

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

FEBRUARY 2011 ₹ 30

LOVE AAJ KAL
SILVERS EMOTE IN
VERSE AND PROSE

MEDLEY
THE SONG
OF THE BAULS

JUNGLE BOY
K M CHINNAPPA FIGHTS
FOR THE FORESTS

Full Circle

Artist S H Raza is home after
60 years in France

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Light and dark

Suresh Natarajan



The good, the bad and the ugly—that's not just a catchphrase but a metaphor for real life that often combines light and dark in equal measure.

As a cold breaking dawn morphed into a bright Sunday morning, over 1,600 silvers cut a swath through the sea of people at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, blazing radiant and proud at the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run. I thank actors Shilpa Shetty, Shreyas Talpade and Bomi Dotiwala for cheering on the participants; my team for their untiring efforts; and Hindustan Unilever, Zimmer India, Belton India Pvt Ltd, J W Marriott, Domino's Pizza, Steve Cragg Advertising and Procam International, and all the Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group companies for their support. Above all, I doff my cap to all our silvers who gather together every year for this celebration of vitality and vigour—they touch my heart with their commitment to Harmony for Silvers Foundation and the Run. Indeed, a simple act of coming out for an event like this and staking your claim on the public consciousness has a deeper subtext: it spells empowerment.

Not everyone is so fortunate. Just a couple of days after the Marathon, people in Mumbai awoke to the disturbing

story of Lakshmi Datlani on the front page of their morning paper. The 95 year-old was periodically left on the stairs outside her home whenever her 58 year-old daughter, with whom she was living, went to work. One day, the daughter just didn't return, leaving Datlani stranded outside for over 48 hours. Eventually, neighbours intervened and called the police; they forced her son, who lives elsewhere, to take his mother in.

The incident is a sobering dose of reality—and a reminder that there are millions of elderly in India who live in abject insecurity and penury, for whom the mere act of living is a challenge to be faced day after day. Who speaks for these silent silvers? Who hears their muted cries? With another Budget around the corner, Harmony for Silvers Foundation urges the government to take heed (see "Budget Buzz"). It's time to dispel the gloom and share the sunshine.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—February 2011 Volume 7 Issue 9

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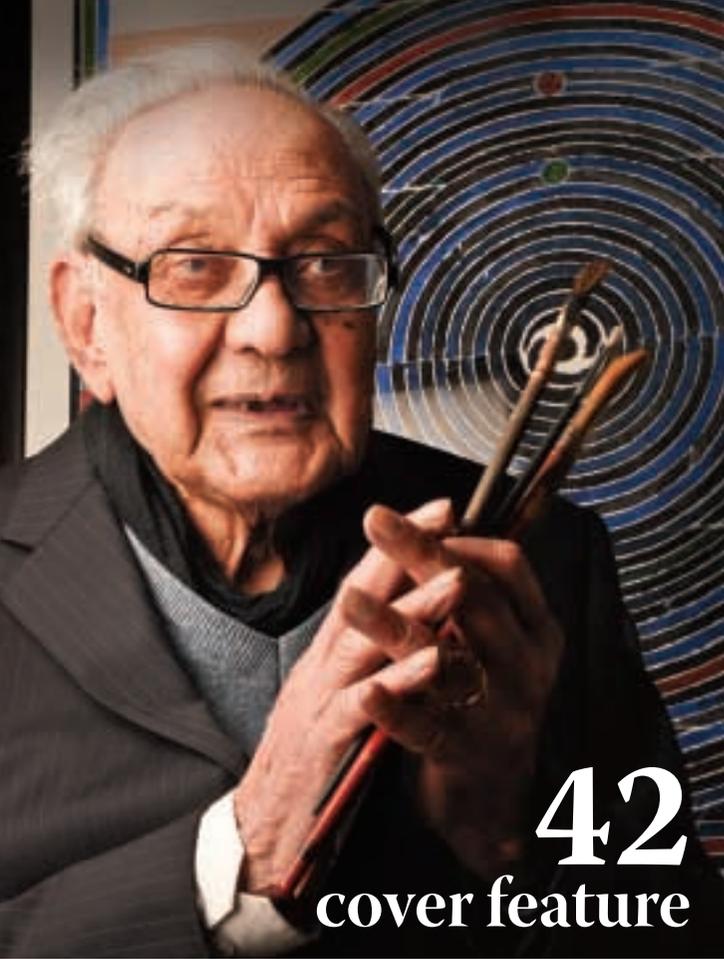
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Editorial & Marketing Offices: Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Tel: 91-22-30327108 (Editorial), 30327102 (Marketing). Email: contact.mag@harmonyindia.org **Printed and published** by Dharmendra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

index

features



42 cover feature

S H Raza speaks of art, life, love and his return to India after a lifetime abroad

S H Raza, photographed by Shivay Bhandari

every issue

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

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

56 . LEGAL EAGLE: Mansukhlal Ruparelia uses RTI to seek better civic services and dignity for silvers

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

80 . SPEAK: Two Bengaluru-based silvers start a kidney foundation for the poor



34 . Showing The Way: The Kulkarnis' crusade against the dowry system

36 . Fine Romance: Silvers keep love and longing alive

50 . Money Matters: Silvers' wishlist for the coming Budget

52 . Proactive: Meet jungle boy, K M Chinnappa

58 . Destination: Yercaud, the hidden jewel of South India

columns

28 . YOGA Rx: Bust stress with Shameem Akthar

29 . WEIGHT WATCH: Exercise with Madhukar Talwalkar

30 . NUTRITION: Anjali Mukerjee suggests the right diet for healthy teeth

32 . AT LARGE: Pakistani writer Ernest Dempsey



WEB EXCLUSIVES www.harmonyindia.org



ROCKSTAR

Muhammad Makki displays his fascinating collection of fossils and meteorites

TO DYE FOR!

Shyamola Khanna confronts the grey in her hair

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wine red

plum crazy

column one

Art is subjective. Perceiving and interpreting colours, beauty and mysticism of a painting is an individual experience and exceptional journey of the mind. It's as unique as how an artist interprets life and the inspiration it lends to all without exception. The universe, its completeness and infinite incompleteness are reinvented on legendary artist Syed Haider Raza's canvas as the *bindu*—Raza's *bindu*. Interviewed by Delhi-based senior journalist Sudha G Tilak, when asked if like other creative souls he would want to take the road to reinvention, he politely declines the thought of deserting 'the *bindu* of his life and work'. "A person lives on if he is able to concentrate on issues that are important to him...Working on my legacy is not my ambition, though my feeling is my commitment and creative work will speak for itself," he says. On the cover this month for returning home to India after six decades in France, Raza's work is the epitome of the adage 'coming full circle'.

Love in later years is a sort of coming full circle as well. After years of adjustments and strife with oneself and one's partner, many couples find true love once again in the silvering shadows. It's February and love is in the air. So we decided to get 'still-in-love' silver couples to pose for our camera. We have poems by Pritish Nandy and late Kamala Das; artist Rekha Rodwitiya talks about marrying her partner of 25 years; and Nandini Sardesai soaks in the memories of her cricketer husband Dilip. Life goes on with and without, but what stays with all of us are the moments of togetherness, the completeness and incompleteness of our beings, the *bindu*, without which there is no end and therefore no beginning. Happy Valentine's month!!

—Meeta Bhatti

I received the January 2011 issue of *Harmony: Celebrate Age* and liked the new cover design of the magazine. The articles are also very good. Frankly speaking, it is one of my favourite magazines as each story in each issue is inspiring. When I cross 50 years of age, I would like to do something significant enough to be featured in your magazine! I hope this dream of mine comes true someday.

Prasad *Via email*

Your review of the book, *Jawaharlal Nehru – Civilising a Savage World* ('Bookshelf', December 2010), by Nayantara Sahgal, was interesting. The title brings back to memory an R K Laxman cartoon in Dr Rafiq Zakaria's book, *A Study of Nehru*, published half a century ago. It shows Nehru demonstrating to us how to welcome guests in a civilised style. Indeed, Nehru was a human dynamo on whom many books have been written. And Nayantara Sahgal's description of her *Mamu* as someone who endeared himself to those he came into contact with is charming. For a 74 year-old person like me who has viewed Nehru as an eminent statesman, it was a pleasant surprise. I remember the time I would look forward to reading his speeches and other commentary. The book reviews in *Harmony: Celebrate Age* are a joy to read—keep it up.

K R Deshpande *Bengaluru*

I am 81 years old and an avid reader of your magazine. Ever since I subscribed to it five years ago, I have been sending it to my other silver friends too and they have all thanked me for introducing it to them. I keenly await its arrival every month. It inspires me in my day-to-day life and teaches me a lot about the interesting things other silvers are doing. I enjoy reading about the

elderly pursuing their hobbies when retired and it encourages me to try and do positive things to pass my time. In fact, I devour the magazine within a day and I wish it could last longer and give me more reading pleasure. As the old adage goes, we all should try and 'add life to our days and not days to our life'.

Sarla Lall *Via email*

CONTRIBUTOR



This month, 34 year-old **Ernest Dempsey** shares an inspiring tale of hope with our readers. The Peshawar-based writer has authored four books and a host of poems, essays, short stories and literary reviews. He is editor of *Recovering the Self*, a self-help journal, and country editor for Pakistan for citizen journalism channel Instablogs. A fan of Hindi cinema, Dempsey learnt about *Harmony: Celebrate Age* during a search on *Harmony* for Silvers Chairperson Tina Ambani, which led him to our website, www.harmonyindia.org. "As I visited the site and read a couple of stories, I really loved the work," he says. "It was infused with the same spirit of hope and life that drives *Recovering the Self*. I was impressed with the spirit of valuing the ageing, the elderly, in an age that is sickeningly obsessed with youth and glamour."

Do you know what goes in your Mouth?

Important things one must know before choosing the material for dental restoration.

Before going to a dentist, here are some homework tips to make it easier for you to choose the right dental material for replacement of your teeth, replacement that gives you a natural smile.

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Special mention

Shilpa Shetty, Shreyas Talpade & Bomi Dotiwala

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thanks

**all those who supported the Senior Citizens' Run
at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon 2011!**



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INSIDE

P10: Highlights of the Harmony Run

P28: Stress-busting *asana*

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► NEWSWORTHY

The walk of life

Every step tells a story. Indeed, according to a study conducted by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre, **the pace at which you walk is a sign of your overall health.** After gathering walking speed measurements and survival rates dating back up to 21 years from nearly 35,000 people over the age of 65, the research team found that the time it took the sampled elders to walk comfortably down a hall was one of the best predictors of whether they would be alive five or 10 years hence. In fact, walking speed was as good a way to predict lifespan as measurements like

blood pressure, weight, smoking status and markers of heart disease and diabetes. “The reason walking speed is such a good predictor of mortality is that so many organ systems are involved in how quickly we move, including the heart, lungs, blood, brain, nervous system, muscles, joints and bones,” writes team leader Stephanie Studenski in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. “But we are not saying that if you just go out and walk faster, you will live longer. Absolutely not. The point is that your body selects a speed that is best for you based on the health of all your body systems. And walking speed might help you reflect or monitor how healthy you are.”



GO GUJARAT!

The New Year began on a bright note for silvers in Gujarat with the launch of **three silver-friendly initiatives** worth applause.

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation is building a 11,000-sq-m park for silvers in the Ranip area with an amphitheatre, seating facilities, a jogging and walking track, a corner for yoga and laughing club activities; and dedicated areas to play chess and cards.

Faced by a rash of criminals duping silvers by impersonating police officers, the Ahmedabad Police has embarked

upon an awareness drive. Police officials have begun a door-to-door and leaflet campaign to educate probable victims about the modus operandi of such criminals. Also on the agenda are meetings at senior citizens' centres and other community organisations.

The Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) will launch a mobile library for silvers—volunteers will deliver books from RMC's extensive library to silvers across the city in their homes. Phone numbers for the service along with further details are likely to be announced in city newspapers and on radio stations in the next few weeks.

75 A DRAFT AMENDMENT TO CHINA'S CRIMINAL LAW—THE COUNTRY'S PENAL CODE—SEEKS TO SPARE SILVERS OVER THE AGE OF 75 THE DEATH PENALTY UNLESS THEY USED EXCEPTIONAL CRUELTY WHEN MURDERING ANOTHER. IT NOW AWAITS THE APPROVAL OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (NPC), CHINA'S TOP LEGISLATURE.

SWEET AT SIXTY

It may comfort the crotchety among us—and our families—to know that we will eventually get nicer and more accepting. Scientists at the University of California - Berkeley have discovered that **emotional intelligence only peaks when people enter their 60s**, making silvers kinder, gentler, more sensitive and empathetic and more likely to see the positive side of stressful situations. As part of the study, the research team examined how 144 healthy adults in their 20s, 40s and 60s reacted to neutral, sad and unpleasant film clips; the participants had been briefed to view the clips dispassionately and objectively. They discovered that while the young and middle-aged participants preferred to tune out the negative and sad scenes, silvers found it easier to view them in a positive light.

"This is a recognised coping strategy that draws on life experience and lessons learned from the past," writes study leader Robert Levenson in journal *Psychology and Aging*. "Increasingly, it appears that the meaning of late life centres on social relationships and caring for and being cared for by others. Evolution seems to have tuned our nervous systems in ways that are optimal for these kinds of interpersonal and compassionate activities as we age."

FIRST RESORT

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YOU CAN HELP!

As part of its Spread the Warmth campaign, Delhi-based NGO Agewell Foundation is distributing woollen clothing and blankets among poor silvers. If you want to donate your old woollies, look out for a collection centre in your neighbourhood or a mall near you.



Can't find one? Contact Agewell at M-8A, Lajpat Nagar-II; call 011-29836486, 29840484, 29830005; or email agewellfoundation@gmail.com



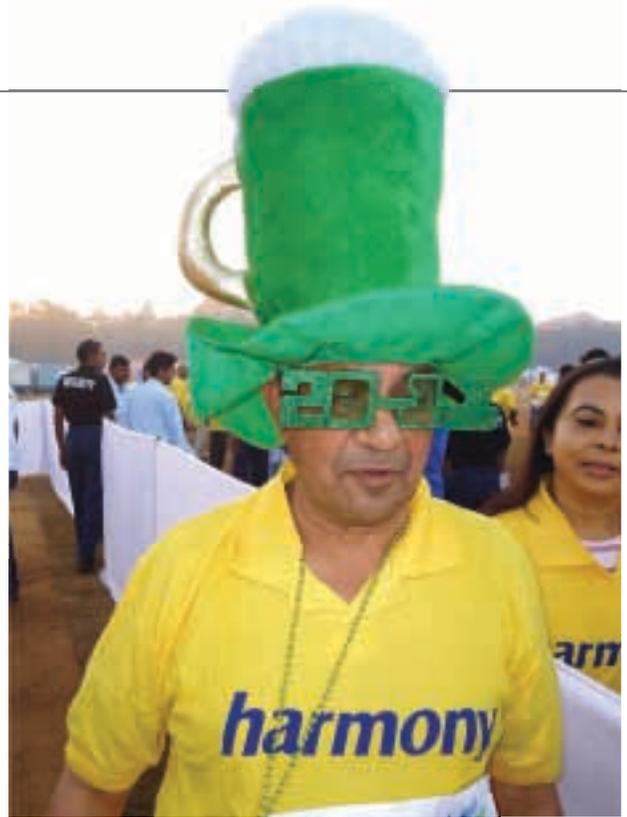
It may well be the best anti-ageing gadget in the world—and you don't even have to buy it! According to a team of researchers at Harvard University, **your mind is the key to looking younger and staying**

healthy. Published in journal *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, their studies to determine the mind's influence on the body and the ageing process reveal that physical decline can be reversed simply by thinking and acting younger. In one study, a group of silver men lived in a 1950s set, watched TV shows and listened to music from that era and were told to think and talk like they did at the time. A week later, they all looked at least three years younger and displayed better eyesight, hearing, muscles and quicker minds. In the second study,

silver women were asked to get their hair cut and coloured—they managed to lower their blood pressure. And were rated as looking younger even with their new hairdos hidden. Other findings: older mothers tend to age slower than those who give birth in their 20s as they are surrounded by younger mothers, a fact that also applies to someone with a young spouse. "Much of the decline of old age may be driven by negative perceptions about our later years and breaking these down can improve health," asserts study leader Ellen Langer.

The fit PARADE

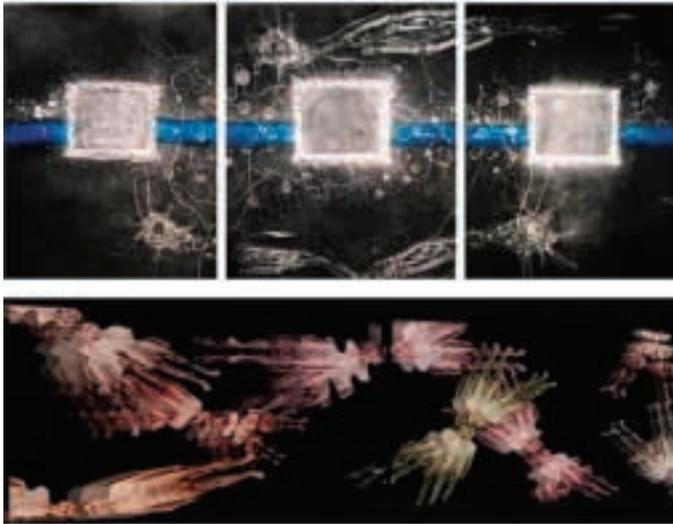
Harmony Senior Citizens' Run
at the Standard Chartered
2011 Mumbai Marathon



Though Mumbai is going through one of its coldest winters, on 16 January the icy chill was no match for the contagious enthusiasm the 1,600 silvers gathered at the Harmony for Silvers Foundation enclosure at Azad Maidan to participate in the Standard Chartered 2011 Mumbai Marathon. As guests of honour—actors Shreyas Talpade and Shilpa Shetty (*left*)—cheered, silvers grooved to peppy Hindi film songs; showed off their diverse, wacky attire (ranging from mirrored *ghagra-choli* to army camouflage) and walked around with banners on water scarcity, environment conservation, and scams. When we asked a boisterous group from the Napean Sea Road Laughter Club if they intended to finish the circuit, they retorted, “We can do it twice, you want to dare us?” We decided not to; after all, we know there is no dream that can elude a silver’s determination.

Photographs by Hareh Patel, Hitesh Parekh





Altering attitudes

You don't have to give up on life simply because you are ageing; you just need to adapt to it differently. That's the underlying message of *Coming of Age; the Art and Science of Ageing*, an exhibition at Great North Museum in Newcastle, UK. An offshoot of Newcastle University's Changing Age campaign, which seeks to challenge negative perceptions about older people in society, the mega event will feature the work of artists as well as scientists from the University's Institute of Ageing and Health. "This exhibition is the first of its kind to explore age and the ageing process in depth," curator Lucy Jenkins tells London newspaper *The Times*. "Its aim is to celebrate the achievement that is our increased life expectancy, but also to encourage people to think about the opportunities, challenges and responsibilities this brings to our society. The university wants to bring areas of research



together and show how these are important to wider society."

For instance, British artists Andrew Carnie, Annie Cattrell and Jennie Pedley worked with scientists at the Institute of Ageing for the show—Carnie produced a slide projection installation revealing the human body as it undergoes the changes of ageing; Cattrell's sculptures examine how memory is stored in the brain; and Pedley's series of silhouette imagefilms track the day-to-day processes of scientists at the institute and the daily activities of older people. Other highlights, on loan from London's Tate Gallery, are Henry Moore's series of prints *The Seven Ages of Man* that show the process of physical ageing; the sculpture *Mother and Child* by Renoir, who suffered from rheumatoid arthritis, and *The Ballet Dancers* by Degas, who reportedly adopted an impressionist style because of failing eyesight. The exhibition ends on 2 March.

FLAG OFF

ONE MORE REASON for you to breathe easy about your financial future: Star Union Dai-Ichi Life Insurance Company Limited (SUD Life) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Union Bank of India on 29 December, whereby Union Bank will offer **SUD life's Reverse Mortgage Loan enabled Annuity Plan (RMLeA)** to its potential customers among home-owning silvers. This comes on the heels of SUD Life's MoU with Central Bank of India, which was announced at 'Reverse Mortgage – A Step Ahead', a seminar organised in partnership with Harmony for Silvers Foundation in April 2010.

Through the RMLeA, silvers can avail of a reverse mortgage loan from Union Bank that will be used to purchase a life annuity from SUD Life. Union Bank will offer the annuitant a life annuity with return of purchase price on the death of the annuitant. The home owner's obligation to pay the loan is deferred till the owner/annuitant dies; the home is then either sold by the bank or the legal heirs reclaim the property by repaying the interest amount, as the principal will be returned by SUD. Speaking on the occasion, Kamalji Sahay, CEO SUD Life, said, "The life insurance industry has witnessed dramatic changes in the past few months. We look to stay ahead of the pack and translate these amendments into increased opportunities. The move to align with Union Bank of India is a strategic one, taken to ensure that we satisfy the requirements of the elderly segment and provide them with superior products."

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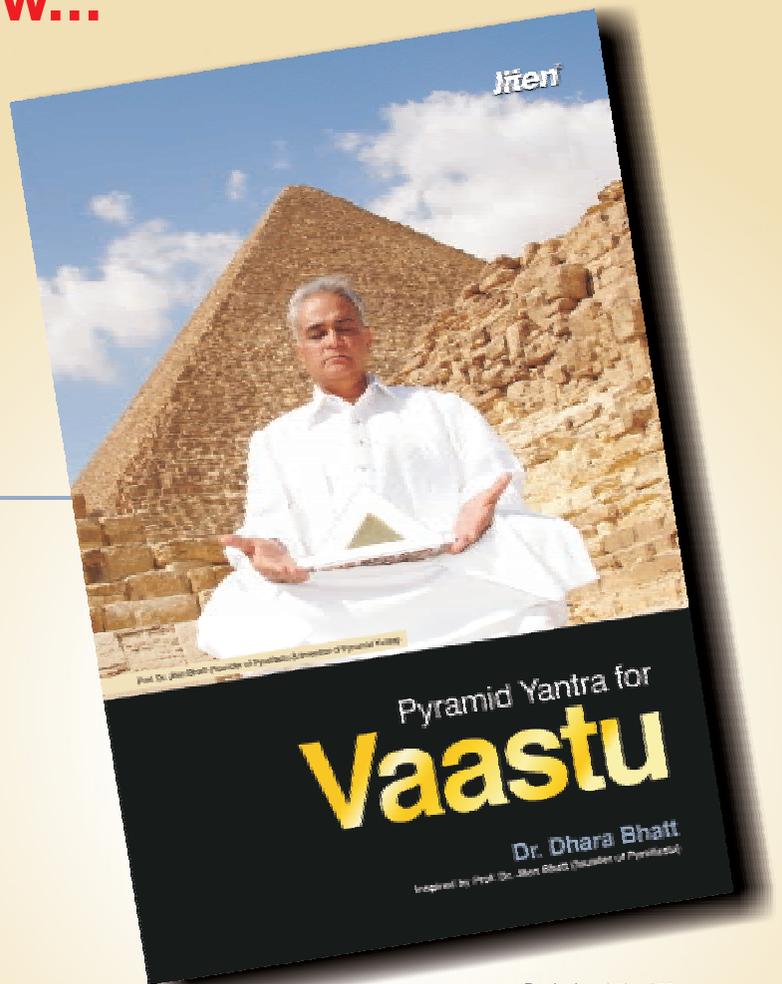
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FACE YOUR AGE

Bone structure is not just a marker of beauty—it can also indicate how old you are. When scientists at the University of Rochester Medical Centre (URMC) in New York State analysed the facial bones of people, they found that **bone structure differed significantly across age groups**. Their study of 60 men and 60 women, split into three age groups (20-40; 41-64; 65 and above), revealed that with age, eye sockets became wider and longer, contributing to wrinkles on the forehead and crow's feet; the distance between the most prominent part of the brow to the top of the nose decreased; the cheekbones stuck out less; the opening of the nose bones

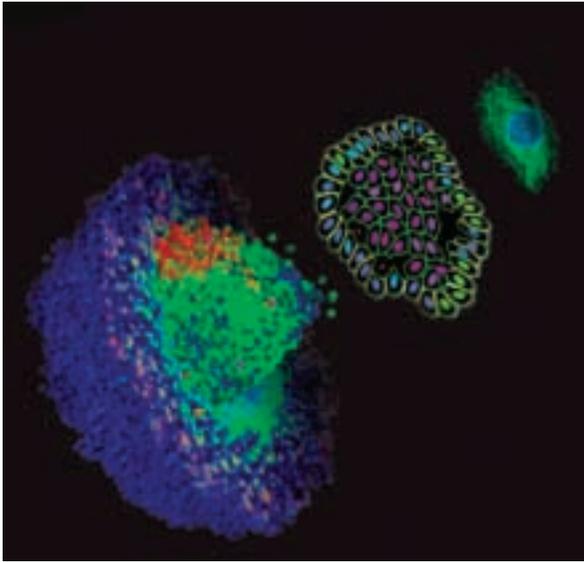
receded; and the lower jaw shrunk in both length and height, flattening the chin and softening the neckline.

Interestingly, facial bone changes appear in women earlier than men, owing to menopause-related changes that lead them to lose bone tissue faster. "Physicians have long been taught that facial ageing is caused by soft tissue descent and loss of elasticity," Howard Langstein, chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery at URMC and study author, writes in the January 2011 issue of journal *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*. "Though we have always known bones change over time, until now the extent to which this causes an aged appearance was not appreciated."

1

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A new VIEW

Cell change is intrinsic to the ageing process—and understanding that process requires the monitoring of cell growth. According to the Belarusian Telegraph Agency (BelTA), specialists of the Genetics and Cytology Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus have developed a **computer-assisted video unit to monitor live cells**. It enables continuous long-term monitoring to track the dynamics of cell populations over generations, including changes in shape, evolution speed and movement. The data gathered will be used to study the ageing process in life forms, test the impact of medications on cells, and design new biotechnologies.

APP alert

Linguists have declared 'app'—short for application, typically developed for smartphones with iPhone, BlackBerry or Android technology—the word of 2010. The cool news is that the word is now part of the silver lexicon too, with a variety of **software developers in the US creating apps for elders**. *The Wall Street Journal* picks its top three favourites for silvers—they're all free—from over 8,700 apps available today:

iBiomed: Available on the iPhone/iPod Touch platform, this app is designed to help keep track of the care schedule of patients with special needs, such as those suffering from allergies, asthma, autism or seizure disorders. www.biomedprofile.com

Pain Care: Available on the iPhone, Android and BlackBerry platforms, this award-winning app allows patients to document and share the location, duration, characteristics, triggers and level of their pain. www.ringfulhealth.com

Personal Caregiver: Available on the iPhone platform, this app maps out medications for up to three people. Pay a one-time fee of \$ 9.99 (about ₹ 450) and it throws in FDA alerts and other important pharmaceutical information. www.personalcaregiver.com



PICTURE THIS Start a photography club with your friends and view life through a new lens. In Delaware city in the US, a bunch of camera-toting silvers started their own club—‘Trigger Happy’—three years ago at their local community centre, even pooling in to invite the occasional guest lecturer and taking off on trips, tripods in hand. To mark their third anniversary, they held an exhibition-cum-sale of their collective efforts. “I’ve taken pictures for years but didn’t realise they could change my life,” says 75 year-old Don Pearse. “Now, I’ve found a passion for life and travel, made new friends, and even scored a little cash from the sale of my work. It doesn’t get better than this!”



Then: Greeting cards

Now: Bowl

Is your house overflowing with greeting cards following the festive season? Use your favourites to make a nifty bowl. Cut out the designs from 14 cards and group them according to the theme; for instance, landscape, portrait, animals, etc. Match them into seven pairs by sticking together two cut-outs, picture side facing up. Let dry completely. Now make small punching holes evenly spaced about $\frac{3}{4}$ inches apart on the edges of the cut-outs. Use one of the pair as the inside base; remember this will be seen the most, so choose appropriately. Now take strong embroidery thread and secure the pieces together. Your greeting card bowl is ready.

Haresh Patel



MORE IDEAS... 1. Cut off the backs of cards with the writing and use them as postcards. 2. Cut the designs and make a small hole on top. Put a string or ribbon through them and use as gift tags. 3. Make a placemat by cutting pictures from the cards, placing them between two pieces of craft paper. You can laminate them for durability.



FACTS

- » The first commercial Christmas cards were commissioned by Sir Henry Cole in London and featured an illustration by John Calcott Horsley.
- » The first step to recycle and reuse Christmas cards started in 19th century with people making new cards from old cards to save money and lessen the commercialism associated with Christmas.
- » In 2003-04, paper and greeting cards accounted for almost a third (1.3 million tonne roughly) of all household waste collected for recycling in England.

Mrs. Pushpa Bhargava, 70 yrs

Women are different, and so are their knees

Mrs. Pushpa Bhargava was just pulling it out as pain in her knees in last two years was making all her daily activities hampered. She was not able to stand for more than half an hour in parties and climbing stairs was up hill task. She took lots of pain killers but pain never subsided. In June 2004 she underwent the knee replacement surgery.

Now, she has more cheerful life, her life style is much better. She says, **“rather than suffering everybody should go for surgery.”**



PMS Arts & Communications

What causes knees to hurt?

Three bones make up the knee joint: the end of the thighbone (femur), the top of the shinbone (tibia), and the kneecap (patella). The knee bones are cushioned by cartilage. When cartilage is healthy and intact, it prevents wear and tear on the bone surfaces when you bend and extend your knee. But cartilage can become damaged over time, due to wear and tear (osteoarthritis), from injury or aging or rheumatoid arthritis. When the cartilage cushion is damaged or gone, the bones of the knee grind against each other. As a result, normal activities, from gardening to climbing stairs, can become extremely painful.

Women are different, and so are their knees

Women account for nearly two thirds of the more than half a million people who undergo knee replacement in worldwide each year, and that number continues to grow. Yet, studies show that many more women would benefit from knee implants, and some women wait longer than they should.

Now, there's no need to wait.

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Custom-built **KNEES**

Patients undergoing knee replacement surgery have reason to cheer. Following complaints about discomfort while walking and bending the knee after surgery, experts have now developed **customised knee implants that not only reduce surgery time and recovery period but perfectly fit the natural knee.** Doctors at Medanta Medicity in Delhi have already done 21 knee replacement surgeries using this method and the response has been heartening. “It’s a pioneering concept, giving way to patient-specific instrumentation,” Dr Ashok Rajgopal, head of the knee replacement unit at Medanta, tells *Harmony*. “Before the actual surgery, we conduct a virtual surgery by making a model of the patient’s knee. Through MRI scans of the patient’s hip, knee, thigh bone and femur, we create a 3D model of the anatomy. We transfer the images to our virtual lab and design implants, taking care of various alignments. With the help of virtual images, we can decide on the opening we are going to make to approach the knee and place the new implant. With computer simulation, we can also know how the patient will adapt after surgery.” In the standard procedure, despite using the best implants, problems relating to alignment with the rest of the body always arise; there is almost always an issue of implants being bigger than the actual knee. “As we recreate the patient’s anatomy and the alignment is done by computer, the implant fits well with no post-operative trauma,” adds Dr Rajgopal. The new method costs about ₹ 50,000 more than the standard procedure.

HEED THE SIGNS

Heart specialists have recently identified a condition known as **transient ischemic attack (TIA) as a warning sign of an impending stroke.** The condition, also known as mini stroke, occurs when blood supply to a particular area of the brain is briefly interrupted and results in

short-term neurological dysfunction. “TIA is a precursor to a bigger stroke—about one-third of TIA patients are said to be likely to have a stroke very soon,” Dr Sanjay Mongia, consultant neurosurgeon at Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai, tells *Harmony*. “This is especially true for the elderly

population.” As it’s a ‘warning stroke,’ one needs to recognise it, evaluate it and get treatment. Symptoms include numbness in one side of the body, confusion, difficulty in talking and brief loss of vision. These signs are similar to that of a stroke, but in TIA they clear up after a short time. TIA should be considered a medical emergency and patients should be taken for proper clinical examination and CT scans immediately.



BAD MOUTH

The age-old practice of doctors asking you to open your mouth to check for signs of anything wrong might be the most powerful diagnosis. According to experts at the Indian Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathologists (IAOMP), **our mouth holds the clues to early signs of conditions like leukaemia, HIV-AIDS, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and several viral infections.** "The mouth reflects the earliest signs of several conditions, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly," Dr K Ranganathan, secretary, IAOMP, tells *Harmony*. "For instance, if there is yeast infection in mouth, it is likely the patient has AIDS and should be tested for the same. Similarly, diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's can be treated with stem cells obtained from the teeth. Diabetes too can be diagnosed by testing the saliva for blood sugar levels as opposed to just blood." The biggest indicator of leukaemia, he says, is swelling of gums with prolonged pain, whereas lesions on the tongue can be an indicator of sexually transmitted diseases. While oral inspections cannot yield concrete diagnosis of fatal conditions, it can certainly act as an efficient screening process, especially in India where regular blood tests are beyond reach for many.

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Sky high

She has jumped from the skies 903 times and, as you read this, she is probably getting ready for her next leap. **Montse**, a 77 year-old Spanish silver, is the world's oldest professional freestyle parachute jumper. Though one might be tempted to assume that the gutsy Catalan is blessed with steely bones, Montse, like many silvers, has suffered and endured the pitfalls of age—she has a hip prosthesis. “Every time I go to a championship they say the same to me, ‘We know you don't do training and we know your age but seeing you there is a privilege,’” she told UK-based TV channel Sky News. Montse tried her first jump at the age of 30. And, ever since, continues to enjoy eye-popping adventures by practising skiing, trampoline jumping, sailing, and windsurfing. She participated in the first freestyle parachute jumping world championship in Empuria Brava in 1993, then in Arizona the following year.

The British GANDHIAN

Jill Beckingham, wife of British deputy high commissioner Pete Beckingham, recently made an outstanding contribution to enliven Mahatma Gandhi's legacy. On 18 November 2010, the sexagenarian started out on a 14-day walk from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to Dandi on the Gujarat-Maharashtra border to raise funds for six charities. Beckingham was accompanied for much of the journey, spanning 360 km, by her husband. Her efforts inspired global praise and philanthropy—she managed to draw £ 3,500 from the UK and ₹ 6.5 million from India. On her unique endeavour she was joined by many including 75-year old Bhagwatiben Oza, a sports person from Vadodara ('Orbit' March 2010).



The eternal PLAYBOY

While most of us bow down to societal propriety and put love and lust on leash as we age, Playboy tycoon Hugh Hefner nonchalantly thwarts the norm. According to a report on *CNN.com*, the 84 year-old proposed to his 24 year-old girlfriend Crystal Harris on Christmas weekend. “After the movie tonight, Crystal and I exchanged gifts,” revealed Hefner on social networking site Twitter. “When I gave Crystal the ring, she burst into tears. This is the happiest Christmas weekend in memory.” Hefner has been married and divorced twice earlier.

MOMENTS AND MILESTONES...

- **Edith Ritchie and Evelyn Middleton** from Aberdeenshire in UK have recently laid claim to the title of the world's oldest twins at 101. Between them, the two sisters share a large brood of 82 children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren.
- **Lillian Lowe**, 103, the world's oldest Facebooker, signed onto the social networking site to keep track of her grandchildren and great grandchildren—and got hooked. Lowe posts status updates twice a week through her grandson's iPad and hopes to get one for herself soon.
- At 103, Brazilian architect **Oscar Niemeyer**, who designed the capital city Brasilia and the UN headquarters in New York, has redefined himself by turning lyricist. Niemeyer composed the lyrics of *Tranquilo con la vida* (feeling good about life) when he was in hospital with kidney and intestinal problems. The song has now been set to tune by Edu Krieger and Caio Almeida.
- To celebrate 90 years of motoring, Mumbai Traffic Police and Western India Automobile Association recently felicitated silver drivers who have owned a licence for more than six decades. Among them were **J M Ashar, 87, Pravin Nanawati, 83,** and octogenarian **Indumati Merchant.**
- **Oja L Ibohalmacha Singh, 86,** a Sankirtan singer from Imphal, recently delivered a mesmerising performance at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in Chennai. Singh is a visiting guru at the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy in Imphal and continues to train students in the ceremonial art form.
- New York-based **Chandrika Krishnamoorthy Tandon**, chairman of American financial advisory firm Tandon Capital Associates and sister of Pepsico chief Indira Nooyi, has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the Best Contemporary World Music Album category for her album *Om Namō Narayanaya: Soul Call*.
- At the recent Tech Awards held in Santa Clara, USA, **Venkatesh Mannar**, president of Micronutrient Initiative, bagged the \$50,000 Nokia Health Award for creating double fortified salt (DFS). The power-packed salt contains both iodine and iron that help protect people against anaemia and disorders provoked by iodine deficiency.



IN PASSING

- Artist and founder secretary of the National Institute of Design **Dashrath Patel** passed away in Ahmedabad on 1 December 2010. He was 83.
- Yesteryear actor **Nalini Jaywant** passed away on 20 December 2010. She was 84.
- Former Kerala chief minister **K Karunakaran** died on 23 December. He was 93.
- Green activist **Shyam Chainani** died of cancer on 25 December. He was 68.
- Rabindra Sangeet exponent **Suchitra Mitra** died of a heart attack on 8 January. She was 86.
- National Congress Party leader **Gurunath Kulkarni** passed away after a prolonged illness on 12 January.
- India's best known collector of vintage cars **Pranlal Bhogilal** died of septicemia on 12 January in Mumbai. He was 73.
- Marathi theatre actor **Prabhakar Panshikar** died of cardiac arrest on 13 January. He was 79.
- Centenarian and former Congress activist and lawyer **Bholaram Das** (*Harmony* January 2011, 'Diary 100') passed away on 16 January.
- Hindustani classical singer **Bhimsen Joshi** breathed his last on 24 January. He was 88.



BIRTHDAYS

- Actor **Waheeda Rehman** turned 75 on 3 February
- American actor **Nick Nolte** turned 70 on 8 February
- American actor **Mia Farrow** turned 66 on 9 February
- American tennis legend **John McEnroe** turned 52 on 16 February
- Indian actor **Pran** turned 91 on 12 February
- American novelist **Toni Morrison** turned 80 on 18 February

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement



Hemant Patil

The fire burns on

Y H GHARPURE, 77

“The common thread through my life has been my love of work”

I qualified as a technical-chemical engineer and began my career as a scientist with the Shriram Institute for Industrial Research, Delhi. I've worn many hats since, working with companies such as the Durgapur Steel plant of Hindustan Steel, Hindustan Organic Chemicals and Hindustan Antibiotics. These positions drew on both my technical expertise and managerial skills, especially when I was managing director with Hindustan Antibiotics, where I oversaw its operations and staff of 2,750 in Pimpri, Pune.

Thus, whether it was setting up joint ventures, evaluating tenders, selecting contractors, constructing plants or overseeing project management and technical services, I enjoyed a rich career before my last professional contract expired in 1985. Following that, I could finally give my entrepreneurial spirit free expression. I set up Gharpure Consulting Engineers, which is headquartered in Mumbai with a branch in Pune. It felt like I had taken wing! The company focuses on market surveys, technology sourcing and transfer for both Indian and foreign companies and turnkey plants.

For the past 12 years, I have been on the State Bank of India panel where I conduct techno-economic viability reports. I also set up another company, Gharpure Laboratories, but the proposed project that was scheduled to undertake with a foreign concern didn't pan out. However, I was not discouraged at all. Now I am setting up an industrial clinic and polyclinic spearheaded by Industrial Polyclinic India, a company I have established. I have 15 people working for me, and put in 10-12 hours a day, and I often bring work home.

I am also a prolific reader and have been writing articles since I was in college. Travelling is another passion and I have visited 50-odd countries so far—mostly on business trips, though I haven't missed a chance to explore their beauty and culture. I value all my friends and am content with my family. This includes my wife, son, daughter and four grandchildren. But the common thread through my life has been my love of work—something that has always kept me motivated. Is there anything else I could ask for?

—As told to Nina Dinshaw

I am a retired teacher. I have a sound knowledge of computers and the Net. Can I use these skills and work from home?

A simple way to earn a good income is to post advertisements on classified websites. Most advertisement posting companies charge between ₹ 2,000 and ₹ 5,000 for membership. They provide you all the material, the format and a list of classified websites. You just need to follow instructions. Earnings depend on how many ads you post a day so you can choose how much time to put in. Generally, the duration of work is from the 1st to 18th of the month. You need to send a report of your work twice a month.

—Kolkata-based Gyanendra Bahal runs GSR Info Solutions, an ad posting company

I have recently retired and have a good collection of books. Is it a good idea to set up a lending library in my neighbourhood in Delhi?

You first need to study the demography of your neighbourhood to know what books to stock. Begin by stocking popular thrillers, children's books, romances and magazines. To start, you would need a room of about 12x12 sq ft with about 2,000 books. You will need about ₹ 200,000 to set up shop. You need a ledger and a catalogue of your books. Hire help if required to aid you with stacking and helping readers. Advertise via pamphlets and in the paper; word-of-mouth publicity will follow. It usually takes between six months and a year for a library to become successful.

—Bengaluru-based Vani Maheshwari runs www.easylib.com, an online lending library

- Last year, Austrian company Emporia launched two mobile phones for silvers: Emporia Solid and Emporia Elegance with hearing-aid compatibility and extra-loud speaker phone function.

- As cost can be a deterrent for retired people, there are many state agencies and local community charities in the US that offer recycled or refurbished phones for silvers.

Calling SILVERS

Though there is a plethora of mobile phones available in the market, there aren't too many built to address the special needs of silvers. As we age, our deteriorating vision and hearing tend to hamper our social interactions, more so if we are talking to someone over the mobile phone or sending an SMS. iBall has launched a mobile phone specially targeted at the elderly. Called iBall Senior, the phone comes with enhanced sound; a large font size so you can read SMS and numbers more clearly; and a bright amber screen to aid clarity. The

thoughtful design also includes an SOS button, which lets out a siren when pressed in an emergency and alerts people in your surrounding area for assistance. Simultaneously, it also sends out an SMS to five predefined numbers and dials all five numbers till the call is attended. Other notable features include caller ID with photo; talking keypad; SMS option in Hindi and English; and a dedicated switch for torch and keypad lock.

Price: ₹ 3,499

Green thumbs

Two silvers have been toiling for over two decades to give Chennai its green canopy. Sonali Majumder gets to the root of their story

It was a dream they sowed 25 years ago—to make all of Madras their garden. Many turns of the shovel later, Chennai residents V Subramanian and Dr R Madhavan are basking in the shade of a greener city. Rewinding to when they first discussed the idea, Dr Madhavan, 60, says, “Subramanian and I used to spend our mornings gardening together. We realised that the spaces available to us were very small and decided to spread out across the city.”

Madhavan, a paediatrician, and Subramanian, 70, a former treasurer with the Reserve Bank of India, embarked on their mission when the city was largely a concrete jungle. They began by planting saplings in their neighbourhood in Mandaveli. Not surprisingly, the two seniors were often spotted cycling down the enclave’s roads armed with saplings and a special ingredient: unusual determination.

Preferring varieties like *poongamia*, *neem*, fig, *peepul* and banyan, they would knock at the doors of residents, asking them if they would be willing to water the saplings they had brought along to plant along the road. “We chose only residents who were willing to tend to the saplings,” explains Dr Madhavan. “We would also charge a token ₹ 30 as people do not value anything that is free.” The young trees needed only minimal watering but they had to be protected from stray cattle. “Though that is still a problem, we have managed to plant over 30,000 trees over two decades to enhance the green cover of Chennai,” reveals a



Planting a greener future: Dr Madhavan and Subramanian

triumphant Dr Madhavan. Today, both gentlemen are the proud ‘parents’ of trees across Chennai and its outskirts, from Ennore to Tambaram.

However, their effort was not without its hitches. “When a big *gulmohar* tree recently fell and injured an old friend who was treated for fractures, we were depressed for weeks,” says Dr Madhavan. “Yet, this did not stop us from forging ahead.” He says urban trees have a high mortality rate and only half those planted survive infantile illnesses. Alternatively, 10 per cent of mature trees die every year. “Local bodies usually ignore their upkeep,” he rues. “It’s also difficult to prevent trees from choking on cement and concrete flooring laid around them. We hope the next generation takes our cue, so that a few more will survive.”

Weathered by years of hands-on toil, Dr Madhavan and Subramanian finally laid down their shovels and began distributing saplings instead. In 1986, they started a NGO, the Environmental Society of Mandaveli, which was renamed Global Greenways when they expanded its scope. The happy duo also roped in NGOs and other organisations to spread the green message. They have thus handed out 60,000 saplings to date. “Now that we have become senior citizens, we distribute them free so that anyone who wants to plant a tree should have easy access to a sapling,” beams Dr Madhavan. “We also offer the advice needed to nurture it.” Adds Subramanian, “We just want to give something back to our country. If our efforts can spur a green movement across India that would be the greatest reward for us.”

If you wish to spread the green movement in your neighbourhood, you can call Dr Madhavan on (0) 9840472623 and V Subramanian on 044-24938368 or (0) 9444388368 and ask for free saplings

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GIFT OF LIFE

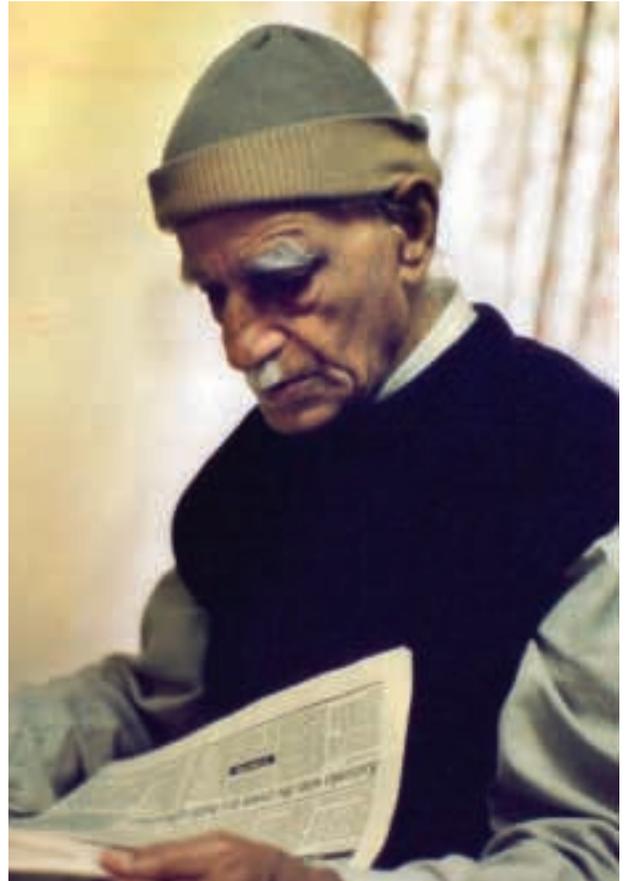
My father was an exceptional man, noble in death as he was in life. He had made a will many years ago but it was only on his death that his last wish came into sharp focus—my beloved Daddy, Narain Dass Madan, had donated his eyes and cadaver to medical science.

Born and educated in Pakistan, my father was in government service in Lahore. He got married in 1947, the year of Partition, and my mother and he moved to Delhi. Here, my father rejoined government service, from where he retired as section officer in 1983. Dad was a sportsman to the core and played hockey, badminton, bridge and carom. We would often see him glued to sports commentary on the radio or watching sporting events on television, including midnight telecasts even at the age of 87! And every time India won a match or tournament, he would distribute sweets. I won't forget the time he was glued to the TV watching the Twenty-20 cricket World Cup in August 2007, when he visited our home in Bhopal.

My dad also had a very strong social conscience and raised his voice against social evils such as dowry at every available opportunity. He even tried to publish a newsletter against corruption. A sociable man with a charismatic personality, my father was loved by all, and had a way with kids. He had the good fortune of having four children and was lucky to enjoy the company of his four grandchildren before his death. Not surprisingly, when he passed away on 31 December 2007, condolence messages poured in from family, friends and even people we did not know from overseas.

In death, my dad set an eye-opening example for the next generation. He donated his eyes to Venu Eye Institute, New Delhi, for transplantation. He also donated his body through the Dadhichi Dehdan Samiti, an NGO promoting cadaver donation, to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, to further medical research. In fact, when his body was taken to AIIMS, news spread like wildfire and many close relatives followed his example. Like my mother, who passed away a year after his death, and who donated her body to AIIMS and eyes to Venu Eye Institute.

On 3 January 2008, coincidentally my father's birthday and also his *chautha* [fourth day after his death], one



In death, Narain Dass Madan left behind hope for others

of his eyes found a recipient. It made the day special, for us and, of course, the person who received the gift of sight. Daddy would have been very pleased! Please donate your organs to save lives; conserve wood; mitigate climate change; and save the environment and the planet. For more information on the subject, please email ghoshusha@gmail.com.

—Usha Ghosh, Bhopal

TRIALS AND TRIUMPH

On my wedding day, I was a 35 year-old, wheelchair-bound Zoroastrian with a 30 year-old Maharashtrian Brahmin standing beside me. Polio since the age of two had robbed me of all sensation below. While we

Pradeep and I feel young, live life to the fullest and when we quarrel, we laugh it off in keeping with the '*raat gayi baat gayi*' principle

were registering our marriage, my father-in-law opined, "I now have a physically disabled *bahu*." My father remarked, "Couldn't my daughter have married a Zoroastrian instead?"

We didn't take notice of their comments as our marriage was based on love and respect. I am fiercely independent and a recipient of the 1978 Indian Arjuna Award for sports (disabled), while my husband Pradeep is a doctor in the Army. We first met at a social gathering when Pradeep was posted in Pune and I was involved with voluntary activities with the disabled at the Queen Mary's Technical Institute. I had a terrible accident soon after and Pradeep visited me daily. That's when we bonded. We struck a chord on many levels, including a positive attitude; love for music; sports; and a fondness for animals. Pradeep told me his family was pressuring him to marry a Maharashtrian Brahmin girl. He said, "Let's get married. I know both families will oppose it but it is our choice. Marriage vows are sacred, through thick and thin. What do you say?"

I remember the time my father-in-law visited our home, and after eating a hearty meal I had prepared, he made a nasty comment while leaving. Pradeep told his dad that if he made one more nasty comment about his wife, he wouldn't be welcome in our home. The opposition from my in-laws continued for another five years after marriage. Amid taunts for not yet bearing a grandchild owing to my disability coupled with my advancing age, we had Karishma, which aptly translates into 'miracle'. Today our daughter is 23 and pursuing a career in banking. My husband is away a lot on postings and I keep busy counselling disabled children, their parents and spouses of disabled persons. I also spread awareness about the rights of the disabled and help with equipment. When Pradeep is away, he calls regularly and when he's home on leave, we spend all our time together. We feel young, live life to the fullest and when we quarrel, we laugh it off in keeping with the '*raat gayi baat gayi*' [the fight ends at the end of the day] principle.

Life seems to have come full circle as my parents made their peace with me marrying out of the community. And my mother-in-law, now well into her 90s, has gifted me her prized Vishnu conch. She could have given it to one of her two daughters or four Maharashtrian daughters-in-law, but she chose me.

—Shernaz Poonekar, Pune

COMMON CAUSE

We met at Alapuzha Medical College in Kerala and later joined Kasturiba Hospital in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu. It was 1987. I worked as an anaesthesiologist and Lalitha was a gynaecologist there. It was then that we realised we shared a common dream to serve the needy. We also realised we were made for each other and soon tied the knot.

My friends and I toured India and saw first-hand how the tribal community lives at the bottom of the development ladder. So we decided to use our knowledge and medical expertise for those who needed it most. Eventually Lalitha and I chose Sittilingi, a village 125 km from Salem in Tamil Nadu. With a 95 per cent tribal population, this was a land of superstition and black magic.

Grief was the common thread that ran through the 80,000-odd tribals there. The nearest hospital was 100 km away and one of every five babies died before their first birthday. Women gave birth in the dirty backyards of huts and they spent their post-delivery days unclean and unattended. About 75 per cent of infants were babies with low birth weight. It was shocking to witness the unsanitary and crude birth process, and practices like keeping the mother from breastfeeding her child for the first days and preventing the mother from eating for five days after delivery.

We spent a year learning about the local people. Then, an elderly tribal gladly donated an acre of land when he learnt we wanted to open a hospital for his people. Thus, with an initial corpus of ₹ 10,000 donated by Action Aid, Bangalore, we set up the Tribal Health Initiative (THI) in 1993. It was housed in a mud-thatched, single-room hut, which was transformed into a labour room when an emergency arose. THI has since grown into a 24-bed hospital. It was very difficult to convince the tribals about modern medical practices and superstitious local quacks tried to drive us out by spreading rumours about medicines. Then came the turning point: saving a woman who had turned critical at the hands of black magic. Over 21 neighbouring villages now benefit from THI. Infant mortality has reduced to 10-20/1,000. Almost 85-90 per cent of pregnant women come for check-ups and there are no deaths because of pneumonia or malnutrition. We have also trained tribal girls as nurses, which has done wonders for their self-esteem. We conduct community health educational programmes, cultural activities and development initiatives with our core team of 25 staffers and health auxiliaries.

We have learnt many things from the tribals with an open heart and mind. After two decades of doing some fulfilling work in rural and tribal areas, Lalitha and I have more happiness than regrets.

—Dr Regi George, Sittilingi



Axe your anxiety: Snub fear and stress with yoga

We never associate chronic anxiety with physical ailments like hypertension, cholesterol, heart problems, obesity, cancer, respiratory ailments, digestive uproar, backache and neck ache, even premature aging. Yet, the fact remains that chronic anxiety trips you up by making you fall ill often, and robs you of the ability to recover faster.

Brain Chemistry Diet, a book by Michael Lesser, MD, lists vitamins and nutrients consumed by stress. For instance, Vitamin A gets gobbled up to produce stress hormones. Vitamin B (the whole lot, including thiamine, niacin, riboflavin, folic acid) deficiency causes fearfulness, agitation, a galloping heartbeat, mood swings, sleeplessness and lower immunity and pain threshold. Anxiety dismantles Vitamin C rapidly, hiking the body's need for it as repairs the damages caused by the biochemical reactions to stress. Calcium deficiency and symptoms of anxiety—grouchiness, tension, depression, weak memory, sleeplessness—find a perfect match. Rapid breathing, another subterfuge for anxiety, curtails blood calcium, causing confusion, dizziness and muscle cramps. Anxious people also run short of magnesium and zinc. Zinc deficiency causes hair loss, low immunity and slows wound-healing. And magnesium deficiency keeps you awake, pumping your heart as if you are escaping a frightful monster.

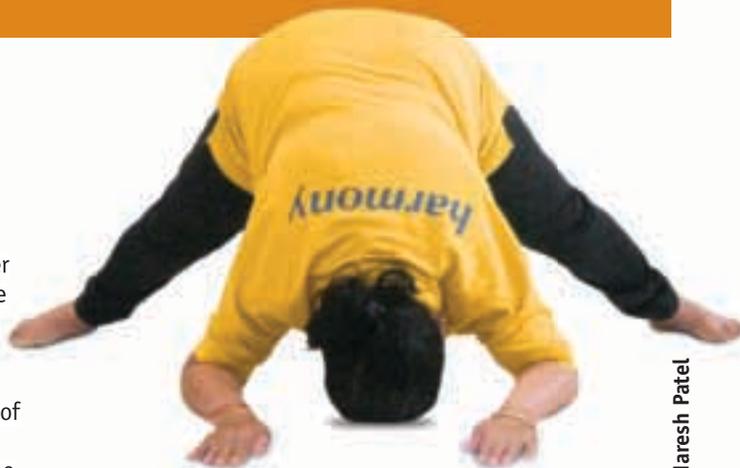
Yoga can help. With unparalleled intuition, ancient *rishi* had guessed that the body's fear complex is located at the navel centre (*manipura chakra*). Meditating on this *chakra* can dispel fear, they advised. Physiologically, as both our body and mind rest completely during meditation, the negative hormonal flux caused by fear is allowed to recede. The internal din within the brain (caused by chaotic neuronal or brain cells firing off) also recedes, minimising fall-outs from adrenal exhaustion caused by excessive anxiety.

Poses that relieve fear and anxiety also work by pressing into this centre, such as the psychic union pose (yoga *mudrasana*), hare (*shashankasana*), seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), head-to-knee pose (*janu sirsasana*) and standing forward stretch (*uttanasana*). All forward bends relax the mind by releasing more blood to the brain, and calming it. There is also a complementary pressure at the abdomen that soothes the gut, which is called the emotional brain. (It responds to feelings by changing colour even!) The stretch along the spine also soothes the upper back that constricts under pressure; in the lower back, the band of muscle that also becomes constricted is released. The stress glands on top of the kidneys are also massaged. Forward bends calm the sense of flightiness that anxiety brings. The trick lies in learning to hold them longer so you can experience the real benefit of the poses.

YOGIC MOVES

Wide-legged forward bend stretch (*prasarita padottanasana*)

Stand up straight, feet a metre apart, pointing ahead. Inhale; raise hands overhead. Exhale; reach hands to the ground. If you are very stiff, you may bend your knees. Your palms should be flat on the ground. Then gently lower your crown (top of the head) to the ground. You may place a bolster or small stool on which to do this. Rest for a few seconds, breathing normally. Look between your legs. To release the pose, raise your hands overhead with an inhalation. **Important:** This pose demands a strong sense of balance, so take care initially by focusing on the legs. The weight must be on the legs so you stay centred and not too much on the hands in the final pose. Avoid if you have a severe lower back problem. **Benefits:** This pose boosts mood and fosters a sense of calm and serenity by de-stressing you. It builds stamina of the mind and body. It makes the spine flexible and tones the limbs, especially the legs.



Haresh Patel

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

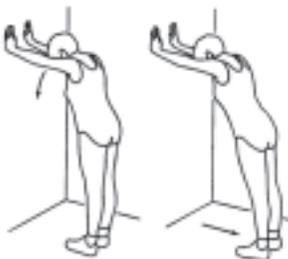


After surgery: Fight stiffness after lumpectomy

I had a lumpectomy last year. Of late, I am experiencing mild stiffness. Please suggest exercises that can help.

The following exercises use self-weight to increase the range of motion:

Atlas: Stand in front of a wall. Put your hands with your palms flat against the wall. Gently bend your head forward and step back slowly from the wall. Feel the stretch in your shoulders.



Champion: Bend the elbow of the mastectomy side and gently pull your arm up over your head with your other hand. Hold for a count of five and feel the stretch down your side.

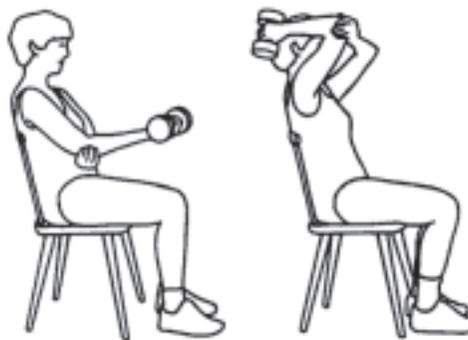


Elbow push: Hold the arm on the affected side by placing the other hand on that elbow. Keep your arm at shoulder level and use the other hand to gently push it up towards your head. Hold for a count of five.



Strengthening exercises

Side raises: Hold a light weight (2 kg bottle/container if you don't have weights) in the hand on the affected side. Use both your arms to work muscle groups evenly. While sitting, raise your arm up and over your head. Put your other hand on your elbow to help raise the arm.



Overhead press: Hold a light weight in the hand on the affected side. Use both your arms to work muscle groups evenly. While sitting, bend your elbow with your palm facing the ceiling. Put your other hand on your elbow and raise your arm over your head. Work towards doing both arms together.

Bench press: Lie on your back, with weights in both hands. Bend your elbows with your arms out to your sides. Bring them up and over your head.



Crossovers: Lie on your back with your arms outstretched and weights in both hands. Bring your arms up off the floor and get them to meet in the middle. Slowly, lower your arms to the starting position.



Madhukar Talwalkar is chairman of Talwalkar's, one of India's largest chain of fitness centres with 78 branches across major cities. Website: www.talwalkars.net If you have a question for Dr Talwalkar write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Dental health: Hygiene apart, diet can help as well

I have always been proud of my healthy, cavity-free teeth. And now that I am approaching 70, I wish to maintain my dental health. Is there a diet plan that I can follow that will help?

Our teeth age at the same time as our muscles, bones and skin. However, actions like biting on ice or very hard substances like sugarcane stems can also cause teeth to crack. Even cavities, tooth decay and gum disease become more common with age.

Besides decay, plaque gets accumulated on adult teeth. Plaque is a colourless and sticky bacterium that encourages tooth decay. Plaque bacteria survive on sugary food particles and lead to cavities, gum disease and periodontal disease. Older adults are prone to plaque build-up because of dryness of mouth with age and receding gums, which expose dental roots. These soft root-surfaces decompose more quickly than the hard enamel surrounding teeth.

Dental health largely depends on hygiene and care. It also relies largely on what we eat. Diet dominated by tooth damaging or teeth-friendly foods determines the number of caries in the long run. There are certain foods that naturally fight bacteria, remove plaque, strengthen enamel, and freshen breath.

TEETH-FRIENDLY FOODS:

Fish and flax (*alsi*) seeds: Both are rich in Omega 3 fatty acids that are good for gum health and anti-inflammatory. Reduction in inflammation of gums minimises the gaps where plaque causing bacteria can accumulate and multiply. *Alsi* seeds can be consumed by roasting or powdering them; they can also be added to juices, vegetables or chutneys.

Dairy products: Milk, yogurt and cheese help neutralise acid in the mouth as they are a good source of protein, calcium and phosphorus. Acid imbalance in the mouth causes rampant tooth decay. Dairy products stimulate production of saliva, which naturally washes food particles out of the mouth. Go for the slim versions of milk and cheese to reduce fat content.

Citrus foods: Acidic foods promote bacterial growth and tooth decay but the acid in citrus fruits stimulates production of saliva, which helps clean our teeth naturally; the

Vitamin C content of citrus fruits checks tooth decay by killing harmful bacteria present in the mouth. However, stay away from fruit juices laden with sugar, as sugar neutralises the benefits of Vitamin C. The high water content of citrus fruits also helps keep teeth clean.

Raw foods: Snack on raw, high-fibre vegetables and fruits to prevent tooth decay as they help stimulate saliva production, besides adding essential nutrients to your diet.

Green tea: It helps boost overall health, though it is mainly beneficial for gum health. Catechin, the antioxidant in green tea, reduces periodontal pocket depth, gum sensitivity to cuts and slows down gum detachment. It is a significant source of fluoride needed to build strong bones and teeth. Drinking a cup of unsweetened green tea a day improves gum health.

Water: Dry mouth encourages bacterial growth. Water helps wash away leftover food particles in the mouth and preserve a balanced and wet environment in the mouth.

Older adults are prone to plaque build-up because of dryness of mouth with age and receding gums, which expose dental roots. Dental health largely depends on hygiene and care, and what we eat





Vitamin A: It plays an important role in the formation of tooth enamel. Foods high in Vitamin A include cod liver oil, eggs, carrots, pumpkin, mangoes, broccoli, spinach and sweet potatoes.

Onions: They are rich in antibacterial sulphur compounds. Eating raw onions is good for the teeth although it might cause bad breath.

Sesame seeds: Sesame seeds help remove plaque and build tooth enamel. They also help protect the bone around the teeth and gums. Add them to salads or vegetables.

SOME DOS AND DON'TS:

- Avoid eating soft and sticky food as it gets stuck between the teeth and facilitates bacterial growth.
- Always use a straw to drink a soft drink.
- Avoid foods with high concentration of sugar; instead, eat natural foods with less sugar.
- Whenever you snack, rinse your mouth and chew some sugar-free gum as it stimulates the flow of saliva.
- Don't drink too much tea and coffee as caffeine slows down saliva's ability to prevent tooth decay.
- Meat eaters should take better care of their teeth. Meat fibre gets stuck in teeth; if left overnight without cleaning, it may release acid and cause tooth decay.

The mouth is an active place where lots of bacteria move frequently on the teeth, gums, lips and tongue. So, it is important to keep your mouth clean to prevent unhealthy bacteria sticking to your teeth and causing dental problems.

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

promotion

Dental Aesthetics



Dr Chandresh Shah
 Email: all32intact@hotmail.com
 Website: www.denticareindia.com

Q1. My upper front teeth are rough and slightly discoloured. It does not have good texture. I am an investment banker and my job involves frequent personal interactions with my clients. Considering the nature of my job, I need to have a bright smile. Can you suggest a minimally invasive technique to improve my teeth?

You probably have flourosed/hyapocalcified teeth which can attract lot of stains. Lack of reflection and refraction of light may lead to improper enhancement of smile. I feel Procera Laminates can offer your teeth unparalleled strength and beauty. The 0.25 mm Procera Laminates core of Alumina is bio-compatible; effectively masks discolouration; and minimises staining during bonding. It is also translucent and preserves the tooth's luminescence.

Q2. I had a root canal done and crown prepared in one of my upper teeth. Unfortunately the tooth broke and cannot be restored. How can I restore the aesthetics and function of the affected tooth without influencing my adjoining teeth?

The remaining portion of your tooth can be extracted atraumatically using special instruments which can preserve your bone and gum tissue. Immediate implantation using newer Noble Active having a good primary fixation can be done with immediate provisanalisation of crown depending on the situation. This will avoid wearing a Flipper or a Bonded bridge as a stop-gap arrangement till the definitive crown is restored.

Q3. I am 65 years old and completely edentulous. Recently I came to know about dental implants. I want fixed teeth with minimum number of implants. What can be done?

Noble Biocare has a concept of ALL ON FOUR. With the help of four implants, you can have a fixed denture in one jaw. This can also be done without opening your gums (flapless). Thus it will be a minimally invasive dental procedure with less number of implants and will offer the comfort of a fixed denture.



AT LARGE BY ERNEST DEMPSEY

My little secret

Back in 2004, I left three jobs and decided not to join a fourth one. This earned me the tittle of 'wayward.' To avoid another one—'dependent'—I started to work as a home tutor to kids at a couple of houses. This kept my pocket running and, more important, it kept my freedom-obsessed soul away from all those secrets of success in suffocating office life. Tutoring had a little money, more freedom, and no secrets. My witty brother Deelan expressed his light-hearted envy of my tutoring business when he heard from me about the pleasantries and snacks that I relished at my students' homes. Finally came the day when I stopped envying myself for tutoring; the day when I met a secret, far more mind-blowing than any I could imagine, to keep.

It was in early winter of 2005, when, at 11 in the morning daily, I went to teach Fanny, a college student grappling with English grammar. While Fanny and I sat at a table in the veranda, in her house, her aged grandmother and bedridden aunt would lay basking on cots a few steps away. Fanny's aunt Sarah was operated on, several months ago, for a deep spine injury. The operation saved her from complete paralysis so that she could even walk a little with support, albeit with much pain. Lack of appetite and unrelenting pain minimised her to something like a skeleton. It was natural for me to speak caringly to her. The fact that the only family left with her was an autistic son wrested from me additional sympathy. I always tried, somewhat helplessly, to give the impression that things were still not that bad with her. But one day, she made me realise how much worse they were.

It was a sunny morning in late February. Incessant rain had confined people to their rooms for nearly a week and we were all relieved to see the sun was still there. I had just started with the lesson when Fanny had to take a short break for some chore. As she went out of sight, Aunt Sarah furtively looked at her old mother. Finding her asleep (and considering the fact she was also hard of hearing), she addressed me. "I wanted to say something if you could promise to keep it secret," she nearly whispered. The word 'secret' kind of rang the alarm for my unease; I always disliked secrets. But I kept my countenance. "Yes, sure." I gathered my generosity to smile and look polite.

"I cannot bear this pain anymore." The look on her face corroborated what she said. "Will you bring me a little poison?" Her words shot through me with a pang, leaving me dumbfounded. "Oh no!" I exclaimed in an automated manner. "Don't think like this please!" It was a real challenge to make up something reasonable and helpful to say there and then. "I've asked everyone in this house," she continued in her whispering tone. "No one is going to help me. What life is this that I have now? It's worse than death. Some shops in Amber Market have this stuff. I thought you would..."

"Oh, but why think so?" I interrupted her speech. The little time that elapsed, while she spoke, was enough for my mind to match words from my erudition with a humanist feel that came naturally to me. It was time to speak, to say something helpful, and that I did as best as I could. "Hard times come in our lives," I said, "and they go away too. Please don't be disappointed. With treatment and care, you will gradually get better. Don't think about death. Life will

get better for you." The lady listened with care and I felt happy, even proud, to see my words working through the expression of her face. She exhorted me to keep the secret and I agreed. On Fanny's return to the study table, I felt relieved. My trial was over and I felt triumphant.

As winter gave way to spring, our tutoring table was shifted to another veranda. I didn't see Aunt Sarah anymore but I did come to know how she was doing as I would ask Fanny about her condition. A week later, I learnt she had started eating fruit. This was

something she never did while feeling bad and in constant pain. It was a sign of her return to life.

A couple of years later, I visited their house and came to know that Aunt Sarah could now move about without support from her family. She had also put on weight and was eating better. Feeling happy for her, I am finally willing to rid myself of this burden of her secret, hoping it will inspire similar cases of helplessness to hang in and value life so as to live and enjoy more of it. I have let the secret out, hoping it won't be unethical to do so, and at the same time hoping that readers will keep it as long as they can.

Ernest Dempsey, 34, is a Peshawar-based editor and author

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In the name of the DAUGHTER

D B Kulkarni and his daughter Asha have dedicated their lives to women's empowerment. **Rajashree Balaram** meets the crusaders

Asha Kulkarni receives three to four letters every week. Some of them on her email account, some on dog-eared post cards, some on wilted blue inlands—all of them carrying a similar message. Boys from distant remote villages telling her how they have stood up to their parents and refused to accept dowry, and girls of humble upbringing who have turned down proposals from families that seek dowries. For Asha, who has been waging a tireless—and thankless—battle against dowry for 30 years, the letters are the proverbial fuel to her fire.

As the secretary of the Anti Dowry Movement, a Mumbai-based organisation that spreads awareness on the evils of dowry, the 59 year-old speaks passionately about the oppression of women. "I feel sad that, suddenly, there is no longer enough coverage of dowry deaths in the electronic media or newspapers," she says fervently. "It's not 'newsy' or 'sensational' anymore, I guess." Only her father's words, drilled into her since childhood, can pacify her somewhat: "*Karmanyev adhikarasya mafaleshu kadachana.*" (Do your deed without any expectation of its outcome.) Her father D B Kulkarni, or *Mamasahab* as he is fondly known among his legions of admirers in Maharashtra, is an

Amalner-born freedom fighter and ardent disciple of social reformer and activist Sane Guruji. "He spent almost 22 years of his life in close contact with Guruji," says Asha. As Guruji campaigned for women's empowerment, Kulkarni too decided to pursue the cause. True to his commitment, after retiring as administration and personnel in-charge from Talwar Paper Products in 1970, he set up the Anti Dowry Movement at his two-bedroom house in Vile Parle. The young, idealistic Asha, who idolised her father, was still in college. "I used to accompany him on *dharna* outside the Mantralaya, placards in hand and a heartfelt litany against dowry on our lips," she says in fond remembrance of her idealistic youth. "Then we realised we were shouting ourselves hoarse against the wrong ears." Kulkarni and his daughter joined force with others who believed in their cause and drew up a list of universities and schools all over Maharashtra. "The dowry system cannot be eradicated effectively by battling an orthodox generation that so deeply and blindly believes in such rigid norms," she points out. "So we altered our stance and decided to focus on the younger generation and women's organisations that could be influenced to think progressively."

She remembers her father's long and passionate speeches in colleges and

schools across Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, Bengaluru and Maharashtra. Kulkarni has held 5,000 lectures so far, addressing 1.5 million youngsters in the past 37 years. Two years back, at the age of 96, he spoke for eight hours every day at the 15-day youth convention held across colleges in Dhule, Jalgaon and Nandurbar. "The students were mesmerised at his stamina," she says proudly. Though he does not really worry over the outcome of his rally, his words have brought significant ripples of change. Students who have heard him over the years in the hushed silence of crowded university halls, are now principals and teachers in many important colleges. And they often invite Asha to address similar lectures in their campus.

The senior Kulkarni has now taken a backseat. A massive cardiac arrest in December 2010 has rendered him weak and confined to bed. The eyes that stare at you from his gaunt face, though, still carry the same bright flame that his speeches once did. "I miss his presence at my side when I am working on the schedule for my speeches and rallies," says Asha. "Till last month, he used to be up early, dictating notes, checking accounts, and drafting letters to universities." Asha, who was earlier manager at Punjab National Bank, took voluntary



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

retirement 10 years ago to join the cause. She also chose to remain single: “I wouldn’t have been able to devote the time and attention that the cause deserves if I had married.”

Today, she struggles for both funds and volunteers. They have not been able to afford an office—the Kulkarni residence still serves as the office of the Anti Dowry Movement. “My father never charged a penny for any of his services,” she says. “He never accepted the pension entitled to him as a freedom fighter. He believed it would have been shameful to accept monetary compensation for being patriotic. Whatever honorarium and donations that people voluntarily offer is all we have. Very often, I end up spending from my own pockets to print materials for the rally.” She needs a lot of backend support for the many drawing, essay and elocution competitions and debates she conducts on the subject of dowry in schools and

colleges. And though she has 20 volunteers, she needs many more to add momentum to her campaign. “There aren’t enough people in Mumbai who are ready to come forward. I cannot blame them; they don’t have enough time to solve their own problems.”

For her part, Asha does not think twice before rushing to help women in distress. She once read a news article on a woman who was harassed and tortured by her in-laws. Her complaint was not registered by the police though. After meeting her at the hospital, Asha pursued the case and brought it to the notice of the home minister, following which the case was resolved and the offenders punished.

Statistics reveal there is one dowry death every 22 hours in Maharashtra. The national figures are even more alarming: one dowry death every 77 minutes and one case of domestic violence every 33 minutes. “Sadly,

despite all the agony that millions of women endure every day, people are not aware of the laws against dowry harassment,” says Asha. If a person has been proved to even ask for dowry, he or she can be charged with at least six months to two years of full-term imprisonment along with a penalty of ₹ 10,000.

Asha knows her figures and facts. After retirement, she completed her degree in law and a master’s in social welfare. However, despite the weight of her knowledge, she is still struggling to fit into her father’s shoes. “He was so focused on the cause that after my mother’s death in 2006, he withdrew into a shell and felt guilty that he had not given her enough attention,” she says, looking at the frail sleeping form of her father. As we leave them, we realise both father and daughter are heroes in their own right—one for lighting the torch and the other for keeping the flame burning. ✨



love

aaj kal

Cynics say love is just an over-rated feeling. They believe that when the first strand of grey sneaks onto your head, romance sneaks out of your heart and is relegated to the backburner, till the flame wears off and one doesn't even notice its absence. We have reason to believe otherwise. Love and romance can survive and flourish—if you are prepared to work hard on it. Two poets and silvers from different walks of life show us love rocks, and so does age

A Phantom – Lotus

*The only truth that matters is
That all this love is mine to give
It does not matter that I seek
For it a container, as alms
Seek a begging bowl, a human
Shape to envelope its wealth. Heed
My faith alone, all the rest is
Perishable, and as such, but
Delusions. Any stone can make
An idol. Loving this one, I
Seek but another way to know
Him who has no more a body
To offer, and whose blue face is
A phantom-lotus on the waters of my dreams...
—Kamala Das*

Dreams realize

*Ever since I met you, you've made me come alive,
This mysterious tapestry of the skies weave
The magic of our lives: you've made me come alive
With words you have not spoken, loves we have
Not shared. Tonight beside the window grows a
Silver tree: our love is free: let's share the
tapestry our dreams realize.
—Pritish Nandy*



The summary of love: 26 years of togetherness

Love shouldn't be bracketed by rules and norms but by an appreciation of each other's strengths and acceptance of each other's flaws, says **Rekha Rodwittiya**

I do not believe that living out your convictions is all that difficult, if you really do believe in them. What matters most is that you find the plumb line of your own existence, and recognise that at all times this alone must define the axis and centring of one's life. It has often been the misconception of many to desire to sepa-

rate the world of their emotions, most specifically that of love, from the cerebral world of intellectual pursuits, believing that opening up one's heart may result in a surrendering of independence. I, for one, have never felt that emotions act in conflict with one's professional growth; or that love suggests negative compromises that alter the map of personal discoveries. The engagement with love and partnership is cer-

(Above) Artist **Rekha Rodwittiya** and her soulmate **Surendran Nair**

We have never allowed for the fire of expectations that we hold as benchmarks for one another to ever be extinguished, and this has proved pivotal to keeping our relationship exciting and dynamic

tainly not without challenge; but if one is comfortable in one's own skin, love and friendship act as aids that enhance the bigger picture of life, holding many areas of delight and exquisiteness that come from sharing with another.

Perhaps the love story of my life that spans 26 years bears testimony to the fact that one can share devotion and loyalty without blurring the spaces of the individual self. Surendran and I were mature adults in our late 20s when our friendship anchored our love. Both of us have never felt impinged upon by the intimacy of togetherness, nor personally disempowered in any way since we became a couple. Neither of us cares much for the conventions of traditions and we have structured our union as a space of mutual commitment that holds no other authority to preside over its sanction. When we signed the Special Marriage Act last year to celebrate our 25th anniversary, we saw this as a reaffirmation of our love and did not view it as 'getting married'. This is because we have been 'married' since 1985, when we defined for ourselves the nature of our relationship, and determined the ethics that would govern our cohabitation. Both Surendran and I have always chosen to be guided by our personal politics at all times, and in return we find great peace and dignity from the choices we have made.

Fiercely independent, I seek no traditional emblems to represent my identity, and Surendran too detests any typecasting of gender. What we construct from our love for one another is a space of belonging with each other that holds comfort and empathy, respect and consideration, sincerity and truth; and perhaps most important, the infinite space to grow with each other every day. Paramount within our lives are two main areas of importance that both of us feel very strongly committed to: our art

and our family. These two facets become like bookends to our lives that define the spectrum that engages our energies.

We have an equal balance of similarities and differences to our personalities that make for the yin and yang in our partnership. We have never allowed for the fire of expectations that we hold as benchmarks for one another to ever be extinguished, and this has proved pivotal to keeping our relationship exciting and dynamic. We connect to each other's intellectual energies and support the professional endeavours of one another with solidarity and belief. This faith we repose in one another is not without critical spaces, and it is this that ultimately holds the key of our love and trust, and the knowledge that in giving to each other as we do, we lose nothing of ourselves in the process. Perhaps it is because we were not searching for love when we met, nor imagined ourselves incomplete as we were; that we were able to negotiate a friendship that yielded so much more. Equality and honour, self-esteem and liberty, are fundamental components to the story of our lives. We often rest in each other's tenderness to replenish our spirit when it is bruised, safe in the knowledge that no hierarchies can ever become secret weapons that will be used to wield power over the other.

For many, love stories are clichéd territories that people feel disinclined to believe in; viewing them as Bollywood tearjerkers that exist only as syrupy fiction. Surendran and I are unapologetic lovers, who value the relationship we nurture. It is a personal space most certainly, but its ripple effect holds an inclusiveness that spells out the true meaning of what love has to offer. For when you know how to love, you can hold openness for the world around you without fear; and that is a magical life to live.

Rekha Rodwittiya, 52, is a Vadodara-based artist and writer

"Our morning walk is when we bond, it's 'our' time of the day," say 55 year-old Dr Shiv Shankar Sastry and his wife Shashi. Dr Sastry, a surgeon, and Shashi, who runs a playschool, lead hectic lives that leave them with little time for leisure. Both however, are neighbourhood activists of sorts and get together with other walkers to preserve the beauty and ecology of Lalbagh, one of the most beautiful green slices of Bengaluru. The couple, who have two children, have been taking a morning walk together for more than 20 years now. "It's strange in some ways that we find our privacy in a public place," says Dr Sastry with a chuckle.



Prasad Durga



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

Bharatiben, 69, and Madhubhai Sheth, 75, find togetherness in spirituality. Both have been doing their morning *puja* together ever since they got married. "We light the lamp together and read out holy text," says Sheth. The Mumbai-based couple also make it a point to visit a temple near their house every day. (Below) Kolkata-based retired silvers Mrinalkanti Das, 70, and his wife Purnima, 62, spend many hours together nurturing their garden. The two grow fruits, herbs and vegetables on their terrace and kitchen garden. They share the fruits of their labour—literally—with their neighbours and friends and often make fruit jellies and sauces with their fresh pickings. "Gardening keeps us away from pointless gossiping that most people our age typically end up indulging in," says Purnima.



Shilbhada Datta

Apart, but together

Renowned cricketer Dilip Sardesai is no more, but he is never too far from the thoughts of his wife **Nandini Sardesai**

I have been on my own for the past three years without my companion, my best friend. The pain has dulled but the ache won't go away. It resurfaces at any moment of time without warning and I feel strangely disoriented. The rhythm in my life is broken and I live in a vacuum. Yet within that void, I have carved out a life for myself. Because that is the way my Dilip would have wanted it. He loved life as much as he loved cricket—he was almost bohemian in his attitude. I was the steady influence but could not curb Dilip's exuberance, nor did I want to. We understood each other and shared a zone of comfort with each other. But nothing prepared me for the suddenness of his departure—I am still coming to terms with it.

Life has not been easy and I miss him a lot. I know I must confront the feeling of loss and move on. I keep myself busy. Indeed, involvement with various activities seems to be a panacea to confront the loneliness that envelops me. I live alone, 'footloose and fancy-free', I call myself. 'Is it a façade?' I wonder. The memories always sustain me. There are sentences and silences. The smiles and tears come and go from moment to moment and provide me with a warm blanket. There was so much we did together and now although I go through the motions, I do not always feel at ease. I have to confront day-to-day problems on my own and I miss my man beside me. He gave me unstilted support and encouraged me to go beyond the boundary and that is what I am trying to do in my own way. Sometimes I falter and miss the helping hand. I wonder if I am still in denial.

*Bhuli hui yaadein, mujhe itna na satao...
Toote huen khabone humko yeh sikhaya
hain, dilne jise paya tha aakhone gavaya
hain...oh, the songs are endless; both of us
loved Hindi songs that had a deep meaning.
I would hum them in my baritone voice and*

he would joke, "Ha, the nightingale is singing". I don't think I dare sing before anyone else. He made me feel good about myself—that is what keeps me rooted now as I cling to a past, alas, no more. Of course the best part of my life that I recall are the times spent with the children and grandchildren, and even today when the family is together, we reminisce about the fun times. The one day I really feel lost is on Sundays on which we did fun things—when the kids were young, it was a family outing and when we lived in an empty nest, it was just the two of us finding company in each other. There are tiny, transient incidents we laughed at; moments we playfully poked fun at each other—there was no rancour, just an undercurrent of understanding. Now when I meet some of his friends, they recall the pranks and his warmth. At the memorial lectures held for him in the past two years, presided by [Sunil] Gavaskar and [Bishen Singh] Bedi, there was much mirth and laughter as experiences were narrated. Yet there was pathos as Dilip was sorely missed. For me it has been an emotional catharsis, a sharing with people who seem to care.

Of course there is a hurt when some so-called friends forget me. Should it matter? It does, but I realise I should not allow it to affect me. Having lost my love so early in life, I have learnt that life is too short to hold grudges. "C'est la vie", I chide myself. 'What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?' (with gratitude to C L R James). Life has to go on and I believe in being sincere and committed in whatever I do. I teach, I work with NGOs, I socialise occasionally and all the time I feel Dilip's benevolent presence beside me. As I write this, tears brim in my eyes, but I rarely cry. I have built a wall around me and, sadly, have become more cynical. Perhaps I should cry more often. Or should I put up a brave front and reach out to whatever life offers me? Myriad questions cloud my mind and myriad memories give me solace.

The smiles and tears come and go from moment to moment and provide me with a warm blanket. Dilip made me feel good about myself—that keeps me rooted now



Nandini Sardesai, 66, is a Mumbai-based professor, writer and activist



The creative SPOT

At 89, S H Raza's homecoming shows his warmth towards India and his preoccupation with the *bindu* takes on new meanings, discovers **Sudha Tilak**

It's a mellow winter's morning and the sun dapples in golden dots on the balcony of a new house in a posh south Delhi colony. In the parlour, Syed Haider Raza is seated on his chair before a stunning blue-black lithograph, acquiescing for the camera. The photographer nudges him for a smile, but he breaks into a hearty guffaw, scattering laughter and light into the room. He may be frail of health, but India's leading painter remains a man of eloquence, dignity, with deep allegiance to his work and committed to refinement in art, encouraging what he calls an "independence of aesthetics" in the country through the Raza Foundation.

There is much of India in Raza as much as he's French. He speaks to his aides and associates changing from chaste Hindi to French and English. His inspiration is Chagall, Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso as much as the beauty and colour of the Ajanta and Ellora caves, Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Jamini Roy and his consistent contemplation of the metaphysical Hindu aspect of creation, the *bindu*.

Raza's life has been an unending journey through continents. From his birth and boyhood in Mandla in Madhya Pradesh to his student days at The J J School of Art in Bombay, to founding the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group, his early life in India was an exciting one full of new beginnings. His 60 years in France where he studied, worked, exhibited and engaged with artists were an equally fulfilling time when his work and paintings grew in form and power. In a country where artistic tradition is rich, yet contemporary space for artists is limited to rabble's censure, Raza's effortless embracing of religious diversity is inspiring.

Accolades, astronomical prices for his works, the Padmashri and encomiums apart, Raza retains an unwavering commitment and focus to his work, ever alert to the world around him, working humour up, reminiscing and reflecting. Like the wine he sips, Raza's years have only added mellow warmth to his mature thoughts. Excerpts from an exclusive interview....



What is the one aspect that has been of constant contemplation through your artistic life?

It's what I learnt from *The Gita*, from Vinobha Bhave, *swadharm*, or one's own conviction and faith. We may pass ourselves through several ideas and thoughts but we must learn to go in one direction, concentrating on that which is most important. I've looked at the *bindu* for years. After years of study as a young person you ultimately arrive at your personal conviction and your tendencies, talent and beliefs merge. As a figurative painter, my faith and



India birthed me and nurtured me like a mother. In France I found purpose and direction for my thoughts and work

belief led to a concentrated thought process. That is not to say that change does not take place. Evolution takes a logic of its own and in my case the same *bindu* has transformed itself through years of work. But it has remained constant, for the *bindu* is a symbol of the seed, the origin. I've been interested in it since the day my school teacher taught me as a six year-old to learn to focus by drawing a dot on the blackboard. I never forgot that lesson and in the 1980s I discovered the *bindu* again and its tremendous influence. For five to 10 years, I worked on developing it from the seed to include the five elements of nature and its different manifestations, be it the male and female component or the *mandala*

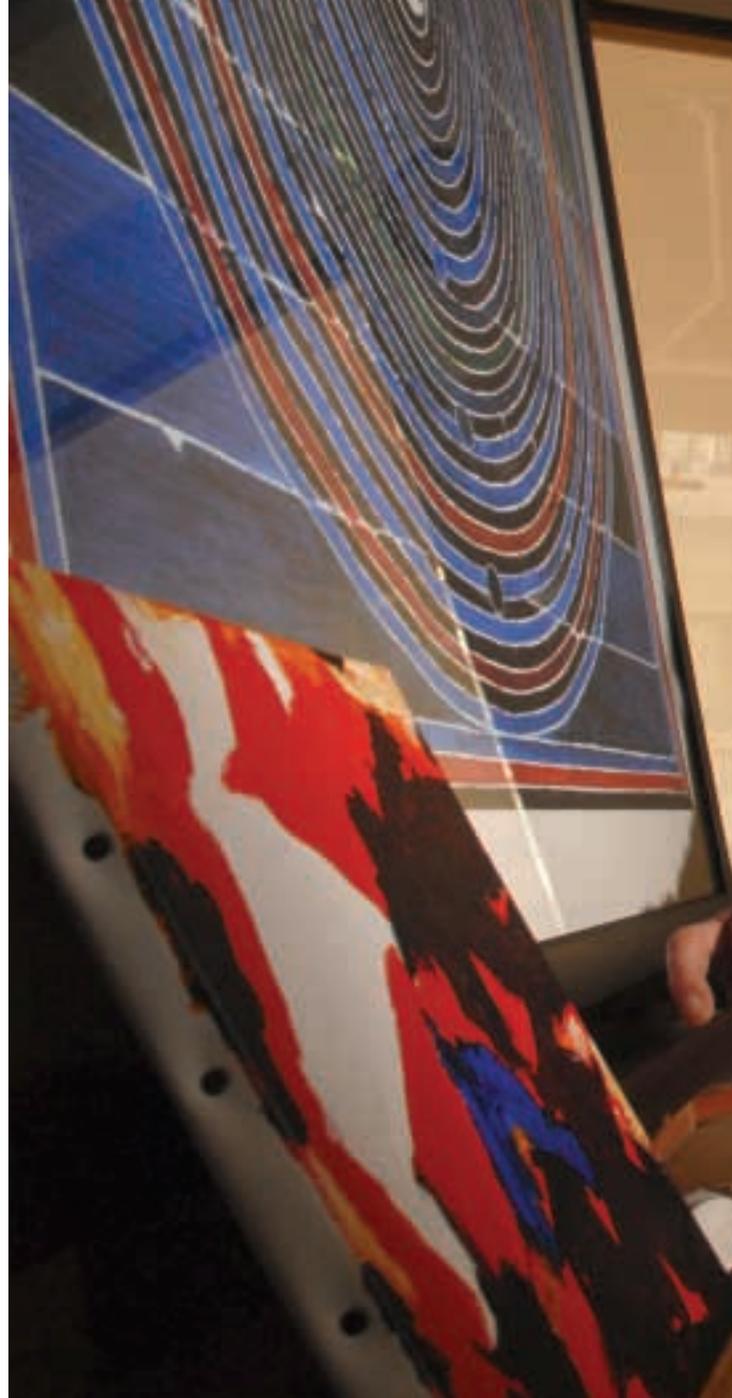
or the circle. In a glorious, magnificent way this has been and continues to be my preoccupation.

You've returned home after 60 years in France. What are the changes you find here?

Changes are considerable today. While I am saddened when I read of the violence around us, I've also a feeling that we all have to take the initiative as it's our duty to take the Indian civilisation forward. We are going in different ways, unable to retain a commitment or a focus to lead ourselves in the right direction.

Little India has changed too. Did you sense that while visiting your home town Mandla?

I visited Mandla some eight years ago. It seemed like a modern world, complete with traffic and congestion. It saddens me that the youth are getting interested in money,



not cultural values. Despite the march of progress, it is important in India to work towards the direction of uplift of consciousness as much as our economic progress. But [chuckles] at heart I'm still a boy who likes his small town. Even during my years in France I loved the big city lights of Paris but preferred to live and work in the village of Gorbio. I prefer the isolation and, at heart, love the village.

How are you contributing to that idea?

As an offshoot of my visit to Mandla, along with Ashok Vajpayee we forged an idea to do something purely for the sake of culture. Between his poetry and writing and my painting we found a harmony and decided to help develop and nurture young talent and younger artists. We choose



Shivay Bhandari

a small number of artists from any part of India and help them with support and space to develop their skills through the Raza Foundation.

From a village in middle India to Bombay, thence to France, and back in India. Where is your home?

Between India and France I've never had a chance to experience homelessness. This aspect is important in my life. I strongly believe one is born twice. My first birth was in India, which I would say was by being born in this land. India birthed me as a mother does a child and nurtured me through my young days. If a first birth is a gift from Providence or nature, a person's second birth emerges out of his own efforts. It is to find the raison of our life and its

direction for our journey. My second was thus in France where I could find purpose and direction for my thoughts and work.

Why did you choose Delhi and not your beloved Mumbai for a homecoming now?

I left Bombay as a young man. I'm now back home 60 years later, alone and needing care. I am 89 years today and I am careful about my health. I came to India and decided to stay in Delhi as it would be easier for friends from across the world to be with me on visits. I am fond of Mumbai but given the space and commuting conditions of the city, I thought that it would be better for me to live in Delhi at my age and in my state of health. So I decided to buy

a house in Delhi and live here now. I've just moved into the new home and am settling things down. The blank canvases are awaiting me to settle down and begin again.

Your companion Janine Mongillat is no more. How did a creative couple like you two cohabit in peace?

Janine has been a great assistant in my artistic journey and otherwise. I like silence and she understood my silences. It is important that temperaments match for two people to live together and we were blessed. We'd wake in the morning and we had two apartments on the same floor. We'd both work for some five hours in the morning and then we'd meet for lunch. We would go after three in the

exclusivity; we should choose our companions to our taste. It often does not happen that way and it's your great luck if you do find the right person. Then it's important to cherish that. Not for me all the flirting and changing partners.

You have family in Pakistan too. Yet your commitment to India is deep. You were present when Indian gained Independence. Tell us more about that day.

My father was not one who allowed us to turn to politics as boys. However I do remember that my brother and I rejoiced like happy young men in 1947, jumping and whooping with joy that India was independent and a republic. Despite Partition, India remained a republic and it was a



Janine understood my silences. It's your great luck if you find the right person. Then it's important to cherish that



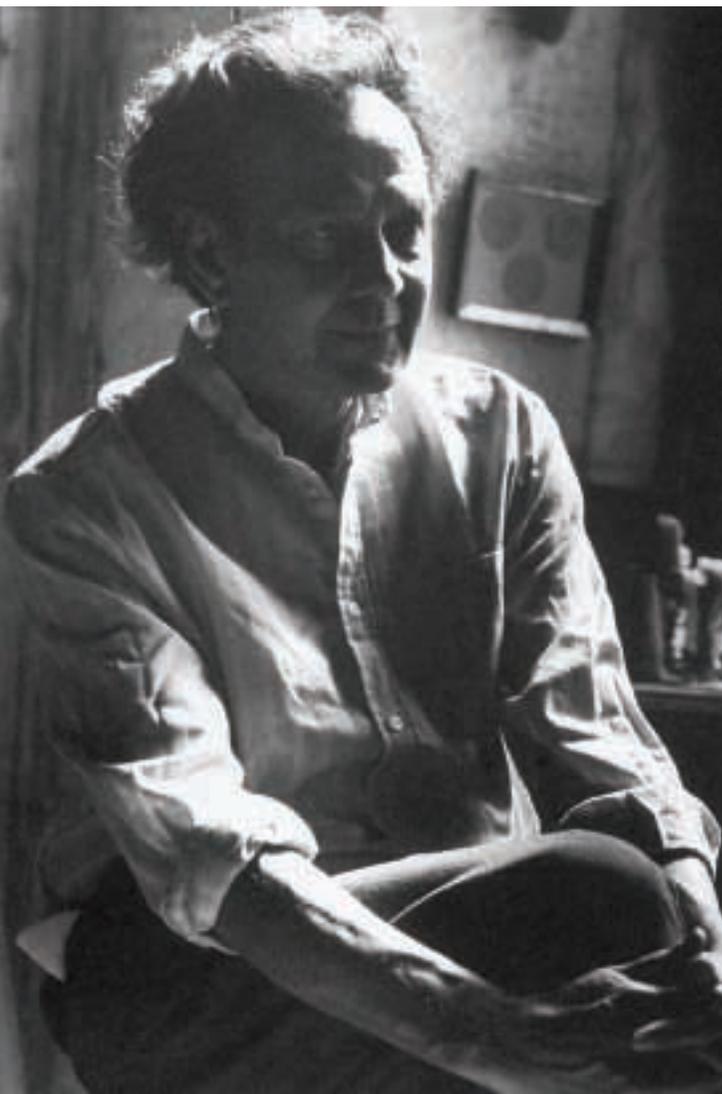
afternoon back to our studios and work and then meet for dinner by seven or eight. We'd have a phone call or a pressing matter to attend but that was that and we did not spend too much time on the radio or TV too. This was the case through our active creative years. Though she was seven years younger to me we stayed very close. We remained a marvellous couple, happy together.

Some eight to 10 years ago, she turned sick and her cancer developed and for the last two years she suffered great pain. I was with her through it. I am a firm believer in God and felt that He would call her up when the time came. I consoled myself saying rather than cry I should allow myself to live the way she'd have wanted. So I took a decision after her passing to go out, meet people, paint. I believe in

moment of great happiness that we had leaders of calibre directing the government. However it is not the same and it's difficult to have such singular leadership in painting as in politics. A painter's job is that of an individual and not to take decision for everyone like in politics.

As part of this newfound energy, we formed the Progressive Artists' Union in Bombay with F N Souza, M F Husain and others. We wanted independence of aesthetics in India. We worked on that decision and some of us worked on reviving the glory of traditions and take, say, the art of the Ajanta and Ellora figurative paintings forward. Accordingly we all evolved our own style and manner but our commitment to Indian roots was strong. Souza left for London and I for France. Our growths were slow, but healthy. We were

soon recognised. I was showing my work in France and ultimately with my concentration growing on the *bindu*, the Indian element did become my preoccupation. I would not agree that it stopped me from going in other directions as I found myself evolving with new dimensions of the *bindu*. I wanted my knowledge of painting to integrate with my Indian concept and I've been following that path.



And today you're one of India's top painters who fetch astronomical prices in the international market. How does it feel to occupy such an exalted position?

I am happy with the prices. It should be important as it helped me have an atelier in Paris or move here to India. These are not unimportant. However you should not make an obsession out of prices. Of course, one cannot ignore it, but one must learn to go beyond it and not allow it to become an artist's only end.

Do you miss your friends?

I miss Husain, Souza. They were very important during the founding days of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Union.

Souza is no more and Husain leaves for Qatar while you make India your home. Do you find an artist's freedom compromised in India?

Husain apart, it saddens me that many important aspects of Hinduism are misunderstood. I am attached to my ideas of Hinduism and in my time many of our teachers came from a priestly lineage and it was a free mode of thinking and living and working for an artist. It is important to understand our differences from Kashmir to the south to the east and the west. Indian contemporary art has a place on the world stage and the younger generation must take forward our traditions. Our contribution on the world map would be our culture and we need to be focused. Artists may be censored but the future will remember and surely retain the most important works of our remarkable painters who leave behind their work as the best proof of their worth.



You should not make an obsession out of prices but learn to go beyond it. One must not allow it to become an artist's only end

Age brought changes in Picasso's work when he began to caricature himself; Monet's cataracts turn the colours in his work reddish in his 80s; Dali's infirmity turned him to photography and Paritosh Sen brought in comic elements in his last years. How has age affected your work and what will your legacy be?

I can't say, but my work will defend itself. A person lives on if he is able to concentrate on issues that are important to him. That is the *bindu* of our life and work. Working on my legacy is not my ambition, though my feeling is my commitment and creative work will speak for itself. The rest are unimportant. What we leave behind of ourselves through work is the most important.

And what of death?

Death is a question of how long He wants me to be here. I am committed to God's will. He will decide how long I live and my work will decide what my legacy will be. ✨

Bindutva!

The circle or *bindu* is more complex than you thought, says **Haresh V Dehejia**

Yantra are geometrical abstractions of states of reality and play an important part in meditational practices. The commonly used shapes in yantra are the *vartul*, the *trikona*, the *chatuskona* and the *bindu*. These shapes can move the adept from mere visual geometry to inner states of being; in the hands of the adept they do not remain mere shapes but point to cosmic realities to be experienced. These geometric yantra are a precursor of the many *pratima* of the tradition. One of the commonest yantra is the *Shri yantra*. It is made of intersecting triangles, some pointing downwards, others pointing upwards, and in the hexagonal space formed by their intersection is a bindu. The downward-pointing triangle is considered the female or the *yoni* or Shakti or the principle of water, while the upward pointing triangle is the male or the *vahni* or Shiva or the principle of fire. In this elegant but simple diagram is the meeting of *prakriti* and *purusha*, pulling in opposite directions, yet creating that beautiful space in the middle where there is the fullness of the total and undifferentiated Being represented by the *bindu*. In this charmed space is neither involution nor evolution, neither form nor formless, a state of mind neither awake nor asleep, in a state of serene stillness, fullness and effortless Being. Consciousness in this space has moved away from the primal restless question 'ko hum:; who am I, to the whispered serene realisation 'so hum:; I am. In this space within intersecting triangles, there are no questions nor answers, no dialogue nor debate, no finding nor searching: there are no sounds but just the beautiful silence of *purnatva*. The *Shri yantra* is depicted through many different *akriti*, from the simple *rangoli* of two intersecting triangles, to the more complicated yantra done by artists with paint, to three-dimensional yantra crafted in metal. But all *Shri yantra* carry the essential visual message of *purnatva* in their own unique way.

A cosmic shape of considerable significance, which not only represents *purnatva* but becomes an aesthetically charged *akriti* is the *bindu*. The most primal form of the *bindu* is

the *Hiranyagarbha*, the Golden Egg of Brahma floating on the waters, and the first source and the seed of all vibration and movement from which all creation emerges:

The circle is the All (universe),
The breath of life is contained in its form,
Even as the Mind is in Man.
The circle is Time eternal.

Vastusutraupanishad, I.6

The *vartul* or *mandala* is thus the seed and the egg, the perfect bead and *shaligrama* (naturally occurring stone in the Gandaki River, which is a symbol of Vishnu), the *purna* and the *prathama* (first); it is the ever widening entire cosmic universe; it is sacred unending time without a beginning or an end; it is the periphery of the vast and unbound consciousness; it is the perfect shape that contains but does not limit; it is the ring that circumscribes a sacred and charmed space; it is a *mandala* formed by the *gopi* joining hands in the *rasa lila*; it is the thread that is tied around the *pipal* tree or the *sutra* that is taken around the village to contain the auspicious and keep out the evil; it is a group of people bound by a similar purpose and common activity; it is the replica of the sun and the full moon; it is the *anusvara* (diacritical mark indicating a nasal sound) on letters that stops the out-breath; it is

the *purnaviram* that brings the sentence to an end; it is the *nada* or the source of all sounds, the *chakra* or the wheel that moves but also the still centre where all movement ends; it is the source and the repository of energy, from which forms emerge and to which they ultimately return; it is the *chakra* of the *kundalini* where energies coalesce and it is the *tilak* that adorns our forehead. The circle is indeed the All and is a primal *akriti* of totality.

The *bindu* as an *akriti* is created in many different ways, as a single *dor* or print, as a circle, as a line that creates expanding circles, as a *tilak* of vermilion on the forehead, or as a mark on sacred books, and as a snake where we cannot find its beginning or end.

Excerpted from Akriti to Sanskriti: The Journey of Indian Forms (Niyogi Books; 248 pages) by Harsha V Dehejia



Bindu, S.H. Bhat, (PC)

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Need of the hour: Silvers deserve a better deal from the upcoming Budget

No one awaits the annual Budget as eagerly as a taxpayer does. A budget, from the old French *bougette* for purse, is a list of all planned expenses and revenues stated in monetary terms. The 2011 Union Budget is India's annual financial statement of receipts and expenditures for the coming financial year (FY) April 2011-March 2012, or the assessment year (AY) April 2012-March 2013. It is intended to function as an indicator of the country's economic growth and financial well-being.

For the lay taxpayer, the Budget's gist emerges from the Finance Minister's direct taxes statement made before Parliament. Tax rate changes, exemption limits, concessions in the calculation of taxable income, and new indirect taxes; all have an impact on a taxpayer's income flow. It goes without saying the speech also affects the government, and given the current political climate, this year's Budget is likely to exert a special pressure.

Parliament's most recent session ended in a logjam. The government came under furious attacks from the media, which exposed a number of scams involving politicians and bureaucrats. Inflation has also added to the government's declining reputation and capacity to protect citizens from bankruptcy. If the logjam continues, it is likely that the opposition will stall the presentation of the Budget. This is likely to cause even further concern to the taxpayer who is waiting for a resolution to the current economic crisis.

Last year's Budget backdrop was also equally murky. It came at a time when the Indian economy was described as particularly unstable. Double-digit food inflation had hit the everyday purse of the common person. Senior citizens and pensioners were particularly vulnerable. Still, the 2010 Budget, which only tinkered with select tax slabs, did nothing to assuage widespread economic stresses. Incomes between ₹ 160,000 and ₹ 500,000 attracted 10 per cent tax; ₹ 800,000 attracted 20 per cent. Anyone earning above ₹ 800,000 would be taxed 30 per cent. The exemption limit of ₹ 240,000 did not budge. Senior citizens responded unhappily as the desired increase in tax exemption limit for their income bracket did not go through.

In addition to the taxman's whip, three other factors have contributed to reduce the real worth of senior citizens' incomes. Incomes from fixed investments plummeted as interest rates nosedived. Expenditures zoomed as generalised inflation ravaged the economy. Food inflation skyrocketed



from 9.41 per cent in November 2010 to a devastating 13.55 per cent by December 2010. The government did what it does best. It admitted failure in taming the price devil. But a confession can't buy vegetables in the market, and it didn't. In absolute terms, the average family's food budget has doubled during the last fiscal. Vegetables, fruits, milk, and dry goods are the worst offenders. The third nail in the coffin is the cost of health insurance. Insurance companies radically altered their policies causing claimants to pay far beyond their ability. All of the above constitutes a source of serious concern for seniors, who, unlike the average family, which wins out in age and stable sources of income, cannot afford to spend the final phase of their lives mired in debt.

What's on the senior citizen wish list?

The wish list is chiefly governed by the need to secure existing income and defence against further erosion:

Senior citizens are looking forward to an increase in the income tax exemption limit from the current ₹ 240,000 to ₹ 500,000. Many seniors have retired with an ugly truth: a small provident fund, minor gratuity, and very few savings. This retirement kitty is commensurate with the less than remunerative salaries they earned at the time of retirement. None of this makes sense to the urban middle-class wage-earner of today, as current income levels have risen far beyond income slabs of persons from generations ago who populate the current demographic of senior citizens in their late 60s, 70s, and 80s. Current income levels are

It is the responsibility of the annual Budget to recognise the growing gap between a culture accepting of high inflation and embracing high consumption and the decreasing capacity of senior citizens to both spend and survive

immediately relevant to senior citizens because they must perforce suffer the negative impact of what new, high incomes can buy—a variety of staple and non-essential goods and services at inflated prices. It is the responsibility of the annual Budget to recognise this growing gap between a new culture accepting of high inflation and embracing high consumption and the decreasing capacity of senior citizens to both spend and survive. One part of the solution is simple. Senior citizens need more money in hand for everyday expenses. This could happen if the new exemption limit significantly checked tax liabilities for senior citizens.

The nuts and bolts of the exemption limit

The enhanced exemption limit should be inclusive of an additional tax saving of ₹ 120,000 (₹ 100,000 in tax saving instruments and ₹ 20,000 in tax free infrastructure bonds) permitted under Section 80C. Currently, seniors who wish to take advantage of tax-saving schemes and instruments feel compelled to save this amount out of their existing incomes. But to save also means to live far more frugally than one already does. On the other hand, those who choose not to invest in tax-saving schemes must continue paying high taxes. This is a classic bind that merits complete banishment.

Reasons why the exemption limit must change

A senior citizen with an income of ₹ 400,000-₹ 500,000 per annum cannot afford to allocate 20-25 per cent of his/her income towards illiquid savings. The deal is grossly unfair because in addition to impoverishing seniors, it also begs the important question of need. To be forced to save more is excessive when you are past 70, and absolutely redundant for an octogenarian. What senior citizens really need is more disposable income in hand. If this year's Budget speech contains efforts to put more money in the hands of people to fuel consumption and growth, senior citizens don't want to be left behind. They want measures that will return buying power back to them.

The Budget and health insurance

Current insurance premiums are expensive, and are continuing to rise in cost. Costs of medicines, doctor's fees, and medical tests are also rising steeply. Senior citizens would therefore welcome a raise of ₹ 50,000 in the limit placed on medical expenditure eligible for tax concessions, currently only ₹ 20,000. High medical expenditures, even those not

requiring hospitalisation, as well as the insurance premium must become eligible for tax concessions, especially as the government is now promoting India as a medical tourism destination for foreign visitors. The foreign sick who seek cheaper medical care have the potential to destroy the value of senior citizens' incomes. Their mass arrival will impact seniors' medical expenses no differently from how the middle-class wage drives up inflation and keeps it up. Foreign patients will tempt Indian doctors and hospitals to hike charges and the drug industry to raise the cost of medication. All this will doubtless impair the financial capacity of senior citizens to treat their own illnesses, which, as we all know, has always been a luxury in a country like ours with no state social security.

The financial security of senior citizens is rife with problems that a responsible Budget can, to some extent, rectify. Some senior citizens take up small paying jobs for pleasure and for money after retirement. Any payment exceeding ₹ 20,000 per annum is liable for 10 per cent tax deducted at source (TDS). Often, the assessee's total income including post-retirement professional income is below the exemption limit, and is eligible for a tax refund, which nonetheless takes years to arrive. It therefore makes sense to first allow seniors a TDS exemption on professional income of up to ₹ 100,000, and then permit the assessee to account for such income during the filing of tax returns.

According to the devil's advocate, the satisfaction of the above wish list will result in a loss of government revenue, to which Warren Buffet, CEO of Berkshire Hathway Inc, has an effective and fitting proposition. "But I think that people at the high end—people like myself—should be paying a lot more in taxes." Buffet's suggestion should apply to India's rich and super-rich, which is currently not the case. Indian canons of progressive taxation need drastic revisions in light of the new economy. A small segment of high and very high wage-earners has determined the cost of living almost everywhere for almost everyone, from below average earners to the poor, across towns and cities. Taxing the rich at a rate commensurate with their income will not only result in higher government revenue at lower administrative cost; it will also provide requisite and rightful relief to marginalised economic groups such as the lower middle-class and the poor, and to other vulnerable categories like senior citizens.

Dr Priya Desai, 70, is a Mumbai-based economist





Photographs by Prasad Durga

Jungle BOY!

Former range forest officer K M Chinnappa has terrorised many a bandit and battled corrupt officials to transform the once-deteriorating Nagarhole national reserve. Today he continues to be its saviour, inspiring young minds to save the tiger and the diminishing natural habitat in India. **Dhanya Nair Sankar** meets the guardian of the wild

With his tall and lean frame, warm smile and easy manner, it's hard to imagine this septuagenarian as one of the most feared men in the Nagarhole forest belt. But when he uses his baritone to command schoolchildren to attention on a nature trail, everyone obeys. Not only do the students meekly fall in line, the forest guards fall silent and even a curious android deer in the vicinity vanishes into the foliage!

This was our introduction to the legendary former range forest officer, K M Chinnappa, who continues to hold the Nagarhole National Park in Kodugo, Karnataka, in his protective embrace. Chinnappa first responded to the call of the wild when he was a child. "My father was with the armed forces and we grew up in a village in Kumtur near Coorg. I have practically grown up in the Nagarhole and Brahmagiri forests. At times, I have felt like a parent to the forest. Isn't it natural to protect your child from bad influences?" he asks, eyes misting up.

The park, which stretches across 800 sq km and is one of the largest protected areas in southern India, is under consideration as a world heritage site. It is home to tigers, panthers, many species of spotted deer, gaurs, wild cats and especially elephants. Had it not been for our lone warrior who still battles from the frontlines, Nagarhole would have told a desolate tale today.



After crossing swords with poachers, the timber mafia, politicians, the powerful Karnataka mining lobby and even corrupt forest officers for almost half a century, Chinnappa is a quintessential denizen of the forest. "I joined the Karnataka Forest Department as a forester in 1967. Back then, instead of animals, the forest was full of people. The *hadlu* [swamps] that the wild animals so love today were used to cultivate paddy, ganja, timber, bamboo and sandalwood. Trees were rampantly cut for money. Poaching was also rampant. Sadly, there was no way to check these illegal activities, which is why they continued for years," rues Chinnappa, a frown creasing his weather-beaten brow.

As a young man, he thought the Forest Department was the best way to flag off his career. "I was offered a posting at a coveted forest check post but opted instead to look after remote areas," recalls the retired range forest officer. "My divisional forest officer was surprised but he gave in. This gave me the chance to acquaint myself with illegal activities from the beginning of my career." Chinnappa thus fought off poachers and timber smugglers. "This forest is close to Coorg, which at the time was populated by wealthy, families whose favourite pastime was hunting," he adds. "Poachers thus enjoyed public support and every time I made an arrest, I incurred public wrath." There was an even more sinister enemy lurking in the jungle: crooked officers in the Forest Department. "Many officers were willing to turn a

blind eye to poachers in return for financial gains," he says. "But there were some honest officers and this made quite a difference."

The forest taught Chinnappa to be a survivor and when taunted by the enemy, he sank his teeth into every fight. "In 1988, I was falsely implicated on murder charges by some people against whom I had taken action," he reveals. "I was facing suspension. But the chief conservator of forests, Mr Parameswarappa, stepped in and I wasn't suspended." The incident was only one of many trials by fire. "In 1992, my house and a part of the reserve were set ablaze. We were living in Kodugu then. Luckily, my wife and son were not at home. I barely had any support from the Forest Department. We filed a court case, which dragged for 13 years. Finally, the court ruled in my favour. I don't know where my wife found the courage to support me," he says, looking affectionately at his wife Radha. "She was disheartened but kept encouraging me." The family moved out of their Kodugu home but well-wishers kept knocking at Chinnappa's door, asking him to return to the forest. A year later, he did. But this time, he adopted a different strategy. He took voluntary retirement in 1993. With the support of a New York-based wildlife conservation society and the Global Tiger Patrol Fund of London, Chinnappa started the Nagarhole Wildlife Conservation Education Project. He decided to raise an army of young warriors to take his legacy forward.

“ The jungle will have a secure future only if commercial interests and their political backers are kept away. These people do not understand nature. They only understand money, which animals cannot eat ”

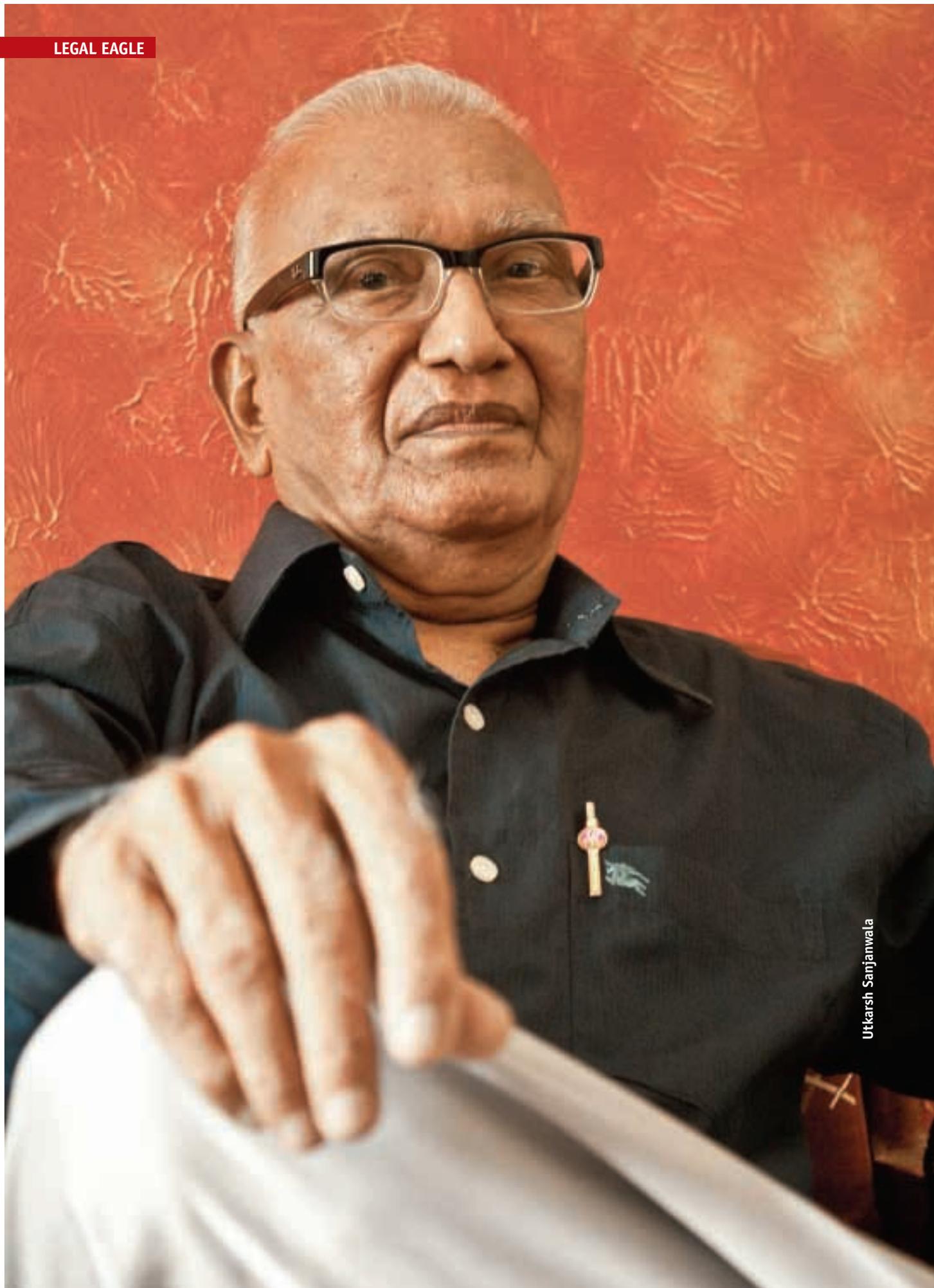
Today, Chinnappa teaches forest conservation to local students and youth and even employees of the Forest Department. He conducts camps for nature lovers and students every week and often has visitors from Mysore and Bengaluru. “Chinnappa Sir’s nature walks are much better than bookish information,” gushes Malathy, a seventh grader from a nearby school. “In one day, you learn how the forest and wildlife play a role in ecology.”

According to Chinnappa, funds are sometimes hard to come by but he uses his pension and income from the coffee plantation he inherited to do what he does best: save the wild. “The Forest Department has implemented many of his suggestions,” says Daniel, who has been helped Chinnappa run his nature camps for the past five years. “For instance, unruly tourists and officials are prevented from turning the forest into a watering hole. There is a 6 am to 6 pm rule, where vehicles can pass through the forest only between these hours.” Chinnappa is also president of Wildlife First and an advisory member of the Save the Tiger Campaign, a mass initiative in India undertaken in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature. And he is persuading the Karnataka government to provide modern equipment to forest guards and other personnel

who man the natural reserve. Between these initiatives, he finds the time to counsel tribal families to shift to government land to minimise the tiger-human conflict, and has on occasion funded their relocation with his own funds. His aggressive stance notwithstanding, our forest warrior has a sensitive side, one that connects equally with butterflies as it does with elephants. Mention the changed face of the Nagarhole forest and his face lights up with a rare smile. “With the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the government made sure the natural state of the forest with open swamps returns. This encouraged the wildlife population to grow. But if tigers and elephants are to remain in the big picture, we have a long way to go.”

His awards and accolades include the Chief Minister’s Gold Medal (1985), Sanctuary-ABN-AMRO Lifetime Service Award (2005) and CNN-IBN Hero Award (2006). But applause means little to this gentle giant, who aims to teach people to love and respect the natural world. “The jungle will have a secure future only if commercial interests as well as their political and financial backers are kept away,” he asserts. “They do not understand nature. They only understand money, which animals cannot eat.” h





Sunshine Act

ARMED WITH THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION (RTI) ACT, SEPTUAGENARIAN MANSUKHLAL RUPARELIA IS BATTLING FOR HIS FELLOW SILVERS. DHANYA NAIR SANKAR MEETS THE RESOLUTE CAMPAIGNER

At the age of 77, Mansukhlal V Ruparelia believes retirement doesn't mean leading a quiet life. After spending 42 years in the Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS)—one of the central services of the IAS—Ruparelia is working diligently to make Mira Road (an unglamorous part of Mumbai) a haven for residents. Fighting to get the roads repaired; making sure only licensed auto rickshaws ply; or asserting silvers' rights for a separate queue in post offices, municipal hospitals and Western Railway; he has done it all. With a sound knowledge of the RTI Act, Ruparelia also keeps a hawk's eye on policies for the elderly—he believes the National Policy for Older People (NPOP) should be implemented forthwith.

Ruparelia is a man with a calling. After retiring as a deputy chief personnel officer in 1992, he joined a private company as advisor, but a voice inside kept telling him to do something 'more meaningful.' "I have seen seniors getting a raw deal in civic hospitals and railways," he observes. "I knew I had to do something for them. That wish became a conviction after retirement." In 2005, when the RTI Act was passed, he got hold of a copy and studied it thoroughly. "First I filed an application to get the municipal garden in Mira Road cleaned up," he recalls. "I got the desired response within three months, which encouraged me to file more RTIs." Since then, he has filed over 300 applications and shows no sign of stopping.

If residents of Mira Road are finding more buses and licensed rickshaws

on the road, it is owing to Ruparelia's relentless efforts. "There were not enough long-distance buses from Mira Road, while the frequency of existing ones was bad," he explains. "I filed an RTI enquiry at the Thane RTO where they had no clue about it. Later, I met officials at Thane and Mumbai RTO, the police and even traffic police officials. For the past four years I have been filing RTI applications against these authorities. Though the frequency of buses has improved, there are some more unanswered questions." Seeing how silvers

all civic hospitals have to give free treatment to those above 60 and municipal schools have to give one room to local citizens' associations on Sundays and holidays; silvers can use this facility for their activities. When taken up with the State Information Commission (SIC), the case has shown results. He also helps silvers get their pension and settlement through RTI Act. A case in point is his friend Anthony Cardoze who was not getting his settlement dues of more than ₹ 400,000. "I was struggling for over three years," reveals Cardoze. "He

"Now a lot more people are coming together to complain. Only a collective force can wake up sleeping authorities and the RTI Act is a powerful tool"

have to bear the burden of waiting in long queues at post offices, Ruparelia filed another enquiry and made sure a separate queue was set up for them.

Irked by rickshaw drivers charging exorbitant fares in Mira Road, Ruparelia has filed RTIs against their unions as well. "Rickshaws charge more than ₹ 50 for less than 1 km," he says. "I have taken up the matter with their unions, the state transport authority and even the governor. But now a lot more people are coming together to complain. Only a collective force can wake up sleeping authorities and RTI Act is a powerful tool."

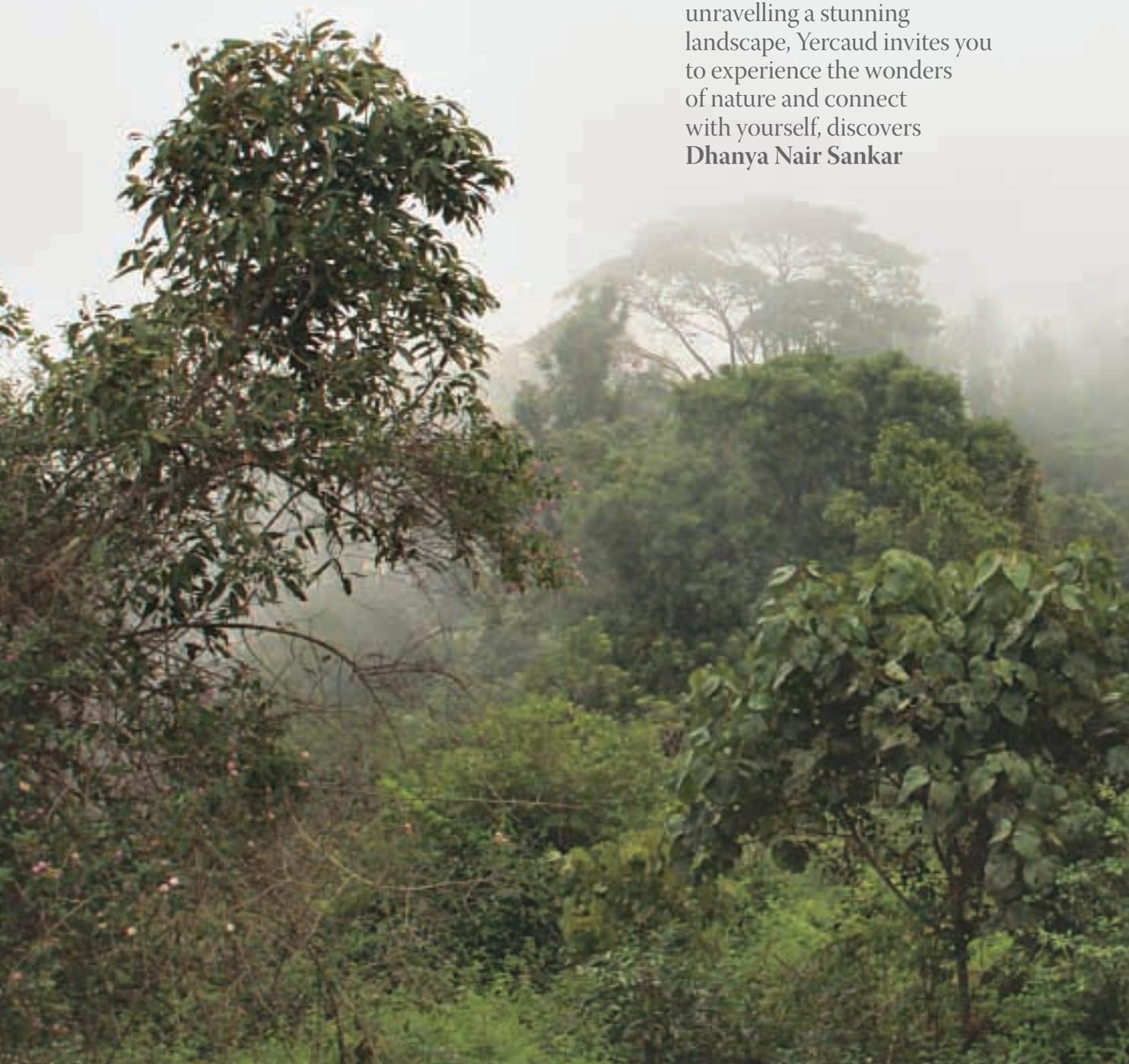
The septuagenarian has also studied welfare policies for silvers under the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and has come across a rule that

filed an application on my behalf and my dues were settled within 10 days." The work, though immensely satisfying, is challenging as well. "Ministers and directors withhold information on the pretext of technical objections like 'the original letter addressed to minister was not received; 'fee not enclosed by nominated post offices with application', etc," says Ruparelia. "Tackling them requires patience and thorough knowledge of the Act."

Family support has been the bedrock of Ruparelia's active silver life; his sons encourage him, though his wife worries sometimes. Next on his agenda is the NPOP. "I want to know how the ministries are trying to implement it," says Ruparelia, adding that he believes the RTI Act is indeed the 'sunshine Act' that can save democracy. ✨

Far from the madding crowd

Soaked in the aroma of home-grown coffee and unravelling a stunning landscape, Yercaud invites you to experience the wonders of nature and connect with yourself, discovers **Dhanya Nair Sankar**



It's often called 'Poor Man's Ooty' but don't let that moniker fool you. Yercaud is a breathtaking hill station, best known for its coffee estates and soulful serenity. In winter, the mornings are crisp and misty, the dewdrops making pretty patterns on the window pane.

It's not only the destination that's exquisite. The journey to this jewel atop the Shevroy Hills near Salem in Tamil Nadu is equally picturesque. But here's a tip—say a prayer as you ascend the winding road because there are 20 hairpin bends, not to mention cars and two-wheelers, all of them making a valiant attempt to get there first!

Still to capture the fancy of tourists, Yercaud's lofty mountains hold visitors spellbound in their vast embrace. Here, the road to heaven is lined with eucalyptus, silveroak, sandalwood and acacia trees while the denizens of the forest call out to you in regular bursts. The temperature drops as you ascend, so warm clothing is a must in winter.



Jithin Sankar

There are no 'tourist spots' to lure the regular tourist to Yercaud. It is an oasis of peace, where just being there is its own reward

And, no, you don't need a signboard to point the way. Locals dressed in bright saris and *lungi* readily offer directions along with a sweet smile.

As you approach the table land, which is 4,700 km above sea level, the landscape gives way to coffee plantations and the air is redolent with the aroma of coffee beans and citrus fruit. If you get there at lunchtime—lunchtime for city folk, that is—the roads will be empty as everyone's observing their daily ritual: their afternoon siesta. There are no 'tourist spots' to lure the regular tourist to Yercaud. It is an oasis of peace, where just being there is its own reward. You can stroll through estates and plantations, trek through the mountains to get an adrenaline rush, sip from crystal springs and waterfalls and, above all, revel in the calm and connect with yourself.

There are many hotels and home stays on many of the estates. The menu offers delicious South Indian fare but everything, from vegetables to *dal* and pepper, is home grown, and is an unusual treat for the taste buds. "This place is not commercialised and offers oneness with nature; that's our USP," smiles Dorai, a young helper on one of the estates. There's a lot of walking in store and as if reading your mind, he adds with a laugh, "I walk almost 5 km to school every day." Walking is indeed the most oft-used form of transportation here. And the locals, regardless of age, seem to effortlessly glide up and down the undulating terrain. Thankfully, most estates and hotels provide a jeep on request. Dorai says the majority of locals still depend on farming for their livelihood and those who don't own land work on the estates. Apart from coffee, Yercaud is known for fruit cultivation and pepper.

Strolling along the tree-filled roads here is like walking into a painting. The paths are broken only by houses whose traditional sloping roofs and walls lend them an understated elegance. A few rejuvenating hours in Yercaud heighten the senses and even minuscule temperature changes are perceptible. So as the sun sets, out come the colourful scarves and sweaters. The air is moist and the roads are paved with auburn leaves.

In the morning, visit the Kiliyur Waterfall and soak in a dazzling sight. The sunlight catches the drops that dance with gay abandon as they glance off the rocks. "Tourism in Yercaud is picking up, thanks to the many estate home stays here. There are over a hundred estates here, each measuring about 100 acre. There are numerous small estates as well," says 55 year-old Gregory Bosen, an estate owner, quick to point out that the home stays are very silver-friendly. "The roads to most estates are smooth. Even though there are not many tourist attractions, people visit Yercaud to go fishing and connect with nature."

When night descends, iridescent fire flies in large number decorate the foliage, keeping time to crickets who drum up quite a medley. "We've come here before. But it's such a great place to unwind with nature that we have returned," says Karan Singh, a sexagenarian here with his wife from Bengaluru. The sentiment is echoed by a young traveller here with her friends, "The picturesque locales, the spicy food and the warm people make you forget all about the nail-biting cold," laughs Sneha Nadig from Bengaluru. Mornings are misty, and rolling hills and the aroma of moist mud paint a mesmerising watercolour. As far as 'points' go, Yercaud has Ladies' Seat,

NAVIGATOR

Yercaud is in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. It is 36 km from Salem, the nearest city; 195 km from Coimbatore, 222 km from Bengaluru and 355 km from Chennai.

GETTING THERE

Air: The nearest airports are at Salem (38 km), Tiruchirapalli (165 km), Coimbatore (195 km) and Bengaluru (230 km).

Rail: The nearest railhead is Salem (38 km). All south-bound trains stop at Salem.

Road: Tamil Nadu Road Transport Corporation buses connect Yercaud with major cities in the state. Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation too runs regular buses from Bengaluru.

WHEN TO GO

Yercaud has a pleasant climate throughout the year. Winter temperatures range from 12°C to 25°C while summer temperatures go from 16°C to 30°C. Rainfall is 1,500–2,000 mm. April–December is the best time to visit, especially April, when coffee is in full bloom.

a tiny outcrop near Yercaud Lake that presents a bird's eye view of Salem town. Its curious name comes from colonial times, when young girls sat here to sunbathe. In keeping with the typical British propah way, there is a Gents' Seat nearby!

Yercaud town is also replete with temples, some of them mere remnants but enveloped in myth and mystery. Finally, you arrive at the 'main attraction': Yercaud Lake. Row boats and pedal boats ply on its still and clear blue water and this is a must-do. The landscaped gardens around the lake, when in full bloom, erupt in a riot of colour. Take a seat by the lake, sip on a cup of steaming coffee and gorge on a slice of pure serenity. Recommended for everyone, bar none. ✨

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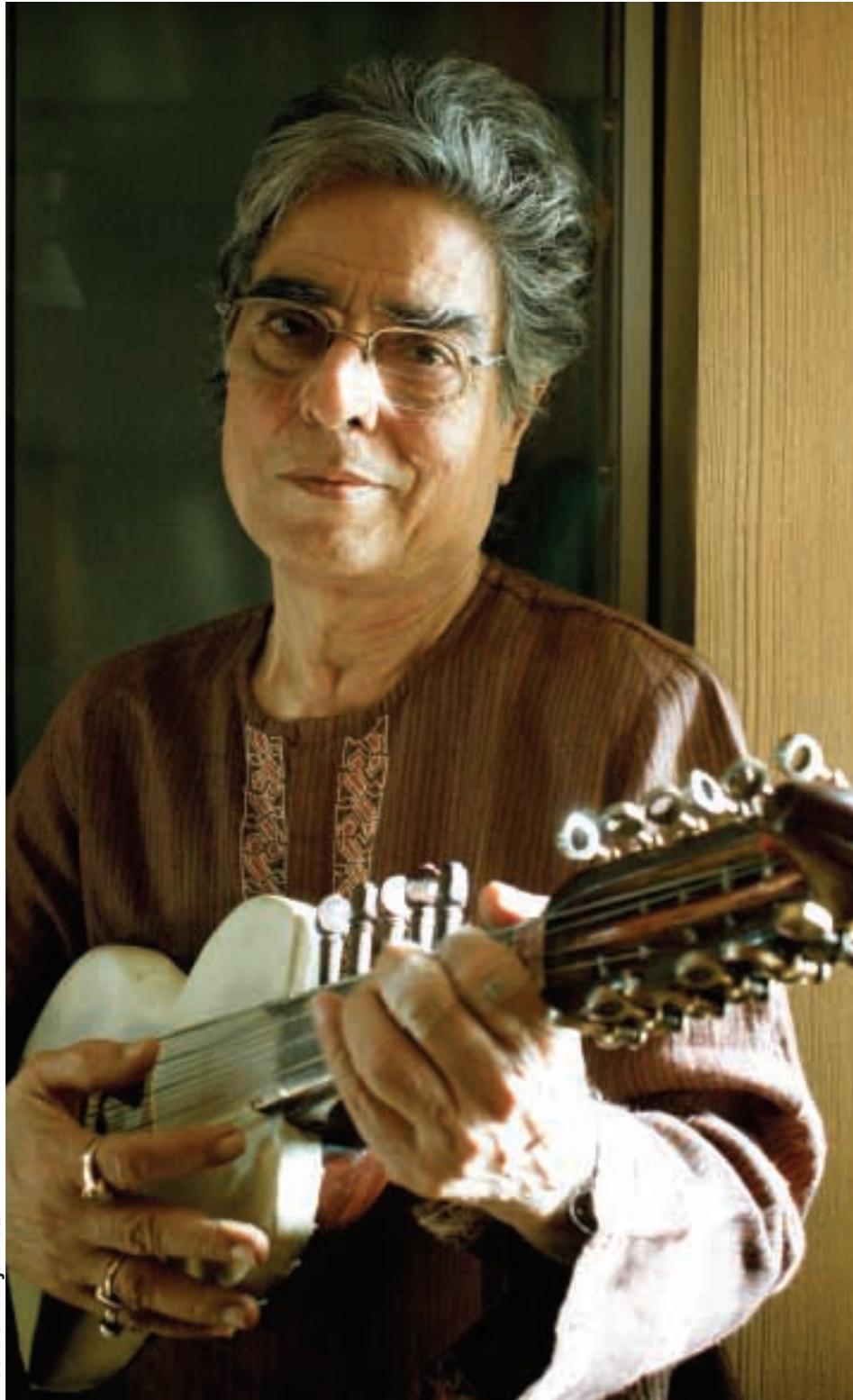
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The true VOICE

MOHINDERJIT SINGH is an idealist. "There is such purity in our traditional instruments but all we hear these days is a lot of noise that does not allow for the soul's voice to be heard," says the 73 year-old passionately. The Mumbai-based composer, singer and violinist, who created a new musical instrument Naad Yogini some years ago, believes music is not just an expression of his artistic depth but springs from his heart with a purpose—to spread the message of Sikhism as far and wide as he can. "I read a book called *Yug Purush* on the life of Guru Gobind Singh about 22 years ago and that changed the way I looked at the world and myself," he says like a devotee. In 2009, he set the 'Shabads' of Guru Granth Sahib to music in '*Deh Shiva Bar Mohey Ehai*' (Give me courage). He is now working with 35 young artists and a medley of traditional instruments on the works of Kabir, Amir Khusrau, Meera and Bulle Shah on his yet untitled album, which he hopes to release towards the end of this year. "I am not here to claim any fame," says Singh. "As long as I leave this world knowing I never let His voice fade inside me, I know I have achieved something far more invaluable than any fame or glory." Despite his humility, the low-profile performer has won praise from the most discerning quarter—composer Naushad once said of Singh: "I have heard his creation very closely. I feel even I could have learnt something from him, he knows so much."

—Rajashree Balaram



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

The family ride



HERITAGE

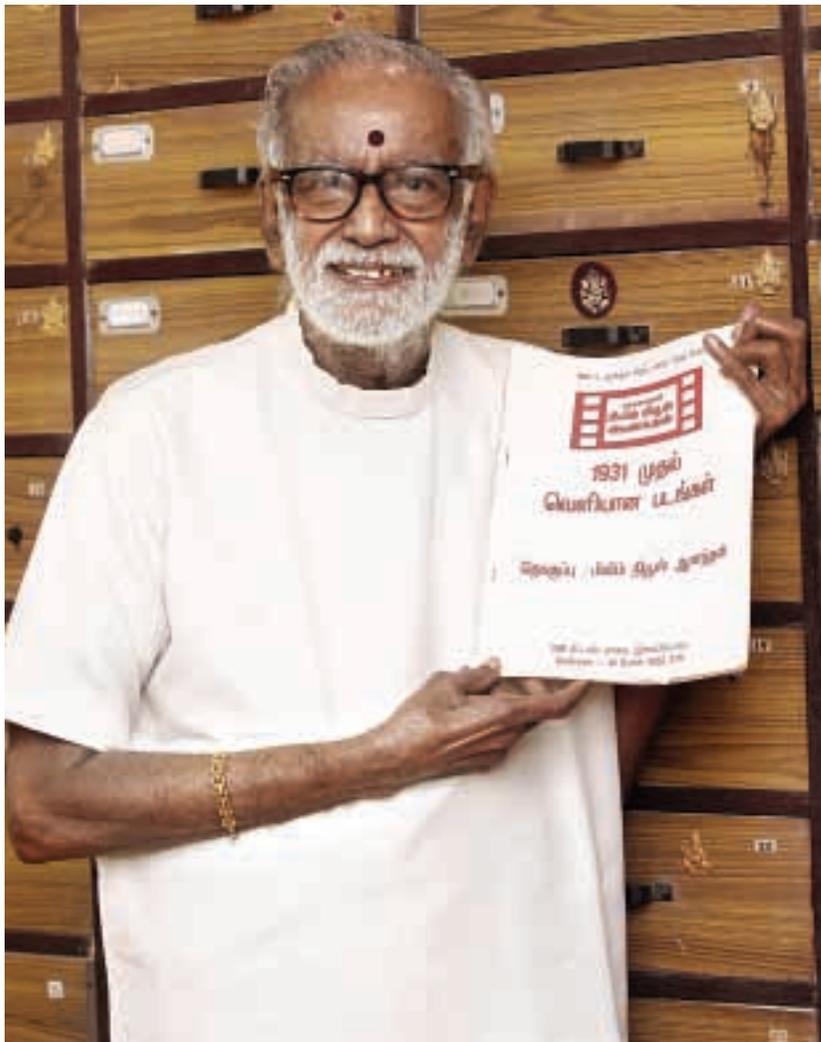
There's a reason why Karsanbhai, a 57 year-old farmer from Dholaveera in the Rann of Kutch, looks so proud standing next to his bullock cart. The cart is more than 200 years old, and has changed hands through four generations in his family. "It belongs to my great, great grandfather," he says in his gruff voice. Decorated with brass plates engraved with motifs of peacock and lion, the cart is a work of art and thanks to Karsanbhai and his three sons, it will remain a source of pride and legacy. "In the rains, we leave it leaning against the wall every day after coming back from the fields to drain the water," says Karsanbhai. The cart is regularly polished with engine oil to keep rust at bay.



Srikumar Menon

**MODERN DREAMS
OCTOGENARIAN
THEATRE LEGEND
EBRAHIM ALKAZI
SHOWCASES
HIS ENTIRE
COLLECTION OF
PHOTOGRAPHS—
SOME EVEN DATING
BACK TO 1857—AT
THE ALKAZI ART
FOUNDATION IN
NEW DELHI'S
GREATER KAILASH-
II. AND NOW,
THE FOUNDATION
WILL SET UP A
NEW ART CENTRE
IN OKHLA IN
SOUTHERN DELHI.
THE CENTRE WILL
DISPLAY MODERN
ART THAT ALKAZI
COLLECTED IN THE
1950s WHEN HE
SHARED A CLOSE
FRIENDSHIP WITH
ARTISTS FROM
THE PROGRESSIVE
ARTISTS' GROUP.**





Chennai Pix

Show MAN

EIGHTY-FOUR YEAR-OLD 'Film News' Anandan can't get enough of the movies; he has been a vital part of Tamil cinema for over six decades—first as PRO and for the past 19 years as a filmographer. Anandan chronicled Tamil film history from 1931 to 2003 in his 738-page magnum opus *Sadhanaigal Padaitha Thamizhthiraipada Varalaru* (Highlights of Tamil Cinema) comprising 1,500 pictures. The book was published in October 2003, the same year the government took over his huge collection of movie memorabilia including 4,000

CINEMA

photos, song books, books and stamps on cinema. Anandan got his wacky prefix during his early career as a still photographer when he provided stills taken on sets to Tamil film journal *Film News*. Today the Chennai-based octogenarian continues to be busy with his work on filmography for all four south Indian language films. He records details of cast, credits, censor and release date, and awards won by every movie. The information is later published in the form of a booklet for the trade circuit.

—Srinivas Chari

WALK THE TALK

The National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) in Bengaluru is conducting a special guided walk on 12 and 25 February for those interested in sculpture. The 90-minute walk will be conducted by assistant curators and introduce you to the complex history of the medium of sculpture. Alternately, the NGMA also holds tours on Wednesday and Saturday on visual arts and the history of Indian art from Mughal miniatures to the origin of the Bengal school.

If you are a Beatles fan, here's more memorabilia coming your way. John Lennon's widow Yoko Ono has handed over his letters to a UK book company for over \$ 500,000.

Part of the heap are Lennon's drawings and scribbles. Many of the letters are addressed to newspapers, record companies and fans. You will have to wait though—the book will be released by Orion Books in October 2012 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' first hit song Love me do.



Hemant Patil

WAX WORKS

Eighty-one year-old Gangadhar Tatake is proof that one is never too old to learn anything. Two years ago, the Pune-based silver learnt a rare art form—encaustic painting. ‘Encaustic’ derived from the Greek word *enkaustikos*, which means ‘to heat’, is a unique, ancient form of painting that involves the use of pigmented beeswax. It was a highly popular form of painting before oil paints took over canvases all over the world. An encaustic art surface is extremely durable because wax, the basic ingredient, is resistant to both moisture and environmental changes.

Tatake decided to learn the art when he saw some encaustic works in America. On returning to India, he learnt it online from Michael Bossom, an encaustic painter from

the UK. Two years since, he not only does encaustic paintings but also conducts workshops to create awareness. “I enjoy the whole process of melting beeswax and mixing it with raw paint,” he says enthusiastically. He keeps several implements handy when he is at work: a palette knife to transfer the wax onto the painting surface, which can be wood or canvas, and an iron, hotplate or hair dryer to get different effects of texture and gloss. “As the paint solidifies quickly, one needs to work at a rapid pace,” says Tatake, who doesn’t let limitations of the medium prevent him from experimenting—he often embeds thread and other materials in his paintings. So look around; you will discover there’s still a lot left to learn.

—Nina Dinshaw

DRAVIDIAN INVASION : WHILE WE CANNOT REWRITE HISTORY, THE TAMIL NADU STATE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (TANSCH) AIMS TO SET IT RIGHT. TANSCH HAS APPROACHED THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH TO CORRECT THE DISCREPANCY IN CHRONOLOGY THAT HAS CREPT INTO HISTORY BOOKS WHERE TAMIL CIVILISATION RUNS PARALLEL TO THE PERIOD OF BUDDHISM AND JAINISM. ACCORDING TO TANSCH, THE CHAPTER ON TAMIL CIVILISATION SHOULD FOLLOW THAT ON INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION.

The song of the Bauls

IN SEARCH OF THE *MANER MANUSH* (THE MAN OF THE HEART), THE BAULS, MYSTIC MINSTRELS FROM BENGAL, WANDER THE COUNTRYSIDE SINGING IN JOYOUS ABANDON AND PIERCING DESPAIR.

THE WORD BAUL ENCOMPASSES EVERYTHING—SONG, TRADITION AND RELIGIOUS SECT.

JIT RAY CAPTURES BAUL ARTISTS IN BOTH QUIETITUDE AND FRENZY ON HIS VISIT TO THE KENDULI MELA HELD DURING THE RECENT PAUSH SANKRANTI IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF KOLKATA





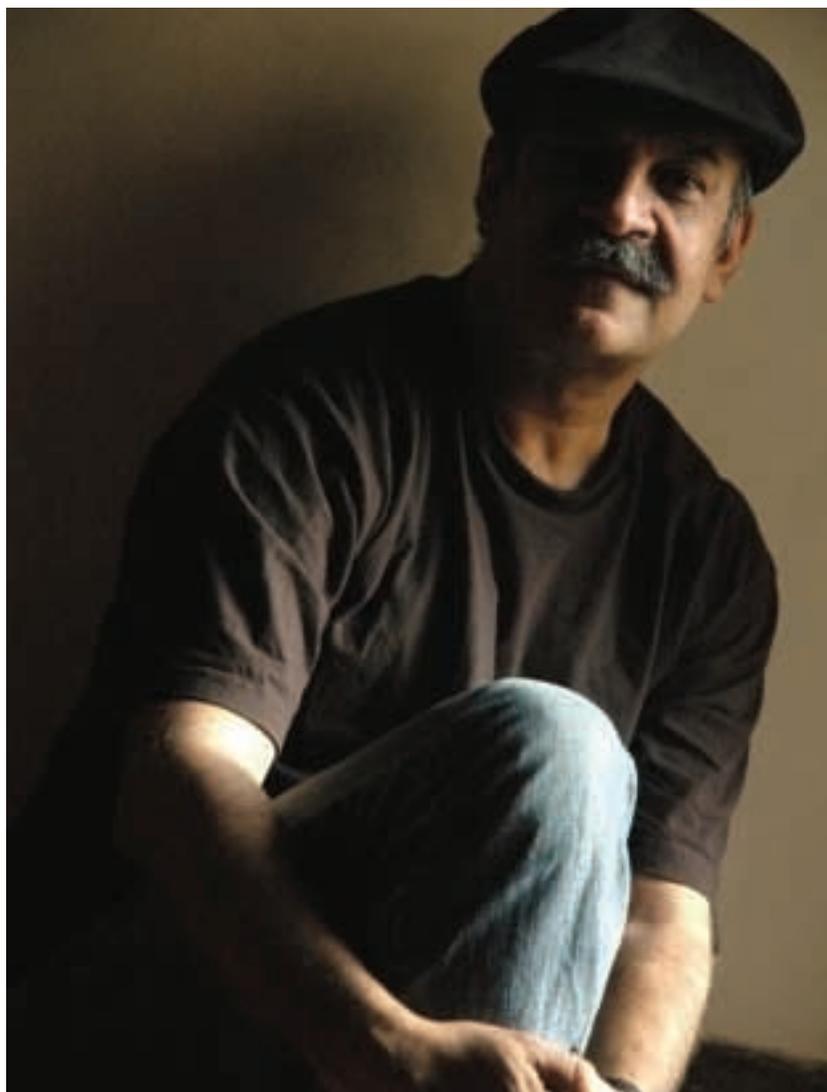
(Clockwise from top) Lakkhipada Baul comes from Kushtiya, the birthplace of Lalon Fakir, the 18th century Bengali poet; Gagan Das Baul sings and begs on the streets of Kolkata... the indefatigable singer is left without any savings after the Vaishnava temple he was constructing was hit by a cyclone last year; Baulini Kangalini is a picture of serenity amid the chaos; (opposite) Binoy Fakir from Birbhum claims he is 47, though he looks much older—Bauls regard the day they leave their house to live life as a nomad as the day they were born

Rhyme above reason

He comes from a long lineage of warriors. But 56 year-old Amit Dahiyabadshah believes poetry is the best weapon to conquer hearts and overcome differences. The founder of DelhiPoetree, a forum for aspiring poets in the capital, tells **Rajashree Balaram** why he believes there is a poet in every person

What made you come up with the idea of poetry forum?

I am the third child of a freedom fighter father and a poetry-loving mother from Haryana. I have a background in organic farming, teaching outdoor survival and skills of observation for dynamic perception. In 2005, The Senior Environment Corps - Centre in the Park, Philadelphia asked me to be their poet laureate as my writing on the environment was in resonance with their objectives. I think big cities like Delhi are growing at a rate comparable to a powerful car speeding without any coolant. Road rage, neighbourhood crime and social insecurity are warning signs of a looming problem. But these problems cannot be attributed to the government or lapses in policing alone; instead they represent a failure of the community at the level of the neighbourhood. Poetry is a great 'coolant' for the speeding engine of society. It is affordable, accessible, inclusive and far more



Shikha Khanna

efficient in bringing society together than any solution available to government or law enforcement agencies.

How do you promote poetry?

We organise regular readings across the NCR, or National Capital Region. This includes special readings for terminally ill patients; senior citizens; disturbed victims of social pressures; victims of violence; street children; colleges; and school students. We mentor novices and youngsters. I believe we are all poets but most people don't realise it. My experience shows it takes 45 minutes for anyone to write their first poem. At our workshop readings we critique each

other's work and assist young poets to get published. Poets who publish with DelhiPoetree are helped to earn as much as 40 per cent of the price of their books as long as they are willing to commit to a programme of regular readings across the NCR. We have developed a low-cost, pocket-sized affordable book of published poems. We also take poetry as a form of catharsis to victims of natural disasters, such as the recent Ladakh cloudburst. Here's one such example from Leh:

My Broken Ladakh

*My Ladakh was a beautiful crystal glass jar
it held sweet apricots, cold water, clean*

air and prayer

*Then we sought to fill it with new things
new cars, new money, new businesses,
new crops, new industry
until it overflowed and broke
and the lid of the sky came crashing down
upon my head
and took it all away*

Where do you meet?

DelhiPoetree readings have been held for six years now at Geoffreys—The Pub at The Palms Country Club, Gurgaon; India Habitat Centre; India International Centre; Cafe Coffee Day, Hauz Khas; Kunzum Travel Café; Siri Fort Auditorium; India Islamic Centre; Poetry in The Park; Vivekananda Centre; and in colleges and schools besides other cities like Udaipur, Aligarh, Lucknow, Allahabad and Varanasi.

Any plans to go nationwide?

We are trying to develop a sustainable model that can be easily replicated based on three measurable objectives: give Delhi and the NCR 30 poetry readings a month; honour 100 contemporary poets as the 'living treasure' of Delhi; and enable 100 poets to earn a taxable income from poetry alone by the year 2016.

Is poetry losing its relevance in the impatient world of SMS and tweets?

No. I admit people's attention span towards reading is diminishing because of TV and cinema. So the solution lies in writing in a language that anyone understands and writing poems that do not take a minute-and-a-half to read out, and writing poetry that can be sung.

What do you think of the SMS fiction and poetry contests coming up?

The haiku is a very brief form of poetry like the *doha* and the quatrain—and they have evolved beautifully. I guess SMS and slam poetry will do so too in some time. But it worries me when bad prose is printed out in short measure and

Dahiyabadshah is now in Leh till June 2011 to rebuild the infrastructure of the region destroyed by the cloud burst in August 2010. As the leader of the Ladakh Renewal Project, he is raising funds to build healthcare centres, schools, houses, and community centres. Donations to the Ladakh Renewal Project can be sent by wire transfer to IFSC PUNBO 456600 Account No: 456600 0100045986

passed off as 'poetry,' or abusive vulgarity as performance poetry or stand-up comedy. I don't really care for the intentional blurring of the lines between these varied forms of expression.

How does one join DelhiPoetree?

Love poetry, show up, listen, start writing and read. Get featured at a reading, get published, make some sweet money and hug yourself at the end of a long day for 'a really great day at the office'.

How easy or difficult has it been to gather poetry enthusiasts?

Poetry lovers and poets flock to our readings. However, it was not always this easy. Just one person showed up at our first reading. When I asked the invited poet to start, he replied testily, "To whom shall I read? There's no audience." I pointed out, "But there is a gentleman who has come." He was getting more exasperated: "You want me to read to one person? I'd heard you were mad, now I'm certain you are!" He left in a huff and I read out my poems for 45 minutes ending with a line about my books for sale. The one-man audience purchased two copies. He said, "I'm sorry you deserved a much better audience." I said, "Are you kidding? Tonight we have set a record; 200 per cent of the audience has bought a book of poetry!" He laughed and returned the following week with a dozen people. And we've never looked back.

Visit www.delhipoetree.com; Write to poetamitdahiya@gmail.com; call (0)9906994833 or (0)9958323256; For Dahiyabadshah's poem *The Last Will and Testament of the Tiger*, global rights of which was bought by a media house for ₹ 1 million, log onto www.ndtv.com/video/player/news/a-tribute-to-the-tiger/182024

WORLDSCAN

HOT PICKS IN BOOKSTORES OVERSEAS

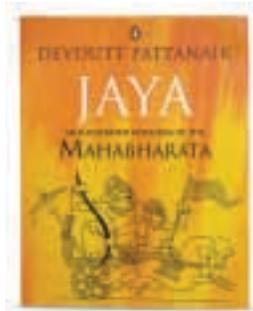
You're Looking Very Well: *The Surprising Nature of Getting Old* by Lewis Wolpert (Faber & Faber):

A distinguished development biologist and octogenarian writes with wit and wisdom about the implications of ageing and issues ranging from euthanasia to anti-ageing creams.

***Finishing the Hat* by Stephen Sondheim (Random House):**

The 80 year-old American composer and lyricist delivers a seminal retrospective of his own work—plus all his lyrics from 1954 to 1981.

QUICKWORDS



***Jaya* by Devdutt**

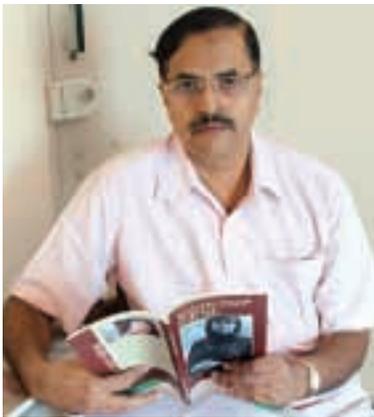
Pattanaik is a retelling of the *Mahabharata* that melds the Sanskrit version with folk variants; replete with 250 delightful drawings. Penguin; ₹ 499; 350 pages

***The Pages of My Life*,**

the English translation of the autobiography of Sindhi writer, feminist and activist **Popati Hiranandani** chronicles nostalgia, history and the story of a community in transition. Oxford University Press; ₹ 1,666; 304 pages

LANGUAGE NO BAR

Most people cannot even master one language in their lifetime, let alone make languages their passion. But **KK Gangadharan** is fluent in three Dravidian languages—Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil—and uses his linguistic edge to propagate the joy of regional literature. “Language should not be a barrier for people to enjoy different literature,” says the 62-year-old. Bengaluru-based Gangadharan has turned the lesser



Saregama...wah!

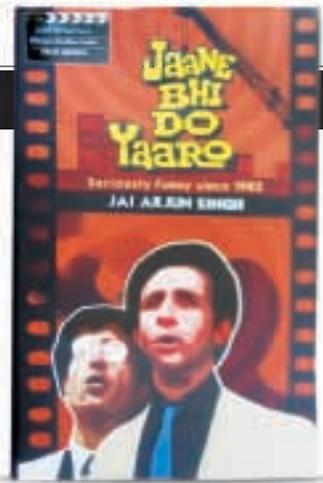
Though many of us can't get enough of old Hindi numbers, we never really spare a thought to the background musicians who added body and life to them. A new large-format book, ***The Unsung Heroes*** (Swar Alaap; ₹ 1,200), written by Mumbai-based musician **Dinesh Ghate**, businessman **Kushal Gopalka**, corporate executive **Arun Purnik** and banker **Shankar Iyer**, covers the many saxophone artists, guitar players, flautists, tabla players and percussionists who lent their creative force to some of the most memorable songs in Indian cinema. Swar Alaap is an organisation formed last year to honour background musicians.

known art of translation into his passion and has translated over 400 Malayalam short stories, four novellas and more than a thousand essays into Kannada, Tamil and English. “Most people think of translators as writers who never made it but translation is an art,” says Gangadharan earnestly. “One needs to be fiercely faithful to the original style, context and essence.”

Born in Kerala, he moved to Kabinethuve village in Coorg in his childhood. “Throughout school I always topped my exams in Kannada,” he says. “I was convinced right then that I needed to do more with the language.” His literary career began and flourished in college when he translated popular Malayalam short stories into Kannada for Kannada dailies. His first work involved the translation of legendary Communist leader E M S Namboodiripad's work into Kannada for *Odanadi* newspaper.

Gangadharan loves his job as it comes with both pride and rare privilege—he has translated the works of some of the greatest regional writers like Kamala Das, M T Vasudevan Nair, Thagazhi Shivashankara Pillai, and Vaikom Mohammad Basheer. He has also translated some of Khushwant Singh's earlier works into Kannada. A lot of his translated work has been featured in many of the leading Kannada newspapers and magazines like *Sudha*, *Kannada Prabha* and *Mayura*. His other published books include *Damayanthi* by K Kavitha; short stories by Kamala Das; and Malayalam writer Paul Zacharia's book *Bhaskarapattellarum Ente Jeevithavum*, which in its Kannada avatar is titled *Bhaskara Patelaru Matthu Nanna Badukugalu*.

—Dhanya Nair Sankar



Flashback!

Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro, one of the funniest films in Indian cinema, refuses to go stale in our minds, no matter how often we watch it. **Jai Arjun Singh's** book **JAANE BHI DO YAARO** (HarperCollins; ₹ 250; 272 pages) explores the craziness that went into its making. Female actors changed costumes discreetly without

DID YOU KNOW

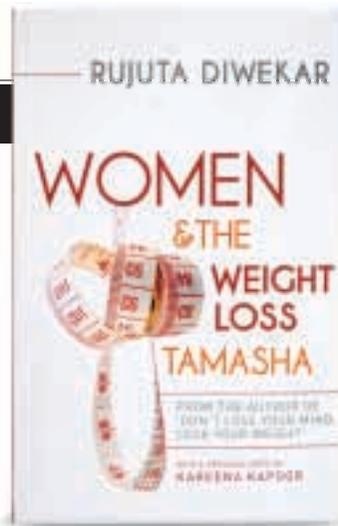
The two protagonists in the film *Sudhir* (Ravi Baswani) and *Vinod* (Naseeruddin Shah) were named after director Kundan Shah's friends Vidhu Vinod Chopra and Sudhir Mishra. Both Chopra and Mishra, two of the most distinguished directors in Bollywood today, were production controller and assistant director, respectively, for the film. Chopra also played Dushassan in the famous *Mahabharata* scene.

the luxury of a changing room; male actors bathed under garden taps; the cast and crew ate watery *dal* for every meal. The tug of ideals between theatre artists and film stars is described as interestingly as the bonhomie that bound them together. The book also includes trivia on some of today's greatest actors and directors who were struggling to find a foothold in the industry back then. If you loved the movie, you'll adore this book.

—Rajashree Balaram

Hormonally vibrant

Twenty and on a (fad) diet? Thirty and expecting? Forty and hypothyroid? Fifty and 'battling' menopause? Sixty and diabetic? **Rujuta Diwekar's WOMEN & THE WEIGHT LOSS TAMASHA** (Westland; ₹ 200, 274 pages,) will demystify inches and calories in every aspect: biologically, metabolically, scientifically and medically. With an accessible and friendly approach, Diwekar explains the role of glands, hormones, enzymes and essential amino acids in our body. "Reassure and support your glands", is her primary advice. Do it with enough carbohydrates (fashionably called 'carbs'), with ample calories, enough sleep and activities that make you happy, for when you smile your cells and neurons smile as well. And don't follow mythical advice like 'don't have *gobi*, peanuts and soya if you are hypothyroid'. According to



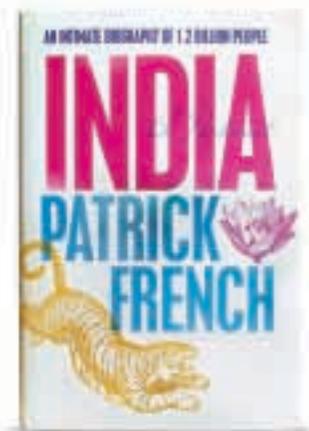
Diwekar, you can't have them raw—so *paratha*, *chikki*, and soya milk are perfectly fine and essential. The book answers several other questions as well. Why can't you eat until 46 minutes after your morning thyroid pill? Why has Mother Nature ensured that women menopause? (Diwekar's great-grandmother had 17 children and stopped only after menopause.) Why do women live with their mothers for 40 days before they come back to family life? And how do our relationships affect our health? So if you don't want your "ovaries to become worries", read *The Weight Loss Tamasha*. One final

YOU
MAY
ALSO
LIKE

Aparna Santhanam's *Skin Deep - An Inside Out Approach to Looking Good Naturally!* How stable and staple is your rice? Or how green your spinach? Find your answers and more in this book that encloses a long list of kitchen essentials—"eggceptional egg; grape's colour power; go-green lettuce, sunny lemon; shaken and stirred olives; angelic fruit papaya; nutty walnuts; pure and white yogurt"—their 'am to pm' use for skin routines, recipes and use of vitamins and minerals. Perfect mid-afternoon reading.

thing: If you take medicines because your body needs them, you and your doctor are correct; but you are with a wrong doctor if he/she doesn't work on lifestyle changes to take you off that drug.

—Meeta Bhatti



The Englishman in India

Patrick French sifted through 585 books, websites, and articles and interviewed hundreds of people to write his literary labour of love. **INDIA: A PORTRAIT** (Allen Lane-Penguin; ₹ 699; 435 pages), which may be catalogued under non-fiction, packs as much drama and pace as some of the most engaging pulp fiction would. Truth be told,

French doesn't really tell us something we didn't know; but his strength lies in his ability to challenge the truth behind what we thought we knew. Some chapters are more riveting than others. For instance, his sensitive—and funny—account of caste dynamics in North and South India (believe it or not, a village in Tamil Nadu was almost torn asunder over speculations about the caste of a cow!); his description of UP chief minister Mayawati's hideous memorial to herself; and his investigative skills: Can one imagine Indira Gandhi sniffing in helplessness? She did; when Maneka walked out with precious grandson Varun in tow. French's take on political and corporate figures are as fascinating as his understanding of homosexuality, innovation and the many babas—and

babies—of India. And even if it sounds like too much for one book, strangely, one never feels out of breath.

—Rajashree Balaram

BOOK
BITES

Sanjay [Gandhi], obsessed by speed, was apprenticed to Rolls Royce in England, where his delinquent tendencies quickly alienated his employers. Asked to account for one of a series of mistakes, he told his supervisor: 'You people mucked up my country for 300 years, so what's the big deal if I muck up Rolls-Royce?'

NAPPY HAPPY



Babysitting your grandchild could get you a permanent place in world history. If that sounds preposterous, consider the story behind Pampers, the world's leading disposable diaper brand that turns 50 this year: it was while babysitting his grandchild that Victor Mills, an American chemical engineer working with Procter & Gamble, wondered if there was a better, smarter way to change the child's nappy.

Mills slaved over his idea at the P&G lab and went on to create a disposable diaper that was absorbent, prevented leaks, and kept babies dry. As there was no other product like it, supermarkets were first baffled over the right place to showcase it. In its early years, the product could be found everywhere from the food aisles to the paper products shelves and even the drugs section. Though young parents initially reserved the brand for 'special occasions' such as travel or leaving the child with a babysitter, in less than a decade after its launch, the cloth diaper industry folded up thanks to Pampers. The brand has consistently innovated on its features over the years, introducing absorbent gels, elastic leg gathers, refastening tabs, and special fibres for better moisture absorption. No child's play, this.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: FEBRUARY 1961

- On 1 February, the US launched its first test of Minute-man 1, an international ballistic missile. The rocket lifted from Cape Canaveral and travelled 4,000 miles in less than 15 minutes to a target in the Atlantic Ocean.
- On 10 February, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, 90,800 people became the largest cricket crowd to attend the test match between Australia and West Indies.
- On 25 February, the last public trams in Sydney ceased operation, bringing to an end the South Hemisphere's largest tramway network.
- On 26 February, Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) in Delhi was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In its earlier avatar, the MAMC campus used to be the Delhi Jail.

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WOULD YOU FIND
SOMEONE ABOVE
55 YEARS
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IN TUNE WITH YOU?

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Life and beyond

You immortality rests in your work and your deeds, says **Soyen Shaku**

The problem of immortality has never troubled Buddhists, to speak frankly. When we were first asked about it, we did not know exactly how to grapple with it, for Buddhists are used to looking at the matter from a totally different point of view. Their first effort is to comprehend the whole, leaving the details behind. They first want to grasp that which is changeless, is above the transiency of phenomenality. When this is accomplished, they find that they themselves are part and parcel of that imperishable something. Though mortal as individual, particular beings, they are a manifestation of the Great All, and as such they will most assuredly survive all forms of change and transformation. They have then nothing to trouble themselves concerning soul or no-soul and much less with its immortality. All that they have to do is to come to a clear consciousness of the reason of the universe and to make its realisation in them as perfect as they can. Whether they live or not after the expiration of their physical lives does not concern them at all.

If, in spite of all this, you feel somehow inconsolable on account of nothing concrete surviving after you but cold ashes and crumbling bones, I would give you the immortality of work (karma) instead of the immortality of the soul. Or we might say that what you wish to understand by the soul does not exist in the ego-entity but in the work you do, in the sentiment you feel, in the thought you think, and if all these are in accordance with 'thy will' which disposes, they will be what is left after you, that is to say, you will forever live in them. When we stand before a canvas painted by a great



We have not come on earth, each singly and separately, to assert only our individuality; but our fates are most solidly linked to our ancestors and their civilisation

painter, do we not feel the presence of the artist, as his ideas and feelings are embodied in it? Cannot we say that the artist is still living in his work? We do not know whether his soul has gone up to the heavens and is enjoying celestial happiness, but we do know for certain that he is still living among ourselves and inspiring us to higher ideals of life.

Before concluding, there is one thing I should like to ask the believers in a materialistic, individual soul and its immortality; that is, what do you want to do up in heaven when you are ushered in there after you have finished

your earthly career? Is it your wish to sit quietly beside your Father and among the host of celestial beings and passively enjoy inexpressible blessings? If this is your wish for individual immortality, I fail to see the purpose and significance of this life on earth. The history of civilisation seems to lose its purport when you are away from here. Buddhists think otherwise than Christians in this respect. We consider our existence here below as a sort of link in the eternal chain of the divine revelation in the universe. We have not come on earth, each singly and separately, to assert only our individuality; but our fates are most solidly linked to our ancestors and their civilisation as well as to our successors and their destiny. What we are today is due to the karma of our predecessors and at the same time Will determine the fates of posterity. If we fail to enrich and ennoble our spiritual inheritance which originally came from the hand of the Dharmakaya, we entirely ignore the meaning of the history of humanity; we altogether disregard our responsibility to our forefathers and grandchildren.

We must not go to heaven and selfishly enjoy our individual immortality. On the contrary, we must abide where we are, and cooperate with one another for the ennoblement and enrichment of our earthly life. We must not be ungrateful for what our ancestors did for us, nor must we be inconsiderate of the welfare and enlightenment of coming generations. We must behave nobly, we must think rationally, we must feel unselfishly, and let us live in this karma which endureth forever, even after the dissolution of this physical existence.

Excerpted from Zen for Americans (1906) by Soyen Shaku, the first Zen Buddhist monk to preach in the US

HE-VAGE

n. A man's chest, especially when revealed by an unbuttoned shirt. Also: **hevage**. [Blend of *he* and *cleavage*].

Example: In what must appear to be the strangest manoeuvre in the age-old battle of the sexes, men, after centuries of contemplating the feminine cleavage with a mixture of lust, envy, and aesthetic detachment, have finally decided enough is enough, and gotten themselves their own cleavage—a male cleavage—best showcased through the **he-vage** T-shirt.

—Lhendup Bhutia, “The murse code”, DNA, 26 September 2010

“Beauty is
eternity
gazing at itself
in a mirror.”

—Lebanese-American poet
Khalil Gibran

civilogue

n. A civil dialogue, particularly one in which the participants avoid insults, personal attacks, and negative generalisations. [Blend of *civil* and *dialogue*.]

Example: Some media outlets have decided they've had enough of the endless juvenile trolling and hate-mongering, and have either adopted a stricter moderation policy (such as *Politics Daily's* calling for a **civilogue**) or forced would-be commenters to fill out forms supplying information that would make it easier to track their identities and ban them if they run afoul of the site's rules.

—Matt Zoller Seitz, “Why I like vicious, anonymous online comments”, 3 August 2010

motor-homeless

adj. Relating to a person who is homeless except for a motor home or similar RV. Also: **motor homeless**.

Example: Welcome to Venice Beach, California, where tensions are rising between homeowners and the **motor-homeless** who take over entire streets living out of campers, vans, buses, trucks and RVs.

—William La Jeunesse, “Homeowners vs. motor-homeless” (video), Fox News, 12 August 2010

FILMANTHROPY

n. Moviemaking that aims to shed light on and raise money for a cause or charity.

Example: Leonsis, for now, has curtailed his work in feature films. Producing documentaries on such serious subjects as the Japanese destruction of Nanking and a national soccer programme for the homeless, he coined the word, **filmanthropy**, which he described as “shedding light on a big issue” while raising money for charity.

—Bob Cohn, “Capitals owner eyes own compelling event”, Pittsburgh Tribune Review, 26 December 2010

nanobreak

n. A brief vacation, particularly one that includes just one night away from home. Also: nano-break.

Example: Anticipating this newly emerging travel trend, Hotels.com has planned special discounts on hotels in the Asia-Pacific, Americas and Europe from the year's end until the middle of February, a period that includes the New Year's Day and Lunar New Year holidays, to allow Korean travellers to enjoy **nanobreaks** more easily.

—Lee Hyo-sik, “Nanobreaks new tourism trend in S. Korea”, Korea Times, 23 December 2010

aftercrimes

n. A pattern of crimes that occurs in the wake of an initial crime.

Example: This year, the mathematician George Mohler showed that what holds for earthquakes also holds true for crime: not only does an initial crime beget future offenses, but these **aftercrimes** also tend to occur according to a predictable distribution in time and space.

—Clay Risen, “Aftercrimes”, The New York Times Magazine, 19 December 2010

flash crash

n. An extremely rapid decline in the stock market.

Example: While individual investors have yanked more money out of US stock mutual funds than they put in every week since the scary one-day **flash crash** 29 weeks ago, the pace of withdrawals is slowing.

—Adam Shell, “Some small investors buying stocks again”, USA Today, 29 November 2010

99er

n. A US citizen who has been unemployed for at least 99 weeks and so is no longer eligible to receive unemployment benefits. Also: **99'er**.

Example: Even as she spends 40 to 55 hours a week looking for work, she’s founded a swelling national grassroots movement to aid people like her: the so-called **99ers**. Named for the maximum number of weeks the jobless can now collect unemployment insurance (UI), these long-term jobless are clamouring for faster job creation and extended jobless benefits.

—Margaret Price, “When unemployment extensions end, a movement rises: the 99ers”, The Christian Science Monitor, 4 November 2010

Chindonesia

n. China, India, and Indonesia taken together, particularly their economies and trade relationships. [Blend of *China*, *India*, and *Indonesia*.]

Example: The increasing weight of China in every market is a global trend, but growing Chinese, as well as Indian, demand is making an especially big impact in Indonesia. Nick Cashmore of the Jakarta office of CLSA, an investment bank, has coined a new term to describe this symbiotic relationship: **Chindonesia**.

—“More than a single swallow: The rise of Chindonesia”, The Economist, 10 September 2009

“ I see when men love women. They give them but a little of their lives. But women when they love give everything.

—Irish writer Oscar Wilde

sloppy payer

n. A person who is careless about paying bills and repaying debts.

Example: By contrast, there are **sloppy payers**, who pay only some bills on time; abusers, who are defiant about paying; and distressed borrowers, who simply do not have the means to pay.

—Eric Dash, “Risky borrowers find credit again, at a price”, The New York Times, 12 December 2010



CELESTIAL SHUFFLE

If you were born between 20 November and December 19, you are no longer a Sagittarian as you had believed all your life. Your sun sign is now Ophiuchus (pronounced o-phew-cuss). Ancient Babylonians plotted the zodiac signs on the basis of the sun's placement in the constellation circuit on the day a person was born. But thousands of years since, the moon's gravitational pull has made the earth shift on its axis and created a one-month shift in the stars' alignment. To reconfigure the zodiac calendar, astronomers have recommended moving all star signs back one month to accommodate the 13th star sign Ophiuchus. So if your sun sign was Cancer so far, you are now a Gemini. Sigh!

“People neglect their renal health. They fail to realise that a healthy kidney is as important as a healthy heart”

P Srinivas, 70, and P Sriram, 68, Bengaluru, for helping the needy get access to a kidney



Prasad Durga

Three decades ago, when a close friend slipped into a coma following kidney failure, **P Srinivas** and **P Sriram** were motivated to set up the Bangalore Kidney Foundation (BKF), Bengaluru's first exclusive medical facility for people with kidney ailments. The two brothers still remember the helplessness they experienced while searching for a dialysis centre in the city as their friend struggled for his life. “Ultimately, we took him to Vellore in Tamil Nadu and then to Mumbai for follow-ups,” says Srinivas. Though their friend survived, Srinivas and Sriram realised the dire need for a dialysis centre in Bengaluru. Pooling in their funds—they run a copper foundry business—the two set up BKF. Now in its 32nd year, BKF not only provides dialysis facilities, but addresses almost every kidney problem and even conducts

transplants. When they started out, they had only two dialysis machines; today they have over 25. Of the 80-100 patients who walk in everyday, most are hawkers, sweepers, destitutes and others below the poverty line. Charges are comparatively nominal: a dialysis session costs ₹ 500, a bed in the intensive care unit, ₹ 1,500, and one in the general ward, ₹ 250. Every month, the centre conducts 150 dialysis sessions free of charge and patients are also offered free dietary counselling. While noted nephrologist Dr N C Talwalkar helped set up the centre, today BKF has an efficient team of doctors, renal specialists and counsellors on board. Apart from Srinivas and Sriram, seven other trustees help garner donations. The two silvers now aim to set up a well-equipped nephrology centre for the poor. As Sriram says, “We want to make quality renal care a reality.”

—Dhanya Nair Sankar

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