My grandmother has a desire to love and be loved—and at the same time she feels unworthy of it. She thinks that people laugh at her because she doesn't hear well and is almost blind. Sometimes she says she hates herself, but still hopes that everything will be fine again."

PENSION, a priority

WE ARE a country in transition. Every fifth Indian will be over the age of 60 by 2050—at present, it's every 12th Indian. Further, the population of people above 80 is likely to increase from 0.9 per cent to 2.8 per cent by 2050. These statistics lie at the heart of *Financial Security for India's Elderly - The Imperatives*, a report by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and CRISIL. Pointing to the “continuously declining inter-generational support within families”, the report underlines the need for a “well-developed, self-sustaining pension system in the country”. Here are some highlights and recommendations of the report:



123RF.com



- Provident and pension funds form just 14 per cent of savings in India and are fed by the organised section of the society. Increasing the penetration of pension products via voluntary pension schemes is the biggest hurdle.
- The Government should focus on voluntary pension, targeting the huge unorganised sector. To address the current problems of low coverage, low contributions and persistency, the options include flexible payment and withdrawal options; monetary incentives for the lower income strata; exclusive pension schemes for women; and improved financial literacy and intermediation.
- In the organised sector, there is a need to improve asset allocation, which is currently skewed towards debt, as opposed to the global trend of investing in equity.
- To address the section of the workforce that is not covered under any form of retirement products, the Government can consider 'auto-enrolment' of people who are part of the employee-employer set-up but are not covered.
- For silvers below the poverty line, the Government could evaluate a targeted pension scheme.
- The Government should focus on increasing financial literacy and awareness of pension products by including personal finance and retirement planning in formal education.
- Ensuring consistency across pension products in terms of accounting valuation, taxation and disclosures would also aid the growth of the Indian pension industry.

“A developed pension sector not only reduces the fiscal burden on the exchequer, it also has a stabilising effect on the economy by promoting long-term savings combined with long-term investments,” says Hemant G Contractor, chairman of PFRDA, in the report. “The pursuit of an affordable, adequate, efficient and sustainable pension system will involve a great deal of inter-ministerial, inter-state, inter-regional and inter-institutional decisions and coordination.” Download the report at www.pfrda.org.in/WriteReadData/Links/CRISIL%20PFRDA%20Report869bc61d-a231-42de-a77c-ff614b0af650.pdf

COVAI'S POLYCARE

Your own family doctor!

In India, we had a long tradition of family doctors (FDs), which is almost nonexistent now. In the past, these doctors were the first people we turned to whenever we fell sick. They visited us at home when someone was unwell. They treated generations of the family and referred us to a specialist if necessary. More important, FDs were a walking-talking encyclopaedia of every family member's health history—in essence, they were members of the family!

"The power of touch, simplicity and compassion is what a patient needs," according to renowned cardiologist Dr Devi Shetty, who laments that this is missing today. Now, specialists have replaced FDs. We run to a polyclinic or go to a doctor in a hospital based on recommendations from friends or relatives. Further, with the information available on the Internet, we become our own doctors and do medical shopping that could be dangerous.

Not many doctors touch the patient or talk to them, instead writing out prescriptions full of tests or medicines. Many of us carry multiple prescriptions and the effect of one medicine on the other is not taken into account. With our hospitals full of patients, doctors are stretched to their limits and find it hard-pressed to spend sufficient time talking to patients. Indeed, the doctor has become a generic persona, identified by a stethoscope, rather than someone with whom the patient can have a personal connect. The situation is exacerbated with the increasing cost of care, which only spirals with advancing age. There is an urgent need to make medical treatment and healthcare more affordable and responsive to the needs of the individual.

The introduction of Covai's PolyCare seeks to do just that. From the stables of Covai Property Centre (I) P Ltd, Coimbatore, as part of its registered brand CovaiCare, it will provide professional and personalised healthcare and treatment with general practitioners (GPs) as your contact point and specialists available under the same roof. In effect, Covai's PolyCare will be your family doctor and take care of all age groups!

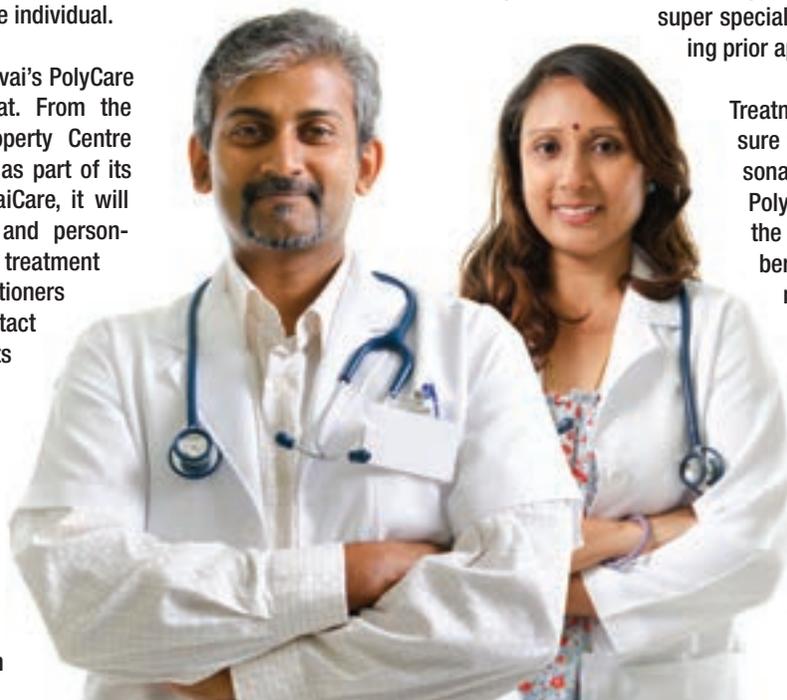
Covai's PolyCare is a healthcare centre, being established in

MEMBERS OF POLYCARE CAN BENEFIT FROM:

- Consultation with doctors at PolyCare starting with general physicians, dental, paediatric, neuropathy, gynaecologist, geriatric, diabetologist, pain management, physiotherapy, cardiologist as well as naturopathy, acupuncture and hypnotherapy specialists
- Having a personal medical and health record lifelong that is easily accessible. Strict confidentiality will be maintained
- Assistance for appointments with specialist doctors in multispecialty hospitals
- In-house pharmacy and access to laboratory facilities, including laboratory tests at concessional rates
- Ambulance service during emergencies
- Escort services to hospitals and laboratories on request
- Ensuring timely visits to concerned doctors or hospitals as well as annual medical examinations
- Reminder services for medicines, medical tests, doctor visits, etc
- Keeping children, living far away from parents, appraised on the status of health of their parents.
- Using the day-care centre and availing caregiver assistance where necessary
- Physiotherapy and non-interventional medical facilities
- Home visits - Doctor-on-call on request is being established

Coimbatore, that provides a wide range of medical services to patients of all ages and maintains an efficient and effective monitoring system so that patients get professional assistance at all times. It will serve as an FD for each member of the PolyCare Centre with a management system that oversees personalised diagnostic and healthcare requirements. With tie-ups with a number of hospitals, one can be referred to super specialists as required, after fixing prior appointments by PolyCare.

Treatment is monitored to ensure that the patient gets personal care at all times. Covai's PolyCare envisions itself as the nodal centre for its members for diagnosis, treatment, monitoring of medication and maintenance of records, with the facility to make records available to hospitals when needed. Covai's PolyCare provides ambulance and escort services if needed. It also has a day-care centre to care for 20 senior citizens.





PRESENTING

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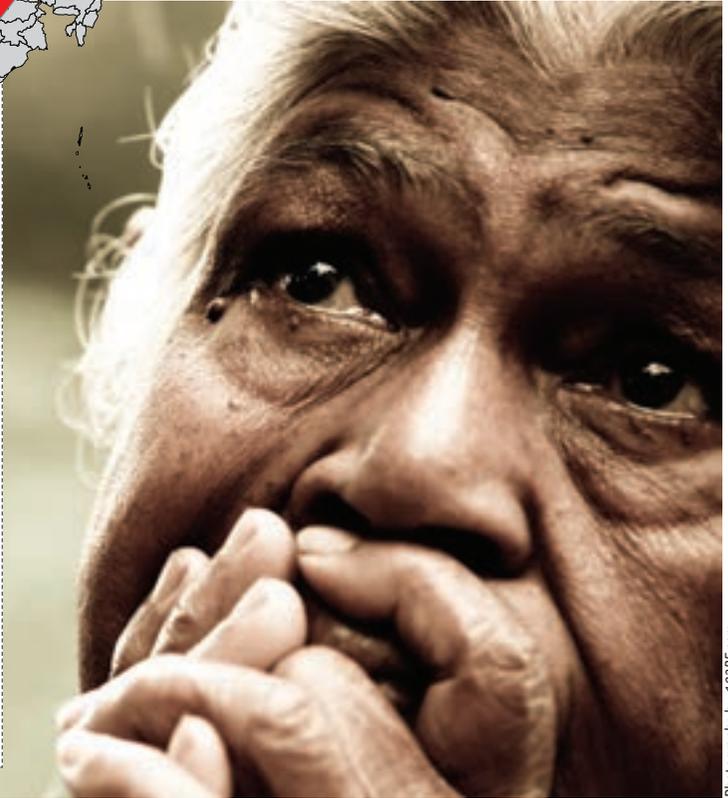
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STATE OF ACTION

This state is fast-tracking justice for aggrieved silvers. The Telangana government has ordered the expeditious formation of district-level tribunals to address the plight of elders neglected, ill-treated or abandoned by their families and enforce the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPC) Act. HelpAge India's Telangana unit will aid the authorities to this end—aggrieved silvers can call the toll-free number 1800-180-1253 and HelpAge members will alert the police and visit their homes. Moreover, the state is planning to establish welfare homes for silvers in every one of its 31 districts; right now, it runs only three.



Photographs by 123RF.com

REVERSE GEAR In our February 2017 issue, we had told you that the Ministry of Railways had announced that the Aadhaar card would be mandatory to book a ticket with senior citizens' concession. Now, the Ministry has walked back its pronouncement, saying that any valid age proof will be enough to avail of the discounted fare.

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL One of India's largest fund houses, UTI has launched a new mutual fund plan—UTI Family (Father and Mother I Love You)—under the growth option of existing schemes, MIS Advantage Plan and Wealth Builder Fund, to provide regular payout to silvers from their children. While MIS is a debt-oriented scheme, Wealth Builder Fund is an equity fund.

SILVER SURGE In Taiwan, senior citizens (over the age of 65) have outnumbered young children (0 to 14) for the first time. According to the latest figures, silvers clocked in at just over 13.33 per cent of the total population, while children comprised 13.1 per cent. By 2018, the number of silvers is expected to cross 14 per cent.



Cracking the ceiling

YOUR ACT may get even more silver-friendly. Media reports suggest that the Government may amend the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPC) Act to remove the monthly ceiling of ₹ 10,000 on the amount paid by children to parents. Instead, it proposes a rating mechanism for organisations providing homecare services to elders and will ensure that the amount decided will reflect both the needs of the parents and the economic condition of their children.

KUDOS TO KERALA



This state appears to be walking its talk. In a bid to make Kerala ‘old age-friendly’, two villages in Thiruvananthapuram and four in Palakkad will soon be declared ‘Vayo Souhruda’ gram panchayats. In other words, they will work to ensure that everyone above the age of 60 will have food, shelter, medical help and police protection if required. As newspaper *Deccan Chronicle* reports, each panchayat will have an old-age home with a clinic; silvers living in their own homes will be provided dedicated and free services in all areas from

health to plumbing; a comprehensive ‘geriatric register’ will be prepared in each of these panchayats; and the police will set up a helpline number for silvers and conduct thorough background checks of all their domestic help. The project is being implemented with the assistance of Centre for Gerontological Studies under the state government’s ‘Sayamprabha’ scheme. “Under Sayamprabha, the idea is to provide senior citizens all the services they require in the most generous manner,” social justice minister K K Shylaja tells the paper. “The project will be implemented with the help of several departments and will guarantee safety, shelter, health, nutrition and even livelihood for senior citizens.”

Meanwhile, the Wayanad district panchayat in the state has launched ‘Punarjani’, an innovative social project. According to newspaper *The Hindu*, over 850 geriatric clubs have been formed as part of the ₹ 1.8-crore initiative for silvers to meet and interact. Free medical care will be provided at these clubs. The district also plans to dispense free Ayurvedic as well as homeopathic medicines to silvers.

COMING SOON: In July 2014, the Budget announced the creation of a National Institute of Ageing in Chennai, along the lines of the one at New Delhi’s All India Institute of Medical Sciences. News agencies now report that the ₹ 150-crore project, being built over 10 acre on the premises of the King Institute of Preventive Medicine, may be complete by the end of this year. The institute, which will function under Madras Medical College, will feature a 200-bed hospital with several specialties linked to geriatric care, and provisions to train doctors from southern Indian states as well as facilitate ageing-related research.



Down under: According to a new study by Monash University in Melbourne, Australian women are ageing faster and look up to 20 years older than their peers in the US and the UK. This is being attributed to prolonged childhood sun exposure to higher levels of UV rays and longer wavelength radiation with inadequate skin protection.

TAPPING HOME EQUITY

Central Bank of India’s Cent Swabhimaan Plus: Reverse Mortgage Loan-Enabled Annuity

Helping your children settle in life, buying your own home and honouring financial obligations during your early years could make a huge dent in your retirement corpus. Moreover, post retirement, you could be missing a regular stream of income. Unlock your lifelong earnings invested in your home through Cent Swabhimaan Plus, Central Bank of India’s reverse mortgage loan scheme that will provide you a regular income for life. What’s more, you can continue to live in and occupy the house all your life (and your spouse’s) without having to repay the loan.

You may choose from two annuity options:

- Life Annuity with Return of Purchase Price
- Joint Life Annuity (100%) with Return of Purchase Price

The amount of loan will depend on market value of the residential property. The maximum loan to value (LTV) as mentioned in the box above is subject to discretion of the Bank (or as notified by the Government).

PROMOTION

Age of owner/borrower	Maximum LTV
Between 60 and 70 years	60%
Between 70 and 80 years	70%
80 years and above	75%

- A scheme specially formulated for meeting financial requirements of senior citizens above 55/60 years of age owning a flat/house and occupying it
- Married couples will be eligible as joint borrowers
- No restrictions on maximum loan amount
- No repayments during the lifetime of borrowers
- For annuity payments, borrowers can choose from monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual modes
- Option for lumpsum amount—maximum ₹ 15 lakh
- Prepayment facility available without any penalty



Courtesy: University of Newcastle

Forget the doctor; the apple may be able to keep the dermatologist away too! Dr Vincent Candrawinata of the University of Newcastle has developed an **anti-ageing skin cream from Australian apples** that is being hailed as a breakthrough. And, as London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, there's more than a touch of serendipity involved in this story! Candrawinata first created an apple-based, antioxidant-rich food supplement called Renovatio. Quite by chance, a man

from Adelaide used it in a paste to treat acute sunburn—with great success. This prompted Candrawinata's eureka moment. He made a concentrated liquid version of the supplement and developed a cream with a vegan base that claims to “protect elastin and collagen structures, leaving your skin transformed, glowing and ageless”. Called APSKIN: Skin Care, the product goes on sale online end July at renovatio.com.au/product/apskin-skin-care. The price tag? AUD 27.65 (about ₹ 1,300) for 100 ml.

THE SCIENCE OF BEAUTY



123RF.com

Nanotechnology just found an unusual application: beauty. A team of scientists from Bar-Ilan University in Israel have used it to introduce wrinkle-smoothing hyaluronic acid into the skin without injections by breaking down its particles to the size of a micron. As website www.time-sofisrael.com tells us, this has enabled Israeli cosmetic pharmaceuticals firm Hava Zingboim to create **Prophecy, the first-ever cream formula that allows hyaluronic acid to penetrate into the deeper layers of the skin to enhance its texture.** Wrinkles, lines and sagging are attributed to the body's loss of hyaluronic acid. For now, the cream, which claims to make skin radiant, blur wrinkles, provide antioxidant protection, make lips fuller and moisturise the outer and inner layers of the skin, is only available in Israel. Watch this space for a global rollout of the cream, which is being touted as a non-invasive alternative to Botox.

SKIN GUARD?

This should get the beauty brigade cheering. Recently, Australian dermatologist Dr Phillip Artemi told a conference

of his peers in Sydney that **wearing makeup could actually slow down skin ageing.** As website ajp.com.au reports, he explained that modern makeup, which

contains SPF ingredients, pigments and reflectors, can shield the skin from UV rays and pollution. This doesn't just delay the ageing process but reduces the incidence of

skin cancer, he contends. However, a light touch won't do the trick—for maximum protection, the makeup used has to be longer-wearing and thickly applied.



Courtesy: Liz Beswick

The tippable effect

Last year, we told you about Anti-aGin, a first of its kind anti-ageing alcoholic drink. Now, here comes the rather predictably named **Collagin**, another collagen-infused beauty tippable. Other than gin and collagen (of course), the drink includes botanicals such as star anise, pink grapefruit and orris root. Best friends Camilla Brown and Liz Beswick from Oxford in the UK, who developed the product, contend that drinking collagen, which maintains skin vitality and youth, stimulates its production better than applying it as a cream or popping a pill. There's no word yet on an international rollout—currently, the drink is available at select retailers in the UK and on website *DrinkSupermarket.com* at £ 34.99 (about ₹ 2,900) for a 500-ml bottle. Now, that's a stiff one.

ROOTED IN BEAUTY

IT DOESN'T GET more luxe in the beauty business than La Prairie. However, two 50-something veterans from the company, Renee Tavoularis and Lynne Florio, decided to take a more organic and

holistic path to beauty with the launch of a new wellness website, wellwithinbeauty.com, and its flagship **Planted in Beauty** line. As website *wellandgood.com* tells us, the USP of the line is that it is plant-based, comprising seven different products (cleansers, serums and moisturisers) with specific benefits. "We wanted to deliver natural, organic, plant-based products due

to our belief that beauty lies within nutrition and lifestyle," Florio tells the site. "We want to help people become the healthiest version of themselves." And Tavoularis adds, "Instead of fighting ageing, we embrace healthy ageing—even celebrate it." That said, these potions don't come cheap—the line begins at \$ 65 (about ₹ 4,200) and goes up to \$ 200 (₹ 12,850).

REALLY?

THIS HAS GOT US A LITTLE HOT UNDER THE COLLAR. JAPANESE COSMETIC GIANT SHISEIDO HAS DEVELOPED A NEW FRAGRANCE CALLED HARMONAGE TO BATTLE 'OLD PEOPLE'S SMELL'. YES, YOU HEARD THAT RIGHT. APPARENTLY, THERE'S EVEN A SCIENTIFIC NAME FOR THIS SO-CALLED ODOUR: NONENAL. NO WORD ON WHEN IT HITS THE MARKET—WE SURE AREN'T HOLDING OUR BREATH.

H2, oh!

It is the most abundant element in the universe. And now **American dermatologist Dr Nicholas Perricone** is 'harnessing hydrogen' to rejuvenate the skin with his **H2 Elemental Energy Collection**. "Hydrogen works by positively affecting gene regulation, gene expression and silencing negative genes," Dr Perricone tells media. "It's a very clever molecule because its powerful anti-inflammatory superpowers target and neutralise inflammation-causing free radicals." The range, which promises to revive, re-energise, hydrate and brighten the skin, includes Hydrating



Courtesy: PerriconeMD

Cloud Cream for \$ 80 (about ₹ 5,150); De-Puffing Eye Gel for \$ 75 (about ₹ 4,800); and Hydrating Booster Serum for \$ 100 (about ₹ 6,425). Orders over \$ 350 are eligible for free international shipping. So, go to www.perriconemd.com if you're convinced the claims aren't just a whole load of gas.

Grow health and happiness. Get your fingers green in your backyard or even pot some plants on your terrace or window ledge—it'll do you a world of good. A slew of recent studies on the benefits of gardening for silvers have pointed out that it relieves stress and depression; promotes hand strength and dexterity; cuts risk of stroke, heart disease and Alzheimer's; and boosts self-esteem and your immunity system. Time, evidently, to dig in!



123RF.com

Then: Shoebox Now: Photo frame



Hareesh Patel



RECYCLING FACTS

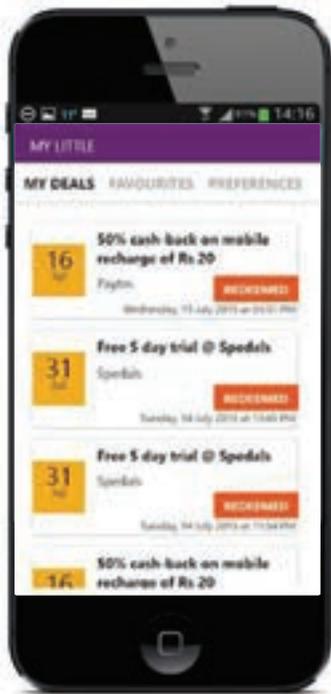
- There are two kinds of cardboard: corrugated cardboard, used to make brown packing boxes, is identified by the wavy inner layers of cardboard; and paperboard (sometimes called chipboard), which is a single layer of gray cardboard that's used to make cereal boxes, shoeboxes, and other packages.
- Cardboard and paperboard can't always be recycled. Pizza boxes and other food containers are often contaminated with grease and cardboard containers are coated with waxy substances to give them more strength, rendering them useless for recycling. Juice containers and other boxes that are resin or wax-coated are not always recyclable.

With every pair of shoes comes a sturdy box that makes for wonderful crafty raw material. One of the simplest things you can make out of it is a photo frame. You will need the lid of a shoebox (or any cardboard box), a corresponding patch of white cardboard slightly bigger than the surface area of the lid, 1-cm thick strips of coloured paper, a pair of scissors, glue and a photograph. Make sure the dimensions of the photograph are smaller

but proportionate to the big patch of white cardboard. Use the glue to paste strips of the coloured paper to border the white cardboard, resembling a frame, and paste the cardboard on the lid. Then, paste your image in the centre. You can get creative with the coloured strips, as we have done with this picture of Team Harmony on an office trip to Dahanu, Maharashtra. The raised edge of the lid enables you to hang it vertically or horizontally, depending on the orientation of your image.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. WRAP THE SHOEBOX LID WITH A LARGE, INTERESTING SHEET OF PAPER—IT COULD BE A GIFT WRAPPING PAPER, OR A LARGE MAP—AND USE DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE TO STICK YOUR PHOTOGRAPH ON THE INSIDE OR OUTSIDE OF THE LID.
2. LEAVING THE SHOEBOX INTACT, DECORATE IT BY STICKING CUT SHARDS OF THE UNDERSIDE OF CDS, OR GEOMETRICALLY CUT MAGAZINE PAGES, ALL AROUND THE BOX. THIS WILL MAKE FOR A NICE, UPCYCLED JEWELLERY BOX.



LITTLE

Available for: IOS 7.0 or later, iPhone, iPad, iPod touch

What it does: It helps you save money on everything near you—restaurants, hotels, movies, spas, salons, adventure activities, fitness centres—with the best deals and discounts across various categories.

How it works: After installing the app, you need to register yourself on the service. Choose your city and browse through the different categories of deals such as 'Food and Drinks', 'Spas', 'Salons' and 'Things to Do'. There is also a 'Nearby' tab that lists the deals near your location. Click on the deal that appeals to you for more details. You can even save your favourite deals in the 'My Orders' section of the app for easy access and future reference. Once you choose a deal, an order code/QR is generated, which is sent to the merchant before placing the order. You can pay through Paytm wallet or avail the PayALittle service, where you pay a token amount through the app to book the deal and pay the rest through cash or card. The app also allows you to share your feedback about the service after redeeming the deal.

MICROSOFT RESEARCHERS HAVE DEVELOPED GAZESPEAK, A SMARTPHONE APP THAT ALLOWS PEOPLE WITH ALS (AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS) AND OTHER MOTOR IMPAIRMENTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH EYE GESTURES. THIS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) APP INTERPRETS EYE GESTURES IN REAL TIME AND DECODES THEM INTO PREDICTED UTTERANCES. THE APP WILL SOON BE ROLLED OUT ACROSS ALL DIGITAL PLATFORMS.

PILLBOXIE

Available for: IOS 9.0 or later, iPhone, iPad and iPod touch

What it does: Here's a go-to for those who forget to take their medicines. A well-designed app, it comes with auditory reminders, a visual display, options for multiple users, privacy settings (you can even set a pass code lock), 'nagging reminders' and an electronic checklist to indicate once a medication on the schedule has been taken. Resembling a physical pillbox, it prompts you to add information for scheduling, appearance and dose history, reason for taking the med, and inputting additional instructions or deleting a medicine.

How it works: Once you download the app, it opens to a seven-page instruction manual on how to use it. The app then prompts you to add the necessary information on your medicinal regimen, which can be reassessed from the settings page. It allows you to select icons that resemble the appearance of the actual medication—injectible, inhaled, liquid or pill/capsule. Once a medication is taken and checked off, the icon turns grey on the screen. You can also enter notes on time and dose taken as well as how you feel after taking the medication. The app responds promptly each time it is opened and is integrated with other reminders on the device. However, it does not need to be opened to provide written and auditory reminders—notifications appear automatically. Value-adds include the ability to track medications for multiple users with different reminder alerts for each individual and the option of emailing your medication list directly through the app.





On a **yoga** high!

This International Yoga Day marked a milestone in Harmony's journey towards a disease-free and dignified life for silvers. We are now partnering with holistic wellness guru Dr Mickey Mehta, whose mantra 'Be Stronger, Live Longer' resonates with our own motto of active ageing. Harmony along with Dr Mehta envisages a series of on-ground and off-ground initiatives aimed at complete and 360° wellness for senior citizens.

We set the ball rolling on 21 June at the special edition of 'Yoga by the Bay' at Marine Drive, Mumbai, guided by Dr Mehta. Over 50 silvers associated with Harmony participated with great enthusiasm in the event, which was attended by noted personalities such as Shaina N C, Dalip Tahil, Malaika Arora and Arbaaz Khan.

From newcomers to long-time yoga practitioners, the silvers were a diverse bunch. For instance, Aruna Malshe, 62, started practising yoga in 1980 after she was diagnosed with spondylitis. "Through yoga, I have been able to manage the effects of the condition, and it keeps me going



even today," she shared. Some others, like fitness enthusiast Mahazarin Patel, 65, have long been looking for the opportunity to be introduced to yoga. "I thought I will not be able to do any of the exercises, but the instructors were close at hand to help me bend and stretch," she said. "It's a great event and I will keep coming here every year."



Some others were seated on the parapet owing to their health conditions but ensured they received their day's quota of exercises. For Jyotsna Panchal, 59, who suffered from hip damage a few years ago, yoga has been a true healer of mind and body. "Whenever I suffer from aches and pains, I get relief from yoga and meditation," she said. Meanwhile, 75 year-old Ramnath Narayan Chiplunkar views yoga as a way of life. "I have been practising for the past 16 years and have managed to ward off lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure through yoga and an active lifestyle," he revealed.

This was the third consecutive year that Rajnikant Karia, 74, was attending the event on International Yoga Day. "I practise yoga regularly and feel young," he said. "It's a

special feeling to do yoga in front of such a large audience and in this atmosphere on the seafront."

For Pramila Shah, 75, who has been a yoga practitioner for the past nine years, this International Yoga Day brought in a marked change from her daily routine of visiting the temple every morning. "I am feeling energetic after doing breathing exercises by the sea," she told us.

For some, the event marked the beginning of a whole new chapter in their lives. Ahuja Acharyakar, 64, enquired among her friends, "Can we do this often?" Indeed, Dr Mehta conducts Yoga by the Bay on the third Sunday of every month at the same place (Marine Drive). Just step onto the promenade and join him!



Photographs by 123RF.com

Keen on green

‘Going green’ benefits not only the environment; it is also important for your mental well-being. Researchers at the University of York’s Stockholm Environment Institute, England, found that **green spaces had a definite impact on brain activity and mental state**. The study was conducted on eight people over the age of 65, who wore portable devices that detected brain changes. The researchers found significant changes in their levels of excitement, engagement and even frustration when put in green locations. “Urban green space has a role to play in contributing to a supportive city environment for older people through mediating the stress induced by built-up settings,” says research fellow and author Chris Neale. The study was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

STAY FIT, STAY MOBILE

Get back on that treadmill—it's doing you more good than you know. New research suggests that just **two-and-a-half hours of physical activity a week can boost**



mobility and improve quality of life among Parkinson's patients.

Studies conducted at the Centre for Education in Health Sciences at Northwestern University, Chicago, found that those who exercised regularly every week experienced slower decline in health-related quality of life and mobility. The findings, based on an analysis of 3,408 Parkinson's patients over two years, were reported in *Journal of Parkinson's Disease*.

LESS IS NOT ALWAYS MORE



10%

of people over 65 are at risk of malnutrition

Lossing weight is usually reason to pop open the champagne but there is such a thing as being too thin. A study conducted by England's Malnutrition Task Force, an independent group of experts across health, social care and local government united to address malnutrition in older people, shows that **rapid weight loss could be a warning sign of malnutrition, cancer, liver disease or even dementia.**

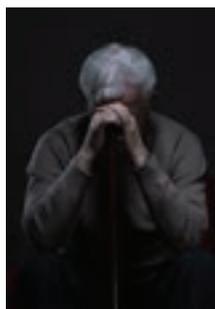
The study, following official figures, found a threefold increase in the number of silvers suffering from malnutrition over 10 years and that 10 per cent of people over 65 are at risk of malnutrition. The researchers polled 855 pensioners for their views on health and weight and found that the seniors they spoke to were either not aware of sudden weight loss as they ascribed it to ageing or that the signs and symptoms were too subtle to notice. Thus, if you find yourself getting tired easily, your clothes have grown uncomfortably loose or your energy levels have sunk, it might be a red flag. What's more, loneliness or grief sometimes leads to loss of appetite and, consequently, malnutrition.

LONELINESS CAN KILL

While we regard physical conditions such as obesity, smoking, cholesterol and coronary heart disease as being potential killers, it appears that issues of the mind are equally important in influencing how long we live.

Isolation and loneliness negatively impact health in the long run for elders, says John Cacciopo, psychologist with the University of Chicago and co-author of the book *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*.

Cacciopo equates the risks of loneliness with those of obesity and says it could increase mortality rate by 26 per cent. With 20 per cent of Americans suffering from loneliness, as per an earlier study done at Brigham Young University in 2015, it is a rising health concern. So if you're in middle age, gear up, get social and spend real time with people.



MOOD ZAPPER?

Uppers and downers doing nothing for you lately? Don't despair. You could soon zap yourself into a better mood! Forty-nine patients were recently taken off anti-depressants for two weeks and introduced to **a non-invasive gadget that stimulates the brain as a means of dealing with depression.** This trial was conducted at the China Academy of Medical Sciences, Beijing. Patients were given a handheld device that sent a mild electric current through clips attached to both ears. They used the device twice a day for a month, essentially to zap the vagus nerve. At the end of that period, it was found that doing this drastically reduced the patients' scores on the Hamilton's Rating Scale used by psychiatrists to measure the severity of depression. The study was published in journal *Biological Psychiatry*.

Sleep tight

Those who suffer from sleep apnoea might benefit from a rather sexy remedy. Scientists are recommending that they take an aphrodisiac before turning in for the night. Now here's the spoiler—they're not recommending sex as a cure! Rather, Chi-Sang

Poon, research scientist at Health Sciences and Technology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US, has found that **a chemical called yohimbine from the bark of the African Yohimbe tree effectively—and coincidentally—treats both erectile dysfunction and sleep apnoea.** In this disorder, this natural

compound reactivates the nerve impulses to the tongue and stops it from relaxing during sleep, thus preventing it from falling back and blocking the airway in the throat. Goodbye clunky mouthpieces and breathing machines! Wait, not so soon. The chemical needs to be formulated into a drug and tested on humans.

HARD CORE

While it is a no-brainer that cholesterol puts you at risk of coronary disease, the belief is that the soft, lipid-laden plaque that blocks the arteries—not the hard, calcium deposits—is the culprit. Researchers at the Intermountain

Medical Centre Heart Institute

in Utah, US, are now saying the opposite is true. They

have found that **people with proportionately higher quantities of harder calcified plaque—not the soft variety—are at risk of heart attacks** as this type of plaque has

the greatest probability of rupturing and triggering a coronary event. These findings are a game-changer because millions of people around the world may not need to take statins prescribed to counter the build-up of soft plaque in the arteries. The team analysed the composition of coronary artery plaque in 224 patients and followed them for seven years. The results were presented at the American College of Cardiology Scientific Sessions in Washington DC.



PAINFUL TRUTH

The next time you reach for a cushion to support your aching back, sit up—ouch!—and take note: research suggests **a connection between back and neck pain in silvers and early death.**

Although this link has been suspected for long, researchers at Sydney University in Australia are attempting to quantify the risk—they found that people with spinal pain were 13 per cent more likely to die early. Their findings were based on a study conducted on 4,400 people over 70 years. Even though this is not a causal relationship, it is a red flag. Scientists point out that chronic spinal pain can wear down the

immune system and make people more vulnerable to disease. It could also be part of a pattern of overall poor health, which contributes to early mortality. So, if you have an aching back, chances are you won't perish from it but you should find out why it hurts so much. The study was published in the *European Journal of Pain*.



13%

of people with spinal pain are more likely to die early



Photographs by 123RF.com

EYE, EYE, SIR! Here's a simple and cheap innovation that is, quite literally, an eye-opener. It's a camera that can photograph the retina without having you subjected to those irritating, pupil-dilating eye drops before your eye exam. The camera, developed by scientists at the University of Illinois, Chicago, works by first emitting infrared light, which is used to focus the camera on the retina. Once focused, a quick flash of white light is delivered as the picture is taken. What makes the camera so effective is that the iris—the muscle that dilates and contracts the pupil—does not react to infrared light, as it does to the white light used by conventional cameras. Science in the blink of an eye? You bet!

BIRTHDAYS

Indian writer and poet **Susham Bedi** turns 72 on 1 July.

American actor and producer **Tom Cruise** turns 55 on 3 July.

Indian writer **Amitav Ghosh** turns 61 on 11 July.

Television host, actor and author **Wendy Williams** turns 53 on 18 July.

Actor and director **Naseeruddin Shah** turns 68 on 20 July.

Businessman, investor and philanthropist **Azim Premji** turns 72 on 24 July.

Marathi and Hindi film actor **Sulochana** turns 89 on 30 July.

IN PASSING

Former Punjab DGP **Kanwar Pal Singh Gill** passed away on 26 May, after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 82.

English TV presenter **John Noakes** died on 28 May after a long battle with Alzheimer's. He was 83.

Indian film producer and distributor **Parvathamma Rajkumar** died of renal failure on 31 May. She was 77.

American journalist, author and former White House press secretary **Victor Gold** passed away on 5 June. He was 88.

Urdu poet, doyenne of Telugu literature and recipient of the Jnanpith Award **C Narayana Reddy** passed away on 12 June following a brief illness. He was 85.

MILESTONES

✎ **Verdun Hayes**, 101, who served in the British Army during World War II, broke the world record for being the oldest tandem skydiver by jumping out of a plane from 15,000 ft.

✎ Athlete **Mann Kaur**, 101, broke the Guinness World Record for javelin with a throw of 5.12 m, taking her gold medal tally to four in the World Masters Games in Auckland, New Zealand. She also set a world record by stepping out 192 m above Auckland city to become the oldest person to skywalk.

✎ **Mahesh Kapasi**, 68, from New Delhi, has entered the *Limca Book of Records 2017* for writing 15,929 letters in 384 publications since 1974—he is a contributor to our 'Response' page too!

Johanna Quaas is the world's oldest gymnast since 2012, according to *Guinness World Records*. A poster girl for active ageing, the 92 year-old German great-grandmother recently wowed the audience with her excellent gymnastic skills at the International Ageing Week held in Singapore. She has won 11 medals to date.

OVERHEARD

"Beauty is whatever you do that makes you confident. Beauty products should enhance who you are, rather than making you into someone you don't feel comfortable with. Find your own style. Don't try to be someone else; not everything works. Just as it is with clothing, the more you can see the person, the more the actual soul of the person shows through, the better. You want to use products that allow you to be there when you're finished applying them. I'm actually lucky I started out as a character actor and not as a great beauty. I don't have the pressure on me that some people do!"

—American actor **Susan Sarandon**, 70, speaking to website thecut.com



123RF.com

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.

LIFE'S A STAGE

Till recently, I lived in a retirement home for four years in Vijayawada. I used to visit Hyderabad for a week, every month, to perform the monthly rituals for my dear departed husband. On one such trip, I met Lakshmi, my favourite niece, whose mother and I have been great friends for a very long time.

Lakshmi was looking for women to be a part of her dance drama, which was based on powerful female characters from Indian mythology. The show was scheduled for 8 March, International Women's Day. Three of the characters had dropped out at the last minute, so she asked me if I could play Kunti, mother of the Pandavas. I developed cold feet and didn't think I could do it.

Although I had been a teacher for more than 25 years and had been on stage with colleagues and kids, this was different. I would have to actually look at the audience and deliver my lines! Then Lakshmi said she would be reading out the parts and I would only have to make silent gestures according to the words. I was already feeling better.

We practised for a day and then it was time to go. When I saw the people coming into the auditorium, my nervousness resurfaced but I couldn't back out at that point. Fortunately, it went off very well and I was pleasantly surprised when people clapped for me with great energy!

My life has come full circle, from being a typical Telugu housewife married at the age of 17 to acting in Lakshmi's play. I have always loved music and dance but my father would not allow me to learn either. After I passed my Class 7, I was given away in marriage. Thereafter, it was my husband's prerogative to decide whether I should learn any of the performing arts. My husband understood my desire and encouraged me to study some more. I did my Class 10 privately and then signed up for the five-year course to qualify for the Telugu Pandit exam from



Shyamola Khanna

Leelavathi overcame her stage fright through determination

Nagarjuna University in Vijaywada, an official certificate that allows one to teach the language.

I could not learn dance but I did learn music and began to teach Telugu in small schools where my husband was posted, in and around Vijayawada. Teaching gave me the opportunity to explore music and perform on stage during annual day celebrations. When I look back, I believe it was my determination and my husband's support that helped me make my life better. That same determination saw me through my initial stage fright during Lakshmi's play.

After my husband retired, we chose to stay in a retirement home as he did not want to be a burden on our children. I have now decided to return to Hyderabad and stay with my son. I am in touch with friends; I am picking up on my love for reading holy books and other texts and gardening. A physiotherapist has given me some exercises and Lakshmi has added some easy ones too. I do these on a daily basis. I do not have any maids or any kind of help and do everything myself. This is how it was in the old-age home. Being physically and mentally engaged like this leaves me with no time to fret or worry.

—Leelavathi, Secunderabad

IF THE SPIRIT IS WILLING...

I got a new lease on life over 10 years ago, when I was in my 60s. With little education and no experience in writing, I suddenly became a published Tamil writer, a playwright and an author!

My mother and parents-in-law, around whom much of my life revolved, were gone. My son and his family left for the US 14 years ago. For the first time in my life, I felt lonely. Not one to give in to depression even in the darkest hours, I drew inspiration from this solitude to embark on a journey of writing.

I was inspired by books on the lives of great men, saints and our scriptures. I would snatch time in between my household chores to devour these. God has blessed me with a photographic memory and, to this day, I can recall unique episodes from books I'd read and discourses I'd heard years ago.

I ventured into this world by writing my spiritual experiences and that of my family associated with Maha Periyava, the great seer of Kanchi Mutt. My brother Balu, a teacher and published author, suggested I send in one of the pieces to *Om Saravana Bhava*, a spiritual publication. Not only was the story published, the publication also asked me to continue writing for them. Soon, the Kanchi Sankara Mutt approached me to write for their 16-page newsletter *Jana Kalyana Seithi Malar*. Since then, there has been no looking back and I started writing for several other publications.

In 2007, I adapted the life story of Adi Shankaracharya in drama form for the Sankara Mutt, titled *Vaazhvum Vaakum*. Right now, I am writing a play for the school children close to my home. My book *Arul Tharum Aanmiga Kadhaikal* (Spiritual Stories for Bliss), a compendium of 60 short stories, was published a few years ago and another one is in the works. Sankara Mutt also broadcast my hour-long interview for *Thanjavur Parampara*, a knowledge portal on culture and tradition, which went viral on YouTube.

I was born the younger of two siblings in 1941, in a village near the temple town of Kumbakonam, Tamil Nadu. I was

married at the age of 13. My husband was not lettered and looked after his family's agricultural lands. Twelve years after marriage, we were blessed with Srinivasan, my son. Four years later, we had twins: a son and daughter.

As they say, misfortunes do not come alone. We lost our lands and fell into hard days. Within eight years, I lost my daughter to illness and my twin son and husband to accidents. I guess I had become inured to tragedy but my spiritual moorings and faith in God helped me develop resilience. I willed myself to come out on top of distressing situations. I had to move on. My son had to be educated and I had five mouths to feed.



J. Ramaswamy

Rajalakshmi ventured into spiritual writing in her 60s

I took into our home a few students as paying guests and did odd jobs for neighbours and took up cooking orders from them, in addition to babysitting my house owner's child. Srinivasan was a topper and medallist in school. He gained admission to Tirunelveli Engineering College without much trouble. Sethuraman, an ardent devotee of Maha Periyava, helped with the fees.

At 76, I see that my spiritual inclinations have inspired a beautiful second innings. It was indeed a magical turn of events where I found my calling so late in life.

—B Rajalakshmi, aka Rajam Maami, Chennai



At the wheel

This advanced prop strengthens the back and hips and expands the lungs



Ushtrasana

Photographs by Haresh Patel



Sarvangasana

The wheel is a new entrant in the yoga world. Props that correspond to it are bolsters, sometimes made to order as wooden bolsters. This can be categorised as an advanced prop—you need instruction from a yoga expert before you begin to experiment with it. Most often, you will also need a partner to help, if only to hold the wheel in position. In case you don't have one, you can use a firm wall to place it against, or a firm yoga block.

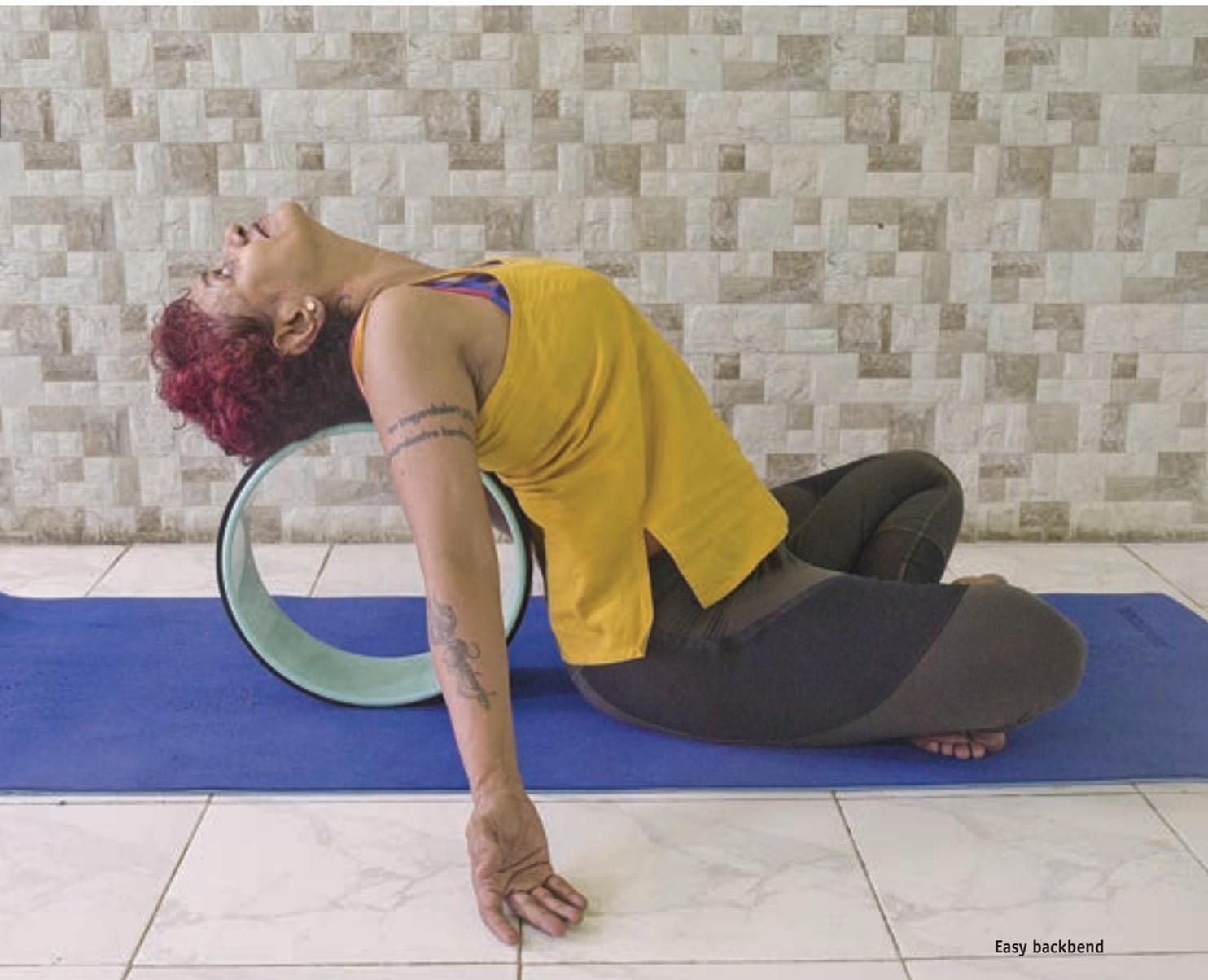
Abroad, there are several sizes of wheels available; in India, there is a standard size, which is a wheel with a circumference of slightly more than a foot. Though it can be used for higher lifts in poses like the shoulder stand

(*sarvangasana*) and pelvic tilt (*kandarasana*), it is best used as a way to open your back for backbends. Some poses that work well with it are the upward plank (*purvottanasana*), cobra (*bhujangasana*), camel (*ushtrasana*), and the Hanuman leap pose (*Hanumanasana*).

The most exciting impact of using the wheel is felt on the spine and in the deepening and enhancement of backbends. The benefits include stronger back muscles, more flexibility at the back and greater hip strength. An immediate effect most people enjoy is the expansion of the lungs leading to deeper breath. This can elevate the mood, remove depression and be a powerful de-stressor.

KREEDA YOGA Murtih – Statue

All of us know this game. The group is loosely spread out. A leader calls out the cues. Once he calls out a name (from among the players), the others run lightly to catch him. Suddenly, the leader calls out *Murtih*—everybody must stop in their tracks and stay still as long as the leader does not give any other command. Those who fidget are out of the game; the others continue as the leader calls out another player's name and the game continues as before. The benefits of this game are emotional culturing and control. It also enhances stamina and mental alertness.



Easy backbend

YOGIC MOVES

Easy backbend

This is a simple combination of two poses; hence, there is no name for it. A more advanced classical variation would be the lying thunderbolt (*supta vajrasana*). But as this pose has a lot of contraindications, especially with knee pain, we are giving you a simpler variation. This may be done with legs lightly crossed in the *sukhasana* (easy pose). Keep the yoga wheel—also called the dharma wheel as it was first created by celebrated yogi Dharma Mitra—at your back. If required, you can keep a block ahead of it, to ensure it does not roll off, or

place the wheel against a wall for firmness. Adjust your body so your back is firm against the wheel. Then, gently lean back with the head looking up (if you have a neck problem) or dropped gently back. Let your hands hang loosely to the sides to further enhance the stretch at the upper back and chest. Hold for a few seconds initially. Later, with regular practice, you can hold longer. Most people love the expansion this provides because the lungs get expanded. It is very relaxing once the initial adjustment is done.

Shameem Akhtar 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)



IT'S NEVER 2 LATE BY JACK YORK



Courtesy: Jack York

The power of perseverance

A champion for the rights of the elderly, Vivian Tellis Nayak, with the steadfast support of his wife Mary, has refused to let Parkinson's disease define him or stand in the way of his work

Greetings, readers of *Harmony-Celebrate Age!*

I'm delighted to have this be my initial offering for the magazine. Executive Editor Arati Menon has asked me to write some words several times a year to bridge the gap between the transformational work being done in the US relative to ageing, and the same creative spirit occurring in India. I'm delighted to

have my first two pieces highlighting the work of two remarkable Indian immigrants who have shared their skill and their compassion as they work now in the US.

Today's words recognise a brilliant friend of mine, a soulful man from Mangalore who has helped transform thousands of lives, one heart at a time. Vivian Tellis Nayak, professor, author, motivator, gerontologist,

researcher, he is all of the above. He is as comfortable passionately defending the rights of the elderly as he is whispering a ridiculous joke into your ear when he thinks no one is noticing.

His upbringing in India is a fascinating one. He was one of 14 children, his mother was not literate, his father with only three years of formal schooling. Yet of those 14 kids, from

such a humble beginning, three have become PhDs and one an MD. His spirit of perseverance obviously runs in the family.

In 1967, at the age of 31, Vivian made his inaugural visit to the US. At that point in his life, he was an ordained priest. He needed to come to the US in order to study for his PhD in sociology; his life was driven in a spiritual direction. The priesthood seemed destined to be his life's journey, but events got in the way and diverted his course. He met the crown jewel of his life, Mary, while studying in the US. She was a nun at the time and they both, rather dramatically, stepped down from their religious callings to start a life together. I don't pretend to have an inside track as to how God thinks, but when you look at the thousands of lives these two people have changed I think it's all good from His perspective!

Vivian continued his path towards higher education, becoming a professor at Hartwick College in upstate New York, teaching sociology for 10 years. While at Hartwick, he led four (three-month) off-campus programs to India, introducing 120 students to the culture of his motherland. He then taught at St Xavier University in Chicago for 17 years. As he reflects on his life, his biggest satisfaction comes from the hundreds of students that have long since started their own careers, individuals that tell him how meaningful he was to them and how he opened their minds as students—their lives changed for the better from him being a part of their journey—especially the students he took to India.

Throughout his academic career, Vivian developed a love for ageing, and for older people. As the years went

by he became a sought-after research fellow, delivering countless papers and lectures on how to provide care for vulnerable older adults living in nursing homes and assisted living communities. He continues that work to this day. Mary has had her own passionate career in the field of ageing; to this day, she is a sought-after speaker working to transform the culture of nursing homes in the US.

Vivian professes a love for both of his countries, India and the United States. He misses intensely the friends and family in India that shaped his upbringing, which pains him more than anything else from

Vivian and Mary received a lifetime achievement award in 2013 from the American Health Care Association for their work to improve quality in nursing homes and assisted living in the US

his homeland. He returns frequently to India to be with his family. He appreciates the academic freedom that has existed in the US, a freedom that allowed him to openly publish articles and state positions without any fear of reprisal.

So a life lived well, a retired professor, a gerontologist in his later years—that would be an easy way to end this story; we could all give Vivian a casual word of thanks for his work and passion. But for me what elevates this man, as much as any person I have ever known, is the way he (with remarkable help from Mary) has come to terms with the devastation of living with Parkinson's for

22 years. Vivian openly shares that part of his journey, not wanting to hide his condition and not letting that condition define who he is.

It's not an easy journey, a brilliant mind trapped in a physical hell, but he makes that journey with grace, dignity and humour. I marvel at how he carries himself, with Mary holding his hand along the way. In fact, Mary and Vivian received a lifetime achievement award in 2013 from the American Health Care Association (our long-term care provider association) for their work to improve quality in nursing homes and assisted living in the US.

There's no end to the energy of this man. Regardless of his age, or his disability, he just keeps moving forward, one shuffling step after another. He has just published a book, *Return of Compassion to Health Care*, available on Amazon India, which provides a glimpse into his work with ageing, and a window into his soul. It's a great read; I recommend it highly.

So Vivian, keep on inspiring, keep on smiling, keep on whispering those bad jokes in my ear. You're an inspiration to thousands, and a brother to me. My life, like so many of your students, has been enriched by your presence. It's an honour to briefly share your journey.

York is co-founder of *It's Never 2 Late*® (iN2L), an American company dedicated to helping older adults realise the full benefits of today's technology



Go organic



Photographs by 123RF.com

Choose foods that are safe, sustainable and free of disease

Our food choices affect not just our bodies but the future of life on earth. At present, most of us are unaware of the toxic poisons accumulating in food chains, poisoning us and our earth for many generations to come.

Toxic food

What you eat is what you are. Indeed, our energy comes directly from what we eat and food, just like us, is a living entity. Its energy comes from the sun and its nutrients come from the

earth. Thus, all that we consume must support conservation that indirectly helps support our health.

Many foods are laden with chemicals, preservatives, colours and taste enhancers, are highly

processed, and are topped with bad fat, white flour, and white sugar. Further, growth hormones are pumped into foods to increase their shelf life. All this has a profound effect not only on ecology but human health—mental and physical.

Dangerous for silvers

Most unfortunately, elders who are constantly exposed to these dangers are less able to eliminate the poisons from their body, resulting in lowered immunity and increased vulnerability to disease. To make matters worse, obesity is also on the rise among this demographic. Thus, as one ages, exposure to these toxins can permanently alter the way an individual's biological system operates. In fact, when food consumption is 'anti-nature' in old age, there is a higher risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, breathing problems, degenerative diseases, dementia, Alzheimer's and even cancer. Therefore, it is an imperative that seniors make a shift in their food habits to reduce the risk of degenerative diseases.

Getting it right

In my view, taking charge of yourself and the planet begins at the end of your spoon as earth care and self care go hand in hand. Add more plant-based, seasonal, local and organic foods to your diet as none of them tamper with nature. Eat fresh and unprocessed fruits, vegetables, whole grains and pulses that are grown without fertilisers and pesticides, and free-range eggs, organic dairy products and organically farm-bred animal protein produced without growth regulators and livestock feed additives. And, yes, throw out the white flour, white sugar, fried foods and sweets!

The organic way

Organic food is sustainable, safe and free of disease-promoting chemicals,



MIXED VEGETABLE PULAV

Serves 4; Preparation time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- Organic brown rice: 150 gm; raw
- French beans: 150 gm; finely chopped
- Tomatoes: 200 gm; finely chopped
- Green capsicum: 100 gm; finely chopped
- Organic cinnamon stick: ½ inch
- Organic cloves: 2
- Organic cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Curry leaves: 5-6
- Ghee: 1 tsp
- Lemon: 1
- Green coriander: ½ cup; finely chopped
- Salt to taste

Method

Boil the rice, put it in a bowl and set aside. Now boil the French beans and leave aside. Take ghee in a *kadhai* (wok), add cinnamon, cloves and cumin seeds. Once the spices crackle, add curry leaves. Then add capsicum and sauté for a few seconds. Add tomatoes and French beans and cook for a few more seconds. Add salt and cooked rice and mix well. Allow it to cook for 10 minutes. Squeeze lemon juice on top and mix again. Garnish with chopped green coriander and serve hot.

MANGO & MINT CHAAT
Serves 4; Preparation time:
5 minutes

Ingredients

- Organic mangoes: 2
- Coconut: 1 tbsp; grated
- Green chilli: 1; finely chopped
- Mint leaves: a few

Method

Peel and chop the organic mangoes. Add grated coconut, green chilli and mint leaves. Toss well and serve cold.



POHA BHEL
Serves 4; Preparation
time: 10 minutes

Ingredients

- Poha (beaten rice): 100 gm; preferably unpolished brown poha
- Cucumber: 200 gm; finely chopped
- Tomatoes: 250 gm; finely chopped
- Raw mango (optional): 50 gm; finely chopped
- Coriander leaves: 4 tbsp; finely chopped
- Olives: 6-8; sliced

- Sweet chutney: 8 tbsp
- Green chutney: 4 tbsp

Method

Soak the poha for 15-20 minutes. Drain out the excess water and keep aside for 10 minutes to further drain out the water. Transfer the poha to a bowl. Add tomatoes, cucumber, olives, coriander leaves, raw mango, sweet chutney and green chutney to the bowl. Mix well. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

preservatives and pesticides. And in addition to preserving the nutrients in your food and protecting individual health, organic farming is better for the environment—it protects the climate; it is better for the flora and fauna, the soil, and animal reproduction; and it produces higher yields in drought conditions.

Organic food is more expensive but I believe it is worth spending a little more to benefit not only your health but the environment too. The truth is, we are getting what we are paying for, a good quality item that is

nutritious and safe for us to eat. And it will give you more energy, boost your mood, and prevent, retard and reverse diseases.

Today, especially in the metros, a host of organic brands have flooded the market. But one needs certification to be sure if they are authentically organic. The brands I am confident about are Conscious Foods and 24 Lettered Mantra as they offer good quality at a competitive price.

All considered, your food choices reflect your attitude to life and to

the world. You have always fed your family with love; now feed yourself with confidence with food choices that are safe and save the planet. Go organic—and give yourself and future generations the legacy of good health.

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

Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

Harmony-Celebrate Age

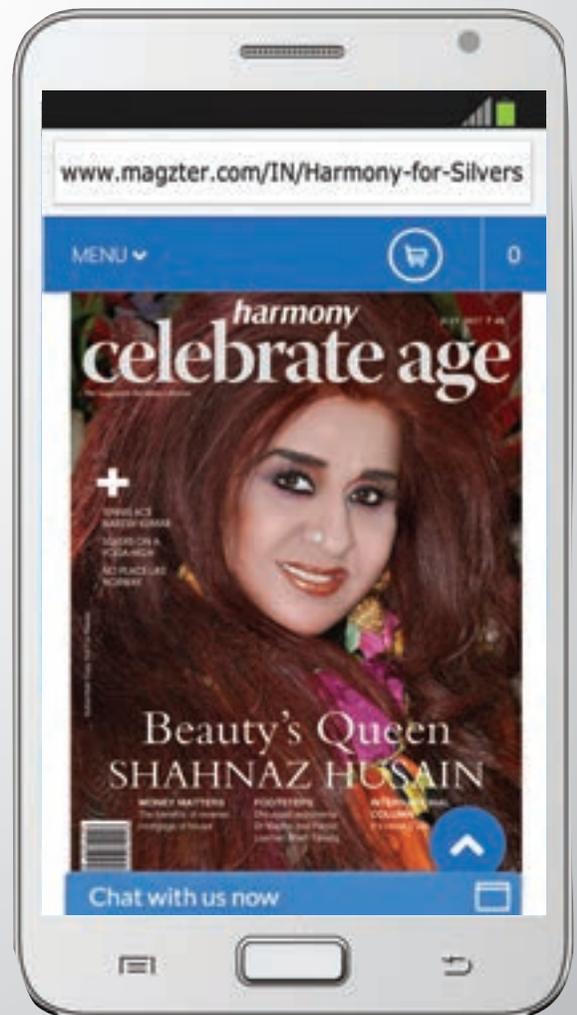
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HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

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

Ingredients of success

Sudha Nahata • MUMBAI

Whether it is special vegetables like *chakki ka saag* and *pachkuta* or rice dishes like *kabuli pulao*, she grew up seeing her mother and grandmother mix the masalas themselves even though the kitchen was the cook's domain. Indeed, 71 year-old Sudha Nahata, a Rajasthani from Mumbai, believes it is all about mixing the masalas right: the right ingredients in the right proportion! And how does one arrive at this perfect taste? "I would love to share my recipes with you, but honestly I don't know the exact measures," she responded with a smile. Like many of our elders whose expertise in the kitchen has nothing to do with teaspoon and cup measurements, Sudhaji has that uncanny *andaaz* while cooking. As she shared the famous Jodhpuri recipe of *kabuli* with me, I could see her fingers dance as though they were actually mixing the ingredients.

Draped in an ethereal peach chiffon sari glistening with zardozi, Sudhaji was a picture of regal elegance. I met her on her recent visit to a wedding in Chennai and we chatted late into the night about several things: food, family, work and the art of harmonising everything. It was easy to see how much she is loved and cherished by family and friends as some of her relatives participated in our conversation. Naveen Galada, who had introduced us, said, "She is always high on life and blessed with a rare combination of practicality

and a futuristic vision. Whenever I see her, I wish she would start a grooming school for young girls." Prathna Sawansukha summed it up well, "Whether it is family, friends or her customers, she is admired by one and all. She binds us all together. Her house has always been a home where we felt loved and welcome." Here are some tidbits of our conversation.

"Recipes have been tweaked over the years. When the children were young, every Sunday was a treat. I have always enjoyed making special dishes and we also enjoy eating out once a week"

IN HER OWN WORDS

I grew up in Jaipur. Despite a strict upbringing, we were encouraged to learn many skills like swimming and horse riding. To date, MGD [Maharani Gayatri Devi] Girls School remains one of the best in Rajasthan, and we were lucky to have studied there. Thanks to my father's vision, my sister was the first non-Rajput girl to study there. I would have loved to pursue my studies, but I was married to Navratanmalji Nahata when I turned 15. We shifted to Mumbai in 1966. I have lived there since.

FAMILY PRIDE

I have been blessed with four daughters and six grandchildren. I lost my husband in 2012 and now my granddaughter lives with me. I can proudly claim that we have given a good upbringing to our children. It pleases me to see how each one of them has adjusted to their respective families.

VALUES – THEN AND NOW

As we were the only ones from our families living in Mumbai, we often had relatives, nieces and nephews visiting and staying with us. Many of them lived with us for extended periods while they pursued their higher studies. We treated them all as our own children or family, and they gladly adapted to our lifestyle. It is different these days. Now, parents provide their children with everything and they do not want their children to ever compromise. I am not saying it is good or bad—just different.

WORKING FROM HOME

I started a small unit for children's clothes in 1975. Relatives and friends started depending on me for their kid's clothes. I enjoyed the entire process, from procuring the fabric, laces and buttons to creating the design. Backed by a good tailor, I managed quite easily. Seeing how well I coped with orders, my husband encouraged me to start a commercial



HEALTHY KABULI PULAV

(Layered rice and vegetables)

A famous and rich rice dish from Jodhpur, this is a favourite at celebrations and weddings. It is highly possible that this dish is the vegetarian version of *Qabili Pulav*, the national dish of Kabul. Though the original recipe requires the vegetables and bread slices to be deep-fried in ghee, Sudhaji has tweaked the recipe into a healthier one.

Ingredients

For the rice

- Rice: 2 cups (300 gm)
- Lemon juice: From 2 large lemons
- Cardamom powder: a generous pinch

For the vegetables

- Potatoes: 500 gm; sliced thickly
- Purple yam (*ratalu*): 300 gm; sliced thickly
- Cauliflower: 300 gm; chopped into florets
- Onions: 500 gm; sliced thickly
- Fresh peas: 1 cup; shelled

For the masala

- Onions: 300 gm; chopped roughly
- Garlic: 125 gm (about 2 pods)
- Chilli powder: 2½ tbsp
- Coriander powder: 2½ tbsp
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp

For the whole garam masala

- Peppercorns: 5
- Cinnamon: 1-inch stick
- Cloves: 5-7
- Bay leaves: 3-5

Other ingredients

- Bread: 3 slices
- Asafoetida powder: a generous pinch
- Saffron: a few strands
- Milk: 1½ cups; boiled
- Yoghurt: 2-3 tbsp; beaten
- Ghee: 1 to 1½ cups
- Salt to taste

Method

Cook the rice along with ½ tsp of salt. Take care not to overcook it; allow each grain to remain separate. Cool it by spreading on a large shallow plate. Gently mix the lemon juice and cardamom powder into the cooled rice. Steam the chopped vegetables (potatoes, yam, cauliflower, onions and peas) by placing them in separate containers in a *dhokla* maker. Take care not to overcook. Now bake the potatoes, yam and cauliflower for 5 minutes on 150°F. (Traditionally, all these, except the peas, were deep-fried in ghee.)



venture. I held my first exhibition in September 1975. My collection sold very well, I was inundated with orders, and my company 'Pixies' was born. It did very well but I slowed down a bit since 1996 owing to health reasons. I have always preferred working from home even though people advised me to start a boutique. Somehow I always felt I could do justice to my husband and children if I worked from home.

CULINARY INSPIRATION

All through my growing years, we always had cooks in our kitchen. My grandmother was particular about our clothes being neat, well-ironed and clean; hence, she never

encouraged us to potter around in the kitchen. So I really don't know how and where I learnt to cook! I remember the first time I cooked a full meal. It was after about a month of marriage; the cook was absent one day and my mother-in-law was not in town. Consequently, my grandmother-in-law looked worried about who would prepare the day's food. I told her that if she guided me, I would cook. I cooked that day and she was absolutely delighted! Mind you, she was not easy to please. She not only loved my cooking but also praised me. I was all of 15 and had a *ghunghat* covering my face. But, yes, I was confident and not at all nervous. I am grateful to my mother who instilled this quality in me.

MANAGING PEOPLE

Our staff remains the same, for over 40 years. We have had the same cook and I have used the services of the same tailor for years. Friends often ask me what makes this possible. I think it is one's behaviour and capacity for a healthy rapport that makes a real difference. If one can learn to respect the needs of others, it becomes easy to get along with others.

FOOD HABITS

Earlier we ate rich food at home, but now we don't eat much fried or spicy food. Recipes have been tweaked over the years. When the children were young, every Sunday was a treat: we



Grind the ingredients for the masala (onions, garlic, chilli powder, coriander powder and turmeric) into a fine paste. Soak the saffron in 1 tbsp of warm milk. Rub it until the milk turns orange. Mix it into the remaining milk. Toast the bread slices and quarter them. Heat 1 cup of ghee in a large pan. Add the asafoetida powder and the whole garam masala. As the aroma rises, add the ground masala and sauté for 8-10 minutes until the ghee separates. Now, add the yoghurt and cook for 4-5 minutes. Add 2 cups of water and bring to boil. Now, add the vegetables: first the yam and peas, then the potatoes, and finally the cauliflower and onions. Switch off the flame and add the toasted bread pieces. In a baking dish, spread one layer of the rice preparation at the bottom. Top it with a layer of the vegetable preparation. Top with another layer of the rice preparation. Repeat the layers if the dish is tall enough. Using the end of a spoon, make 4-6 holes in the arranged pulav dish. Sprinkle the saffron milk on the sides of the dish and pour it into the holes. Cover the pulav with an aluminium foil and bake for 10-15 minutes on 200° F. Serve hot.

would set the table beautifully and eat restaurant style. I have always enjoyed making special dishes and we also enjoy eating out once a week. My own favourites include Mumbai street food: *bhelpuri*, *vada pav*, *dabeli*.... I do not diet but I am diet-conscious. For instance, my husband always had *daliya* [porridge with broken wheat] for breakfast. He was extremely diet-conscious. I did not care much for *daliya*, so I would eat fruits instead.

SOME FAVOURITE SPICES

At home, I always have some special masalas. For instance, the *jirawan* of Malwa [Indore] is really handy. Sprinkle it over *poha* or add a dash of it to a simple salad. Serve it with

khakra brushed with ghee or apply it over leftover rotis and puris and enjoy as a roll. A must while travelling. Next on my list is *kathbel ka pachak* from Murshidabad. I get it from Kolkata. Just sprinkle it over *mathri* or *khari* biscuits and enjoy the difference. And then there is the *dal ka masala* from Agra. If your dal or sabzis are tasting a bit bland, simply add this masala. It also gives a punch to samosas.

LEFTOVER TIPS

A favourite at home is toasty toast with leftover *pav* bhaji. Cook the bhaji until it thickens. Sandwich it between two bread slices and bake it in the toaster oven. You can do the same with leftover potato or paneer sabzi.

MANTRA FOR SUCCESS

The simple mantra for success is your smile! Your smiling face can make you a winner. I have always told my daughters that with their smile and attitude, they should leave a lasting impression wherever they go.

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



MONEY MATTERS BY PRIYA DESAI

Home truths: Reverse mortgage is a viable option for monetary flow in the silver years

Owni^{ng} a dream home is one of the biggest aspirations for most of us. Often, a big chunk of a person's income goes towards seeing this dream materialise brick by brick. Years pass by, and before we even realise it, we are at the threshold of the sunset years, with the fledglings having grown wings and flown away to build homes and families of their own. This is the time when most silvers are beset with financial worries. Reverse Mortgage of House (RMH) is a viable solution tailored to meet the needs of such silvers.

Decoding RMH

RMH was introduced in India in 2007. In simple words, it is the exact opposite of a housing loan. The National Housing Bank (NHB) is the apex body for all RMH schemes.

A person who puts up their house for reverse mortgage is called a borrower. Borrowers receive periodic payments, yet continue to live in the same premises. This gives them some financial stability without forgoing their property.

In 2009, the Government introduced yet another scheme, Reverse Mortgage Loan-enabled Annuity (RMLeA), to provide a lifetime income.

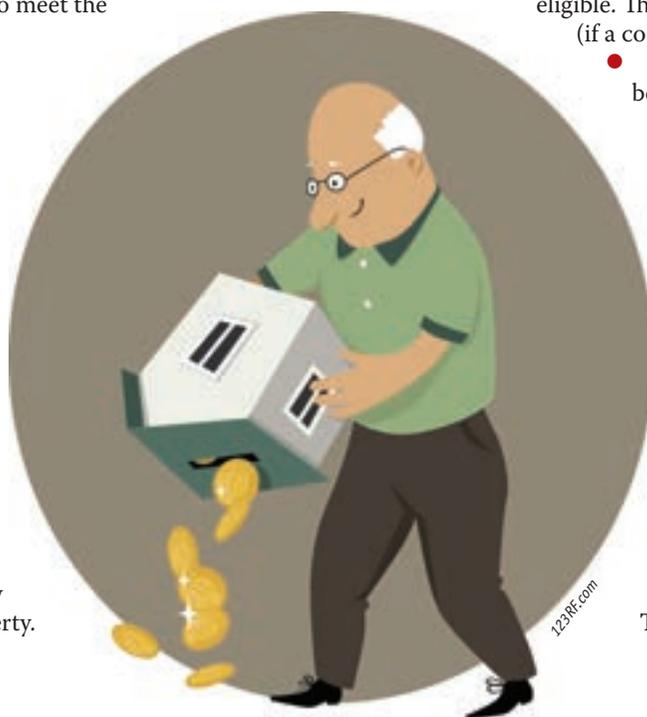
How it works

When a house owned by a borrower is pledged to the bank, it is assessed for its monetary value. Some of the major determinants in the assessment are the demand for the property, prevailing property prices and the condition of the house. The loan amount arrived on the basis of these parameters is disbursed to the home owner

in the form of periodic payments after discounting for the margin of interest costs and price fluctuations. These periodic payments are called 'reverse EMI (equal monthly instalments)'. These are received by the borrower over the fixed loan tenure. Each payment pari passu decreases the equity or interest of the borrower in the house.

A few basics

- Home owners above the age of 60 are eligible. The minimum age of the spouse (if a co-applicant) is 58.
- The life of the property should be a minimum of 20 years.
- The amount of the loan is 60 per cent of the property value.
- Maximum loan tenure is 15 years and minimum 10 years, though some banks provide RMH loans for 20 years.
- Revaluation of property is done every five years.
- Loan payments are available monthly, quarterly, annually or in a lump sum.



It is important that silvers relook at their real-estate investment as a means of financial aid instead of struggling. Liquidating immobile assets is a conducive way of providing for yourself in your sunset years

The benefits

- **Reverse mortgage income doesn't attract any tax:** Silvers would generally be worried about the tax implications of this regular flow of income. However, as the amount received is typically a loan, it doesn't attract any tax. When the lender sells the property to recover the loan amount after the death of the borrower, the surplus (if any) is liable for capital

gains tax. Income under RMLeA used to be taxable, but the scheme received a shot in the arm when it became tax-free in 2013.

RMLeA and RML : A working example

Age	Particulars		Net Monthly RMLeA for Lifetime (₹/per month)		RML (2007)
	Property Value (₹)	LTV	Option 1	Option 2	Up to 20 years
60	50,00,000	60	17,295	10,955	4,214
65	50,00,000	60	19,935	11,335	4,214
70	50,00,000	60	24,080	12,095	4,214
75	50,00,000	70	35,830	16,555	4,916
80	50,00,000	75	57,597	24,941	5,267

LTV – Loan to Value Ratio Option-1: Life Annuity without return of purchase price Option-2: Life Annuity with return of purchase price

Source: Saurabh Balote, Analytical study of inherent risk in reverse mortgage loans, *International Journal of Applied Research* 2016

- **The borrower doesn't lose the house:** The owner of the house need not harbour any apprehensions about not having a roof above their head once the loan period is over. The owner of the house and the spouse can continue to stay in the house till their death, even after the loan tenure is over. However, they will stop receiving monthly payments.

BANKS OFFERING REVERSE MORTGAGE LOANS

- State Bank of India
- Central Bank of India
- Canara Bank
- Union Bank of India
- Bank of India
- Bank of Baroda

- Most banks have a restrictive capping of the loan amount from ₹ 50 lakh (₹ 5 million) to ₹ 1 crore.

The big paradox

Most silvers are emotionally attached to their homes. Silvers consider reverse mortgage only as a final recourse as a mortgage is still looked at with disdain in India. This has probably

acted as a dampener for financial institutions.

- **The owner retains the right to sell the property:** If the owner chooses to sell the house, the lender will recover the loan amount, interest and other expenses. Any loss from the sale of the property is borne by the lender while any profit is passed on to the borrower after adjusting the principal, interest and other costs. If the sale occurs after the death of the property owner, the next of kin has the first right to buy the property once the dues have been paid off.

Though 23 banks and two financial institutions have launched the scheme, none of them have made a concerted effort in pushing the product. The market size of RMH is estimated at ₹ 20,000 crore, but sadly the business volume is negligible.

What ails the concept?

Despite being in existence for almost a decade, RMH and RMLeA haven't caught on in a big way unlike in the West, where silvers exercise their right to earn income from their assets. There are a number of reasons for this, such as:

- Complex and confusing nature of schemes
- Lack of clarity on how the product works
- RMH is a financial product and has risks like other products of such nature. These risks are neither highlighted nor understood correctly
- Lack of properly trained bank staff to sell the scheme
- Lack of unanimity of payout calculations
- Inconsistent answers to customer queries from different organisations
- Unavailability of watertight and comprehensive guidelines needed to popularise this product
- Lengthy documentation procedure that makes it difficult for silvers to comprehend

The current situation is a paradoxical one. People that are consistently in dire need of money are unwilling to part with their assets owing to their emotional attachment (labelled the Indian psyche) and unsubstantiated fears because of a poor understanding of the concept, product and its modus operandi.

While senior demographics and the potential of the product haven't gone unnoticed by financial institutions, they are still not geared up to sell the concept aggressively.

Capitalise as per your needs

It is important that silvers relook at their real-estate investment as a means of financial aid instead of struggling with a no-income and low-savings situation. It is crucial that they hold a magnifying glass to their own needs, comforts and lifestyle requirements, and adopt a more rational approach while considering financial solutions. Indeed, liquidating immobile assets is one of the most conducive ways of providing for yourself in your sunset years.

The author is an economist based in Mumbai

Devoted to Dhruvpad

The first female exponent of this classical musical tradition, Dr Madhu Bhatt Tailang is striving to ensure it does not remain a male preserve, writes **Prakash Bhandari**



In the Bramhapuri locality of Jaipur's walled city, one house attracts more attention than most. Called 'Dhruvpad Dham', it is adorned with metal wire sculptures of the pakhawaj, veena, mridang and tanpura on its gate. This is no random choice of musical instruments; these are the instruments that accompany the oldest existing form of classical Indian music, called Dhruvpad. Given its décor, this could only be the home of Dr Madhu Bhatt Tailang, the first female singer of this centuries-old form of music. She lives here with her father, the much-revered Dhruvpad exponent, Pandit Laxman Bhatt Tailang, 89.

"The origin of Dhruvpad is linked to the recitation of the *Sama Veda* [the sacred Sanskrit text] and is a meditative yoga or prayer in vocal form," explains Dr Tailang. "Its sound and resonance keep the body, mind and soul in a peaceful and healthy consonance. It is much more than mere music." The Tailangs belong to the Vallabhacharya Vaishnava sect and are traditionally singers in the temples of Lord Krishna. "Our family moved from today's Telangana to the north of India a very long time ago," reveals Dr Tailang. She adds that Jaipur has been the home of Dhruvpad singing ever since their ancestors were invited to the darbar of Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in the 19th century.

Dr Tailang is the only child of Pandit Laxman to follow in his footsteps. "Not all my daughters learnt Dhruvpad. Madhu had a penchant and passion for it, and it was she who wanted to become a Dhruvpad singer in true family spirit. She has a voice that matches the resounding rhythm of the *pakhawaj*," says Pandit Laxman, who taught his daughter music orally, as is tradition, from the age of five.

With two master's degrees and a PhD in 'Dhruvpad Musical Dynasties', Dr Tailang has mentored 22 students who have obtained their doctorates in music. She currently heads the Department of Music and is dean of the faculty of fine arts at the University of Rajasthan. Indeed, both father and daughter are passionate about teaching their craft and set up the International Dhruvpad Dham Trust in 2001 to teach students for free. "The future of Dhruvpad

singing will no more remain a male domain and a number of my students will take centre-stage," insists Dr Tailang in her powerful voice that is so beautifully suited to this classical musical art. They also run the Ras Manjari Sangeetopasna Kendra, where students can learn other forms of Indian classical music.

Father and daughter are so totally in sync that even the Gods seem to stop and listen to them sing. "When we were performing at the Dhruvpad Samaroh in Vrindavan on a sunny afternoon many years ago, Madhu and I started singing raga Miyan Malhar. Suddenly, it started drizzling. Soon, the skies opened up and it started pouring as we sang, invoking the rains. This was the effect of our *jugalbandi* [duet]," recalls Pandit Laxman.



IN HER OWN WORDS

I started learning Dhruvpad when I was five years old, whereas my sisters and brother opted to learn to other forms of classical vocal music or to play the sitar. *Riyaz* would begin at 4 am for my eldest sister and, an hour later, the rest of us would be woken up to join her. We all took turns at singing or playing, while the others paid attention. After school, we'd return and it would be time for *riyaz* again. We spent eight hours a day in *riyaz*, a habit I maintain to this day. I don't think I have slept for more than five hours a day my entire life.



Dr Tailang training students on the terrace of her home

Opposite page: with her father and grandmother as a toddler; at one of her early concerts

When I was 13, I took part in my first singing contest. It was conducted by the Central Government's Ministry of Art and Culture. My father prepared me with a Dhruvpad composition. I won the competition and received my first scholarship. The guests at the competition were surprised to see a girl singing Dhruvpad. At that time, it didn't strike me as out of the ordinary. That is when I decided I wanted to be a Dhruvpad singer.

My father taught all of us—six girls and one boy—but never pushed any of us to take up music professionally. He was happy with my decision as he believed my deep voice suited Dhruvpad more than any other classical form. It was up to me to carry forward my father's legacy. For the many scholarships that came my way, I was often asked who I would prefer as my guru. For me, the answer was always the same.

My father took care to balance his roles as parent and teacher. When he would make us accompany him on the tanpura at concerts, I distinctly remember the delicious *rabadi* and *mawa* he would feed us on stage. I also remember all these people coming to pay their respects to him. That's when we'd get a glimpse at how respected our father was.

My mother, who belonged to the same community of devotional singers, was married to my father because of his musical tradition. She would rise before us and get us ready for practice. The chores were divided equally among us children. And when father was away, my mother would take his place as guru and teach us. She was attentive to who was weak in a particular *swara* or raga, and help them individually.

When I was around 20 years old, my father took me to Ambitjugai in Maharashtra, where the Sangeet Natak Akademi had organised a Dhruvpad *mela*. I was to accompany him on the tanpura. There, I was noticed by Dr Premlata Sharma, the first female musicologist, who was one of the organisers. She invited me to open the seminar the next morning, making it my first public concert. After that, my career took off.

My father is very progressive with his music even though he was brought up in a traditional school of learning. Before my father, all the Dhruvpad *gharana* involved singing devotional songs. He said we had been singing those tunes for centuries and even the audience is bored of them. Devotion is not limited to Krishna and Radha. It can also be towards one's country,



K Chandu

he would say. So he started setting *Sare jahan se achha*, *Vande mataram* and even the *Raam dhun* of Gandhi to Dhruvpad. He has over 500 such compositions, the most attributed to any Dhruvpad composer.

Dhruvpad has long been an isolated vocal tradition, only truly appreciated within the musical community but, for my father, this was not good enough. So he reinvented the form by introducing a lighter, fifth element to the existing four, known as the *Chaturang: bandish*, the summary of a raga; *sargam*, singing notes instead of words; *tarana*, nonsense syllables used at a brisk pace; and *hawaj bol*, making the sounds of the *pakhawaj*—within which each composition is performed. My father included a folk or semi-classical element for a lighter singing form, thereby making the music more accessible to classical music fans. It is called *Pachrang*.

My father has opened the art to the many students who are now spread throughout the world. He used to say that this art has been passed down to us across generations, and now is the time for us to let it out. And he finds interesting ways to teach each of his pupils—we call it learning through play. For example, one of the *swara* is *ma pa ni pa re*, which in Rajasthani translates to the child telling her mother that it is raining... *Ma, paani pare!*

“My father believed my deep voice suited Dhruvpad more than any other classical form. For the many scholarships that came my way, I was often asked who I would prefer as my guru. For me, the answer was always the same”

People compare me to my father and I feel a great sense of pride that they see him in me. But when your father is your guru, you have to prove your worth as his name is attached to it. Before beginning any concert, I pray to the Gods for strength to preserve my family name.

My father is a man of many talents, including being a handyman. If any machine in the house is broken, like a watch or the television, he repairs it himself. And when we were children, he would stitch our clothes and even cook great food for us sometimes.

Like my father, music is not my only gift. I like to dance and have spent over 12 years of my young life learning Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Manipuri at Banasthali. My father thought it would help me find more rhythm in my music. I don't have much time for it now but I still dance sometimes.

I was married once. My parents looked for someone with an open mind to let me practise my art. We learnt of this boy who was a lawyer and was also interested in theatre. But you don't always get the full picture from the outside. We divorced in 1997, without any children. To fill that space in my life, I started teaching children free of charge. Rather than having one or two kids, I have thousands, of different ages. I live with my father now. He has given me his land, which I have made into the Dhruvpad Dham institute. This is now home. ✨



An ace, always

Tennis legend Naresh Kumar relives the golden moments of his career in a chat with **Partha Mukherjee**

Naresh Kumar is many people rolled into one: sports commentator, successful businessman, tropical aquarium fish breeder and art collector. But he is most fondly remembered for his pioneering role in taking Indian tennis to the world stage.

Along with Ramanathan Krishnan, Kumar ruled Indian tennis for over a decade in the 1950s and 60s. And together, they were considered one of the top doubles teams in the world, which led the British Tennis Authority to suggest that “Kumar & Krishnan were two of the finest sportsmen on the court...”

At the age of 89, Kumar is now a grand old man, having built a coal trading company in his post-tennis days; but he exudes the air of a man who has defied time. Walking into his sparse yet tastefully decorated office in Kolkata, M F Husain’s angular horses gallop across the walls of the sprawling chamber, reminding us as much of Kumar’s patronage of the ‘barefoot artist’ as his stallion-like will to succeed. These days he makes it to the office for a couple of hours, although the reins have now passed to his son.

Past the paintings, one notices a treasured glass chamber on the wall next to Kumar’s desk, which houses monochromatic memories of his past life: the tennis champion and his Davis Cup teammates meeting then President Rajendra Prasad; conferring with then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru; and most splendid of all, a picture of a lanky and athletic player dwarfed by the Wimbledon court. Below, as acknowledgement to the stories that the photographs tell, hangs the Arjuna Award conferred on him in 1962.

At barely 21 years of age, Kumar played on the foreign circuit. Armed with a wooden Slazenger racket and an Air India kit bag slung over his shoulder, he played the finals at the 1949 North of England Championships at Manchester, his first foreign tournament. “I lost to Tony Mottram, who was No. 1 in the UK, but won the doubles title with Mottram as my partner,” Kumar remembers.

By 1951, he was regularly playing at Wimbledon and making swift strides up the rankings, even reaching the Top 16 in the 1956 Wimbledon singles game. And with Krishnan as his partner, he played a handful of doubles and mixed doubles games over that decade. In fact, *The Daily Telegraph* dubbed Kumar as “one of the most

popular figures in lawn tennis”. Ramanathan Krishnan tells us why: “His sense of humour and ready wit kept us rejuvenated on the circuit. He was quick to crack jokes, even on himself”

Through a career spanning 20 years, Kumar represented India at Wimbledon and Roland-Garros (where the French Open Championship is played) and led the Indian Davis Cup team as playing and non-playing captain for several years. Close to retirement from active sports, in 1963, Kumar turned to the commentary box to keep him close to his beloved game and continued the tradition of attending Wimbledon year after year, long after he had stepped out of the commentary box for good.

Kumar may be on the verge of turning 90 but his achievements are still being recognised; earlier this year, he was awarded the Jeevan Kirti Samman Lifetime Achievement Award by the West Bengal government for his contribution to sports. We visited him at his office and strolled down memory lane with the tennis legend.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

How did tennis happen for you?

I was about 12 when I saw an advertisement in the papers. So I enrolled myself as a trainee at a coaching camp by the Bengal Lawn Tennis Association, in South Club [Kolkata]. We could practise twice a week for half an hour, free of cost. After training for three years, the association saw no talent in me. But I was very committed and started taking private lessons, twice a week, from S J Mathews, one of the coaches at South Club.

You had to return to Lahore, the city of your birth, quite unexpectedly....

Yes, my father sent me back to Lahore when World War II broke out and its effect was felt on the city.

Returning to Lahore under such circumstances, were you able to pursue tennis?

Yes, the courts were meant for players of higher standards in Lahore, where I lived for three-and-a-half years. This made me a much more competent player. I enrolled in

Government College, where I mingled with seniors such as Dev Anand, Keshub Dutt and many others who went on to become greats in their respective fields. The college itself gave my tennis career a huge fillip. It had the best facilities for tennis: six courts graded A, B and C, with C being the lowest court. To play in Court A, one had to beat a player from courts C, B and finally A. The competitiveness inherent in the arrangement was enough to egg me on to give my best. As I was already trained in tennis, I started on Court B and was always challenging Court A players. The British had a wonderful system that was essential for those who aspired to do well in sports.

What was the routine like when you returned to Calcutta? Could you pick up where you left off?

I came back to Calcutta in 1946. Those were very tough and hectic days for me. After attending college in the morning, I had to race to my father's office to help him

in his coal trading business. Then I would rush home to grab a quick lunch and finally land up at South Club or Punjab Club for a gruelling round of tennis. Taj Mohammed and Noor Mohammed, excellent sibling coaches, were appointed by my brother Suresh to practise with me.

What was your earliest win?

I still fondly recall the game in which I beat Jiten Chowdhury, another promising youngster in Calcutta in those days, and bagged the Junior National Champion title for 1945-46. By 1948, I was about 20 years old and I already held a national rank and had won several regional and national titles.

There was one great foe who thwarted you from winning the Nationals....

Yes, I never won a National title as Ramanathan Krishnan and ranked foreigners had started playing in the tournament by then. But I did win the doubles titles six times with Krishnan, and the mixed doubles with Khanum Singh, who had come to India from Karachi. In her younger days, she was the most glamorous lady in the tennis world.

How did it feel to beat Krishnan at last?

I beat the great Krishnan at the Frinton-on-Sea tournament in the UK in the finals in 1957. Of course, it was a great feeling to win against an all-time great. I must confess that the court was wet, which went against Krishnan, who was not an athletic fellow. I could run well on a wet court.

Was that your advantage on court?

Yes, my tenacity. If not for that, I would never have pulled off some of those victories from the brink of defeat. The match against Tony Mottram of Britain comes to mind, where I was trailing badly. But I managed to turn the match around and claw my way to victory. Mottram lead me 5-3 and 30-15 in the fifth set but I retrieved a seemingly impossible shot from Mottram. In all my matches, I fought till the very last point.

Were there any advantages playing on home turf?

Yes, in a way, and the weather played a considerable role too. My most memorable match was my victory over Sven Davidson in the Asian Championships in 1956 at South Club. At that time, Davidson was ranked No. 5 in the world. The scorching midday sun sapped the strength from the tall and muscular Scandinavian and he looked quite dazed at the end of the four-set match.



During a Davis Cup tie versus Japan in Tokyo

“In all my matches, I fought till the very last point. If not for my tenacity, I would have never pulled off some of those victories from the brink of defeat”

What were some of the challenges getting to the foreign circuit in those days?

It was very difficult to get financial support back then. There was no such thing as a sponsor for Indian players. Some well-wishers gave me some money but it was my elder brother Suresh who has provided most of my financial support.

You played more than 100 matches in 19 years. What is your most cherished memory while representing the country?

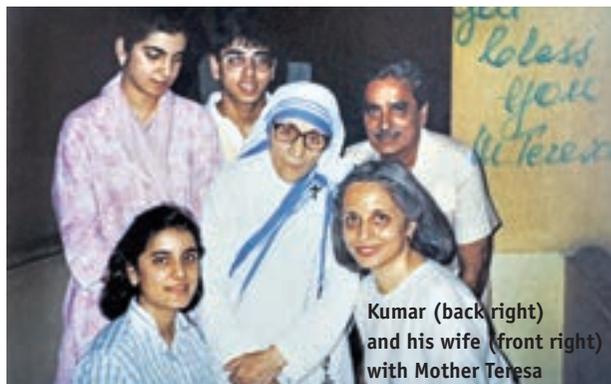
My greatest moment was at Wimbledon, when Ramana- than and I beat Budge Patty and Gardner Mulloy, the reigning champions and the No. 1 doubles seeds. It was the pre-quarter final of 1958.

How did you manage to navigate the circuit abroad and at home?

Usually, after Wimbledon, I would play in the UK and stayed away from home for about six months and then return home from England to work with my father in his coal-trading business and my brother in his many business enterprises. In those days, the coal firms were headed mainly by the British, who knew me because of my tennis. This helped my father procure business from them. My father died of cancer in 1959. While I was abroad, I received a message from home that he was not well. Krishnan and I had just won the doubles in Manchester. When I returned home, Wimbledon sent me a telegram wanting to know if I would make it back, as they were going to seed me and Krishnan No. 3 or 4 in doubles. My father advised me to return but I refused. I stayed with him for six months until he breathed his last. In those days, there were no good painkillers, so he suffered a lot. I couldn't leave him. It was a great setback for my career but my father's blessings more than compensated for that.

How did you make the switch from the court to commentary box?

I started to commentate in English in the latter years of my playing career. I had developed a flair for it by listening to the great cricket commentators of my time Dan Maskell and John Arlot. My *Wimbledon Roundup* on radio was broadcast every morning for 15 minutes on every station



Kumar (back right) and his wife (front right) with Mother Teresa

of All India Radio for about 20 years. I also anchored the Olympic Games and the Asian Games on television.

Apart from your business interests, how do you keep yourself busy?

I have been associated with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity along with my wife, who is their official spokesperson, and I am a member of many social clubs. I also work out at the gym every morning and spend the evening attending social gatherings, painting exhibitions and private film screenings.

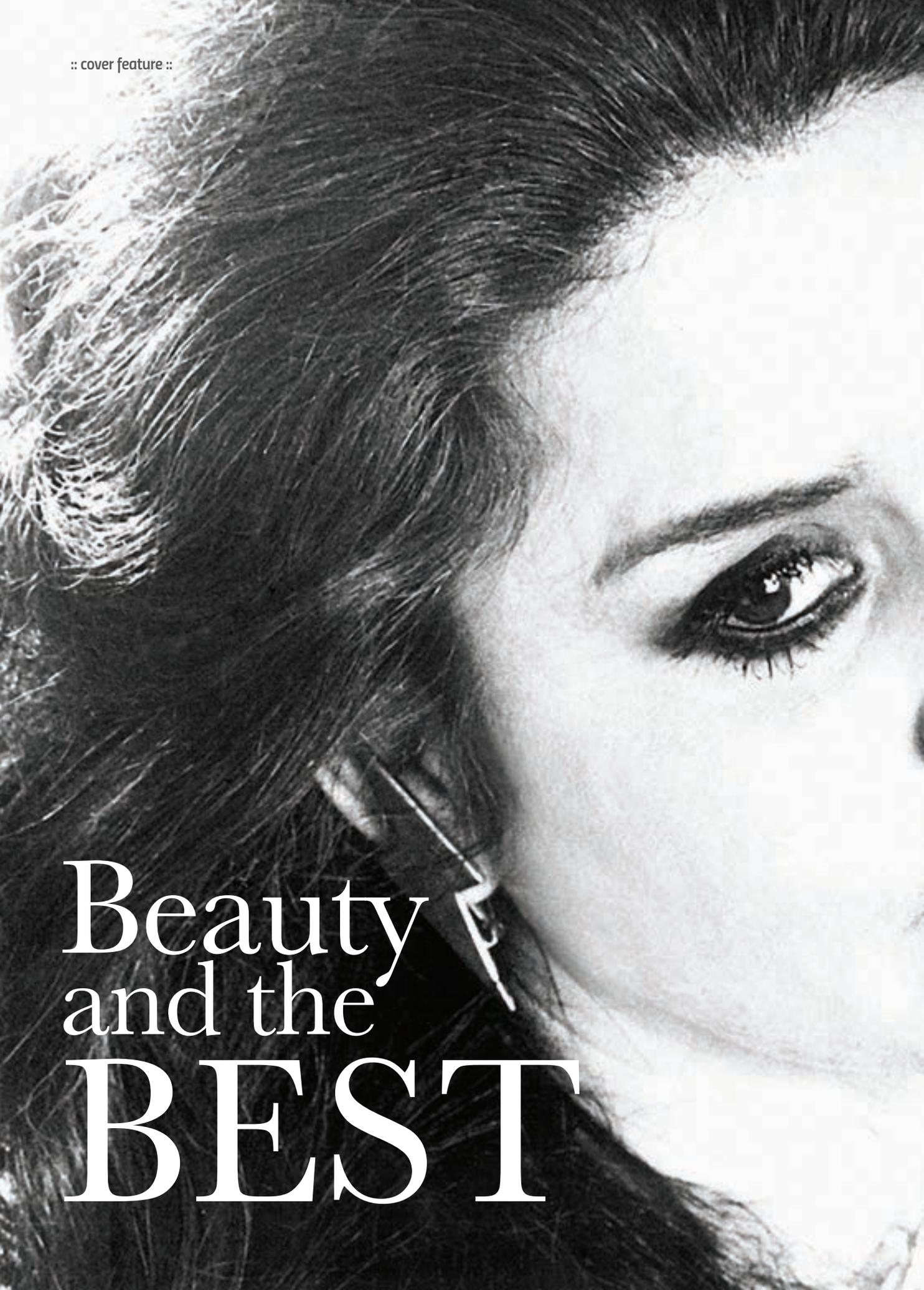
How did you get interested in M F Husain's paintings?

My wife Sunita is a very good painter. She instilled a taste for art in me and inspired me to collect art. But my interest in Husain grew because he had this amazing ability to hold forth on any subject, from films and poetry to music and art. We met him at a dinner party in 1963 and, ever since, our friendship grew. He would join Sunita and me every summer to watch Wimbledon and I would invite him to tournaments in India and Davis Cup matches.

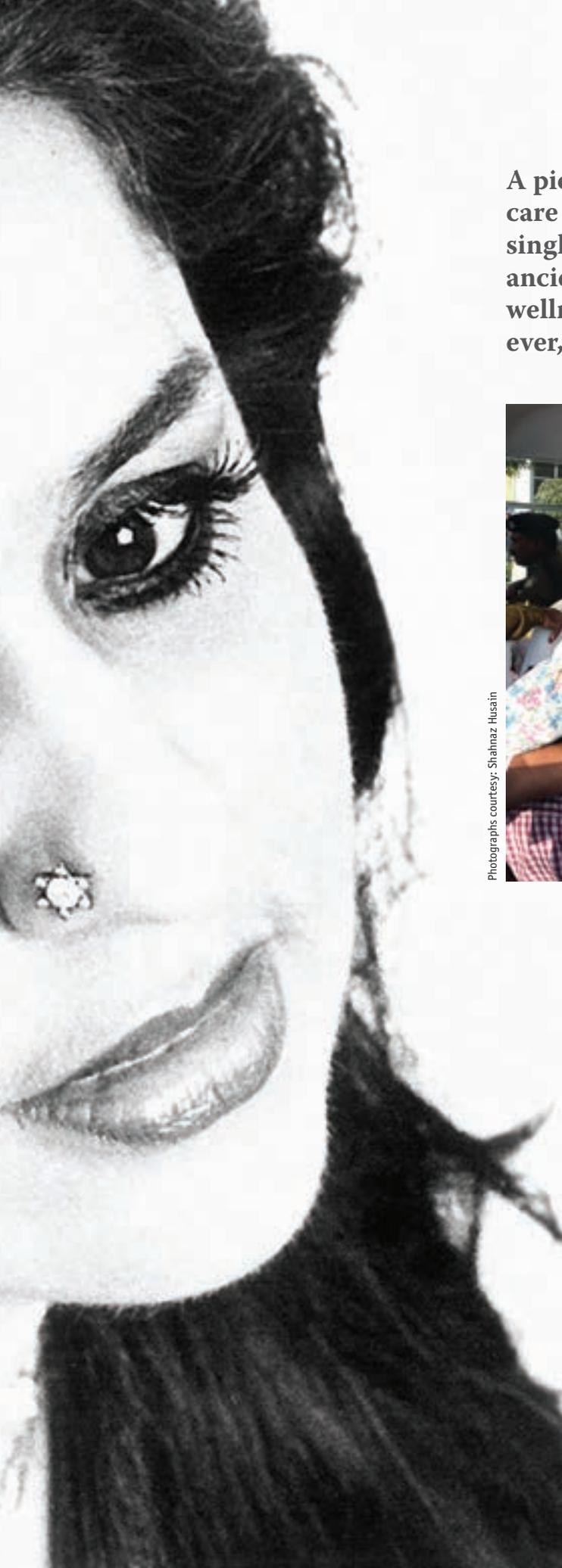
Do your children share your love for sports, or do they have your business acumen?

We have been blessed with three lovely children. My son Arjun, a Cambridge graduate, has taken over the business mantle from me. My daughters, Gita and Preah, both happily married, are a painter and a culinary artist respectively. Both Arjun and Gita were very good at tennis but didn't pursue it. ✨

:: cover feature ::

A high-contrast, black and white close-up photograph of a woman's face and hair. Her dark hair is pulled back, and her right eye is looking towards the camera with a slight, enigmatic smile. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of her hair and the contours of her face.

Beauty and the BEST



A pioneer of the herbal cosmetic care movement, Shahnaz Husain singlehandedly established a market for ancient Indian wisdom on beauty and wellness. And she remains as prolific as ever, discovers Rachna Viridi



Photographs courtesy: Shahnaz Husain

Opulent and larger than life, her home mirrors her persona. Nestled in a by-lane in New Delhi's tony Greater Kailash neighbourhood, the imposing iron gates of the *kothi* open into a patio where a statue of her favourite Lord Ganesha welcomes you. The interiors are equally spectacular; the living room pristine and white, dotted with fur sofas and delicate porcelain, the perfect foil for Shahnaz Husain as she walks in with her retinue, flamboyant in her animal print kurta teamed with a Louis Vuitton scarf, gold leggings and a black overcoat, and her trademark hennaed mane. You may be gobsmacked to know that her 60-odd, in-house staff includes a beauty professional, tailor, interior decorator, camerapersons and a PR team! But make no mistake; the founder, CEO and chairperson of her eponymous group of companies is a one-woman show. A self-made entrepreneur and pioneer of the herbal beauty

“During my training in London, I came across several instances of damage caused by chemical treatments. So, I began searching for an alternative that was safe and without risk. My subsequent study of Ayurveda convinced me that it could answer the demands of modern cosmetic care”

market worldwide, she didn't just establish a brand—she became one. Little wonder then, that Harvard Business School chose her in 2016 as a case study for its 'Creating Emerging Markets' project, part of the curriculum for management students.

It's been quite a journey. Born in an aristocratic family to Nasirullah Beg and Sayeeda Begum in Hyderabad, Shahnaz Husain studied at La Martiniere in Lucknow and Queen Mary's, an Irish convent, in Allahabad and grew up reciting Keats and Byron to her Oxford-educated father. Following an early marriage to foreign trade officer Nasir Husain, she found her calling in the world of beauty. In her case, however, her global education in the field taught her some home truths: the need to go back to one's roots, literally, and use the precepts of Ayurveda and the bounty of nature to 'care' and 'cure'. At a time when the Indian beauty industry was fragmented, she launched her first Shahnaz Herbal salon from the veranda of her New Delhi home in 1971. Today, the Shahnaz Husain Group has 600 franchise ventures in over 100 countries and 400-plus organic formulations. In the past 46 years, in addition to a host of prestigious awards including the Padma Shri, she has lectured at renowned institutes worldwide, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard Business School, Oxford University and the London School of Economics on Brand India and Ayurveda; addressed the House of Lords and House of Commons at the British Parliament on Ayurveda and women's empowerment; and walked the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival twice, to promote India as a destination for film shooting as well as to celebrate 100 years of Indian cinema, respectively.

Over a sumptuous lunch including mango ice-cream, her “favourite dessert”, she shares the story of an extraordinary life, the lessons learnt, and how she came to be known as ‘The Princess’ in the realm of beauty: “My mother belonged to the Hyderabad royal family that originally came from Samarkhand. To that extent, the word ‘Princess’ started being used by a paper in the UK.” But there's no royal hauteur about her as she gets you to cut a cake—a gesture every guest is privileged to receive—signs her books as a keepsake and, at the end of a memorable afternoon, sees you off personally at the gate with palpable warmth.



Shahnaz Husain and Professor Geoffrey Jones of Harvard University; opposite page: receiving the Golden Peacock Entrepreneurial Leadership award in 2014 from British Home Secretary (then) Theresa May

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

Congratulations on becoming a case study at the Harvard Business School curriculum! Tell us more.

Dr L R Hayes from Harvard University wanted to highlight my entrepreneurial role in creating a market for natural beauty care and Indian Ayurvedic products. My interview, which was videographed, will be widely used by educators and researchers. Earlier, in 2010, I had lectured at Harvard University on how I established a brand identity without publicity—I have always believed that a satisfied client is the best advertisement! I did wonder why they wished to feature someone who's only studied till Class 7! Nonetheless, Professor Geoffrey Jones from Harvard told me, “It's not about education; you're a pioneer, role model and an intelligent speaker.”

You had quite an adventure when you went to MIT way back in 2013....

The authorities at MIT had been calling me since 2010 to speak about India and Ayurveda but I was unable to make

it. When they invited me for a lecture on women's empowerment and the positive impact of innovative entrepreneurship in April 2013, I decided to go. Then, the Boston marathon bombing happened on 15 April and there was a manhunt for two suspects. Both the suspects died in a shootout some days later, but normal life was highly disturbed. The Indian External Affairs Ministry considered it unsafe for me to travel but I had already committed and decided to take the chance. I left on 22 April, reached New York on 23 April and hired a taxi to Massachusetts and back for \$ 5,000. MIT called to say there's heavy patrolling and policing on the general route. The other route was closed owing to security so we ended up taking the earlier route where the bombings had happened.

But then, you've always taken risks and the road less travelled! You began your professional journey at a very young age. Please share it.

I got engaged at 14, married at 15 and had my baby at 16. And all I was doing was sitting and eating. I realised it couldn't go on like that and decided to pursue beauty as a career. My husband Nasir Husain's posting as the director of foreign trade with the State Trading Corporation, however, took us to Tehran. I started writing articles for the *Iran Tribune* on beauty. I would type almost 10,000 to 20,000 words a week with one finger on a manual typewriter. As a result, my finger bled, my nail broke and the flesh was left hanging out. The doctor told me, "Either you should change your job or your finger will have to be cut." But I was unrelenting. I feel some things are important in life. The money earned from my writing helped me support my education. I worked my way up to premier beauty institutes by studying cosmetology and cosmetic therapy from Helena Rubinstein and Arnould Taylor (London), Lancôme (Paris), Christine Valmy (New York), Schwarzkopf (Germany) and Lean of Copenhagen (Denmark). I started at the age of 17 and went to five countries in eight years.

You are a pioneer in 'bottling' ancient Indian wisdom on beauty and wellness. What was the genesis for this?

During my training in London, I came across several instances of damage caused by chemical treatments. So, I began searching for an alternative that was safe and without risk. I had inherited my faith in herbal healing from my family. My subsequent study of Ayurveda convinced me that it could answer the demands of modern cosmetic care. I returned to India with the idea of providing



AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1986: Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur from FICCI
- 1988: President's Gold Medal for Export Excellence
- 1989: Indira Priyadarshini Award from Government of India
- 1995: Quality Excellence Award from Government of Japan
- 1996: World's Greatest Entrepreneur Award from New York-based *Success* magazine—the first woman to receive it in 107 years
- 1997: Leading Woman Entrepreneur award from National Foundation of Woman Business Owners, USA
- 1999: Selected as Woman of the Year by the American Biographical Institute
- 2000: Received the Millennium Medal of Honour from the American Biographical Institute
- 2006: Padma Shri
- 2008: Leonardo da Vinci Diamond Award by International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, UK
- 2011: Indian Achievers Award for Quality Excellence
- 2011: Asia's Leading Woman in Business Award from WIL Forum Asia, Malaysia
- 2012: Outstanding Ayurvedic Innovation Award in London from the Indo-British Business Forum
- 2014: Golden Peacock Entrepreneurial Leadership Award for Ayurvedic Innovation, London
- 2015: Entrepreneur India Award for Outstanding Ayurvedic Innovations from Entrepreneur Media India, FICCI, NEN and NASSCOM

beauty on the principle of 'herbal care and cure'. To translate my ideas into reality, I launched my first herbal salon in the balcony of my house in New Delhi. Back then, women would go to salons for superficial beauty treatments. I began formulating my own products based on Ayurveda. Later, I introduced a unique franchise system based on the concept that anyone could open a salon with my backing and zero investment. My first franchise salon started in Kolkata in 1979. Today, we operate in more than 100 countries with 600 franchises, 70 beauty training academies, stores and direct product distributors.

What sets you apart as a brand?

I established customised beauty care based on individual needs and an integrated system of salon treatments and product ranges that rely on each other. To that extent, we are different. My vision and philosophy have become a part of the brand



At the Rashtrapati Bhavan with President of India Pranab Mukherjee and Shasight students

image. It is also true that 'Shahnaz Husain' is an image-based enterprise; the person behind it is herself trained in cosmetology and herbal cosmetic therapy. Everyone knows that there is a real person behind the brand name. I remember, some years ago, my car got stuck in a puddle on the road. My driver was trying to fix it. While seated behind, I saw two *thelawallas* some metres away. One of them recognised me and told the other, "See that's Shahnaz Husain." This has set us apart.

What is the USP of your products that enables you to hold your own against the competition? How do you manage to stay ahead of the curve?

Till 1990, Shahnaz Herbal did not enter the retail business. Our products were only available at our herbal salons, based on massive client feedback. Apart from innovative formulations in general beauty care, we became known for therapeutic products and clinical treatments. Besides our basic services, we introduced signature salons and a repertoire of spa treatments through our unique franchise system using traditional and exotic ingredients. We also launched some revolutionary products such as the Chemoline range, comprising a hair tonic and skin cream, to alleviate the side-effects of chemotherapy and radiation on the skin for cancer patients. Without conventional advertising, we established tremendous goodwill and built a network of salons and ventures. Very early in my career, I made it a point to reply to letters seeking

"To date, thousands of students have been trained under the Shamute and Shasight courses available at the Shahnaz Husain International Beauty Academy in New Delhi. The achievement cannot be measured in material terms"

solutions for beauty problems. Four decades later, I maintain this practice, this personal touch.

To be a woman entrepreneur in what was essentially a man's world must have been tough. How did you overcome the hurdles?

I had to overcome social and economic hurdles. It was my family's support and understanding that helped me to overcome barriers and realise my dreams. To educate people about the concept of herbal care and cure, I started contributing articles to leading newspapers and magazines. Entering the international market was the biggest challenge. I participated in the Festival of India in London in 1980 and was given a counter at the perfumery section at [department store] Selfridges. In the face of fierce competition, to stand up alone and sell India's ancient civilisation in a jar was not easy. To everyone's surprise, the entire consignment sold out in three days, breaking the store's cosmetic sales records. From there, we moved on to Harrods in London, Galeries Lafayette in Paris, the Seibu chain in Japan, la Rinascente in Milan and El Corte Ingles in Spain. We've experienced an increasing demand for Ayurvedic products across the globe.

What advice would you give to women entrepreneurs who wish to make their mark?

My biggest advice to women is to be capable and independent and never get cowed down by your

man. I feel there should be a law that enables a woman to refuse to get married unless she is technically qualified. It's your life journey and you have the right to choose what you want to do. Also, if you're doing your duties as a wife and being fair to your man, there is no reason for him to stop you.

You've said your father recognised the fire in you. How did he inspire you?

My late father Nasirullah Beg was the former chief justice of Allahabad High Court. He inspired me to emerge from a sheltered life and venture into the world of entrepreneurship. When I opened my first herbal clinic, it was from him that I borrowed ₹ 35,000. He was very happy for my success but it disappointed him that I couldn't study further. When I was doing well, I went up to him and asked him if he was happy for me. He replied, "You've done so much for this world which is temporary. To build your spiritual goodwill, you should do something for the next world which is permanent and you need to start now." Being young, I didn't take it seriously. Later on, I started working for the deaf and blind.

Through Shamute and Shasight, you offer free beauty training courses to the speech and hearing impaired. Please shed some light on this.

It's wonderful to have achieved something worthwhile by training the underprivileged sections of society. It cannot be measured in material terms. In 1984, when I launched Shamute, the school for deaf and dumb people, my dad's friend Giani Zail Singhji [then President of India] inaugurated the school. In 2008, we launched Shasight for the blind. To date, thousands of students have been trained under the Shamute and Shasight courses available at the Shahnaz Husain International Beauty Academy at Kohinoor Mall and Nehru Place in New Delhi. We even help them find employment.

You also started a skill development initiative under which more than 100,000 underprivileged women were trained and certified in beauty and wellness. Tell us more.

In 2016, the Shahnaz Husain International Beauty Academy joined hands with the Indus Group of West Bengal to implement skill development projects in 141 centres of all the 20 districts of the state. This was to make them self-sufficient to work as beauty therapists or start a home-based business. Professional training is the order of the day and such training can empower rural women.



MILESTONES

- 1971: Set up the first Shahnaz Herbal salon in Delhi
- 1979: Opened first Shahnaz Herbal franchise salon in Kolkata
- 1980: Entered the international market and broke a 40-year cosmetic sales record at Selfridges
- 2000 to 2006: Launched products and opened franchises in the UK, Middle East, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia
- 2005: Only Indian woman business leader to participate in the Forbes Global CEO Conference in Sydney, Australia
- 2010: Represented India at US President Barack Obama's World Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington DC
- 2012: Received three prestigious awards in London for 'Outstanding Ayurvedic Innovation', the most prestigious received at the British Parliament, in the House of Commons
- 2013: Walked the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival and introduced the Starlight range
- 2014: Started the Just Shahnaz franchise retail outlets in several cities and towns in India
- 2016: Launched the Chemoline collection in London
- 2017: Became a case study for brand creation at Harvard Business School and a subject in the curriculum for management students

It is said that your moisturiser, Shamoist, was created for Indira Gandhi, with whom you had such a special relationship. Who are the other clients who have sparked your creativity?

I formulated my Barbara Cartland Honey Rose Mint Moisture Plus Cream to celebrate my friendship with Dame Barbara Cartland, the famous author. She was also a great believer in the healing power of nature and natural vitamin therapy. Her interest in herbal healing brought her in close contact with me and we became great friends. She was by my side when I showcased my products at Harrods. When I launched my Flower Power Range at Galeries Lafayette, she flew down to Paris for the launch.



“I have a distinctive style that is not consciously cultivated. I never buy clothes off the fashion shelves. I have an in-house tailor for years now and design my own clothes as I find that most comfortable. I love dramatic styles in solid colours and wear what suits my personality”

Walking the red carpet with husband R K Puri at the Cannes Festival in 2013; (right) with daughter Nelofar Currimbhoy

Opposite page: Presenting her book to the late President of India Dr Abdul Kalam

Tell us about your own beauty regimen.

I am a staunch believer in the adage ‘internal health for external beauty’. My diet, yoga and daily walk are as important as a regular beauty regimen. I apply a special mask daily consisting of a herbal powder mixed with seaweed lotion, yoghurt, honey and egg white and kept in the refrigerator. The night-care routine consists of cleansing and nourishing my skin with a cream containing wheat germ and carrot seed called Shalife. For hair, I use a lotion containing a combination of oils and herbal extracts, and an *amla*-based shampoo. I am very particular about henna treatments at least once a week. The henna paste is specially mixed for me, with yoghurt and about 12 eggs without water.

What is your style mantra?

I have a distinctive style that is not consciously cultivated. I never buy clothes off the fashion shelves. I have an in-house tailor for years now and design my own clothes as I find that most comfortable. I love dramatic styles in solid colours and wear what suits my personality. During the day, I like to wear white and set it off with gold or a special trimming. For the night, black is my favourite. Accessories are absolutely essential for me.

You’ve said that if ever a biopic were to be made on your life, you would want Priyanka Chopra to play you!

Priyanka Chopra impresses me not only by her good looks but her personality too. I think the persona or image people have of you is important. Besides the products, my persona has become part of the brand image. I feel Priyanka would be ideal for portraying this aspect.

How can one celebrate the silver years with beauty, style and grace?

There are qualities that come only with maturity, like elegance, grace and charm. In fact, an older woman who is poised and self-confident can be far more attractive. One should come to terms with ageing in a positive way. Discover yourself again, find new hobbies and interests. If there is weight gain, adopt a weight loss programme, or learn yoga to feel younger and attractive. Have a daily skincare routine. Be subtle with makeup and accessories. Do not follow fashion fads. They may not be for you. Learn something new. It will make you feel active and youthful. Also, your idea of how you look depends on how you feel. I believe good health and fitness have a lot to do with how you view yourself.

If you feel young, you look young and other people also view you as being younger. Following a healthy lifestyle, with exercise and a nutritious diet, reduces stress and makes you feel more energetic and, therefore, younger.

Your own routine doesn't seem to have slowed down over time! Tell us about a typical day in your life.

I always wish there were more than 24 hours in a day! I have an extremely busy schedule as I am involved in every aspect of my enterprise. In fact, while I am getting ready, I start jotting down the things that occur to me. My day includes discussions with different departments from production, international expansion and public relations to packaging, promotions, meeting foreign buyers and doing media interviews. I keep some time aside for answering mail and important letters. I am very particular about personal obligations, sending gifts, flowers or cards to various people. Very often I have to attend felicitations, award ceremonies or other important functions. When I see the worldwide recognition of Ayurveda, it makes my efforts worthwhile.

On a more personal note, you have overcome bereavement and come out stronger. What is the secret of your resilience?

When my grandmother passed away, I remember my father saying, "Who am I to challenge the will of God?" This left a very powerful impression on me. Realising this truth gives you great inner strength. I have faced grief and loss before by way of my first husband's death in 1997, but the depth of the loss of my only son was impossible to fathom. It is never easy to talk about grief or to convey exactly what is going through the mind and the heart. One is left to deal with it in one's own way. But I surrendered totally to God's will and that gave me inner strength. This also helps me to stay grounded. Spirituality has nothing to do with success, name or fame. It goes far beyond that. It is an inner consciousness, an inner strength.

Your daughter Nelofar plays a significant role in your business and has even written a book on you, *Flame: The Story of my Mother*. Tell us about her.

I was only 16 when my daughter Nelofar was born. We grew up together, like two sisters. I remember our trips to London, where we would have the most wonderful time shopping and giggling like two schoolgirls. Nelofar has

also schooled in the best cosmetic institutes in the world. I taught her to value time and to live each day as if it is a separate, complete life. Today, she is at the frontline of our business. She keeps in touch with the developments in the international cosmetic industry.

You remarried some years ago. Apart from your husband Raj Kumar Puri being a source of strength to you, what do you bring to each other's lives?

We bring respect and companionship to our marriage. In a marriage, the husband and wife should be on an equal footing. Over the years, our friendship and respect endure. These are what I value. The support and understanding I have received from him are indeed a great source of strength. We share opinions and ideas and ask for suggestions and advice.

What are your other passions?

I love writing poetry. I have written three books on beauty: *The Shahnaz Husain Beauty Book*, *Forever Beautiful* and *The Book of Absolute Beauty*. I also indulge in painting and love to translate my ideas, emotions and feelings through colours. I love coffee and have an obsession for coffee at Starbucks. If I was not into beauty, I would have opened a coffee chain! I also have a passion for ghazals and Louis Vuitton products.



Looking back, what are your greatest learnings? And looking ahead, what's next for you and the company?

My greatest learning is that one should aim for the sky! No mountain is too high to climb and no frontier is too distant to cross. You can be what you will yourself to be. I have always had a positive attitude towards life, welcoming challenges and turning them into opportunities. I believe you should never stop trying till you achieve perfection. You may say 'perfection' does not exist because it is a relative term. However, I believe you should leave no stone unturned to accomplish a task.

As for the company, future plans include concentrated international branding, strengthening and widening our global chain of franchise ventures and appointing distributors in unrepresented new markets. Product innovation has helped our organisation to remain a dynamic one. We will continue to launch advanced products in Ayurvedic beauty care in the international markets. ✨

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Northern lights and midnight sun apart, Norway is laced with ruffled fjords, rugged mountains and green belts

📷 📷 Rekha Sarin



As our aircraft descends in Oslo, a collage of shimmering waters and undulating mountains comes into view. Norway, a name coined by Anglo Saxons, means the 'way leading to the north'. Sitting pretty on the western and northern arm of the Scandinavian peninsula, 60 per cent of the land is dominated by rugged mountains enclosing glassy lakes. These ranges speak of the Ice Age, of mammoth glaciers that slid down into the sea, corrugating the edges, creating ruffled fjords and speckled islands along its long coastline. Thirty-seven per cent of the surface area is forested, making it one of the most beautiful countries on Planet Earth, where heavenly skies

merge with the waters and panoramic landscapes unfold to take your breath away.

This land of midnight sun and enigmatic northern lights is not only about the great outdoors. Norwegian cities have all the cosmopolitan trappings, with slick Scandinavian architecture, restaurants, shopping and vibrant cultural life. And so, over the next eight days, our Nordic vacation will unfold an enchanting swirl of nature laced with urban delights as our itinerary spans cross-sectional glimpses of the country, westwards to Bergen, gateway to the fjords, and then moving extreme north to enjoy high latitudinal thrills, 350 km across the Arctic Circle to Tromsø.

We make a head-start with the capital city. It is 8 pm and a long summer day is giving itself over to the night as we arrive at Smart Hotel, where we are booked. Like its name, the hotel accepts payments with smart cards only, even if it's breakfast or simply a cup of coffee. This management outlook perhaps synchronises with Norway's progressive modernism. Yet, Norwegians love their traditions, and honour their constitutional monarchy that presides over a parliamentary democracy. The old and the new, Oslo exhibits this striking mix of character.

This land of midnight sun and enigmatic northern lights is not only about the great outdoors. Norwegian cities have all the cosmopolitan trappings, with slick Scandinavian architecture, restaurants, shopping and vibrant cultural life

First, a quick look downtown to Karl Johans Gate, where we sample Oslo's nightlife, with a choice of international cuisine restaurants, nightclubs and pubs rocking with music. This is the pivotal boulevard of the city and the next morning we traverse it again on our way to the harbour. It is a beautiful tree-lined pedestrian street with flowerbeds and a bubble fountain in its central square, expressing 19th century grandeur in the architecture of its buildings. We cross the Grand Hotel dating to 1874, where celebrated Norwegian playwright and poet Henrik Ibsen lunched daily and penned his thoughts. The hotel hosts the annual banquet for the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize—the only Nobel award that is presented in Norway and not in Stockholm.

Over the next three days, we shall do a lot more sightseeing around this area. An avenue on the western side leads to the Royal Palace. Regal edifices like Stortinget or Parliament and the National Theatre afford some wonderful photo opportunities. Towards the eastern end of the street





stands the baroque Oslo Cathedral and surrounding bazaar. Cafes abound; we can't resist lunching at an eatery with a board that states: 'Beauty lies in the eye of the Beer holder!' Then again, stylish stores set in gracious buildings tempt us to tarry and browse.

Juxtaposed with the neoclassic is the stunningly futuristic architecture. For instance, the Opera House is a contemporary beauty in white marble and granite. Its angled design rises like an iceberg against the blue waters of Oslofjord. Its massive framed glass panes admit the sky into the foyer. From the ground level, visitors can walk right up to its roof by way of external ramps. In the defunct shipyard nearby, the 'Barcode' district is an expression of line and space. These are closely spaced corporate buildings in black and white with facades that resemble the pixels of a barcode.

The Vigeland Sculpture Park, the life work of Gustav Vigeland, has over 200 modernistic sculptures in bronze and granite. Oslo has art galleries and museums galore. Norwegian expressionist artist Edvard Munch's masterpiece *The Scream* at the National Gallery is a crowd-puller. We take the ferry to Bygdøy peninsula. A walk through lush environs leads us to the Viking Ship Museum, where ships with curved hulls are among the highlights. The Fram Museum shares interesting insights about Norwegian polar expeditions.

We set aside half a day for a cruise along Oslofjord. As our boat moves out, the medieval Akershus

fortress that was built to protect Oslo at the edge of the waters recedes, while a cool sea breeze whips up light clouds that weave fascinating patterns in the sky. Facing the waterfront is the elegant building of the Nobel Peace Centre that merits a tour. The prize ceremony is held at Oslo City Hall, an impressive edifice, also along the harbour. A brown stone configuration in three blocks, its colossal central hall with a grand staircase and skylights has murals and paintings depicting Norwegian cultural life.

On our last day, we go out to the charming suburb of Holmenkollen by metro to see the ski jump that has witnessed over a century of ski championships. An elevator goes up to the 60-m jump tower from where a swirling slope stretches out. Though the ski museum is of interest, we are bewildered by our daring to venture a ride in the ski simulator, which leaves us gasping!

After action-packed Oslo, our next stop Bergen, Norway's second largest city, is a short flight, but we'd rather take the train, which is worth every minute of its seven-hour journey. Our eyes remain peeled to the window, nature revealing its magnificence, as the train goes through different elevations. Initially, it glides along the road edged with calm waters and mountains visible through alpine trees. As it goes over rocky heights, the train goes through tunnels, each time emerging to extract joyful exclamations from us. The landscape changes with bare snow-spangled mountains casting mirror images in the blue waters of reflec-

The National Theatre is a classic landmark at Karl Johans Gate, Oslo; the Arctic Cathedral in Tromsø is a marvel of modern architecture

Opposite page: The historic Hanseatic League's merchant houses in the medieval town of Bryggen, in Bergen



At Kjosfossen, the train makes a special stop to allow passengers to see the 225-m-drop waterfall. As everyone rushes out, a Huldra—a Scandinavian enchantress—materialises from the misty spray, singing hauntingly

tive lakes. Closer to our destination, threads of silvery waterfalls course through green forests that inhabit the lower ranges.

Bergen is endearingly draped over the mountains that surround its harbour, busy with cruise ships, yachts and fishing boats. By the pier, the historic fish market now wears a contemporary face with its expansive glass-paned market hall, with an upper level tourist information office where we book our Sognefjord cruise tour. Across the bay is the UNESCO heritage medieval town of Bryggen, rows of slant-roofed wooden Hanseatic League's merchant houses in colours of ochre, blue, brick red and brown: Bergen's poster icons, and justifiably so.

The city has a funicular for mountain views, and its share of museums and churches, while downtown has chic shopping, but we simply walk through the cobbled lanes and hilly streets to soak in the charm. The central City Park with its cast iron circular gazebo encrusted by flower beds is delightful. Nearby stands the National Theatre built in 1909, at the initiative of Ole Bull, Bergen's famous violinist whose statue resides under a large tree.

Our Sognefjord tour starts early next morning with a train to Myrdal. There is a flurry of excitement among fellow passengers as we transfer to Flamsbana, a heritage train built in 1924, which will take us on what is rated as one of the world's most scenic train journeys. The train, with its wooden interiors, is a quaint marvel as it negotiates its way down to Flam, which is almost at sea level, making it the steepest ride on a regular gauge track for any European railway. The carriages are outfitted with a screen that map the 20-km journey as it challenges the gradient with several twists and turns, negotiating 20 tunnels, some with windows carved in the side to admit the view. At Kjosfossen, the train makes a special stop to allow passengers to see the 225-m-drop waterfall. As everyone rushes out, a Huldra in a red dress—a



Scandinavian enchantress of folklore—materialises from the misty spray, singing hauntingly: a special effect for tourists, but enthralling nevertheless.

The train reaches its highest point at Finse, elevated at 1,222.2 m from where it begins its descent. In Flam, there is time enough to stroll along the crystal waters of the river flowing through this bucolic village. We board our ship here, and a beautiful vista of blue waters stretches out, cruising along the different arms of Sognefjord. Open sea and wide passages reduce to narrow inlets along this ‘King of fjords’, being Norway’s longest, extending 204 km inland. The five-hour journey keeps us engaged with varying views of mountains, high glacial peaks, some completely bare, and yet others with forests opening out to green pastures and picturesque villages. As night falls on our return, we gaze at Bryggen’s lights

casting myriad reflections in the dark, still waters across the harbour.

Early morning next day, we take our flight to Tromsø. And there begins another blissful experience of Nordic beauty. The captain makes an announcement when we cross the Arctic Circle. Our landing is as spectacular, if not more, than Oslo. There are many more fjords and islands here and the mountains are taller, though mostly bare. The city centre, in fact, is located on the island of Tromsøya, and from mainland Tromsø, our airport bus takes us through the Tromsøysund Tunnel to our place of stay, Hotel Viking—a name so apt! Being early afternoon, not only do we have the better part of the day for sightseeing but the advantage of the midnight sun days when, between May and July, the sun remains above the horizon, never setting.

Clockwise from top left: A walk down Karl Johans Gate, Oslo; Stortinget or Parliament at Oslo; the Grand Hotel in Oslo; the Fram Museum on the Bygdøy peninsula near Oslo

Opposite page: A gushing waterfall at Kjosfossen



WHEN TO GO

For those who want to enjoy Nordic summer beauty, June to August is the best time. In any case, jackets and scarves must be kept handy even during summer as cloudy weather can play spoilsport anytime. So keep your fingers crossed when booking fjord cruises. On the other hand, the sun feels really sharp in these high latitudes, so hats are equally important. By mid-September, tourist flow decreases and by October, there are some chances of seeing the northern lights. The best time for winter tourism is December, when Christmas lights up endless dark nights in this home of Santa Claus, and the season is festive once again, after a gloomy November. Norway is a paradise for winter sport, and has hosted the winter Olympics twice. The country's winter avatar is entirely different, so the time to go depends on what you want to see and do.

VISA & CURRENCY

Norway is a member of the European Free Trade Association and although it is not a part of the European Union,

it is a member of the Schengen Area, so a Schengen visa is necessary. However, Norway has its own currency, the 'Kroner' with the acronym NOK or Norwegian Kroner. 1 NOK = 7.7 INR. Currency can be exchanged at any of the visitor centres or Forex Bank in Norway.

TIPS

- Be prepared to loosen your purse strings, as Norway is expensive. It has one of the highest standards of living in the world, the reasons being high petroleum reserves, higher education standards and low unemployment combined with a relatively small population of about 5.5 million. Consequently, Norwegians earn well and prices are steep. Hotels and eating out run up a high bill. A hamburger combo meal at McDonalds costs 90-130 NOK!
- To beat the cost of local travel, it is best to buy a Travel Card that can be purchased at any tourist centre or ubiquitous convenience store chains like Narvesen and 7-Eleven. One to three-day cards are available

and you can travel free on bus, tram, ferry or local train within the central zones that cover most of the sightseeing. If you intend visiting a number of museums and art galleries, it is better to buy the city pass that covers several museums and attractions.

- Silvers can get a 50 per cent discount on travel and trains, except flights. Only those above 67 years of age are considered seniors, and the accompanying spouse, even if younger, qualifies for the discount. Always carry your original passport; photocopies are not considered proof of identity.
- Tickets booked online and in advance are always better priced than on-the-spot ones. The Bergen trip can also be done with the 'Norway in a Nutshell' tour that combines Fram railway and Sognefjord, but we found it cheaper to do it on our own. For last-minute train bookings, sometimes 'minipris' tickets can be bought at a good price from Norwegian state railway booths. These, however, are non-refundable.



The heart of the city retains its character with low wooden buildings that hark to the early settlement days. But then again, the fascinating contrasts: Domkirka, an ancient wooden Protestant church, sits in a park with trees, while across the harbour, on the mainland, stands the modern Arctic Cathedral. This triangular white structure stands out on the skyline together with the slick, sweeping profile of the cantilevered bridge that spans the waters. The City Hall and public library have abstract glass frontages that catch wonderful reflections of the harbour. Another fantastic work of architecture is Polaris Museum, designed as a stack of leaning angular sections resembling floating icebergs. It is a must-see, as we get to learn much about the polar world and indigenous Sami tribes, besides watching an entertaining session of seal feeding. There is also the University Museum and, on the same campus, the world's northernmost botanical garden, with an amazing collection of alpine and arctic plants. Although this is the same latitude as Alaska, Tromsø enjoys the influence of the warm Gulf Stream, and considering the long sunshine hours of summer, this garden thrives until mid-October.

However, the most indelible print in memory remains from our daylong excursion to Skjervøy, which lies among the conglomerate of little islands high up on the Norwegian Sea sprinkled like jewels above the coast. Our tour takes us on a wonderful bus ride across Tromsø Bridge, past the Arctic Cathedral and suburban residences, and a ferry ride transfer takes us through seascapes like none other. We pass by islands dominated by the craggy Lyngen Alps that look at the waters in gla-

cial silence. Back on land, our bus moves through greener settings and it is 6 pm when we arrive at Skjervøy. This is a sleepy little village with a church and town hall to serve its 2,880 inhabitants. There is some activity on the pier while waiting for the Hurtigruten ship liner that will take us back to Tromsø. We see huge salmon being packed on ice, ready for shipping; fishing is the mainstay industry here.

This cruise is all about experiencing the magic woven by the transition of the late sunset on the waters. As always in Europe, the clouds are whimsical but they provide a beautiful rose-tinted canopy as they catch the evening rays. The glorious colours of the sea take their cue from the sky, turning from a soft blue pink to dazzling gold. Surrounded by the deepening mountain silhouettes, a cold wind sharpening our cheeks, we certainly feel on top of the world. Twilight makes a subtle entry and at 10 pm the sky deepens into an inky blue. A huge ball of silvery full moon obligingly sails through the clouds.

Tromsø's shoreline appears as a spread of twinkling lights interleaving its islands. Sounds of a weekend jazz festival waft through the town and restaurants and bars flow with activity. The local Mack Brewery advertises itself as the 'highest brewery in the world'. Summer spirits are jolly, making the most of seemingly endless daytime. Conversely, under the white blanket of winter, the day will shrink until it goes into total obscurity when polar nights set in from November to January. Then, the ethereal northern lights will draw crowds. All said, Norway's charms remain perennial and astonishing. ✨

The statue of a whaler in a boat at the Tromsø market square; a river running through the village of Flam

Opposite page: A rosy sunset on the Norwegian Sea

Experience

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Photographs courtesy: Gallery 7



From paper to mould

“How would it be if I could bring two-dimensional characters of my work to life by giving them a three-dimensional form or structure?” wonders 80 year-old artist Lal Prasad Shaw, in the statement of his latest exhibition, *Babu and Bibi bronzes*. He very well knows! His new exhibition brings to life the *babu* of Calcutta, distinct middle-class Bengalis in

craft British India, *Babuana (in pic)* being one of them. Originally known for his tempura paintings, the artist was assisted by two young sculptors in the preparation of his first exhibition of 12, 3-ft-tall bronze sculptures. His simple yet precise figures represent the *babu* lifestyle along with Kolkata motifs such as trams, hand-pulled rickshaws, markets, the ubiquitous fish and long umbrella. *Babu and Bibi bronzes*, curated by Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya, ran till 20 May at Gallery 7, Mumbai.



Story of a book



Photographs by Chirodeep Chaudhuri / Courtesy: Project 88

Clockwise from top left: *Romances of the French Revolution*, by Frederic Lees; *The Great Controversy Between Christ & Satan during the Christian Dispensation*, by E G White; *The Evolution of Man: A Popular Science Study*, by Ernst Haeckel; Aristotle's works

A book tells the story inscribed on its pages, as is its wont. An old book also tells another story—in the creased and torn pages that have yellowed with time, a forgotten bookmark or library stamp, in the list of names of those who have borrowed the book, or in its handwritten dedication. A recent photography exhibition titled *In the City: A Library* at Mumbai's Project 88 paid tribute to one of Mumbai's oldest libraries, the 198 year-old People's Reading Room & Library, and the invaluable, tattered books it houses. In their note on the exhibition, writer Jerry Pinto and photographer Chirodeep Chaudhuri say the exhibition is an "attempt to look into the heart of a library and see how time ages the heart, how it works a certain elegiac magic on the pages of the book".



Courtesy: Sabyasachi Chakraborty

"Lately, I've been sifting through thousands of photographs of bald men with moustaches. Every day, my mailbox is inundated with envelopes containing these. Some of them have forced, comical expressions; others stare clownishly into the camera. Word has got around that I'm on the lookout for a 'Jotayu' [the fictional crime writer in the *Feluda* series]—sadly, no one seems to have grasped what Jotayu is all about. He's not a comic character, but a sensitive, intelligent man. Yes, there's a physical type: he has to be short, about 5'5", compared to Feluda, who is over 6'. My only criterion is the actor has to be bloody good with timing. I'm desperate to find the perfect one. And until I do, I won't make another *Feluda* film."

—Filmmaker Sandip Ray in *Outlook* magazine

Howzzat!

Cricket fans were in for a treat recently. Kapil Dev joined the likes of Amitabh Bachchan, Mahatma Gandhi and Lady Gaga, with the unveiling of his life-size wax statue at the New Delhi branch of Madame Tussaud's. The sculpture depicts the former Indian cricket captain in a midair bowling pose in preparation of delivering one of his iconic fast balls. The



statue was created from over 300 measurements at the workshop in London, where all Madame Tussaud's statues are made. Speaking to media at the unveiling of the statue, Dev said, "I have lived and breathed cricket all my life. Receiving this at the age of 58 is a huge credit that further motivates me as an individual to evolve more. The whole process of making my figure has been an exciting journey." Fans can now get up close and personal with the superstar cricketer, who led India to the historic 1983 World Cup win.

LET'S DANCE



Sarabjit Singh Dhillon / Natya Vriksha

For the last decade, Bharatanatyam exponent Geeta Chandran, 55, has been gathering troupes from her Natya Vriksha school of dance to celebrate World Dance Day on 29 April in the capital. It is also touted as an opportunity for non-dancers to step up. This year's celebrations culminated in a two-day event with workshops open to all, including non-dancers, performances and awards. "Any effort to promote young dancers is still short of creating a level playing field of opportunities in India today. We need to do so much more to encourage and support young artists," says Chandran in a press release. During the celebrations, she also honoured senior dance critic Shanta Serbjeet Singh with the first Natya Vriksha Lifetime Achievement Award. The event was hosted in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Culture and the Sangeet Natak Akademi at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Considered one of the most iconic paintings of modern Indian art, *Glow of Hope* by master painter S L Haldankar is a portrait known for its haunting imagery. The masterpiece, popularly known as *Lady with the Lamp*, is often mistaken to be an oil painting by Raja Ravi Varma. This is particularly interesting because Haldankar actually used watercolours to show that a watercolour painting could be created with the precision of oils, without mistakes. His muse: his 16 year-old daughter Gita, who turned 100 this year. "It was the day of Diwali and I was lighting lamps on our big terraced flat," Gita tells *The Week*. She was wearing her mother's lavender *nauvari* sari and holding a brass lamp, whose flame illuminated her face. "When my father saw me, he told me that he would make



Courtesy: Jaganmohan Palace

my portrait." The painting is now one of the most visited at Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery at the Jaganmohan Palace in Mysuru, where it hangs.



Shail Desai

DUM maaro DUM

Celebrated chef Imtiaz Qureshi relishes new challenges after calling it quits at the ITC Hotels, writes **Shail Desai**

On 2 March this year, Imtiaz Qureshi officially hung up his ladles, after over 40 years with ITC Hotels. But ‘retirement’ means little to the Grand Master Chef, who for decades lorded over the hotel chain’s restaurants across the country.

“Cooking is so important for me, I don’t think I can ever retire,” says the 86 year-old, who is credited with popularising Awadhi cuisine in India and cultivating a palate for it in cities across the world. He is best known for *dum pukht* cuisine—a process where meat marinated in spices is slow-cooked in copper vessels—a technique mastered by his forefathers who were chefs in the royal kitchens in the former princely state of Awadh.

Every time Qureshi enters a kitchen, his sleight of hand is enough to transform a meal into a feast, leaving sous-chefs, apprentices and patrons dumbfounded. It was in recognition of this talent that Qureshi was awarded the Padma Shri last year, the first-ever chef to receive the award.

Indeed, cooking is in Qureshi’s DNA. He grew up in a family of nine boys and two girls in Lucknow. While kids his age were grasping the basics of arithmetic and poetry, he was busy figuring out the correct technique to butcher meat and pick out the right cuts. And, at the tender age of nine, he decided to pursue the tradition of his forefathers. “I hardly remember studying,” he says, a smile slipping from under his bushy, white moustache. “I spent more time in the kitchen than at school. My first teacher was my sister’s husband, who had a food business in Lucknow.”

While the most accomplished chefs in the world today are graduates from top culinary institutes in Switzerland and France, Qureshi’s was a learn-by-doing approach in traditional, smoky kitchens, where he picked up the secrets of Awadhi cuisine defined by kebab, korma, biryani and curry.

tradition

At the age of 28, Qureshi was hired by Krishna Caterers in Lucknow, where he was in charge of the kitchen. It was his first big break, and it also gave him his favourite story, one that he has told more times than he can count. One day, Chandra Bhanu Gupta, then chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, asked him to cook a meal for his guests, who included prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri. And, horror of horrors, his VIP client wanted him to cook a vegetarian feast! “When I told Guptaji I had never cooked a vegetarian meal, he simply said all that mattered was that I cook the meal. I really did not have a choice.”

What followed was a carefully curated meal, where vegetables were prepared in a way that not only looked like Qureshi’s trademark non-vegetarian dishes but tasted like them. So, a jackfruit dish was prepared to resemble and taste like *murg musallam* (Mughlai-style chicken) and paneer *pasanda* was persuaded to look like chicken *pasanda*. “It was quite a relief when I was told that the guests loved the meal. Nehruji had a hearty laugh when he heard what had gone into the preparation.”

That one-off tryst with vegetarian food transformed into a love affair for Qureshi, who enjoys it almost as much as his experiments with meat. Ever since, he has dished

While the most accomplished chefs today are from top culinary institutes, Qureshi's was a learn-by-doing approach in traditional, smoky kitchens, where he picked up the secrets of Awadhi cuisine defined by kebab, korma, biryani and curry

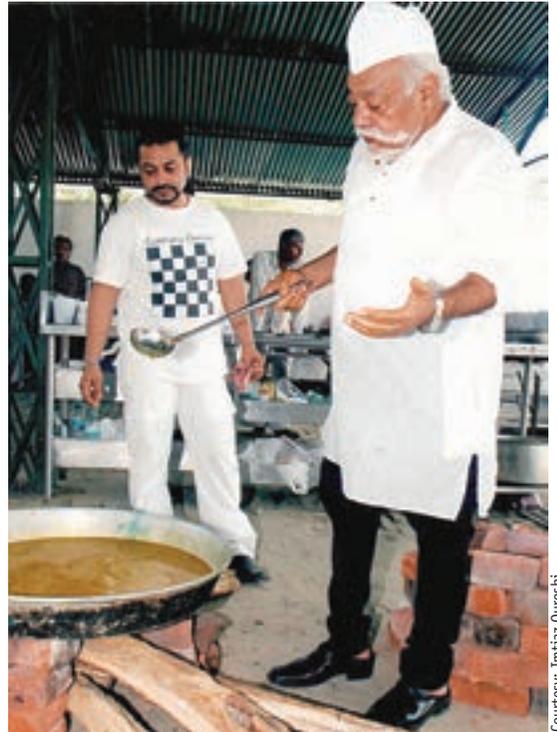
out gastronomic delights at celebrations hosted by the Ambanis, Dalmias and other top Indian VIPs.

Qureshi was still working with Krishna Caterers when he travelled for a hoteliers' convention in Aurangabad. Here, he was to be given his most crucial assignment at the age of 45. This was where the ITC chain of hotels took note of his skill and invited him to an interview in Lucknow. "At the convention, I met Ajit Haskar, who was chairman of ITC Hotels," recalls our chef. "He enjoyed the food I had cooked at the convention so much that he invited me for an interview [in Lucknow]. After I cleared that interview, they asked me to come to New Delhi for another one. But when I went there, they told me I would have to wait a couple of days as Haksar was not available. I was flustered and all I wanted to do was get back to work. I told them I would sit through just one more interview and they could call in the entire ITC management, if they wanted, but there would be no more!"

The interview with Haskar unfolded in the most unexpected way and, soon, the two were sipping whisky through the meeting! But the Awadhi chef had to prove himself all the same and was asked to prepare a complete menu for the restaurant. The menu became so popular that much of it remains the same even today.

Working at ITC introduced Qureshi to the who's who of India as well as many visiting dignitaries from abroad, including American presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush, Russian President Vladimir Putin and England's Queen Elizabeth. But Qureshi was never overawed by the status of his guests; he was focused purely on what he was serving them. "When Queen Elizabeth was here, the spread was huge but she walked right over to my food in the Indian section," he says with a smile. "We both knew she would not be disappointed."

One of Qureshi's fondest memories is his meeting with Dilip Kumar. The legendary actor was a guest at the ITC Mughal in Agra for a month, and they bonded on the subject of food. "Dilip *saab* really loved my food, especially all kinds of kebabs. But when it came to curries, he would eat only *kundan kaliya* [golden lamb curry]. We became really close and I even asked him for some advice when a rival hotel group offered me a job."



Courtesy: Intiaz Qureshi

Preparing the Bakra Mussalman Biryani at Baradari, Lucknow, during the shooting of *Gordon's Great Escape* as his eldest son Ishtiyaque looks on

Another time, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi called upon Qureshi to prepare a meal for the royal family of Spain on their visit to India. He organised a lavish spread but what the guests relished most was the biryani. "Spain has a dish called paella, which is saffron-based and consists of various meats and rice. So they took a natural liking to the biryani. They wrote in the guest book that they had travelled the world but had never eaten biryani like that, even in Muslim countries," says the celebrated chef.

Things go wrong at times, even for the best in the business, but Qureshi never once faltered. "When you've served *Nehruji* at the age of just 23, there's little that can throw you off." At a private party in Lucknow, the *murg musallam* was to be the signature dish of the evening. But when Qureshi and his team went out to buy the meat, they couldn't find the right quantity of chicken. So they made a quick trip to a nearby village, where they found 20-30 kids, the young ones of a goat. The *murg musallam* went as per plan. "After the party, the organiser told me he had never eaten *murg musallam* like that in his life. He said the guests loved it as well. So a man learns everything with time, when the situation arises," Qureshi chuckles.

What sets Qureshi apart from other top chefs is his belief in traditional Indian cooking rather than aping



Courtesy: Imtiaz Qureshi

Receiving the Padma Shri from President Pranab Mukherjee in 2016

trends. And despite the use of modern appliances, he has remained true to his style over the years. “You can’t really consider dishes like butter chicken to be food from India. They have no history. You just give it a name and it’s done; this is what a lot of cooks do today,” says the Grandmaster Chef. “Food from India has a name and a reputation. This is what I wanted to keep alive and get people to realise.”

Qureshi’s has always striven to bring the joy of eating back to the Indian dining table. So it naturally annoys him to see the way meals are dished out in many restaurants today. “Take dum aloo, for instance. It used to be such a unique preparation that not everyone could make it. It needed a minimum of 10 hours to prepare—you first boil

the potatoes, make holes in them and then fry them in mustard oil on a high flame. You then cook them in gravy on low heat. That’s how you get dum *aloo*. Do you think anyone will spend so much time preparing it this way these days?”

Why, his ingenious—and strenuous—approach to cooking had even celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay floored. Ramsay, who had sought out Qureshi for a Master Class on his television programme *Gordon’s Great Escape*, famously remarked on Qureshi’s goat biryani: “Eggs inside the quails, quails inside the chicken, and then we put it all inside the goat.... It’s like rewinding giving birth!”

At the ITC, Qureshi groomed a number of young chefs, among them many members of his family, who are part of the food industry today. Asked if he is willing to share any culinary secrets, he smiles and answers in the affirmative. “Without love and passion, you cannot make it right even if you know everything. The more you are involved with it, the better your dish will be,” he says. Hmm, he really had us there!

For all the love and passion Qureshi has put into his work, he was rewarded with the Padma Shri last year. Even then, he was cooking up a storm in the kitchen. “At the time, I was at a wedding of the Goenkas in Kolkata,” he says. “The award meant a lot to me because it was the culmination of my work through the years, right from my Lucknow days.” Now free of the obligation of work, Qureshi has the time to puff on his favourite hookah during breezy evenings at his home in Bandra, Mumbai. But he’s still consumed by food. His latest innovation is kebab made of beetroot, which he recently served at a party in Chennai. “I think I’m still quite creative when it comes to vegetarian food,” he laughs. How could we disagree?

KADHAI CHICKEN

Qureshi’s *Kadhahi* chicken is an easy-to-cook dish, which needs basic ingredients that can be found at home. It doesn’t take too long and can be enjoyed with roti or paratha, garlic bread or even on its own.

Ingredients

- Chicken: 1 kg
- Tomato: 500 gm; blanched & chopped
- Onion: 250 gm; chopped
- Garlic: 100 gm; chopped
- Ginger-garlic paste: 50 gm

- *Degi mirch* (red chilli powder): 1 tbsp
- Oil (refined or mustard): 150 ml
- Salt to taste

Garam masala (to grind)

- Black peppercorns: 1 tbsp
- Coriander (*dhaniya*) seeds: 1tbsp
- *Kala jeera* (black cumin seeds): 1 tsp
- *Badi elaichi* (black cardamom): 3

To garnish

- Ginger: 2 tbsp; julienned
- Fresh green coriander; 2 tbsp, chopped

Method

Blanch the chicken, throw away the water and set aside. In a *kadhahi*, sauté the onion and garlic. Once it is slightly brown, add chicken and ginger-garlic paste. Cook for a few minutes on medium flame. Add *degi mirch* and toss the chicken around for an even coat. Add the tomatoes, a little at a time. Sauté till the water evaporates and the masala turns golden-brown. Add the garam masala, salt and a little water to clear any masala stuck to the sides of the *kadhahi*. Let it simmer for 10 minutes on slow flame. Garnish with chopped ginger and coriander.

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

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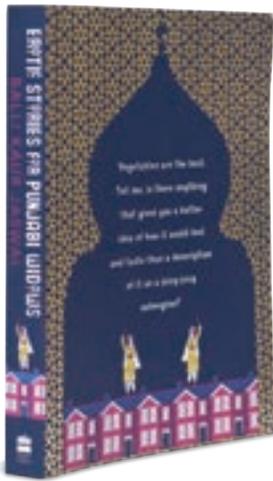
All you who sleep tonight

In this simple verse, **Vikram Seth** (born 20 June 1952) revisits his favourite themes of love, longing and loneliness

All you who sleep tonight
Far from the ones you love,
No hand to left or right
And emptiness above -

Know that you aren't alone
The whole world shares your tears,
Some for two nights or one,
And some for all their years.

Recipient of the Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi Award and WH Smith Literary Award, Seth is best known for his novel in verse The Golden Gate and the epic novel A Suitable Boy



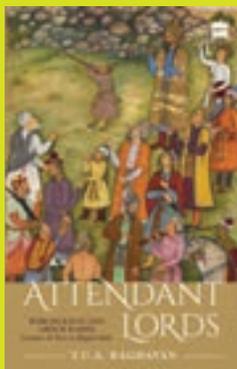
East meets West in **EROTIC STORIES FOR PUNJABI WIDOWS** (HarperCollins; ₹ 298; 308 pages), a steamy diaspora read by **Bally Kaur Jaswal**. Hinging on desire and discontentment in the close-knit, yet almost entirely closed-off, Punjabi community in Southall, the book addresses basic issues in a traditional set-up. Jaswal lifts the lid on lust, longing and the secret sexual fantasies of white-clad widows whose inner lives are as colourful as their untold stories. In the process, she exposes a seamy underbelly of deprivation and despair. Each tale comes with its own flavour—pre-marital, marital, extra-marital and gay sex—to give Southall, fondly called Little India, its own ‘50 Shades of Grey’. Little wonder then, that film rights to this dark but heart-warming book have already been secured by Sir Ridley Scott’s production house.

A taut thriller, **WHITE TEARS** (Penguin; ₹ 599; 271 pages) revolves around two white kids—Seth, an introverted audio geek who builds recording paraphernalia, and Carter, a rich privileged hipster—who have nothing in common except an obsessive love of music. They rise on the New York music scene by collecting and manipulating tracks to sound like the vinyl records they worship. When they stumble upon an old blues song that one of them records unknowingly, they are drawn into a shadowy world over which they have little control.



The song goes viral on the Internet, drawing them down a rabbit hole. Carter and Seth slide into a painful period of American history where African-Americans were subject to racism and ill-treatment, giving rise to the blues—music born out of humiliation and suffering. Different time zones and periods overlap as characters from the past and present meet midway. This tale by **Hari Kunzru** is as much about black lives and cultural appropriation as an indictment of white American power, built on exploitation.

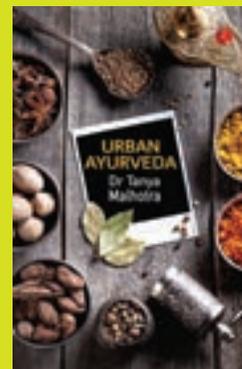
Also on stands



Attendant Lords
TCA Raghavan
HarperCollins; ₹ 699; 360 pages
The biography of legendary Mughal courtiers Bairam Khan and his son Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan covers a century of Mughal history, capturing power struggles, courtly intrigues and literary endeavours.



Why Gandhi Still Matters
Rajmohan Gandhi
Rupa; ₹ 499; 220 pages
The Mahatma’s grandson appraises Gandhi and his legacy by examining some of his most famous but controversial ideas and beliefs.



Urban Ayurveda
Dr Tanya Malhotra
Rupa; ₹ 195; 128 pages
A comprehensive guide to understanding the ancient Indian medical science of Ayurveda; it also allows the reader to combine age-old traditions with modern concepts of wellness.

Meet the Jinnahs

Love is not easy, more so when those involved defy social norms. *Mr And Mrs Jinnah: The Marriage That Shook India* (Penguin Random House; ₹ 699; 421 pages) authored by **Sheela Reddy** is one such tale that details the personal tribulations of a greatly misunderstood historic figure. For better or worse, chroniclers and biographers of Mohammad Ali Jinnah have drawn more on a not-so-charming and vehemently obstinate Muslim leader responsible for the creation of Pakistan. Reddy's thoroughly researched book sheds light on another Jinnah: a 40 year-old who fell in love with an under-16 Ruttie Petit.

The balanced treatment of the subject matter and authentic character portrayals, combined with the first-time use of source material, which includes never-before-seen personal correspondence, highlight the author's talent as a seasoned journalist with 35 years of fact-finding experience. A former books editor at *Outlook* magazine, the 65 year-old has an interest across disciplines, including politics, history, culture and literature. In an email interview with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the Delhi-based author talks about the making of the book, the man behind the myth, and her own zest for life.

Excerpts from the interview:

How was the book *Mr And Mrs Jinnah* born?

As someone curious about our recent history and the persons who shaped it, I wanted to find out more about that great arch-rival of



Courtesy: Sheela Reddy

our founding fathers. The more I read about Jinnah, the more intrigued I became about his personal life, especially his marriage to this young Parsi girl. It became a challenge to try and uncover everything about them. And even before I knew it, I was hooked!

authorspeak **What was the contribution of the late Padmaja Naidu to the book?**

Padmaja Naidu was the elder daughter of Sarojini Naidu, the

second of her four children. She was the last surviving member of the very modern and cosmopolitan Naidu family, all four siblings having died single and childless. Although Padmaja was from Hyderabad like me, I had never met her personally. I knew very little about her except that she was a close friend of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was only when I started researching the Jinnahs that I discovered the vast correspondence she had bequeathed to the Nehru Memorial Museum and

Library (NMML). This contained a large cache of letters written to her by Jinnah's wife and the entire correspondence between the brilliant, eccentric and widely-travelled Naidu family, running into scores and scores of files. These letters shed interesting light on Jinnah, his wife, their marriage and the politics of the freedom struggle. They were invaluable for my research. I owe the book almost entirely to Naidu's loving and systematic preservation of her family's huge correspondence with each other and those associated with the freedom struggle.

How different was the experience of writing this book compared to your book on the Emergency?

My first book, *Why I Supported the Emergency: Essays and Profiles by Khushwant Singh*, was not really my book. I was only the editor. My role was to pick from the reams of columns Singh had written to include in the book, sometimes stringing three or four of them into a single essay because they were far too short to go as individual pieces. The introduction, which was longer than some of Singh's own essays, was my only original contribution. And as that did not take me longer than a couple of days to write, it does not compare at all with the experience of writing *Mr And Mrs Jinnah*, which took me all of four years to write, making me feel like I would never reach the end, if there ever was going to be an end to whatever I was doing.

Who kept you motivated during that period?

The biggest inspiration was Vinod Mehta, my editor at *Outlook*. He cautioned me not to be in a hurry to write the book without researching it thoroughly. "It is your first book. Don't cut corners," he said, encouraging me to ignore the very tight dead-

line I had given myself for writing the book and ignore the publishers whenever they got impatient. I also felt I had to meet the expectations of my other mentor Khushwant Singh, whose lifelong lesson was that it was possible to be both readable as well as serious without sacrificing facts at the altar of readability. The other motivator was my family, where I had the reputation—quite undeservedly, I always felt—of not finishing any project I undertook. So, to my mind the book became a marathon race that I had set myself to run and now had to reach the finishing line no matter how overwhelmed and exhausted I felt because it was my *izzat ka sawal!*

"I was surprised how little even Pakistanis knew about Jinnah's personal life. There were so many roads and universities named after him in every city, but no attempt to understand the man behind the myth"

What has been the takeaway for you?

I learnt much from examining Jinnah and his wife closely and trying to get under their skin. I realised that to put one's feelings under such tight control as Jinnah did usually leads to disaster, both for oneself and others. Another lesson was that women who love too much, like Ruttie, end up doing a great disservice to themselves and the person they claim to love.

Were there any surprises while researching on Pakistan?

I was surprised how little even Pakistanis knew about Jinnah's personal life. There were so many

roads and universities named after him in every city, but no attempt to understand the man behind the myth.

Given the historical narrative of India and Pakistan as well as the political distrust between the nations, what can the book hope to achieve?

I am not egotistical enough to believe that my book can change the way people think, let alone an entire nation, and indeed that was never the intention behind writing the book. But, yes, I do hope the reader will come away with a better understanding of a man who is either seen as an arch-villain or demigod and the circumstances he was up against, and the tragedy of it all.

What are your leisurely pursuits?

So many things! I like spotting birds, trees and butterflies, although I am only beginning to distinguish the different kinds. I like walking, heart-to-heart conversations, shopping in local markets, learning about diverse subjects, attending talks, watching films from around the world, Zen Buddhism, and the art of interpreting dreams, among others. I have just been through a short-lived passion for Chhau dance and another phase of Haiku poetry. I also enjoy reading, writing and meeting friends, cooking, mooching around the house, and spending time with my family.

Are there plans for another book?

God knows! Before I wrote this book, I used to think we choose the books we write, deliberating among various subjects for the right theme. Now I know that it's the story that grabs hold of one, never letting go of you until you tell it the way it wants to be told. It's like being possessed!

Just roll with it

The side-effects of ageing can be hilarious, writes **Johanna Castro**

I have a funny feeling that my brain has decided to take on the role of resident comedian because it goes AWOL (absent from where one should be but without the intent to desert) at the strangest times, which actually has given me good reason to have some great belly laughs. Like the other day. I lost my wallet.

Where did I find it? In the fridge of course as I was making dinner! Why? Because I'd shoved it in a shopping bag earlier as I came out of the supermarket. Once home, I began unpacking the groceries in a rush and had lots of other things on my mind. So I shoved it in the fridge with the broccoli. Obvious! But when I needed my wallet during the day, it was nowhere to be found. I can almost hear my brain chuckling as I write this.

I'm not the only one to do silly things though. A very dear friend of mine dashed into the post office a couple of days ago and, when she came out, she didn't get into my red car but got into the red car parked in front of me! She told me:

"When I was about to buckle the seatbelt up I realised my mistake—I just turned to the woman in the driver's seat who was looking a little bit aghast and as I rushed to get out I said: 'Sorry! I should have gone to Specsavers (a British optical retail chain)!"

My dear mum told me a funny story the other day and we nearly wet ourselves laughing about it. You see she was driving along a remote Devon lane minding her own business when she saw a woman walking along carrying some shopping bags. Feeling sorry for her as it was a hot day, she stopped and her partner M wound down the passenger's window and mum asked: "Would you like a lift?" She

thought the woman said, "No, Thank you. The weather's lovely," and so off she drove in a puff of exhaust fumes.

"What did you do that for?" M asked. "Why did you drive off?"

"Well, she didn't want a lift," Mum replied. "Silly woman! Preferred to walk because the weather's lovely!"

"She wanted a lift!" said M. "She put down her bags and was about to open the rear door. She said, "Oh, thank you; that would be lovely."



When they found somewhere to turn around and then drove back, the (bemused and probably rather shaken) woman was seen getting into another car.

But there's something else you should know. If you meet me at a party and the music is loud, and I'm smiling inanely at you all the time, it's not because I've had too much to drink, it's probably because I can't hear a bloody thing you're

saying. So please make sure you Open-Your-Mouth-When-You-Talk because I'll be trying to lip read.

The late American actress and comedienne Lucille Ball said, "The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."

But I like to be philosophical about age—it's just a number. The way to look at it is if you're 50, then actually you're only 25 (with 25 years of indispensable experience).

Hmmm! What funny things have happened to you recently?

Castro is a freelance writer who blogs for women over 50 at <http://lifestylefifty.com/>



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Everyone's LOVIN' IT

Health freaks and new-age nutritionists may lose their sleep over it, but there's nothing as comforting as biting into the melange of flavours that makes up the iconic 540-calorie Big Mac, considered the Cadillac of burgers. Incidentally, it was on a warm summer night in 1967 that the Big Mac was born in Jim Delligatti's kitchen in Pennsylvania. At only 49 cents, it debuted in 47 outlets across the US in 1968. Filling, yet small enough to fit in one hand, the Big Mac soon metamorphosed into the perfect bite for the road, aligning itself as a symbol of American lifestyle.

An instant gateway to gastronomic heaven, the Big Mac boasts of a triple-bun approach, with the middle bun, called the club, separating the beef patties, lettuce, cheese, gherkins and onions, while the golden orange velvety sauce ties it all together. It's believed it took Delligatti two years to perfect the sauce, the recipe of which is still a closely guarded secret. In fact, the sauce is so revered that at a recent auction a 25-oz bottle of it sold for nearly \$ 95,000!

Though many American fast-food chains have made the leap to the international stage, none have been



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as successful as McDonald's, riding primarily on the Big Mac, considered cheap, consistent and filling. Despite allegations of contributing to obesity in the US, the Big Mac continues to be mega popular, with Americans alone ordering about 550 million of them a year. It also continues to be present in some form or another on McDonald's menus across conti-

nents. In fact, almost 30 years ago, *The Economist* paid homage to its ubiquity by introducing the 'Big Mac Index', a light-hearted guide to whether currencies are their correct level by tracking the cost of a Big Mac around the globe. There's even a museum dedicated to the Big Mac in Pennsylvania, making it truly America's signature burger.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JULY 1967

- On 1 July, Canada celebrated 100 years of confederation, with Queen Elizabeth II participating as the chief guest.
- On 8 July, Hong Kong was invaded by a mob of 300 people, including armed men in uniform, from neighbouring China.
- On 10 July, New Zealand decimalised its currency from the pound to the dollar, with £ 1 being converted to \$ 2.
- On 25 July, the discovery of a new gemstone, tanzanite, was registered with the Republic of Tanzania.

“ I don't have a problem with ageing—in fact, I embrace that aspect of it. And am able to and obviously am going to be able to quite easily. It doesn't faze me at all.

—English singer-songwriter David Bowie (1947-2016)

Soft robotics

n. The invention and use of robots made from materials that are soft, flexible, or malleable.

EXAMPLE: How will these robots appear in our lives and how will we interact, and live, with them? We can foresee smart skins, assist and medical devices, biodegradable and environmental robots or intelligent soft robots. For example, the compliance of **soft robotics** makes them ideally suited for direct interaction with biological tissue.

—Jonathan Rossiter, “Robotics, smart materials, and their future impact for humans”, MIT Technology Review, 6 April 2017

Vanlife

n. A lifestyle based on living in a van or similar vehicle.

EXAMPLE: Huntington's **vanlife** hashtag was a joking reference to Tupac's 'thug life' tattoo. “You know, it's not thug life—it's van life!” he told me. Six years later, more than 1.2 million Instagram posts have been tagged #vanlife.

—Rachel Monroe, “#Vanlife, the bohemian social-media movement”, The New Yorker, 24 April 2017

Paleo-pirate

n. A person who illegally extracts and sells fossils.

EXAMPLE: However, when I finally arrived at the park entrance, I was turned away. A vigilant park ranger forbade me to see the trails because I had failed to acquire the proper permits. Their location, I learned, was a matter of great secrecy due to the rise of so-called **paleo-pirates**, who had been known to carve out the more notable fossils and sell them to collectors.

—Robert Moor, *On Trails*, Simon & Schuster, 12 July 2016

Source: www.wordspy.com

Granny nanny

n. A grandmother who cares for her grandchildren while their parents are working.

EXAMPLE: One way is that we're in our grandchildren's lives more than ever before, whether from across the country thanks to Skype and FaceTime or as **granny nannies**—in some cases full time.

—Lesley Stahl, “Grandbabies: The great reward for ageing”, The New York Times, 13 May 2017

MYCONET

n. A symbiotic network of connections between tree roots and fungi that enable the trees to share nutrients.

EXAMPLE: A plant under attack from aphids can indicate to a nearby plant that it should raise its defensive response before the aphids reach it. It has been known for some time that plants communicate above ground in comparable ways, by means of airborne hormones. But such warnings are more precise in terms of source and recipient when sent by means of the **myconet**.

—Robert Macfarlane, “The secrets of the Wood Wide Web”, The New Yorker, 7 August 2016



Courtesy: Society to Save Rocks

Rock that walk

Did you know that the gargantuan granite boulders of the Deccan Plateau are among the oldest rocks in the world—even older than life itself? Well, now you do. But do you know how these smooth and massive rocks get stacked in that curious way—as if somebody balanced their huge masses delicately on top of each other like weightless pebbles in a garden? To know this and more about the fascinating history, composition and phenomena behind the rock formations surrounding Hyderabad and Secunderabad, the Society to Save Rocks organises free ‘rock walks’ that are open to anyone, on the third Sunday of every month. Unlike

BUZZ

rock-climbing, the monthly rock walks are safe for silvers, a demography that has already started becoming a common fixture—just be sure to have on proper footwear and long pants, and carry a bottle of water. “Last month we had two silvers, a lady and a gent, who enthusiastically hiked the path, and the youth could not keep pace with them,” says G R B Pradeep, joint secretary of the society. The walks take up just the morning, or extend through the day, depending on how far their location for exploration is from Hyderabad. To join them this month, pre-book your spot with Pradeep at (0) 9866752114, and get your walking boots on.

Guerilla drive-in

n. An impromptu and unauthorised drive-in movie theatre, particularly one set up in an unused urban space where the movie is projected against the side of a building.

EXAMPLE: Drive-in theatres have come a long way since the outdoor Theatre de Guadalupe in New Mexico first welcomed cars to join seated crowds at screenings in 1915. But decades of growth up through the 1950s and 60s gave way to decline in the 70s and 80s. A recent **guerilla drive-in** movement, however, has begun to reinvent the concept, using new technologies to create mobile open-air theatres in the hearts of cities.

—Kurt Kohlstedt, “Guerrilla drive-ins: Mobile urban movie theatres animate disused spaces”, 99% Invisible, 3 April 2017

RACECATION

n. A trip that combines participating in a race, such as a marathon or triathlon, and a vacation.

EXAMPLE: I just got back from a mini **racecation**. I thought I’d share the things that I always forget and the things I never forget to create the ultimate packing list for a racecation!

—“The fool-proof packing list for your next race”, Women’s Running, 23 March 2016

“It’s gratifying to serve those who put the country first”

Col G B Sethi, 77, and Brigadier C S Vidyasagar, 69, Hyderabad, help ex-servicemen claim their dues

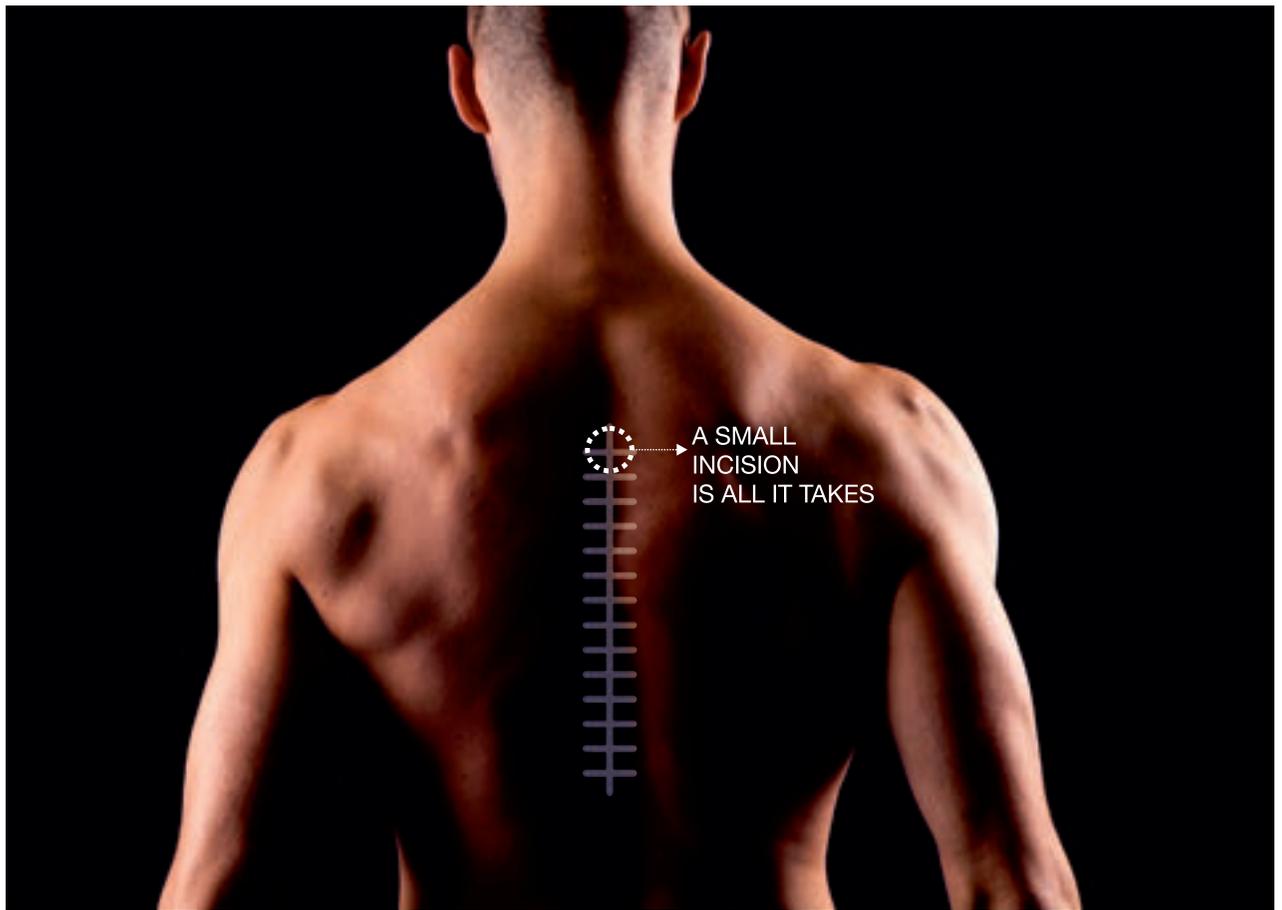


Shyamola Khanna

When Kirti Chakra awardee (posthumous) Major Avinash Singh Bhadoria lost his life while taking on terrorists in Kashmir in 2001, his wife Shalini was promised ₹ 1 million by the Uttar Pradesh government. It remained an empty promise until Hyderabad-based Triservices Ex-servicemen’s Welfare Association (TSEWA) stepped in last year, with the dues being released immediately. Set up by retired Army officers Col **G B Sethi** (right) and Brigadier **C S Vidyasagar** in 2015 to help war widows, sepoys, disabled soldiers and other ranks (ORs) below officers and their dependents, the organisation has successfully tackled 500 cases including pending pensions, medical benefits and disability pensions. “While working with the Sainik Welfare Board of Andhra Pradesh I met war widows in the hinterland,” says Brigadier Vidyasagar. “I realised many of them didn’t have the means to get their arrears cleared.” Col Sethi, whose garage functions as the office of the organisation, adds, “As army officers, we believe in giving our best under any situation. It feels

nice to reach out and benefit so many who were not even aware of their dues.” A casual chat between the two about the disparity in pension among officers led them to organise a protest rally demanding One Rank One Pension in Secunderabad in June 2015 and forming TSEWA immediately afterwards. As word spread, the duo was flooded with requests for help from hapless widows and veterans. Cases were taken up and cleared on a war footing. One of the beneficiaries, a colonel who prefers to remain anonymous, says, “Within six months of contacting them, I got my disability pension. Now I keep telling every *fauji* to join TSEWA.” Incidentally, when the above mentioned colonel’s pension was released, it benefitted 103 other officers and jawans with disabilities, whose dues were also cleared. With over 6,000 members across the country, TSEWA is currently working on 22 cases with the Armed Forces Tribunal. Promising to continue their war against red tape, they hope to reach out to as many people as possible through their website www.tsewa.in.

—Shyamola Khanna



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