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STORYTELLER

Director Shyam Benegal deconstructs cinema and life

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL Three achievers excel at 80

FOOTSTEPS Sharanya Chandran dances to her mother Geeta's tune

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Taking WING

Spring is in the air.

New hope, fresh beginnings, myriad colours, it is a season of renewal—in more ways than one. The other day, I read that British filmmaker Matthew Vaughn has silver on his mind. His latest venture The Golden Age will feature a team of superheroes at a retirement home who have hung up their capes, only to be forced back into action to clean up the mess created by the younger generation. Based on a soon-to-release comic book written by British TV chat show host Jonathan Ross, the title is inspired by the era of Superman and Batman. Media reports suggest Vaughn is trying to convince screen legends like Clint Eastwood, Jack Nicholson and Warren Beatty to sign up for the film, which promises to have lots of drama, and even more action.

In a global film industry that is disturbingly ageist, with a sell-by date for both female and male actors, this is incredibly good news. Even more encouraging is the fact that a big-ticket director and producer like Vaughn, who has made his fortune making teen flicks, has embraced the project—and his belief that audiences want to see silver actors in a hitherto youth-exclusive genre. As he said to reporters, "You have these great star names and they're mainly playing supporting roles now. I want to give them the lead again and let them have some fun."

Call it fun, or reinvention, there's no time like the present for it. The International Council on Active Ageing's trend report (see 'Orbit') predicts that silvers are transforming existing perceptions of ageing. They are embracing more physical and mental activity; becoming more proactive about their physical and financial wellness; and giving back to the environment and community as volunteers.

Indeed, there are many routes to the destination called happiness. Find your own—and watch yourself fly; superhero or not!

ina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age-March 2011 Volume 7 Issue 10

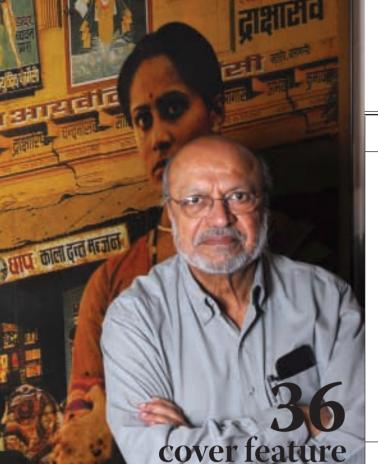
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Shyam Benegal, photographed by Sanjiv Valsan

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FLIGHT OF IMAGINATION

Aeromodeller Ashok Bhole takes you on a miniature flight

THE LOST CITY

Colonel Nirmal Mahajan rues the changes in his beloved Dehradun

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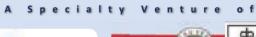
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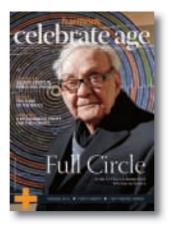
column

It was simple coincidence that before writing the brief to this month's magazine, I picked up Jayanti Ranganathan's fiction in Hindi, Auratein Roti Nahin (Women Don't Cry). Three women-two in their 30s and one nearing 50-revel in Ranganathan's words. They have cried their share of tears, have suffered their and others' share of suffering, and have finally pulled themselves together. They have names that are of no immediate importance. What's important is that they have finally decided not to care about relationships, society and taboos. March is the month of women every age; it's the month of colours as well. To celebrate, Harmony has packaged views and visions of some women who-like each one of uscould well have the strength of a hundred armies ('Steel Magnolias'). As feminist Vrinda Nabar says in her column, "The Goddess in You", they have "simply drawn on accumulated inner reserves as they grow older"; they don't cry.

It's also a simple coincidence that the person on the cover this month is a feminist. Shyam Benegal, the legendary maker of classics like Ankur, Nishant, Manthan and Bhumika, believes men and women are equal—not competitively but complementarily. His protagonists, Shabana Azmi and the late Smita Patil, were campaigners of women's issues in their own right, further strengthening the cause.

This month we also celebrate the installation of Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib's bust in his haveli in Delhi; the mother-daughter synergy of dancers Geeta and Sharanya Chandran; Meleth Devassy Ouseph's century-long life; and Holi in Santiniketan. It's not the time for tears. At *Harmony*, it never is.

—Meeta Bhatti



I am writing to thank you for the nice article 'Wax Works' ('Etcetera') in the February 2011 issue of Harmony - Celebrate Age. Mr Gangadhar Tatake, the subject of the article, is my uncle and we kids have been intrigued by all the artistic work he does since childhood. We do encourage him as much as we can but recognition from a reputed magazine makes a big difference. The efforts by *Harmony* are definitely having a positive impact on seniors in India. We now hope to help uncle hold an exhibition similar to the one in Pune at Thane Kala Bhayan in the next few months.

Sachin Via email

eartiest congratulations for The January 2011 issue of Harmony - Celebrate Age; you have certainly begun the year on a highly positive note. I especially appreciated the write-ups by confident and enterprising silvers defying age, ailments and calamities in 'Your Space'; the feature "Clean-up Drive' on octogenarian Maj Gen (retd) S C N Jatar of Pune for his vigorous fight using the Right to Information Act; the inspiring and encouraging messages from celebrities in your cover feature "1.1.11"; and the ennobling and creditable deeds by bereaved families of young martyrs who sacrificed their lives for our country ("The Legacy of the Brave"). I salute them all.

Kusum Gokarn Pune

hank you for keeping the 'Your Space' column open to budding writers like me. In future, I hope you will offer some small prize money for featured articles, like some other magazines. This will motivate people to write more often. As you know, writing is akin to therapy—jails in Ahmedabad have actually started a magazine for prisoners to give vent to all their pent-up emotions.

Nita B Idnani Ahmedabad

CONTRIBUTOR



In 'At Large', Achala Sharma funnels the despair of millions of people at the recent closure of the BBC Hindi Radio Service. Former head of the service, she recollects defining moments that illustrate its massive reach and impact in India. The 58 year-old, who joined BBC Hindi Service, London, as a producer in 1987. went on to helm the service from 1997 to 2008. She has received the Asia Pacific Broadcasting Union Award for her radio programme, Raiiv Gandhi Assassinated; the World Hindi Honour for contribution in broadcasting awarded at the 7th World Hindi Conference held at Suriname: and the Padmanand Sahitya Samman by Katha UK for two collections of radio plays. She has also authored three collections of short stories, Bardashta Bahar, Sookha Hua Samudra and Madhyantar, and two collections of radio plays, Jarein and Passport. Sharma lives in London.

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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Materials for dental restoration swings around many options based on which your dentist takes a decision. The first option is the popular 'Metal Restorations' evidently made of metals. The very use of metals in its manufacturing gives away the aesthetics and physical properties and 'metal' by its nature is bound to get perforation because of metal erosion or aggravates allergy.

The second option available is called PFM Porcelain Fused on Metal using ceramic and metals otherwise known as partial ceramic replacements. Porcelain Fused on Metal are made of metal from inside and given a ceramic-like finish on its outer surface. Over a period of time when the ceramic coating outside the metal tends to give way or chip off the worries begin and gets worse with time.

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ctive ageing has always been a mantra for Harmony for Silvers Foundation. This imperative finds an echo in the work of the International Council on Active Ageing (ICAA), a US-based organisation that supports professionals who develop wellness organisations and services for people over 50. "We're looking at a huge market that, in effect, embraces people ages 50 to 100 and beyond," says Colin Milner, CEO of ICAA, in a media release. "While there's bound to be some segmentation, certain values, principles and socioeconomic forces are converging to the point where we can make some predictions for the market as a whole." Here are the top 10 trends for the new decade in North America, as identified by ICAA:

More wellness programmes: Over 77 per cent of respondents to a recent ICAA survey said they plan to expand their wellness activities.

More wellness professionals: Among organisations with wellness programmes, 27 per cent plan to add more staff, like exercise physiologists, sports medicine professionals, chiropractors, orthopaedists, naturopaths, and physical therapists.

Convergence of rehabilitation and wellness: After the common cold. sports injuries are the No. 2 reason 'young' silvers visit their doctors. The focus here is to prevent functional decline and restore optimal function.

Rejection of stereotypes of ageing: We will witness greater diversity in portrayals of ageing, greater achievements by older adults and a change of perception of what 'ageing' means.

Increase in energy-boosting solutions: On the rise will be energybuilding exercises to chronic health issue support services.

Redefinition of 'retirement': Organisations will provide fitness,

health management and wellness programmes to enhance productivity.

Technology: We'll see everything from immersive games for lifelong learning and participation in social causes to sophisticated brain games, assistive devices and innovative technologies in support of ageing in place.

Reengineering of industries: Watch out for an upsurge in wellness, housing, parks and recreation projects backed by innovative design.

Going green: Outdoor activities and eco-tourism will flourish, with more silver participation in 'green teams'.

More age-friendly cities: What began as an initiative by the World Health Organization in 2007 has now trickled down to cities across the US. Canada, Europe, Latin America, and beyond, and will continue to grow.





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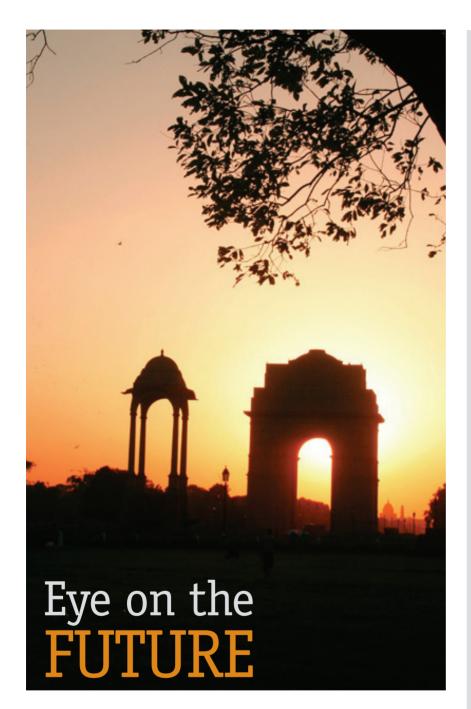




TAKING ROOT

umbai's Nana Nani Foundation (NNF) has major plans for the days—and years—ahead. After helping to establish 18 Nana Nani Parks, intended exclusively for silvers across Mumbai, it is now developing a 'Nakshatra Garden' at the Girgaum Nana Nani Park in southern Mumbai. The garden will feature trees to represent the 27 constellations, giving elders the opportunity to meditate under the tree that represents their birth constellation. The

garden is expected to be complete by October 2011. Other initiatives on the anvil include the establishment of Nana Nani Parks for silvers in Pune. Thane and Nasik and even a 'Virtual Nana-Nani Park'. Through this, NNF aims to reach out to silvers via the Internet, accompanied by a real-time membership card that will offer discounts at grocery stores, chemist shops, hospitals, shopping malls and tourism companies. This project is expected to kick off in early 2012.



n February, over 1,500 silvers in Delhi received the Sewa Privilege Card from Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Intended to be part of a holistic care programme for elders in the capital to reduce disease-related morbidity and mortality, the scheme was devised by hospital Sharp Sight Medfort in association with the Confederation of Senior Citizens' Associations of Delhi to provide priority and discounted eye care. "This is a first-of-its-kind activity that will ensure that the eye care needs of elderly are looked after properly," Dikshit announced at the launch. Further, she assured that the government and civil society will take the initiative forward, offering more schemes to improve overall health, and include more silvers in its ambit.



COUNTER OFFER

The Imphal branch of the State Bank of India has opened a special transaction counter for pensioners and senior citizens at its head office at M G Avenue.

OF SHOPLIFTERS ARRESTED IN JAPAN IN 2010 WERE OVER THE AGE OF 65. IN AN ANNUAL REPORT, THE NATIONAL **POLICE AGENCY SAID 27,362 PENSIONERS WERE ARRESTED** FOR SHOPLIFTING IN 2010—ALMOST **EOUALLING TEENAGERS.** MOST OF THEM STOLE FOOD OR **CLOTHES RATHER** THAN LUXURY **ITEMS. THE POLICE ALSO BELIEVE PENSIONERS ARE** SHOPLIFTING NOT **JUST FOR FINANCIAL REASONS BUT ALSO OUT OF A SENSE OF ISOLATION.**



The trampoline lift



eck deep in sagging skin? Traditionally, the only solution would be a time-consuming, and invasive, surgical lift. But now, American cosmetic surgeon Dr Gregory Mueller has devised an alternative to tighten neck skin: the trampoline lift. As British newspaper *The Daily Mail* reports, the procedure, usually performed under local anaesthesia, involves making a series of pinpricks across the jaw line. A thin surgical thread (or suture) is weaved through these tiny holes, before being tied together like a shoelace. This tightens loose skin around the neck and chin, making it taut, like the stretching of a trampoline. The best part: the whole thing takes only an hour. "If you compare it to a full-on neck lift, which is an aggressive surgery with increased risks of nerve damage, numbness and blood clots, not to mention the three months needed to recuperate, this is a far more attractive option," explains Mueller. "You have minimal incisions, the possibility of infection is low and recovery time in most cases is just a week." At a cost of about \$ 5,600/£ 3,500 (about ₹ 260,000), the trampoline lift is now available in the US and the UK. Check out harleystreetplasticsurgery.info for more information.

75% OF WOMEN OVER THE AGE OF 50 IN THE UK CONTINUE TO WEAR HIGH HEELS, ACCORDING TO A SURVEY COMMISSIONED BY BRITISH MAGAZINE SAGA.



THE LATEST WEAPON IN THE **BATTLE** against ageing is a sugar called rhamnose. Found in an Amazonian vine called uncaria or cat's claw and in the sap of the silver birch, it is claimed to trick your skin cells into pumping out higher levels of collagen and is the central ingredient of LiftActive Derm Source, the latest offering by L'Oreal under its Vichy label. According to the company, regular use (once a day for eight weeks) will plump up the skin and reduce the depth of wrinkles up to 20 per cent. "For us this is a breakthrough because we have found a compound that can produce a direct effect on the cells that produce collagen," says Julie McManus, the company's head of scientific affairs. "Other collagen-stimulating creams work in a relatively untargeted manner. We've shown that we're having an effect exactly where we want it." The cream, which is yet to be launched in India, is available across the UK, Europe and the US. The price per pot: £ 27 (about ₹ 2,000).



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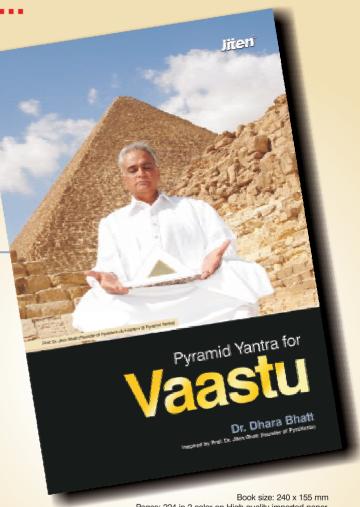


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Second SIGHT

M S Raju returns the joy of reading and writing to the visually impaired with his Camera Mouse. **Dhanya Nair Sankar** meets the Visakhapatnam-based silver innovator

t the centre of Computer and Electronics for the Blind in Hyderabad, a senior citizen is seated at a computer screen, clutching a mouse that weighs less than 100 gm. He rolls it over a sheet of printed paper although he's neither scrolling through an email nor using the paper as a makeshift mouse pad. His eyes are focused on a monitor, where he scans the print typed on the paper-now magnified. The palm-size Camera Mouse is his gateway to the written word, a window that seemed to shut when his vision deteriorated with age.

Opening the shutters once again is M S Raju. 77. An alumnus of IIT-Kharagpur, Raju's charitable organisation, VisionAid, was selected by the Ministry of Science and Technology for a prototype of the Camera Mouse in 2006 with a grant of ₹ 50,000. Raju, who developed the device under VisionAid's Technopreneur Promotion Programme, began work in 2007. He was mass-producing it in less than a year, selling over 3,000 pieces to date.

"Even a partially blind person can read with this device," says Raju. The Camera Mouse, which was exhibited at the Genpact Nasscom Social Innovation Honours in Mumbai in February this year, was also exhibited at the Indian Science Congress in 2008.



It magnifies the written word up to 20 times and can be adjusted for magnification, illumination and contrast. It weighs less than 100 gm, consumes as little as 10 watt of power and has a rugged body. It connects to both a TV screen and computer monitor. The best part: it can be used for both reading and writing. Built-in illumination allows use in a darkened room and its high-tech CMOS camera performs virtual magic for individuals with impaired vision. "After connecting it, one merely has to scroll over the object that is to be read," says Raju. "It captures an image of the object and displays it on the monitor."

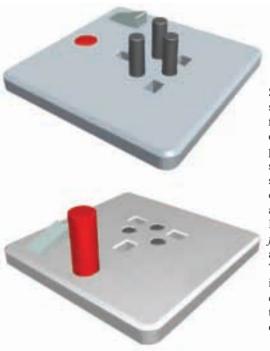
"At our centre, we get many elders who are visually impaired," explains C H Somuraji, director of Computer and Electronics for the Blind, an NGO that trains the visually challenged with assistive devices and supplies hardware and software for them. "They want to stay independent and continue with leisure reading and serious reading like bank documents and share certificates, etc. They respond wonderfully to the Camera Mouse after training for a month or two. They feel empowered as they can read 'the fine print' before taking decisions."

Unlike scanners and web cams, the Computer Mouse does not distort the quality of the image it captures on screen. It also comes with an illuminated writing pad underneath that can be used to type. And why is it called a 'camera' mouse? "It uses a high-quality miniature movie camera that provides a video feed to the monitor. The power unit has a circuit that adjusts itself to the supply and maintains sharpness and brightness. As it works on low-voltage DC, it is safe for hand-held use," explains Raju, who set up VisionAid in 2006 to train people with low vision to use the computer.

VisionAid assists all types of individuals whose vision cannot be improved by medicine, surgery or spectacles with various assistive devices. "There are three methods to enhance visual information going into the brain. The Camera Mouse utilises illumination, magnification and contrast to provide good quality and large print on screen," adds Raju, who worked with leading telecom companies after graduation. He has been teaching at institutions like XLRI and IIT-Kharagpur even after he retired in 2004.

The Camera Mouse is not sold in retail stores but is available via mail order. Pegged at ₹ 2,500, it comes with a 12-month warranty. "Comparable imported devices cost at least 10 times more," remarks Raju.

Silvers interested in the device can contact Raju on 09849498800.



In, out

Simple problems need, well, simple solutions. Here's one: an eject button for silvers with osteoarthritis who experience difficulty unplugging **power cords.** Designed by UK design student Glen Crombie, the easily installable product, which ejects a standard plug from a socket at the touch of a button, won first prize at the Future Perfect Company (www.thefutureperfectcompany.com) design competition at Collyers College in Horsham, UK. The contest asked students "to create innovative, attractive and aspirational designs that allow people to continue to live enjoyable, active and independent lives as they get older".

Sensing your needs

Silvers who want to live independently, for longer, just got a shot in the arm. A new sensor promises to automatically detect when an elder is in an emergency situation and inform a trusted person. Under develop-

ment by researchers at the Fraunhofer Institute for Experimental Software Engineering IESE in Kaiserslautern, Germany, the system is called ProAssist4Life, short for 'Proactive Assistance for Critical Life Situations'. Project partners include German companies CIBEK technology + trading, Binder Elektronik and the Westpfalz Klinikum. As news agency AFP reports, the system works unobtrusively through multisensory nodes mounted to the ceiling that register an individual's movements. It records how long a person spends in what part of the home and transmits this data to a computer, which then



grasps his normal behaviour. Thus, it can identify situations that deviate from the norm and issue an alert; indications perhaps that the person is lying unconscious on the ground or spending longer in the bathroom. But to prevent false alarms,

it first prompts the individual through a phone call or a touch-screen monitor. If the silver still fails to respond, the system alerts the family or caregiver and an emergency medical service. "Our solution is not designed to replace home emergency-call systems but intended to serve as a kind of airbag to give people living in single households a sense of safety," says Holger Storf, a scientist at IESE. "To date, there has been no comparable, learning-capable system on the market that constantly adapts to an individual's behaviour." The team is now awaiting patents for its software and multisensory nodes.





Play SAFE

RESEARCHERS IN NEW **ZEALAND** are developing **a** unique care robot—it will entertain the elderly while encouraging exercise and mobility. Stickmen Studios, a Christchurch-based gaming company, has developed a game called Kung Fu Funk that can help rehabilitate people who have suffered brain injuries. Now, the company has teamed up with researchers at the University of Auckland to customise a robot with the gaming facilities. The robot is called Eldercare and has been created with South Korea's Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute.

"The robot will be able to monitor a person's blood pressure or insulin levels and help elders with movement-based exercises such as tai chi," David Cotter of UniServices, a division of the University of Auckland tells *The New Zealand Herald*. "The use of such technology will help balance out the volume of elderly people to caregivers and help keep people active and in their own homes."



DANCE YOUR BLUES AWAY It's proven to lower blood pressure and stress, and boost coordination, flexibility and mobility as well as mood. Take a cue from a group of grandmothers in Singapore who don their leotards and leggings every Sunday for a round of ballet practice at their local community centre. "My mother did not allow me to learn ballet, saying I should focus on my studies," says 62 year-old Lee Poh Ying, who retired as a supervisor at an electronics factory. "I used to watch the other girls dancing and secretly try the moves in my room. Now, I'm free to do as I please. Ballet makes me very happy. I will continue dancing until I cannot dance anymore."



Then: Assorted paper and plastic bags

Now: Bouquet

Use commonly found household articles like tissue paper, used wrapping paper, newspaper and even polythene bags to create a beautiful paper carnation. Make a tiny primrose out of discarded gift paper. Cut eight 1/4×1-1/2-inch strips of the paper. Wrap one end of four strips around the toothpick about 1/4 inch from the end. Wrap one end of the remaining four strips around the toothpick about 1/2 inch from the end. Fold back the 'petals'. Make a daisy out of tissue paper; cut several 3/4×3-inch strips. Round off one end of each strip with a scissor. Wrap and glue the uncut ends of the strips around a toothpick.



Make a lily out of discarded paper from a notebook or newspaper. Cut a half circle from the tissue paper. Wrap the circle around the toothpick like a cone. Glue in place. Make a rose out a coloured polythene bag; cut out one of the sides; the long side should be on the top and bottom while the short side should be on the sides. Fold about 1/2 inch of the bottom of the plastic sheet up. Fan-fold the next 1/2 inch to the back. Keep fanfolding the tissue until it is completely folded. Once you have the plastic folded into a long strip, fold it again; let the short ends touch each other—there should be a single bend in the centre. Take a 12-inch piece of embroidery thread and tightly bind the centre of the strip. Cut the folded end. Begin to peel the layers of tissue, opening the flower to form a fluffy, round blossom. Wrap the very bottom of the flower (where the wire holds the plastic) and the wire with floral tape. You can even lightly mist the flower with perfume. Your paper flower bouquet is now ready.



FACTS

- » Household paper including notebooks, newspaper and tissue paper accounts for almost 95 per cent of total municipal waste.
- » Recycled paper cuts down water pollution by 35 per cent, reduces air pollution by 74 per cent, and eliminates many toxic pollutants.
- » Plastic bags account for over 10 per cent of the debris washed up on the US coastline.

MORE IDEAS... 1. Crumpled plastic bags can be used as fillers for planters to fill up large pots that are too deep for your plants.

2. Use coloured tissue paper to wrap small gifts or store your baubles. 3. Make note cards out of notebook pages: just stick two pages together, cut in a desired shape, and paint.

THE SILVER PITCH

hat's the colour of the resurgent consumer market in the West? Silver, insists British newspaper *The Independent* in an article that shows how companies are increasingly targeting their products to silvers, and, on occasion, using them to market them too. Some examples:

Nintendo's ad campaign for its Wii Fit Plus virtual gaming machine features uber fit 65 year-old actor Helen Mirren, rhapsodising about the gam-



ing options: "It's like having a new lover every day," she whispers, adding, "Now I feel very modern and young."

French luxury goods maker **Louis Vuitton** has used rock star Keith Richards (67), actor Catherine Deneuve (67) and former Russian premier Mikhail Gorbachev (79) to peddle its luggage, using iconic photographer Annie Leibovitz to portray them in varied, and often languorous moods.



British retail giant **Marks & Spencer** signed '60s model Twiggy to promote its rebranding in 2005; she continues



to be the face of the company at the age of 61, still slender and chic.

German company **Baldessarini**, an offshoot of Hugo Boss, is marketing its chic clothing and fragrances at 'sixty-something playboys'. Their magazine ads feature a silver stud with slicked-back hair framed against his Lear jet; a young brunette behind him completes the picture.



German-born Turkish designer **Umit Benan** has released his Retired Rockers collection featuring elder 'rogues' in wacky styles, including shiny suits,

retro shades, waistcoats, hats, headbands and leopard skin jackets.

US company **Not Your Daughter's Jeans** has taken the market by storm with 'tummy tuck' jeans—with a front panel that holds the mature tummy in



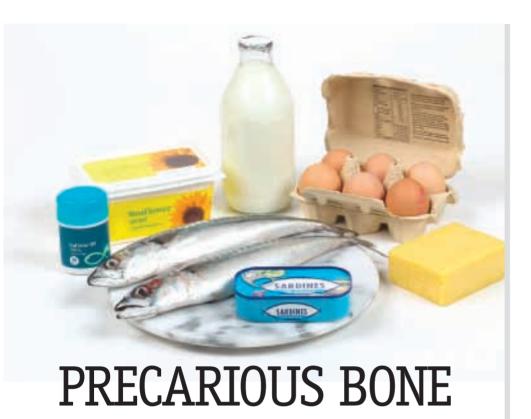
and Lycra for extra stretch. Its slogan: 'You wouldn't trade places with your daughter, or trade clothes with her!'

'Super-groovy' **Phonak hearing aids** from Swiss company Sonova have cool digital features like StereoZoom, which claims to take 'binaural processing technology to a whole new level', and DuoPhone, which lets you hear a voice on the phone in both ears.



Even the **Artemis brothel in Berlin** is targeting silvers with wheelchair-friendly rooms, seats in showers, and, ahem, more 'helpful personnel'.





rthopaedic surgeons from Delhi recently undertook a study to understand the unprecedented rise in osteoporosis among Indian silvers. Ninety hip fracture patients and 90 people (in the 65-80 age group) without any bone or cartilage disorders participated in the study, which revealed that almost 75 per cent of hip fractures are caused by Vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D is required not just for bone health but muscle strength. "As we age, we require more Vitamin D, an essential component to get calcium, the lack of which makes bones brittle," Dr S Sankaralingam, senior orthopaedic surgeon at Chennai's Bharani Hospital, tells *Harmony*. "Such people are more prone to hip or other forms of fracture; the greater the deficiency, greater the chances." While deficiency is common among all age groups in India, silvers are more prone to fractures owing to their age. The doctors checked the participants' levels of calcifediol—a prehormone created from Vitamin D whose blood-serum level is commonly used to indicate absorption of the vitamin—as well as serum calcium, serum phosphorous and other hormones and enzymes linked to bone health. "Seniors should take at least one Vitamin D supplement daily," says Dr Sankaralingam, adding that it also plays a role in treating certain cancers, multiple sclerosis and diabetes.

MEMBER COMMITTEE HAS BEEN APPOINTED BY THE QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA (QCI) TO RATE BLOOD BANKS IN INDIA. IN ITS TWO-YEAR TENURE, THE COMMITTEE WILL REGULATE BLOOD BANKS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ENSURE THE BLOOD PROVIDED TO PATIENTS IS SAFE. THE INITIATIVE IS AN ATTEMPT TO CURB THE SPREAD OF INFECTIONS LIKE HEPATITIS AND HIV.

Don't **FRET**

Psychologists have always urged people to stay clear of stress, a common af iction among all age groups today, as a stressful life can cause severe medical complications. Now a team of researchers at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago have proved that stress doesn't just cause ageing but can also cause Parkinson's disease in an ageing brain. Dopaminereleasing neurons in a cerebral region known as the substantia nigra could die a premature death in a person who is leading a stressful lifestyle.

"Stress makes neurons react in a different way," Dr Hirnamay Saha, senior consultant psychiatrist at Global Hospital in Kolkata, tells Harmony. "They cause anxiety and depression in an ageing brain that cause tremors in the body, a signal that the body should slow down and de-stress. The eventual death of neurons causes Parkinson's disease." Additionally, stress puts pressure on the neurons' mitochondria and elevates the production of superoxide and free radicals. These molecules are closely linked to ageing, cellular dysfunction and death. By lowering one's metabolic stress level, dopaminereleasing neurons can live longer and delay the onset of Parkinson's.

GENDER BENDER



reast cancer, predominant in women, doesn't spare men either. Top Indian oncologists claim that one out of every 100 breast cancer patients is a man; those aged 70 and above more often fall prev to the disease—and as in women, most men have their genes to blame. According to last year's statistics, men comprised around 1.5-2 per cent of new cases. What's worse, owing to lack of awareness the condition is often misdiagnosed or diagnosed late, often leading to severe consequences. Men with mutation of the BRCA gene are most vulnerable and therefore likely to develop prostate cancer as well. "As men get older; their testosterone levels plunge, while oestrogen levels rise, causing the BRCA gene to mutate," Dr S Krishnamurthy, senior surgical oncologist at Kidwai Institute of Oncology in Bengaluru, tells Harmony. "And as they don't have fat in their breasts, the disease attacks the chest wall and muscle faster than normal, resulting in diagnosis in the third or fourth stage of cancer." However, unlike in women, cancer is more easily visible in men; hence you should consult a doctor as soon as you feel a lump.



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Adrenaline MAMA

At 62, aerobatics pilot Radka Machova from the Czech Republic is not just testing out new heights and stunts in the sky, but exploring the depths of her own determination and will. **Dhanya Nair Sankar** couldn't help but gasp when she met the daredevil at the recently held India Aero Show 2011 in Bengaluru

How did you develop an interest in the offbeat field of aviation?

I was 22 when I received my pilot's license from the Aeronautics University in Czechoslovakia. Not too long after that, I was invited to be a part of the Czechoslovakian National Aerobatic Team. I was part of the team for four to f ve years but it changed me forever. I knew I wanted to do nothing else.

How does it feel to have come so far in a field that is essentially maledominated?

Being an aerobatics pilot has always been a strong passion for me. And I don't see it as something exclusive to being male or female; it's all about whom you can trust up in the sky. Aerobatic f ying is an art as it's not just about stunts but f ying together in a formation. I enjoy working with each member in my team.

What were the various challenges you faced along the way?

I quit the Czechoslovakian National Aerobatic Team when I got married and had two children. After a few years, I joined a local airline as a pilot. In early 2001, when I was offered a chance to lead the Flying Bulls, which is now one of the leading aerobatic stunt teams in Europe, I knew the opportunity was too good to pass. When I rejoined the team again, it

was like I had never left. I have been very fortunate to have the best team of experienced pilots f ying with me. After every performance, we look at ways to further improve the show. Each member of the team takes the



plane apart and puts it back together for each performance. I love getting my hands dirty!

You have two children. How do you manage to strike a balance between work and home?

In the beginning, I took time off to raise my kids. Now that they have grown up and moved out of the house I spend more time f ying. Flying is my life—I get bored when I am not doing it!

How do you keep your tenacity and enthusiasm alive at an age when people tend to slow down?

I'm 62. For me it is not just about fying but everything that comes with it. I love travelling with the team around the world. I have performed at various events and often get to meet wonderful people during my travels. I have many good friends from different parts of the world, including Arabs, Germans, and the French, and I am sure I will make many new Indian friends now that I am here in Bengaluru.

Do you have a speical message for others inspired by you?

Follow your passion and do what you love doing. Don't let anyone tell you that you will not be able to do anything you want. Believe in yourself and reach for the skies.



OVERHEARD



"I'm definitely still wild at heart. But I've struck bio-gravity. I can't hit on women in public any more. I didn't decide this; it just doesn't feel right at my age. But I also believe that a lot of the improvements in my character have come through ageing and the diminishing of powers. It's all a balancing act; you just have to get used to the ride."

American actor Jack Nicholson, 73, who is reported to have bedded over 2,000 women and had five children by four different partners, in The Daily Mail

BIRTHDAYS

- Former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev turns 80 on 2 March
- Actor Anupam Kher turns 56 on 7 March
- Media mogul **Rupert Murdoch** turns 80 on 11 March
- Douglas Adams, author of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, turns 59 on 11 March
- American actor Liza Minnelli turns 65 on 12 March
- British actor Michael Caine turns 78 on 14 March



- Actor Shashi Kapoor turns
 73 on 18 March
- American action hero Bruce Willis turns 56 on 19 March

IN PASSING



- Activist, statesman and founder director of the Peace Corps **Sargent Shriver** passed away on 18 January in Maryland, USA. He was 95.
- Telugu film director E V V Satyanarayana died of a cardiac arrest on 21 January. He was 55.
- The world's oldest woman Eunice Sanborn died on 1 February in Texas, USA. She was 115.
- **K Subrahmanyam**, former national security advisor, died on 3 February. He was 82.

MILESTONES

- Dance guru Nataraja Ramakrishna and classical singer Girija Devi have been elected Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellows (Akademi Ratna).
- Malayalam writer O N V Kurup received the Jnanpith Award on 11 February.
- Sarojini Bhagabati from Nalbari in Assam earned her postgraduate degree in Arts at the age of 72. She is now planning to pursue her PhD thesis on the suppression of Brahmin widows in rural Assam.
- American actor Mia Farrow, 65, has been chosen for the Marian Anderson Award 2011 for her exceptional work in sensitising the world about the condition of children and refugees in war-torn regions.



- Industrialist Ratan Tata,
 74, co-piloted Boeing fighter jet F-18, also known as the Super Hornet, on 10 February, at Aero India 2011, India's greatest aircraft show held in Bengaluru. Tata flew the aircraft for 45 minutes.
- Chef K Damodaran, 57, from Chennai, sautéed, stirred and chopped his way into Guinness World Records, in the category of 'Longest Cooking Marathon—Individual' by making 617 dishes or 190 kg of food—in 24 hours, 30 minutes and 12 seconds.



HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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GADGET GURU

You could call me a gadget freak—I cannot get enough of hi-tech gizmos. My day starts and ends with my iPad. I use it to check and send mail; read the newspapers; and Google for information, any time, anywhere. The iPad is a gift from my dear daughter. In fact, I should thank my two daughters for unwittingly fuelling my fascination for hi-tech gadgetry. Both of them study in prestigious business schools abroad; one at Stanford University and the other at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management. When I visit them in the US, I make it a point to drop by swank electronic stores to check out the latest newbies on the shelves.



Rao is happiest in his world of gizmos

My passion for travel goes hand in hand with my obsession for new technology. I used to visit techno fairs in Europe and USA twice every year till I retired from my chartered accountancy practice in 2007. These rambles have added heavily to my collection—my house is chock full of the latest gizmos; iPad, Mac laptop, and the nifty reading device Kindle, to name a few.

Some people use technology to make life better but for me technology is life itself. While working as a chartered accountant, I launched several hi-tech set-ups. I started a medium-scale security printing business in my village Tenneru in Andhra Pradesh in 1986 and managed it successfully for 20 years. Along the way, I also launched new enterprises dedicated to bar code systems, variable data printing and telephone scratch cards. All these ventures brought me in close contact with people who share a similar interest. For instance, the machinery supplier in my of ce introduced me to many new technologies.

Now, I want to spread my knowledge through e-learning. I practice organic agriculture on my small 4-acre farm— I have kept it small as it means less space, less water, less work and more vegetables. I am also trying to build awareness about the virtues of energy conservation through solar technology and green biomass. I would urge more silvers to embrace new technology; it may seem like a complex world, but it's also one full of amazing possibilities.

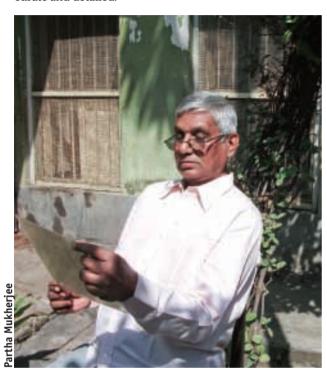
-Madhusadana Rao Devineni, Hyderabad

BATTING FROM THE SIDELINES

live and breathe cricket even though I have never participated in the sport. I grew up in the early 1950s, when cricket was the prerogative of the wealthy. How could a simple lad from a middle-class family in a remote village ever afford the luxury of a sport that required both money and a progressive mindset? Still, my head was f lled with fantasies of meeting the greats like Ted Dexter, Ken Barrington, Peter Parf t, Richie Benaud, Ramchand, Polly Umrigar and Bapu Nadkarni. But my dream always stopped short at the gates of the hallowed Eden Gardens. Alas, the one time I picked up the courage to ask my father if I could buy a ticket to a match, I was met with a disapproving frown and a sharp retort about the marks I had scored in a class test.

I stopped talking about cricket at home but the ghost of the game constantly hovered over me. My only link to the sport was the radio that *Baba* had bought. The 'running commentary' was par excellence in those days and commentators like Pearson Surita, Sydney Friskin, Chakrapany, A T S Talwarkhan, Ajoy Bose, Kamal Bhattacharya, Pushpen Sarkar and Premangshu Chatterjee, immortalised their expertly modulated baritone while bringing the action into our living rooms.

Thanks to the radio and the blow-by-blow account of the match it offered, I would sit with a stack of paper and draw a graphic representation of the players on the f eld, marking every delivery, the path the ball took after it left the bat, and even the strengths and weaknesses of every bowler and batsman. I would thus end up with a graphic reproduction of the match and its analysis! Accompanying this labour of love were match statistics, which included an inf nitely detailed bowling analysis till the end of play every single day. The next morning, I would tally my work with the match report in the newspapers and would f nd to my astonishment that the match report was a carbon copy of my chart! Sometimes, mine would even appear more accurate and detailed.



Clean bowled: Kundu cherishes Bradman's note of appreciation

As I followed my passion, little did I know that it would lead to an unexpected 'trophy' that would be bestowed on me by the greatest name in cricket: Sir Donald Bradman. It was 1962 and I had chanced an excerpt from the book, *Art of Cricket*, authored by Bradman, in a local daily. In the excerpt, Bradman had written about a puzzle given to him by a famous astrophysicist, Sir Artur Eddington, in 1930. He went on to explain that he had taken two decades to solve the puzzle and f nally cracked it while on a ship to England to play against the British in 1948. He also said he would be happy to have someone else give it a try.

Could I resist a challenge from the great Sir Donald Bradman? I solved the puzzle and dispatched the solution in a letter to 2 Holden Street, Kensington Park, South Australia. Pat came the reply—a note of appreciation and encouragement. That day I reached the pinnacle of cricket, in my own unique way.

Today at 70, I still enjoy cricket, despite suffering from arthritis, ischemia, myopic vision and hypertension. I reminisce about those days when I dared to postpone my honeymoon as the schedule clashed with the India-England cricket series in 1972-73. Although my newly wed wife was almost in tears at my decision then, today she treasures the letter autographed by the Emperor of the cricket world to her husband.

Here's Don Bradman's puzzle:

AN IMAGINARY SCOREBOARD

Atkins 6

Bodkins 8

Dawkins 6

Hawkins 6

Jenkins 5

Larkins 4

Meakins 7

Perkins 11

Simkins 6

Tomkins 0

Willkins 1

Extras 0

Total 60

BOWLING

Pitchwell: 12.1-2-14-8 Speedwell: 6-0-15-1 Tosswell: 7-5-31-1

CHIES

- 1. The batsmen have scored only in singles and 4s.
- 2. All of them were clean bowled. No one was caught or run out. There were no no balls or 'short' runs.
- 3. Speedwell and Tosswell bowled 6 and 7 overs respectively at a stretch.
- 4. Pitchwell opened the bowling, with Speedwell coming in at the other end for the next over.
- 5. The overs were of 6 balls each.

QUESTIONS

- 1. Which bowler dismissed which batsmen?
- 2. Who was not out?
- 3. What were the Fall of Wickets?

MY SOLUTION

- 1. Speedwell took the wicket of Jenkins; Tosswell took Bodkins' while Pitchwell dismissed Atkins, Dawkins, Hawkins, Larkins, Meakins, Parkins, Simkins and Tomkins.
- 2. Wilkins returned not out with one run only.
- 3. 6/1 (Atkins); 12/2 (Dawkins); 18/3 (Hawkins); 23/4 (Jenkins); 31/5 (Bodkins); 41/6 (Larkins); 44/7 (Meakins); 59/8 (Parkins); 59/9 (Tomkins) and 60/10 (Simkins)
 - —Chittaranjan Kundu, Sheoraphully



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

The devil inside: Control your anger with yoga

errible things happen inside your body when you feel anger, however justif ed it may be. Though the stressor outside cannot be removed, yoga is a science that helps you deal with the ugly footprint of anger in your body.

Here's the list of physical ravages left by anger: Your heart beats faster. Blood pressure rises as blood vessels constrict. Pupils widen to allow more light. Lungs work harder. Energy packets like glucose are delivered fast. Digestive system shuts down. Detoxifying systems shut down. Immune mechanisms shut down as blood gets directed to the brain, heart and skeletal muscles. Even blood chemistry changes to facilitate easy clotting. Adrenal or stress hormones once released circulate in the blood, creating a cascade effect. Your adrenals are exhausted, breeding the new-age ailment called hypoadrenia, creating chronic fatigue, weak immunity, and inability to lose weight and concentrate, making you edgy, insomniac, among other things.

As yoga believes in a holistic approach, its anger therapy also calls for a complete overhaul of the foods we consume. This can be quite an eye-opener for victims of chronic anger—pesticides (in food) cause aggression, attention def cit and hyperactivity in kids, ruin thyroid health, and

reduce endurance to any provocation. Other danger foods are additive colours, preservatives and monosodium glutamate used in fast foods, soft drinks and most artif cial f avours (including f avoured tea). Anger foods are high glycaemic index foods, which release energy too quickly into the blood. Yoga advises low glycaemic index foods such as cherries, plums, grapefruit, soybeans, barley, oatmeal, apples, pears, peaches, grapes, kidney beans, red lentils, chickpeas, black-eyed peas, tomato soup, milk and yoghurt.

In yoga, the most common *kriya* used to treat anger are gentle ones such as the entire *pawanmuktasana* series, also called the energy release or joint releasing series, and forward bends such as the psychic union (*yoga mudra*), done either in the easy pose (*sukhasana*) or lotus (*padamasana*). As people who suffer from backache cannot do these poses they can try alternatives such as the no-mind pose (*unmani mudra*). Other practices include the hare pose (*shashankasana*) and seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*). Those with knee or lower back problems can also try the *unmani mudra*. Breathing practices or *pranayama* used in anger therapy are psychic breath (*ujjayi*), alternate nostril (*nadi shodhana*), hissing or cooling breaths (*seetali/seetkari*) and the humming bee (*bhramari*).

YOGIC MOVES

Psychic union pose (yoga mudrasana)

Sit in a cross-legged meditative pose, ideally in the classic lotus or padmasana. Close your eyes. Place palms flat on the ground, in front of the body. You may also clasp them lightly behind. Inhale deeply. Exhaling, bend forward gently to reach your forehead to the floor. Continue breathing, staying in this pose calmly for as long as comfortable. Inhaling, return to the starting position. Initially, this may be tough but regular practice can get you there. If your back is very stiff, you can keep a high bolster or short stool in front, to reach the forehead to it till your back becomes more flexible. However, avoid in case of severe lower back pain. Ensure your hips do not rise off the ground. Keep a cushion under your hips if necessary. Benefits: It is therapeutic in several ailments, including high blood pressure, diabetes, memory failure, inflammatory conditions, acidity, digestive problems and upper back issues. It relieves neck problems, releases tension and is deeply calming.



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)



<mark>WEIGHT WATCH</mark> BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

Heart safe: Resistance training for cardiac patients

I am a 55 year-old heart patient. Can I do weight training exercises?

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF AN EXPERIENCED PERSONAL TRAINER, WEIGHT (RESISTANCE) TRAINING IS SAFE.

How should a heart patient begin?

Ask your doctor if you may begin an exercise programme that includes weight-training.

If you have not participated in aerobic exercise, enrol in an aerobic exercise programme for two to four weeks before adding weight training to your regime.

Speak to a cardiac rehabilitation exercise specialist or trainer working with heart patients and older adults (if this applies to you).

Learn the proper techniques to avoid injury: breathe correctly (naturally, not holding your breath, exhaling during exertion and inhaling during relaxation); avoid straining; use proper posture; and understand the motion.

A supervised cardiac rehabilitation programme may be recommended for some individuals to monitor

signs and symptoms of ischemia (decreased blood supply to the heart muscle), blood pressure, heart rate and lifting techniques to avoid complications and injury.

Recommendations for initial weight training prescription:

Weight training should be performed...

- in a rhythmic manner, at a moderate-to-slow controlled speed.
- through a complete range of motion, avoiding breath holding and straining by exhaling during the contraction or exertion phase of the lift and inhaling during the relaxation phase.

• alternating between upper and lower body work, to allow for adequate rest between exercises.

The initial resistance or weight load should...

- allow for, and be limited, to 8-12 repetitions per set for healthy, sedentary adults; or 10-15 repetitions at a low level of resistance (less than or equal to 40 per cent of maximum one repetition) for older adults (more than 50-60 years of age), frail persons, or cardiac patients.
- be limited to a single set, performed two days per week, and involve the major muscle groups of the upper and lower extremities—chest press, shoulder press, triceps extension, biceps curl, pull-down (upper back), lower back extension, abdominal crunch/curl-up, quadriceps extension or leg press, leg curls (hamstrings), and calf raise.



While traditional prescriptions for weight training involve performing three sets of repetitions, single and multiple set programmes actually provide nearly the same relative improvement in muscular strength during the initial training period. For the average person beginning strength training, single-set programmes are recommended over multiple-set programmes at least two days per week—they are highly effective, less time consuming, and promote adherence.

A comprehensive programme of eight to 10 exercises can be accomplished in 15-20 minutes and should be done after the aerobic component to ensure adequate warm-up.

Gradually, increase the exercise level by changing any variable—increase resistance; increase repetitions; increase the number of sets; and decrease the rest period between sets.

Next month: Exercises, guidelines and precautions for a stronger heart.

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



EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Are you vegetarian? Add more protein to your diet

I am a 61 year-old man. I have always been a meat eater but owing to weight issues my doctor asked me to switch to vegetarian food. Two months into the new diet plan and I am feeling very sluggish. Can lack of protein make one less energetic? Can you give me a plan that will make sure my protein intake is sufficient?

Protein, along with carbohydrates, helps to keep energy levels high. Not consuming enough protein could lead to lack of energy, muscle fatigue, thinning of hair, weak nails and heart palpitations, to name a few problems. Protein helps our body make haemoglobin, which transports oxygen to every cell of our body and therefore helps generate energy. It also helps repair and build tissues, and build muscles, bones, cartilage and blood.

How to get protein from a vegetarian diet: The word protein is derived from 'Proteus', which means 'prime importance'. There is a general belief that a vegetarian diet is low in protein. In fact, foods like pulses (peas, beans and lentils), nuts, seeds and grains are full of protein. Vegetarians can meet their requirement easily if they eat a variety of protein-rich foods. Almost all vegetables—beans, grains,

rice, soy, tofu, soymilk, nuts, seeds—contain protein. Here are some good options to boost your intake.

Paneer: It has more protein than yogurt and is low in calories. *Paneer* cubes with *chaat masala* sprinkled on top make a healthy snack.

Egg whites: They contain 4.7 gm of protein per egg, in addition to vitamins and minerals. Add them to soup or brown rice or stir fry veggies to raise the protein levels.

Chickpeas: Add them to salad or rice to increase protein content. They are nutritious, containing 6 gm of protein and 5 gm of f bre per half cup serving.

Tofu: It is an excellent source of protein; 1/2 cup of raw tofu has 10 gm of protein.

Nuts: They are an excellent source of protein and good fats. Avoid f avoured nuts as they are high in salt or sugar. Include a handful of nuts in your daily dietary regime.

Protein powder: It is the easiest way to add a good serving of protein to your diet. It is available as whey, or soy protein.

Plant protein lacks certain essential amino acids and is therefore considered second-class protein. It needs to



promotion

Though there is a general belief that a vegetarian diet is low in protein, foods like pulses (peas, beans and lentils), nuts, seeds and grains have it in plenty. Protein helps our body make haemoglobin, generate energy, repair and build tissues, and build muscles, bones, cartilage and blood

blend with other sources to provide a complete package. The well-known combination of cereal and pulses, rice and beans provides a complete protein source.

A sample diet plan:

Breakfast: 1 cup milk, 1 egg, 2 slices whole wheat bread

Midmorning: 1 fruit

Lunch: 1 *jowar chapatti*, 1 cup *rajma* or *chole*, 1 cup rice, sprout salad, 1 cup vegetables

4 pm: 1 cup curd

6 pm: 1 cup tea and a handful of roasted *channa* or nuts like almonds

Dinner: 1 jowar chapatti, 1 cup curd, 1 cup dal, 1 cup vegetables

Bedtime: 1 glass low-fat milk

A vegetarian lifestyle does act as a preventive measure against numerous diseases like heart disease, diabetes and cancer. It helps increase energy, improve mental health, lower bad cholesterol and maintain a low body mass index. In your case, your low energy levels could be attributed to lack of enough vitamins, minerals and protein in your daily diet. Include lots of fruits, green vegetables and the above mentioned protein sources in your meals and speak to your doctor for a supplement of multivitamin and multi-mineral additives (capsules or tablets) to feel energetic and maintain a healthy weight.

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

Bridging the gap



Dr Mandar Gadkari Practising General Dentistry with special attention to Implant & Cosmetic Dentistry.

Q1. I have a few missing teeth and I have been advised replacement of these teeth by dental implants. Are implants a good option?

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Such implants prevent bone resorption that occurs when teeth are missing. Besides, the natural beauty of the smile is preserved with implants and adjacent teeth are not compromised as complete support is drawn from the bone.

Q2. I have been advised a CT-Scan in order to plan my implant surgery. Is it really necessary?

Digitisation is a key driver in implant dentistry. With it, treatment can be planned prior to implant surgery. The Nobel Guide is a complete software for Dental Implant Treatment, using which we can digitally integrate future replacement teeth together with a full view of a patient anatomy via a CT Scan. With the Nobel Guide, we can also examine surrounding bone quality and quantity, thus determining the proper location for implants. This makes planning and placing of implants simple, safe, efficient and predictable, and allows us to fulfill the bio-mechanical, functional and aesthetic needs of our patients. The customised surgical guide can be ordered online.

The surgical guide includes all planning information and allows clinicians to prepare implant sites and gently place implants as planned. The Nobel Guide provides us an option for safe, minimally invasive surgery.

Q3. What are the overall benefits of computerising the implant procedure?

By computerising every step of the planning process, the Nobel Guide offers significant benefits to us and our patient. Dentists can inform their patients about all the details of the treatment, including the procedures, time, exact treatment costs and outcome goals.

With Nobel Guide as an option, we can achieve minimally invasive surgery, resulting in less swelling and shorter recovery times for patients, and thereby easily maintain high level of success with the best aesthetic and functional results.



<mark>RGE</mark> BY ACHALA SHARMA

Goodbye BBC Hindi

n 26 January my cell phone rang. It was a young journalist from The Indian Express. 'Have you heard the news?' He asked. 'Yes,' I said, 'it is the death of an iconic institution and I am in mourning.

My reaction may have sounded a bit dramatic to some but I believe I was speaking on behalf of those large numbers of listeners in India who still have no access to other credible sources of news and information, despite a cluttered media landscape of the cities. The news of the closure of the BBC Hindi radio is equally shocking for Hindi broadcasters as many of them will lose their jobs in its aftermath.

Born on 11 May 1940 as Hindustani Service, BBC Hindi Service has been the only reliable source of news for mil-

BBC Hindi Radio's

lions of people in India and the Gulf for more than 70 years. 'It must be true if BBC Hindi says so, people have argued over the years.

It may feel like a lifetime but I vividly remember the day, 17 January 1981, when I f rst arrived at the headquarters of the BBC World Service, Bush House, to become a part of the Hindi service. I had seen sleet for the very f rst time in my life and felt very cold but the colleagues gave me a warm welcome. Despite having spent about

three years at All India Radio, I felt like a complete novice in broadcast journalism during my initial days at the BBC. Its broadcasts during the Emergency in 1975 and subsequent political changes had led to the belief that it was always f rst and accurate with news.

Though BBC Hindi Service's forte had always been news and current affairs, its feature programmes were equally popular. I was given the responsibility to produce a weekly youth programme. Some of those who contributed to my programme such as Chandan Mitra, editor of *The Pioneer*, and Mrinal Pandey, chairperson, Prasar Bharati, are wellknown journalists today. BBC Hindi welcomed Indian students in the UK to participate in its programmes.

My second innings at Bush House began in 1987, lasting for about 21 years. At the time of my departure, Hindi Service still enjoyed huge popularity as witnessed during the road shows between 2004 and 2006. But it was during the golden jubilee celebrations of BBC Hindi broadcasts in 1990 that I had my f rst taste of its popularity.

I was travelling with the former BBC Hindi head Kailash Budhwar to organise live debates. We had an evening free in Bhopal. So we asked colleagues in London to announce in our last broadcast of the day that the team would be happy to meet listeners in Bhopal the following evening. It was short notice but by the next evening, the venue was f ooded with thousands of Hindi listeners. Some of them had even taken overnight trains from distant cities.

However, the emergence of satellite TV in the early 1990s meant that the sound of Hindi programmes had to compete with live pictures. We had to change with the times. We started to modernise our output by adding real voices from the spot, establishing a network of Hindi-speaking journalists across India and presenting programmes in a

> friendlier tone. 'We are not broadcasting from Mars' was the key message.

> private TV channels started broadcasting round-the-clock news. BBC could no longer claim to be the f rst in breaking news. But the large presence of BBC Hindi journalists in India and abroad certainly helped to improve our coverage in terms of providing indepth analysis of the events that were shaping the new world order.

broadcasts during the As the century dawned, a number of Emergency in 1975 and subsequent political changes led to the belief that it was always first and accurate with news

> Since then, 'change or perish' has been the mantra throughout the BBC. However, listeners have complained about changes that they did not like—particularly, BBC's emphasis to appease audiences in cities with an indistinct dose of entertainment. On occasions, we were compelled by our listeners to revive old formats like Hum Se Poochchiye, a programme of questions and answers. Nevertheless, they also welcomed some new interactive programmes such as Aap Ki Baat and BBC Ke Saath. It provided them a platform to put direct questions to top politicians.

'It will mark the end of an era,' a listener wrote. There is no doubt that the closure will be a huge loss for millions who, despite the presence of hundreds of TV and FM channels, struggled to f nd us on shortwave. But I wonder if the management realised that by closing down Hindi radio, BBC would suffer an even bigger loss—the trust def cit.

Achala Sharma, 58, is former head of BBC Hindi Radio Service. She lives in London

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SHOULD AGE BE A REASON TO LET GO OF YOUR DREAMS? SHOULD GREY BE AN EXCUSE TO BLEACH ALL COLOUR FROM YOUR LIFE? SHOULD MENOPAUSE MEAN THE END OF A BIOLOGICAL PROCESS, OR THE REVIVAL OF YOUR LONG-CHERISHED GOALS? THOUGH THE PASSING YEARS TAKE AWAY OUR YOUTH AND PULCHRITUDE, THEY ALSO ENRICH US WITH THINGS FAR MORE VALUABLE—A DEEPER APPRECIATION OF LIFE, AN INDOMITABLE SPIRIT THAT HAS EMERGED GREATER THROUGH MANY CRISES, AND A PRISTINE CLARITY OF WHO WE REALLY ARE. TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ON 8 MARCH, HARMONY PRESENTS WOMEN ACHIEVERS WHO ARE A TESTAMENT THAT AGE CAN ONLY BRING OUT THE BEST IN US.



MY WAY

Every woman is happiest when she looks back and sees a life she chose for herself, says **Maya Jayapal**

n his insightful book *Man's Search For Meaning*, leading European psychiatrist Dr Viktor Frankly talks of the last of the human freedoms: "to choose one's own attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." I grew up with an enlightened father and a compassionate mother. He insisted that all three of us sisters get a postgraduate education (in 1955!) and become independent and capable of sustaining ourselves. My mother, by her role modelling, imbued us with an abiding curiosity in all things life had to offer, whether it was cooking, stitching or studying. Having been deprived of a complete education herself, she encouraged us in that direction.

My father wanted me to become a doctor, which was a safe, pragmatic and realistic ambition for women those days. However, I cut open an earthworm in my first zoology class and promptly fainted. That put paid to my father's dreams for me! After an unhappy foray into economics, I finally followed my heart—I got a postgraduate degree in English literature. I started thinking about the 'dreaming spires' of educational institutions in England. I also dreamt of being a diplomat and representing India in the elegant manner of Sarojini Naidu and Vijayalakshmi Pandit. However, I met



my husband when I was 19 and decided to marry him. It was not what is customarily talked about as a 'love marriage'. Nor was it totally 'arranged'. It was somewhere in between, with my father repeatedly telling me I did not have to marry him!

But I had made a choice, chosen a fork in the road. I also decided to complete my postgraduate course and marry my husband, although everyone assured me I could complete it after I got married. But I was adamant, for I had seen too many of my friends put an end to their studies in spite of such assurances. Another choice!

Soon I had two beautiful daughters. I enjoyed them. And I wrote about them. I have a passion for the written word. So writing became a part of my life, along with children, cooking and running a house. We led a peripatetic life, moving across cities and continents. When the children were about 10 and eight I decided to teach. Teaching was a profession I could do part-time and involved no ambition or competition. Yet it did fulfil an urge in me, even though it was not always monetarily rewarding. I taught in Singapore and Jakarta. When in Singapore, I was introduced to the concept of counselling and fell in love with it. It became a vocation for me, one I continued on returning to India in 1993.

My love of language and my teaching experiences merged seamlessly into a desire to counsel. Words are powerful, almost magical. They have the power to soothe, describe, heal, to move and inf uence. Conversely they also have the power to hurt, devastate. And I felt we need to use them with compassion and honesty. I think, looking back, all I wanted to do from childhood was use words to express myself and reach out to people. Now, in retrospect, all my experiences, my subconscious desires and my choices seem to have led me to my present vocation. It has been a late blooming vocation for me, coming when I was 50. I must

confess that there were times when, upon seeing the name of a classmate who was an ambassador in the papers, I felt a twinge for my almost forgotten ambitions. But the twinge does not appear any more.

Am I a product of my times? I think not. The pendulum has to swing to both sides before finding its level. My daughter, a lawyer, gave up a highly remunerative and prestigious career after 15 years. She felt she did not want to see her children's childhood disappear before her eyes. An instinctive decision I had made almost 30 years ago. Hers was a more thought-out process, possibly. She has the twinge too occasionally but she has the choice to get back into the workforce if she desires. Her parents and mine saw to that.

I see my clients, many of whom are young women, torn between expectations of fame and fortune, yet expressing an almost primeval instinct to be a part of their families, to rear their children. My heart aches for them, for I can be in their shoes, feel their desire to be Superwomen. But I also know that they have to find their own way, decide what is important for them, make their own compromises. I see my children who have met the slings and sorrows of life with strength and fortitude, I see the cover pages of my books on my study wall, and I see the work I am doing still. I see my husband's pride in me. He is my best publicity agent! And I am content having straddled both worlds, not having to prove myself in either. Have I lost something in the process? Maybe, but it was my choice. I take onus for that choice.

Maya Jayapal, 69, is a Bengaluru-based counsellor and writer

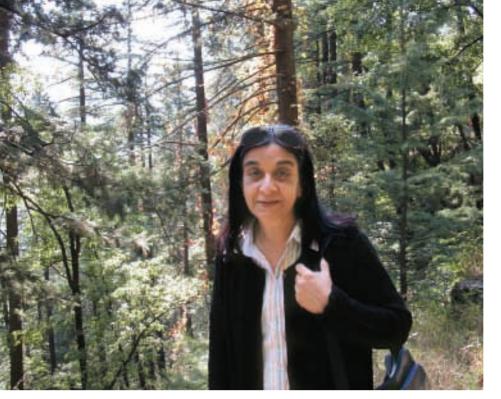
THE GODDESS IN YOU

Age brings a lovely burnished strength to every woman, says Vrinda Nabar

oes ageing empower women? Or do women simply draw on accumulated inner reserves as they grow older? These are questions that women of all ages might want to think about as yet another International Women's Day approaches. I for one increasingly have reservations about words like ageing. Phrases like ageing parents, ageing populations, the ageing process, and so on indicate that the word retains the negative connotations of an earlier era despite the fact that people live longer and many of them lead active lives. It is true that growing older still brings about inevitable changes in energy levels making even health-fiends aware, sometimes painfully, of body parts they had taken for granted in the

years when they functioned optimally and unobtrusively. Nor does it help that the mirror won't lie, especially about your ref ection in that first early morning moment of reckoning, confronting you relentlessly with crow's feet, furrowed brow, crepey neck, and sagging jaw line.

Yet part of the reason why our mirror image makes us *feel* old today may be because we have surrendered to the 'commodification' of the body on a scale hitherto not experienced in human history. *Looking* youthful has increasingly come to matter more than *being* youthful as skincare products and processes have begun seducing both men and women with before-and-after assurances of



'age-defying' makeovers. This insidious marketing blitz-krieg makes it more necessary than ever, especially for women on the other side of 60, to ref ect on whether the hard-sell has any real merit. Amid the jingoism that inevitably accompanies an event like International Women's Day they might want to analyse why a greying man might still be considered charming and mature, a greying woman simply frumpy and old.

They might want to ask if growing older diminishes one as a woman. Speaking for myself I'd say it does not. I know I'm not the person I was even five years ago, but I won't pretend to be that person either. I'd like to move on, seizing each day as it comes, and letting go of what I cannot hold on to. The years may not necessarily have brought me greater wisdom, but they've given me a good enough ringside view of life's commonplace drama.

But while I've no illusions about my own age-induced growth in terms of good sense and maturity, I don't see

my situation as universal. Which is why the mental wheels went into overdrive recently when I received one of those routine email forwards, the kind that asks you in turn to send it to some eight others—eight women in this instance, in whose presence you felt empowered enough to think there was nothing you could not achieve if you were all in a room together. Appealing in a schmaltzy kind of way, but as I began thinking of all the wonderful women I would want on that list I realised I would need an Aamir-Khan-in-the-Deepa-Mehta-movie-*Earth* kind of hotline to the *parlok* if I had to communicate with some of them.

Several of those women, my age or older, are no longer alive, and reiterated what we all know: that women as a rule have always had this cache of resources to bring into play when circumstances demanded it. Undeniably oppressed in many cultures, a woman learned to depend on no one but herself. Manipulating their given roles as the daughters, wives and mothers of men, women learned to use subterfuge and subversion in order to survive. Social conditioning and the force of the collective unconscious may have kept them under, fashioned them into apparent non-entities, the 'weaker sex' in need of protection. But our older myths of the fearsome goddesses in their multiple

avatars are valuable repositories of a primal acceptance of and surrender to the essential agency of women.

More and more women are rediscovering this agency, and a remarkable feature of many struggles to secure privileges in public and private spaces is the role played in them by ordinary, older women. This happened not too long ago with the initiatives that led to the formation of something

> like the Naga Mothers' Association whose members used the experience of age, 'kitchen politics' and motherhood to reassert that the personal is political, and broker solutions inaccessible to more violent interventions. In harnessing age-old skills to create a meaningful movement the Naga mothers showed that even our humdrum lives have a potential for empowerment, reminding us in turn of those older, self-effacing women in our lives, who repeatedly surprised us with their unassuming sagacity and resilience. Similarly, if the evidence of today's world suggests that women

who held jobs are more at peace with themselves after retirement than their spouses, at least some of the reason may be found in this inherited female legacy of understated practical wisdom. The battlefields of ordinary womanhood may contain little opportunity for heroics but the learning curve of their tactical lessons demonstrates that older women need no cosmetic aids to find their own empowerment.

Growing older does not diminish one as a woman. I know I'm not the person I was five years ago, but I won't pretend to be that person either. I'd like to seize each day as it comes, and let go of what I cannot hold on to

Vrinda Nabar, 62, is a Mumbai-based feminist writer



32 harmony celebrate age march 2011

« LAKSHMI FENN, 83, poet

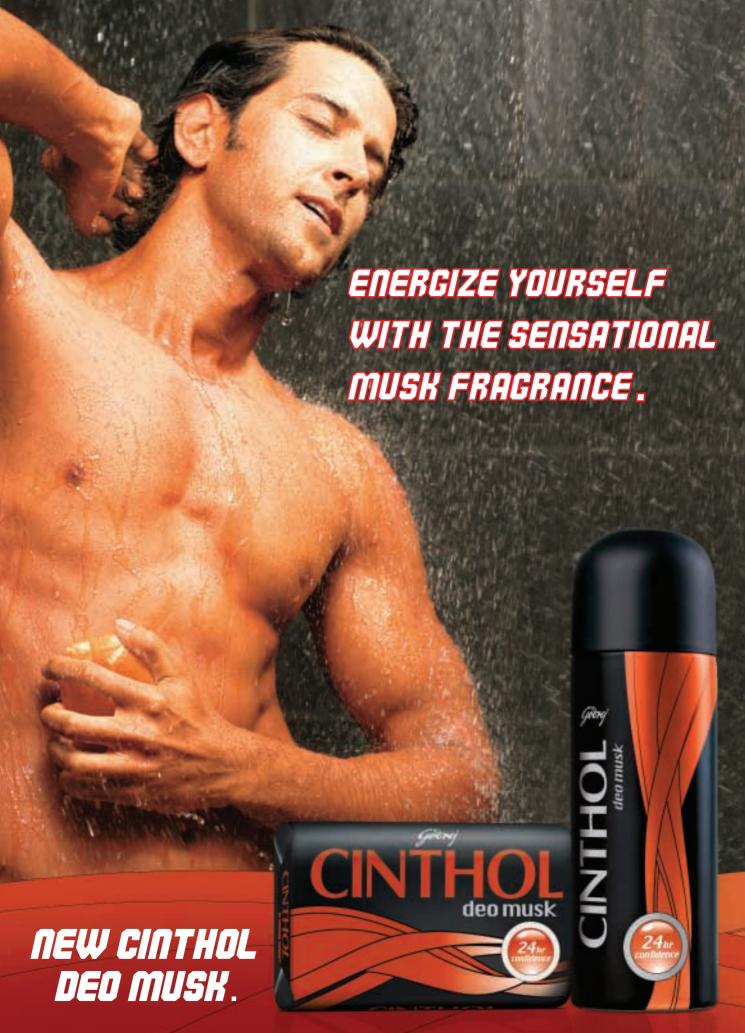
Though Gurgaon-based Lakshmi Fenn always loved to write poetry in her journal and shared it with her family and friends, three years ago she attended a poetry reading of DelhiPoetree, a poetry forum in the capital, and felt encouraged to share her verse with the world. In 2009, Fenn's poems made it to *Here and Now*, an anthology of poems published by DelhiPoetree. Fenn finds inspiration in the 'small wonders of each day'. "Even the bird that flutters in my balcony leaves a poem behind for me when she flies away," she says. Fenn is now approaching publishers to launch her first book of poems. When we ask her if she regrets discovering poetry so late in life, the sparkling silver says, "No, I am glad I did it now. My poetry is wiser, richer and deeper today only because of the wisdom that the years have imbued in me."



★ HOMAI VYARAWALLA, 97, photographer

She is India's first woman press photographer. Her lens has captured the greatest highs and lows of pre and post-Independence Indian history: the flag-hoisting at Red Fort on 15 August 1947; the departure of Lord Mountbatten from India; the meeting where leaders voted for the partition of India; the funerals of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Last year, she gave her entire collection of camera, prints, negatives and memorabilia to the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts for documentation. Today Homai Vyarawalla leads a quiet, independent life in Vadodara. Till recently, she was her own plumber, driver, electrician and cook. These days, she tends to her lush terrace garden and sometimes even makes a shy appearance at lectures and exhibitions held in her honour.





storyteller

His knowledge of his craft occupies an infinite space in continuum, yet Shyam Benegal remains the epitome of simplicity.

The one-man film school makes it look all seem so simple for **Dhanya Nair Sankar**



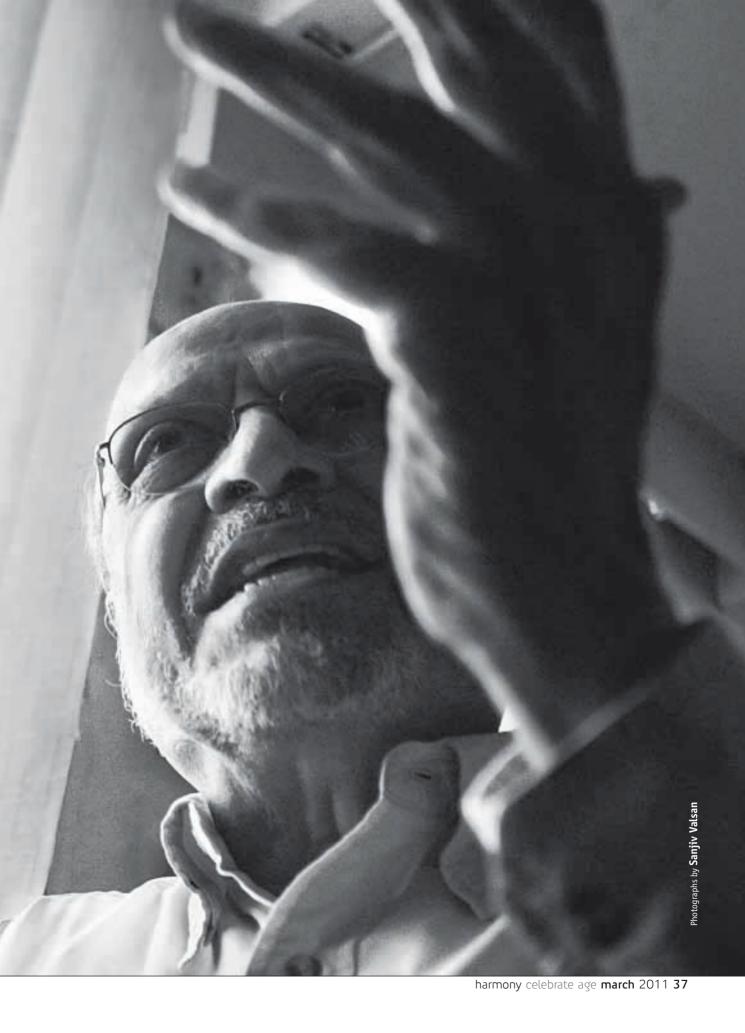
hen *Harmony* first set forth to contact the legendary filmmaker, we expected to go through an assistant at the very least, if not a skein of public relations machinery. But when we called the num-

ber, a soft voice pleasantly informed us that he wasn't "the secretary" but the man himself. We eventually meet Shyam Benegal in his office tucked in an unglamorous part of South Mumbai. Oblivious to the cacophony of activity and phones around him, the 76 year-old is a little tired—he has had two meetings before this—but nevertheless eager to recount his journey from *Ankur* (1973) to *Well Done Abba* (2010).

The world had no choice but to take notice of *Ankur*. Based on a true incident in Benegal's hometown of Hyderabad, it's a tale of sexual and economic exploitation of the helpless and poor at the hands of the rich and mighty. The film dared to touch upon uncomfortable subjects like alcoholism, caste, poverty and religion, bringing to the fore 'the other India' seldom portrayed in the cinematic world. The film was nominated for the Golden Berlin Bear award at the Berlin International Film Festival (1974) and won Benegal his first National Award. More acclaimed films over the years translated into more accolades, including the highest recognition in Indian cinema: the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2005.

He followed up *Ankur* with *Nishant* (1975), keeping his focus trained on rural oppression and sexual exploitation. The story of abduction and rape of a teacher's wife at the hands of powerful *zamindar* and how the village polity turns a deaf ear to the poor husband's pleas for help rocked us out of our comfort zones. While *Ankur* and *Nishant* were a gutwrenching depictions of exploitation, the final installment of his rural trilogy *Manthan* (1977) was a paean to empowerment, and how collective might can change a society and its politics. The 1970s are often termed as definitive years for the Indian cinema movement and the credit for this largely goes to Shyam Benegal's first four films, including *Bhumika* (1978), a biopic on Marathi stage actor Hansa Wadekar and her search for identity and self-fulfillment.

Sensitive, powerful, prolific are just some of the adjectives used to describe him; but they seem plebeian considering Benegal's oeuvre. While trade pundits carped at Benegal's latest offering *Well Done Abba*, the proof of the pudding lies in its taste. It's a heartfelt tale of a driver working in Mumbai who goes back to his village to find a suitable groom for his daughter, only to get mired in the drought plaguing his hometown, and the attendant corruption, administrative idiosyncrasy and bureaucratic red tape, all to build a well on his home turf—the film won Benegal his eighth National Award. "Recognition is certainly flattering," he says, breaking into an endearing smile. "I am a storyteller and I feel best when I am telling one."



IN HIS OWN WORDS:

I found my true calling when I was a kid. I made up my mind to become a filmmaker when I was just eight! Even though I didn't fully understand it, there was something deliciously intriguing about the process. I completed my master's in economics-a subject I loved in my university days-and entered the advertising industry but I wasn't at peace because I knew I had to become a filmmaker. I grew up in Hyderabad where there was no film industry; if I had suggested it to anyone they would have thought I had a hole in my head. As I came from a fairly modest family, there was no question of pursuing my dream in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras. My parents thought I should complete my education so I could at least earn my daily bread.

I was always clear about wanting to make my kind of cinema. When I entered the advertising industry, the first few commercials were being made in India. I saw an opportunity in copywriting; I thought it could help me hone my skills in writing film scripts. There were no film schools then; the only way you could become a director was to assist someone and slowly make your way up the ladder until you first became the first assistant, not quite knowing if you would ever become a director. In the

process, you would get caught up with how your director is making films, be influenced by his style and body of work. I didn't want this. I wanted to be in films to make my kind of films—and nobody else's. In my advertising career that lasted about a decade, I ended up making over a thousand commercials. It was quite a learning experience.

The transition from advertising to filmmaking was not easy. I lasted so long in advertising because there were so few opportunities in films then. I had worked on a script for many years; it turned out to be the script for *Ankur*. I spent over 12 years meeting everyone who counted [in the film industry] but I couldn't get any producer interested. When I finally made it, it turned out to be a big success, critically and commercially. I was here to stay.

I was lucky to be able to finance my films. *Manthan* started it all. It was actually the brainchild of Dr Verghese Kurien, the father of the white revolution. He also helped me write the script for the film. Being the head of the



Gujarat Cooperative Milk Manufacturer's Federation, he inspired dairy farmers to give $\stackrel{?}{\stackrel{?}{\stackrel{?}{?}}}$ 2 each and help produce a movie worth $\stackrel{?}{\stackrel{?}{?}}$ 100,000. They readily helped because the film was about them. They felt connected. Yes, it was an innovative way to produce a film. And thanks to the film's success, I was able to replicate the model to produce movies like *Yatra* and *Antarnaad* [smiles].

I don't quite agree with the tag of 'parallel cinema'. Till the early 1970s, the Indian audience was subjected to a certain kind of cinema with a fixed narrative and lots of songs and dance. The mid-1950s unleashed the creativity of legends like Satyajit Ray, soon followed by Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak. They were the only ones who dared to stray from the formula. For a young bunch of filmmakers, they became very influential figures. A decade after Bengali films, the Malayalam film industry was affected by this change. With time this influence started spreading across Kerala, Karnataka and Orissa. Then finally, by 1970, the style came to Hindi films. I was one of the last Hindi

film directors to follow this road. These films started to be known as 'new' or 'alternate cinema'. But in my opinion, there was nothing alternate about them; it was just a more real form of filmmaking.

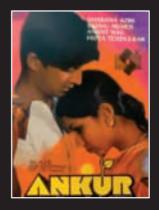
Though I have never imitated anyone, Satyajit Ray has been a major influence. My uncle, who knew about my passion for cinema, recommended that I see Pather Panchali. I was in Calcutta then and found the film so compelling that it was like an explosion in my head. I watched it over a dozen times on that very visit. When I went back to Hyderabad, I wrote to Satyajit Ray saying I wanted to show the film in the film society I had started in my college. By that time he had made his second film. He was very prompt and put me in touch with his producers; whatever he made was then shown in the society. I met him much later, on the sets of Nayak, on the last day of shooting. He was quite gracious. We spoke for long and he answered all my questions. He recommended me for the Homi Bhaba Film Fellowship before I made Ankur. He was my first audience for every film I made until his demise.

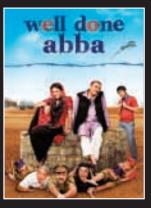
A narrative need not be told from A to Z. Stories have to be told differently as a film has to be an experience. If it is not an experience and does not offer any kind of insight, it's a film not worth having been made. That's one reason why I have been a bit restless in the manner I choose subjects. I have made so many different kinds of films; one of them has been biographical, others are based on history, literature and even mythology. I don't like to repeat my subjects either in terms of form or the genre. Unless you reinvent yourself, you are certainly not likely to do something different from what you have done before. I give a lot of thought before sketching characters, their personalities, quirks, social environment, personal relations and gender relations. These are the multiple layers present in everyone. All these bring out the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Mahabharata is the greatest epic of all times, including our times. I have always believed that it throws up all possible human archetypes. One could use these whenever, wherever, and in whatever time period, ancient or contemporary. I used the idea for my film *Kalyug*. The backdrop of the story was an industrial family collapsing much like the one in the *Mahabharata*. It is certainly an evergreen subject because the portrayal of human spirit in the epic can withstand the test of time. I haven't seen the recent film *Rajneeti* but kudos to Prakash Jha for drawing inspiration from the epic because it's challenging to draw your characters from it and do justice to them.

I think I am a feminist. To me, feminism means men and women are equal. I don't look at it the way they do in Europe and America, where men and women are competitively equal. I think they should be complementarily equal. I believe both men and women are arcs; they make

FILMOGRAPHY





ANKUR 1973

NISHANT 1975

MANTHAN 1977

BHUMIKA 1978

JUNOON 1979

AROHAN 1982

KALYUG 1982

TRIKAAL 1986

SURAJ KA SATVAN GHODA 1993

MAMMO 1995

SARDARI BEGUM 1997

SAMAR 1999

ZUBEIDA 2001

WELCOME TO SAJJANPUR 2008

WELL DONE ABBA 2009

a healthy circle when they come together, and only then is there greater harmony. We have had a long history of oppression of women. I believe in women's empowerment and have consciously created strong female leads in some of my films, hoping they could serve as role models. With our kind of democracy, it is actually possible for women to exercise their rights and emerge stronger.

The days I have spent in Parliament have been a great learning experience. As a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, I am not really a 24/7 parliamentarian. But I attend meetings on subjects I am interested in, such as land acquisition, media, television, and media ethics. I actively participate in discussions on these subjects and listen to other voices, which open my eyes to the larger issues. However, I will not get into active policymaking as I don't have the knowledge required for that kind of magnificent job.

I like travelling, especially to rural pockets and to my roots. Each time I travel to Hyderabad, the city fascinates

COVER FEATURE

Hyderabad is me. many things-there is the very old city, the old-new city of the 20th century and now the new-new city. It has seen all kinds of periods and, amazingly, it's going through yet another transition. You will see all kinds of people who have been part of this transition; they make for interesting case studies. A lot of my movies are, therefore, set in Andhra Pradesh. I go to rural areas for research to ensure I correctly depict the feel of the place.



All my films use a particular dialect as well. I think using the local dialect is not just useful but vital for the film's grammar. A film that doesn't get the local idiom right loses out on credibility. If you want your story to have universal appeal, your characters need to be identifiable. They cannot look like exotic species in an alien land.

People go to the cinema not to be persuaded but entertained. So it is foolhardy to expect a single film to bring in social change. For instance, the cinema of the

1970s and the 1980s did have some kind of impact on the younger generation, but it was also the social and political situation of the times that created the impact. Films can certainly raise awareness about a certain issue, propagate it and make the audience think. But there's nothing wrong in making films solely for the sake of entertainment. Cinema is both an art and industry. Like any business, it also works for the motive of profit. And while some filmmakers strike a balance between what is artistic and commercially viable, there are others who choose only entertainment. There is nothing wrong with it.

We are now perceived as intelligent filmmakers. We are very rooted in our

culture and Indian films, by and large, have always reflected that. Moreover, with time, Indian filmmakers have become bold. They are aware of the changing audience and changing tastes and no longer shy away from technology. Their scripts have become foolproof. Now, more and more foreigners are watching us for our global appeal. I think some directors to watch out for include Debasheesh Banerjee, Rituparno Ghosh, Vishal Bhardwaj and Anusha Rizvi.

I hope my students have benefitted from what I've taught them. I am chairman of the academic council at

Whistling Woods, a film school in Mumbai, and also teach at other film schools around the world. Sadly, I haven't done much teaching in the past three years. These film-makers in the making have two distinct advantages: their lack of inhibition, and their intelligence. They are not only filmmakers but filmmakers with class for they are all thinkers. Young filmmakers also don't shy away from taking risks and breaking away from the norm.

My daughter Pia has also been confident enough to

follow her heart. She is her own person—she has dabbled in fashion design and designed costumes for my films; produced some of my early documentaries; and produced and directed some ad films. I am happy with whatever she does because she is so mature. To me, that's a sign of successful parenting.

People go to the cinema not to be persuaded but entertained. It's foolhardy to expect a single film to bring in social change. Films can certainly raise awareness about a certain issue but there's nothing wrong in making films solely for entertainment

People call Neera and I the 'golden couple' but there's no big secret to it. For any marriage to succeed, the partners have to remain compatible. The initial romance might go but the marriage has to sustain itself. They should know each other; be aware of each other's likes, dislikes, aberrations and tempers. It is not just

about compatibility but being continuously so—you can't say I am going to be compatible today and forget about it tomorrow. There is never a time when you can sit back and say everything is hunky-dory. All relationships need to be dynamic and alive; they must be continuously worked on.

Ageing is certainly an endearing process. I don't think of it as a death knell at all. One of the most crucial things in life is not to give up. If you have given up, you are useless to yourself and to life. Positive ageing is just a natural extension of this attitude. **

he first day at school.

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen.

The first drama you got a part in.

The first day at college.

The first date you went on.

The first kiss.

The first time you proposed.

The first job interview.

The first board meeting you addressed.

The first day after retirement.

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Dancing to my MOTHER'S TUNE

Internationally acclaimed Bharatanatyam dancer Sharanya Chandran has learnt the greatest lessons of life and dance from her mother Padmashri Geeta Chandran. **Shilpi Shukla** meets the daughter and sees a mirror image of the mother

didn't choose dance; it chose me. Born into a family with a tradition of dance, I never really had to make a conscious effort of having to—or for that matter not having to—attend a one-hour dance session every day. Dance was the done thing in our house. I began dancing at the age of four.

Mom is a wonderful teacher. Dance is an extension of one's inner persona. You have to lead a certain lifestyle to be able to say what you are saying through your dance in a credible way. Mom has instilled in me the value of honesty and humility; not just in dance but in every aspect of life.

I still get overjoyed every time someone claps for her. Usually, during most of Mom's performances, I am busy with some task or the other backstage. But even then, when I hear the applause reverberating through the auditorium, I feel totally thrilled and amazed.

She's always open to suggestions. Despite over 30 years of dance experience to her credit, she is open to all the radical experiments that I suggest, even though I still have a lot left to learn from her. While we maintain the *guru-shishya parampara*, she has always given me the freedom to express myself freely during my stage performances.

Her diligence and energy amaze me. I have not seen anyone handling so many tasks at the same time—that too

without cribbing, complaining or getting worn out. She teaches dance, performs on stage, works with her group; conceptualises fresh ideas for each performance; works out the music for her students' dance shows; attends social events...the list goes on. Phew! Mom is meaningfully occupied each and every hour of the day. And she has this amazing boundless energy and enthusiasm for life. Every time I see her multitasking so impeccably, I feel rejuvenated, and say to myself, "You can do it too!"

If only Mom was not as methodical [sighs]. We think alike and rarely fight. But my room is a sore issue between us. She is very meticulous. She believes in keeping everything in its rightful place. Every time she enters my room, she walks out expressing her deep disapproval about how unorganised I am and how my room is always in a state of mess. I fail to understand why she comes into my room when she knows what lies in wait for her [laughs]. We have now agreed to disagree with each other on this issue for the rest of our lives. So this leaves us with little scope for fights and debates.

Mom refuses to delegate. She is a workaholic. Even when it comes to trivial tasks, she will insist on doing it herself. While it's good to be hardworking and take charge of life, at times it is important to take things easy. She wants to handle everything herself, and ends up exerting a lot of pressure on her health and wellbeing. And that annoys me a lot.

Mom does not care whether I win or lose, but she always urges me to give my best shot. Being her daughter, the bar of excellence is set very high for me. So performing with her is as daunting as it is enjoyable. The most intimidating part is that she is so versatile and unpredictable while dancing that you never know when she might come up with a new step, leaving you totally baffled



We bond over *riyaz*. I look forward to practising with her every day. These are among our best family moments. This is when we get to talk to each other—as teacher and student, and mother and daughter—through the language of dance. Our best 'silent' conversations happen during *riyaz*.

Our family is our biggest asset. My father, mother and I prefer to spend time at home talking to each other rather than socialise or party aimlessly outside. We like to do things together as a family: attending social events and concerts; travelling; watching movies; listening to music; and sharing little mundane occurrences with each other and sometimes just sharing a comfortable quietude.

Mom and I are best buddies. Unlike most youngsters today, I can share almost everything with my mother. More than a mother, she's a great friend and a true confidant. I share the silliest thoughts and routine chores with her, and she is always all ears to my elaborate nonsensical conversations. Though she was a strict parent when I was in my teens, she never imposed her choices or decisions on me. We are similar in every way but one. Both of us are hardworking, sincere, focused, perseverant, reserved and emotional. However, she is more straightforward and blunt, and I am more easygoing, like my father.

I often see a little girl in her. I don't know when the equation changed but now I find myself mothering her more than she mothers me. Whenever we go out, I tell her what to wear. Whether it is her dance performance, makeup, dress, health, food, sleep, or her tendency to be a workaholic, I often have to take care of the little girl in her. At times, I feel she needs me more than I need her now [smiles].

She taught me never to question the Almighty's decision. My grandfather expired a few days before my fifth birthday. All my birthday plans

were cancelled that year. It was then that Mom persuaded everyone in our family to celebrate my birthday. Despite having a heavy heart, she thoughtfully went about making all arrangements for my special day. That memory holds a special place in my heart. Not only did she show her love and care for me but I learnt a great lesson: have faith in God and accept every difficult situation with a smile.

Performing with Mom enthrals and scares me. Being Geeta Chandran's daughter, the bar of excellence is set very high for me. So performing with her is as daunting as it is enjoyable. The most intimidating part is that she is so versatile and unpredictable while dancing that you never know when she might come up with a new step, leaving you totally baffled.

Mom is a champ. She is a real fighter. She does not care whether I win or lose, but she always urges me to give it my best shot. It's important to her how spiritedly I take up challenges. She has always maintained that participating is more important than winning; an attitude that has helped me make a mark in different fields at a very young age. **

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<mark>money matters</mark> by DR Priya mutalik-desai

PENSION TENSION:

A closer look at the National Pension Scheme

f recollection is the lot of the elderly, real time is the lot of the young and 'youngish'. No surprise then that uttering the words National Pension Scheme (NPS) to the lay individual under 50 invites expressions of bovine ignorance. The NPS is still making baby steps. It was launched not so long ago, in May 2009, by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), a government arm that promotes income security among the elderly. The PFRDA's primary duties include establishing, developing and regulating pension funds, and protecting the interests of pension scheme subscribers. Any Indian citizen between 18 and 55 qualifies.

For those fortunate ones who can afford to build toward social security, a well-designed pension plan is a vital ingredient in a prudent retirement. The answer to the question 'why have one?' is simple. Money invested early at a young age multiplies through compounding over the years. Subscribing early in one's working career is, therefore, wise. While shopping around, you'll discover the NPS is hardly a novelty. Competitors abound. Various public-sector corporations such as LIC and SBI, as well as private-sector companies like Kotak Life and Sahara Life, offer pension plans. Others with foreign partnerships like ICICI Prudential, Bajaj Allianz, Birla Sun Life, Tata-AIG, Bharti AXA, ING Vysya, Aegeon Religare, and Future Generali, are also viable options depending on your investment portfolio. If there are so many fish in the sea, what's so special about the NPS? The NPS has better coverage than other plans. Small investors and high net-worth individuals stand to gain. A single registration number, like PAN, makes it portable. A designated Permanent Retirement Account Number lets you take your NPS subscription anywhere in India, notwithstanding change of residence between neighbourhoods, cities or states. It includes India's vast unorganised sector, which more exclusive pension schemes programmatically disqualify.

Some stipulations apply. The NPS is mandatory for government employees joining after January 2004, and optional for the private and unorganised sectors. A few numbers illustrate the vastness the NPS hopes to cover. The number of Indian elderly (60 years and above) would have increased 107 per cent to an awesome 113 million from 1991 to 2016. Subsequently, the percentage of the elderly is projected to increase from 8.9 per cent in 2016 to 13.3 per cent by 2026. This great sea of old people is the potential subscription base the PFRDA aims to attract. Grandiose aims indeed,

but how robust and reliable is the NPS really? Here's an outline of its key features.

NPS investors create mixed options from three available asset classes. The first option (E) involves high investment exposure in equity (mainly index funds) capped at 50 per cent. This is best suited to investors with an appetite for high risk. The second option (C) denotes high exposure in fixed-income instruments like liquid funds, corporate debt instruments, fixed deposits, and infrastructure bonds that are aimed at investors who don't enjoy high stakes. The last (G) is a mix of pure fixed investment products. This offers low returns at low risk. Investors who do not pick an option mix can opt for the Active Choice Life Cycle Fund. In this case, the asset allocation from the three classes, (E), (C), and (G), will be determined by the fund manager based on the investor's age.

Question: Holmes, how does the NPS operate? **Answer:** Elementary, my dear Watson.

Specifically, the NPS modus operandi is split between contact points and fund managers. Investors deal directly with their respective Point of Presence (POP), or banks. Six entities selected by PFRDA are designated fund managers. Current fund managers are UTI, SBI, ICICI Prudential, Reliance Capital, IDFC, and Kotak Mahindra. Fund managers run various plans comprising equity, government securities, and corporate bonds. Investors may select their own plan mix, a fund manager and, better still, switch fund managers once a year if desired.

Nuts and bolts about costs: The NPS's minimum contribution per annum is ₹ 6,000. Payments as low as ₹ 500 at least four times a year are also allowed. According to current rules, and unlike NAVs for mutual funds, the NPS investment's Net Asset Value (NAV) is declared once a year. Fund managers charge a low fund management fee of 0.0009 per cent. Tax benefits are available under Section 80C of the Income Tax Act. On maturity (turning 60 years of age), an investor must invest 40 per cent of the accumulated pension corpus in annuities arranged via a life insurance company. This allows for a flow of fixed income during the investor's retirement years. The deal gets sweeter with 'Swavalamban'. Via this scheme, the government will contribute ₹ 1,000 every year for three successive years to the investor's subscription. Only those signing up for the NPS in the current financial year are entitled to gain from Swavalamban. Then there's NPS-Lite, which is designed for hard-up wage-earners to help them grow a small fund of savings during their working years.

Tax-wise too, NPS investors might stand to gain. Previously, the NPS pension corpus was taxed on maturity. If implemented as it stands, the revised Direct Tax Code will keep the NPS out of the tax net. This would be a big incentive for prospective pension subscribers. The proposed EEE (exempt-exempt) method of taxation for NPS gives hope that the NPS will become exempt from taxes in all its three operative stages—deposit, appreciation and withdrawal.

Fees are an investor's nemesis. They get a bad rap because they are typically high. In contrast, the NPS boasts the lowest fund management charge. Its 0.0009 per cent, compared to the 0.75-1.75 per cent charged by other pension companies per year, lets the NPS truly take the cake. In its cost feature alone, the NPS not only beats every other pension/annuity deal out there. It also bests the charges of mutual funds and ULIPs. These merits hold true even when the costs incurred towards record-keeping, ₹ 350 per annum, and per transaction costs are considered. All in all, the NPS's low-cost features merit close attention because you end up getting more, through compounding, for less money spent.

Transparency, flexibility and portability are the strengths of the NPS. So, theoretically, it should be everywhere. But the NPS has failed to take off. Conventional reasons prevail. Poor publicity, widespread financial illiteracy, and limited faith in government initiatives have left the NPS in the dust. Most of all, however, investors are still unfamiliar with the concept, structure and responsibilities of social security. They are no less unexposed to the advantages of social security. Surrendering a small portion of your income over your working career in preparation for a more secure retirement is an utterly foreign notion to most Indians. As far as most people go, the NPS might as well not exist.

Who's to blame? Well, the government of course. They have never made it their business to educate people about social security and its benefits. Nor have they considered enumerating the distinctions between pension plans and pure investments, like equities and mutual funds. Furthermore, abstruse language in official documents discourage even the sharpest financial planners to recommend NPS to the lay individual. For their part, ordinary investors lack the time and training to digest the fine print regarding cash flows and income requirements in pension plan documents. One could say the ignorance around social security is almost well-deserved.

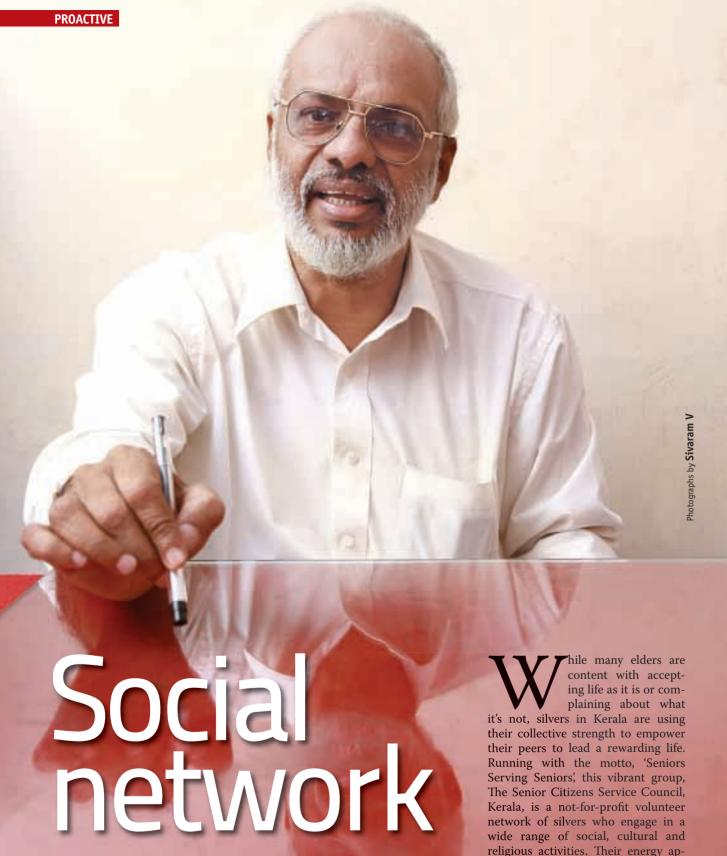
The poorly performing NPS has set off alarm bells. Yet again, figures tell us how things stand. A meagre collection of ₹ 480 million by the PFRDA, and the fact that 90 per cent of POPs, most of which are located in urban areas, under-perform, is a clear indication of how little the NPS is known and/or subscribed to. It would take a miracle or two for the NPS to make a dent in towns and villages.

To succeed, compete and, one day, outperform its competitors, the NPS needs to apply a distribution-driven philosophy. So far, the PFRDA had wrongly assumed that POPs would mobilise funds and disseminate the merits of the NPS. Now, hard-hitting marketing must be deployed to propel the NPS into the common imagination of those lucky bank account holders. Incentives must be offered to POPs in the form of commissions to revert the dismal record of NPS-enabled POPs. A mere 788 branches out of a total of 30,057 branches of 14 POPs were NPS-enabled in July 2010. In return for commissions, POPs must be vested with the responsibility of marketing the NPS innovatively. To kick off the cure, the government's Bajpai Committee will apparently discover the precise reasons behind the NPS's failure, and strategise a recovery. A report, it is alleged, is expected soon.

Let's face it. The NPS is a kid in diapers. It's too early to tell what its fate will be. Regardless, no pension scheme, neither the NPS nor any other, can become the sole support of a retiree. That said, pensions can help, and do. Think of a pension plan as a paycheque you receive for not having to work after 60. Honestly, how many would refuse that?

Dr Priya Mutalik-Desai, 70, is a Mumbai-based economist and writer





Kerala's first formal forum for elders is empowering thousands of silvers across the state, discovers Nisary Mahesh

Kerala, is a not-for-profit volunteer network of silvers who engage in a wide range of social, cultural and religious activities. Their energy appears to be infectious. According to the founder and state president of the Council, N Ananthakrishnan (above), the organisation had just five members when it was established in 2008. "Today, we have 3,000 members across all 14 districts of Kerala, with representatives from each district," he beams. Viral publicity travelled through different associations, clubs and NGOs across the state, making it the largest and the first formal association of seniors in Kerala.

The idea took root in 2007, when Ananthakrishnan was travelling with friends and discussing the challenges faced by seniors. His experience as a member of the Kerala NGO Union and general secretary of the Joint Council-State Service Organisation proved invaluable in the establishment of the council.

So how does the Council motivate silvers to live life to the fullest? "We are dedicated to providing seniors a means to enhancing their well-being as well as ensuring their participation in planning and improving the services that affect them," explains Ananthakrishnan, adding that the Council also gives seniors a strong common voice with an awareness of issues that concern them.

For instance, it encourages seniors to actively engage in hobbies such as language studies, yoga and meditation, and seminars and symposia on topics such as fine arts, literature, music and culture. Eminent speakers, writers and personalities are invited to address senior citizens on various subjects, adding authenticity and richness to these events. "It is an environment that inspires them to live with dignity and keeps them away from loneliness," remarks Haneefa Rawther, secretary of the Council.

In Thiruvananthapuram, retired teachers conduct weekly classes in Tamil and Sanskrit for 50 senior students in their homes, free of charge. "We emphasise language studies because it keeps the mind active and reduces the chances of dementia," says Ananthakrishnan. "Learning Sanskrit



"It's the duty of individuals, NGOs and the government to protect silvers from abuse, and to provide them with adequate health benefits"

is quite a hit as it helps seniors read the scriptures while Tamil helps them understand Siddha medicine. Also, as Thiruvananthapuram is close to Tamil Nadu, we even have senior Tamilians learning the language with a deep yearning to read signboards, at least."

Seated in the Council's head office in Oottumuri, Thiruvananthapuram, Ananthakrishnan, a former Central Government employee, points out, "We have so much time after we retire. Why don't we use it actively?" There are files stacked everywhere in the office and as if to explain their omnipresence, he quickly adds, "We regularly write to the authorities about the problems and issues faced by senior citizens." He culls a letter the Council wrote to the government listing a host of suggestions including requests to extend concessions on railway tickets and essential services to seniors; the establishment of welfare units and recreational centres for the elderly in each civic ward; a mandatory geriatric ward in every hospital; a mobile clinic and laboratory for seniors in all hospitals; and a legal cell for silvers.

Ananthakrishnan points out that Kerala tops the list of all Indian states in terms of longevity but neighbouring states are streets ahead in terms of infrastructure for seniors. Legal support services are also a crying need, he adds. "We have written to the chief minister requesting a pension of ₹ 1,000 for senior citizens who have no other income," he reveals. "The 2006 Budget included such a policy but it has come to naught."

Moving on, he explains that interactive sessions are an effective means to bring the challenges faced by seniors to the government's attention. "Last year, we organised a mass satyagraha before the State Secretariat to protest the negligence of seniors by the government." Then, there was a 'Dignified and Silent Protest' by Council members in Thiruvananthapuram on Seniors Citizens' National Protest Day on 16 August last year. The protest was organised by the Joint Action Committee of Senior Citizens, with a view to highlighting the fact that most of the rights conferred on silvers by the Constitution were not being safeguarded. "Seniors are the roots of our country and the government needs to care for them," affirms Rawther.

Joint families are fast disappearing in Kerala and many elders now live alone. For many, the council fills a void and offers a support system. It's a perfect arrangement, as M Divakaran, a Council member in Thiruvananthapuram, explains. "I visit the Council's office quite often. We take part in heated discussions about politics, movies, cricket, people around us... anything and everything. We help each other with simple things like getting a new gas connection. It makes me feel useful unlike many seniors who sink into a state of depression." The Pillais, also from Thiruvananthapuram, were pleasantly surprised and very grateful for the helping hand





Besides inviting eminent speakers, the committee meets every Monday to resolve family disputes and elder abuse

like to keep abreast of senior-related news and activities, the Council began

circulating a monthly called *Shanthiparvam* in 2010. Annual membership is as little as ₹ 100; for seniors without a source of income, the fee is ₹ 10. "As our numbers are fast increasing and most of our services are free, even ₹ 10 per head is a considerable sum," says Ananthakrishnan. Donations from well-wishers, member donations and sponsorships keep the Council's activities alive and kicking. "Our major expenses are our events and the publication of the magazine," he reveals.

Next on the Council's agenda are computer classes, teaching the Veda and, most important, a placement cell for seniors who want to work after retirement. "It's not just the duty of individuals or NGOs but the government, in particular, to look after the welfare of seniors, protect them from exploitation and abuse, and to provide them with adequate health benefits," says the sexagenarian, adding emphatically, "Is politics a profession or a service?"

of senior volunteers when they shifted house. "There is so much to be done at a time like this and we received assistance in so many ways," they say. "This encouraged us to become members of the Council."

The Council's executive committee and senior office-bearers meet every Monday to discuss various issues like settling family disputes and elder abuse. Ananthakrishnan recalls the case of a couple in Thiruvananthapuram who were being coerced by their son-in-law to hand over ownership of three buildings they owned. As a result, they were forced to live in rented accommodation. The Council intervened and settled the matter amicably and also asked the daughter to give her parents ₹ 5,000 every month.

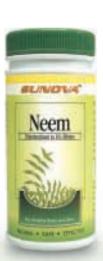
On a lighter note, culturally inclined silvers have a blast at activities organised by the Council. Topping the charts was last year's 'Music Nite' and a symposium on literature and culture called 'Sahiti Sallapam'. For elders who

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Son of the SOLL

A wealthy but simple farmer, Meleth Devassy Ouseph tells **Nisary Mahesh** that the secret to happiness—and serenity—lies in the little things in life

e's something of an anachronism, wrinkled hands gently turning over a curling leaf on a guava tree in his garden. This fertile plot, the ancestral home it embraces and the patriarch who resides in it are together an oasis of tranquillity in the heart of bustling Thrissur in Kerala. Right off the bat, his simple words carry a poignant message. "I enjoy every moment of life and I laugh at all the little things. I enjoy the best part of life, nature, which you have missed all your life," says Meleth Devassy Ouseph, pointing in the direction of traffic hooting on the main road nearby.

Hailing from a wealthy Syrian Christian family for whom agriculture has always been a way of life, our centenarian, clad in a simple *mundu* (*dhoti*), leads us down the garden path. "I love the smell of the soil when the first raindrops fall," he adds with childlike simplicity. Even though his face reflects the ravages of time, Ouseph is surprisingly agile for someone who crossed a century last year. Stepping into the veranda, he invites us to be seated. Neither his speech nor his gestures betray his age. "Father still refuses to use a hose to water the plants. He still draws water from the well," remarks Jose, Ouseph's son with whom he lives.

Memories of yesteryear are tucked into every nook and cranny of this modest old-style home complete with tile roof on a half-acre plot in Ayyanthole. And thus, over a steaming cup of tea, we begin our stroll down memory lane. Ouseph, the fourth of five siblings, says his father was an avid agriculturist who encouraged all his sons to love the land.

Ayyanthole then was a picturesque little village with a bucolic beauty. Where buses and cars now whiz by, villagers once ambled at an unhurried pace. In the abundant paddy

fields in the neighbouring Puzhakkal, where the family owned several acres of land, farmers sang to unwind at the end of a long, tiring day and children frolicked amid the vegetation. Now Puzhakkal is on its way to becoming a satellite township.

Sepia-tinted memories are rudely interrupted by the loud ringing of the telephone. Ouseph answers the call, which is from the Senior Citizen's Council of Thrissur. He chuckles softly, explaining that the council had just felicitated him on being a centenarian. He then continues to turn back the pages. Ouseph became a "full-fledged farmer" at the age of 16, when he began to sell his own produce. He continued farming till he turned 75, when the family sold most of their land as it became difficult to hire workers when Thrissur began responding fast to the call of urbanisation. It's a way of life he simply "cannot understand".

Ouseph was married at the age of 21 to Achayi, who was just 15 then. "I was the first bridegroom to drive to his bride's village in a car," he recalls. "There were only four cars in Thrissur then." The hired 'black beauty' was an old Ambassador, the object of intense curiosity among the village boys.

Memories like this make Ouseph's face crumple into a broad smile and he presses on enthusiastically. He fondly recalls the first movie he and Achayi watched together. "It was called *Nalla Thankam* and there was only one cinema hall in Thrissur at the time." The film was about a girl from a poor family who suffered in her husband's home. "In those days, people measured a family in terms of the land and cattle they owned. Nowadays people don't want their daughters to marry into an agricultural family. All they care about is how much money they will get," says our centenarian, furious at the dowry system.



Ouseph and Achayi had seven sons and three daughters, of which seven survive. "If you count all my children, grand-children, spouses and great-grandchildren, we are 93 in our extended family." The whole family gets together once a year for the church feast or on Christmas Eve. "It's a lot of fun when we all meet," he says.

But a chapter seemed to close in Ouseph's life when Achayi passed away last year. The couple had been married 78 years. With all his siblings also deceased, he is the only surviving member of his immediate family. Still, Ouseph is in surprisingly good health for his age and visits the local doctor only once in a few months for routine check-ups. "I don't need a walking stick or spectacles." Jose chips in, saying, "Father still reads old property documents written in old-style handwriting. People sometimes bring them to him to translate."

So what's the secret of his longevity? "I am not a disciplinarian. I don't care for all those low-calorie diets," says Ouseph categorically. His day begins at 7 am with a cup of tea. Then he takes a stroll in the garden and follows that with a bowl of *kanji* (rice gruel) for breakfast. After lunch and a nap, he returns to the garden to tend to the plants. "We grow whatever we eat—banana, guava, spinach, beans, lady's finger, brinjal, bitter and sweet gourd and tomatoes," he lists, rattling off a virtual grocery list. Not surprisingly, Ouseph's farming skills made it to the airwaves, on a show he hosted on All India Radio, called *Krishi Deepam* (Farming Tips). He used to take a regular stroll to the nearby junction but, pointing to Jose, he adds with an affectionate smile, "Nowadays, they [Jose and his wife] will not let me go alone as they are scared."

When he does venture out, Ouseph is baffled by the ways of the modern world and intrigued by glimpses of busy city life. He never misses Sunday Mass at the nearby church. Only, instead of walking, he now travels in an auto-rick-shaw. His other regular outing is a trip to the barber twice a month and he insists on going alone!

His mind too remains agile, which is evident as he gleefully debates over—correctly—the dates of major events like the 'great flood' in Kerala in 1923 and cyclone in 1941, with Jose. Mentioning these events reminds him of a milestone for the Ouseph family, a visit to their home by former prime minister Indira Gandhi, who was in Thrissur for a political campaign. "She came here to rest because ours was the only house in this street then," he says, his voice brimming with pride.

Ouseph says he dearly misses his friends. "When I stopped hearing from them one by one, I guessed they might have left this world. I read about a few of them in the obituary columns. "Then, with a touch of sadness, he adds, "There's no depth in relationships today."



"I enjoy every moment of life and I laugh at all the little things. I love the smell of the soil when the first raindrops fall"

A keen observation from a man who has lived by the principle 'a family that prays together, stays together.' Evidently, he passed on this maxim to his children. "We strictly follow old Christian traditions like the evening prayer where the entire family participates," says daughter Markili Jose. "It's not something many families do today." What is the most valuable lesson she's learnt from her father? "We were taught to live life with simplicity and self-respect rather than ape trends."

It's a sentiment shared by the parish priest of the church Ouseph attends, Father Seby Kanjirathingal. "Today's generation has a lot to learn from Ouseph *chettan* [elder brother]," he points out. "We are past masters at shrugging off our duties and responsibilities by blaming others or circumstances. But the sincerity with which he approaches the little things in life is outstanding." **

Ear to the ground

A lesser known treatment option for nerve deafness, cochlear implant surgery has life-changing potential, reports **Dhanya Nair Sankar**

or 70 year-old K N S Mani, a Bengaluru-based retired banker who has battled deafness for most of his adult life, the power of hearing is not just a gift from God but a fantastic innovation of science and technology. Following a normal childhood, Mani began to suffer hearing loss when in college. Diagnosed with nerve deafness, which typically occurs when a part of the inner ear or the hair cells are damaged or destroyed, an inner ear surgery restored his hearing for some years. But by the time he reached his 30s, Mani couldn't hear at all. By then, he was married and working with a bank. "For 35 long years, I only communicated through lip reading," he says. "I somehow managed to articulate my thoughts thanks to the support and kindness of my family and colleagues."

As he grew older, his grown-up sons once again looked to science for answers—they stumbled upon a procedure called cochlear implant surgery. In July 2005, Mani, then 65, underwent this little-known surgery. The results were life-changing. "Hearing aids simply amplify sound; one cannot really identify the sound and communicate well," he explains. "Cochlear [auditory] implant surgery gave me my independence."

A cochlear implant (CI) is a surgically implanted electronic device that can restore hearing and improve communication abilities of people who have severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss (nerve deafness). It is also often referred to as a bionic ear. Unlike a hearing aid, CI transforms speech and other sounds into electrical



energy that is used to stimulate the surviving auditory nerve fibres in the inner ear. A popular treatment for deaf children, it wasn't thought to be an option for silvers. But a 2004 study conducted by New York University's

Langone Medical Centre suggested that the 50-plus population suffering from profound hearing loss could benefit substantially from this surgery. Since then, it has become very popular among silvers in the US and UK. By 2009, approximately 488,000 patients worldwide (300,000 in the US alone) had undergone this surgery.

In India, however, the figures are negligible, with lack of awareness being the major reason. "In India most CI surgeries are performed on the paediatric population," says Dr Shankar Medikeri, lead cochlear implant consultant at Medikeri's Super Specialty ENT Centre in Bengaluru. "The procedure has equally high potential for the elderly. However, most silvers renounce their right to quality of life with ageing and prefer to live with debilities."

THE IMPLANT

The CI is surgically placed under the skin behind the ear and consists of external and internal sections. The internal section comprises a receiver and stimulator secured in bone beneath the skin, which converts signals into electric impulses and sends them through an internal cable to electrodes wound through the cochlea, which in turn sends the impulses to the nerves in the scala tympani (a cavity in the cochlea) and then directly to the brain through the auditory nerve system.

The external part consists of one or more microphones, which pick up sound from the environment; a speech processor to filter sound, prioritise audible speech, split it into channels and send the electrical sound signals through a thin cable to the transmitter; and the transmitter, which is a coil held in position by a magnet placed behind the ear to transmit power and the processed sound signals to the internal device by electromagnetic induction.

Considered an advanced ear surgery, the CI device is surgically placed under general anaesthesia. "In experienced hands, it takes about two hours and hospitalisation ranges from a day to two," says Dr Ameet Kishore, senior ENT consultant and lead cochlear implant surgeon at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Delhi.

POST-OPERATIVE THERAPY

The surgery, however, doesn't automatically produce the end result; patients also need to undergo intense post-operative therapy, which can last from two months to a year. "The processor [external component] of the device needs to be connected to allow the recipient to hear," elaborates Dr Kishore. "The 'switching on' of the implant takes place about three weeks after the surgery. Following this the device needs to be fine-tuned with periodic mapping or programming over a few months. During this period, the patient also undergoes hearing therapy to get accustomed to the new sound."

"The CI produces an electronic or bionic sound, which the audiologist has to make sure the patient understands," says Dr Rajesh Patadia, senior consultant audiologist at Lilavati and Hinduja hospitals in Mumbai. "Also, unlike children who are born deaf, elderly patients already have a memory of the original sound. An audiologist connects the new bionic sound to this brain memory." This process is called mapping and is essential to make sure patients understand the different speeches and sound. "Patients are made to hear different sounds and speeches ranging from a frequency of 20 hertz to 20,000 hertz," he adds. "They are also made to hear different vowels, shrill to bass. The process is an integral part of surgery and should be done as soon as the surgery wound heals, which is normally within two to six weeks. Depending on the patient's ability, it takes anywhere between eight months and a year to complete this procedure."

As it also brings about a huge shift in the way one communicates, there is extensive counselling prior to the surgery. "Counselling dispels exaggerated expectations of getting back original hearing power and speech restoration," says Dr Krishna Vora, senior ENT specialist at Bhatia Hospital in Mumbai. "Meeting other people one's age is also encouraging," adds

DOS AND DON'TS

- The CI device has to be used with utmost care.
- While patients can undertake everyday activities like walking and exercising, they should ensure the external device is always dry.
- Ideally, they should remove it while going for a swim.
- Patients should ensure they don't get any kind of ear infection.
- They should avoid jerky movements while travelling.
- Direct injury to the head should be avoided at every cost.
- If patients have to take a MRI/CT scan, they should tell the doctor about the surgery and the presence of a magnet inside the body.

Dr Medikeri. The restored hearing in an elderly patient may not match that of a younger patient and silvers might also face limitations in processing implant signals. Counselling helps patients thoroughly comprehend the exact impact of implants.

K N S Mani in Bengaluru was initially very apprehensive about the surgery but counselling helped change his and his family's opinion. "When I first heard about CI, I wanted to continue living with my deafness," he reveals. "For over a month, my doctor counselled me on the various benefits, especially communicating without depending on my wife, who has been a go-between me and other people in the past. That changed my mind."

THE AGE FACTOR

While the age of the patient is not a determining factor for surgery, there are some other imperatives. "With

1751

Benjamin Franklin was the first to suggest that electricity could produce hearing sensations in a deaf person

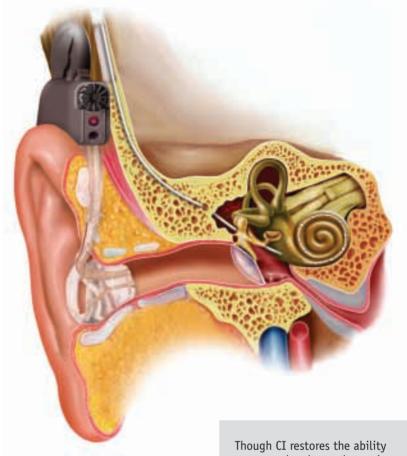
1957

The first CI surgery was reported in France

1980s

The first multichannel implants were approved by the FDA in the US

age, the cochlea [inner ear] undergoes degeneration," says Dr Vora. "As a result, hearing starts deteriorating gradually. Though CI is an option, not everyone is a suitable candidate. The surgery is recommended only when the patient's hearing is less than 40 per cent despite powerful hearing aids. The indicator of how well a person would hear after CI is not age but for how long the patient has been deaf before getting the implant." For CI to be a viable option, the patient should feel he is not benefitting from hearing aids; have profound hearing loss; bilateral hearing loss; one functionary auditory nerve; and should have lived without hearing for at least some time. "Before the surgery, we try various hearing aids on patients and make sure they can't benefit from any of these," says Dr Medikeri.



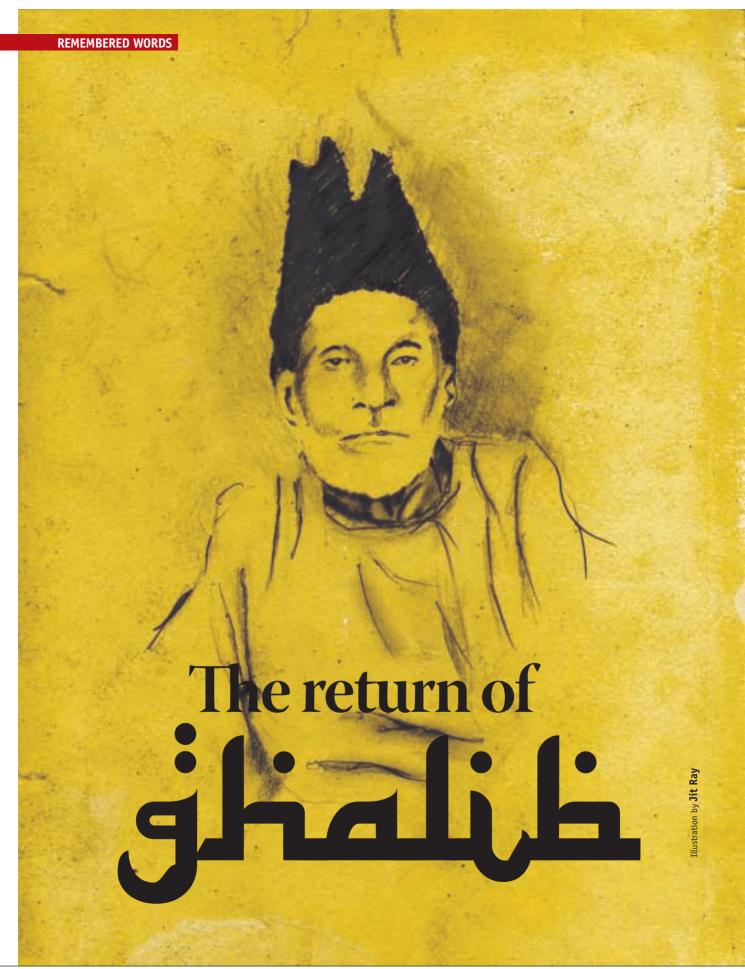
BENEFITS AND COMPLICATIONS

A lifestyle-enhancing device, the CI improves the ability to recognise everyday and soft sounds, improves speech and comprehension, elevates sensory pleasures (music, for instance), and enhances the general feeling of connectedness with the world. Still, some doctors caution patients about certain complications that may or may not arise after surgery. "Persistent giddiness, tinnitus, numbness around the ear, device failure mainly owing to breakage of wires inside the scalp or leakage of body fluids into the device, infection surrounding cochlear implants, and meningitis are some of the problems that may arise," warns Dr Vora. "And as the location of the cochlea is close to the facial nerve. there is a risk that the nerve may be damaged during the operation."

Though CI restores the ability to comprehend speech, music can still sound chaotic to the ears. A group of composers in Australia recently developed a musical project on soundscapes called Interior Design which is customised for the CI ear.

THE DETERRENTS

With the surgery costing anywhere between ₹ 525,000 and ₹ 1 million, which is not recoverable under medical insurance, there aren't many takers for CI in India. The procedure also requires elderly patients to be aware of the implant's external component, its battery life, MRI compatibility, mapping strategies, and customer service from the manufacturer, which they find intimidating. While the surgery brings with it several benefits, awareness, cost and demystification need to be dealt with to make it popular. **



One hundred and forty-two years after his death, India's greatest Urdu poet is now remembered with the richly deserved awe and admiration that eluded him in his lifetime. **Adab Nawaz** explores the phenomenon of Ghalib

ot accorded due acknowledgement in his lifetime, maverick Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869) had predicted that people would hail his poetry posthumously. Seeing the kind of interest the poet generates among the literati and the spell he

casts over connoisseurs, one can safely say Ghalib was not off the mark when he predicted his immortality. Recently one more chapter in the lengthening memory of Ghalib was added when a bust of the poet—commissioned by renowned poet Gulzar—was instituted at Ghalib's *haveli* in old Delhi. Holding candles in the cold Delhi afternoon, lovers of Ghalib marched from Chandni Chowk to Balli Maran to install the bust at the restored *haveli*, which will also house a library soon. Carved by Solapur-based sculptor Bhagwan Rampure, the marble bust is a reminder that the world has not forgotten one of the greatest Urdu poets.

Poetry, both in Urdu and Persian, and a new style of letterwriting are two major areas where Ghalib excelled. He stood head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in the craft but was not taken too seriously by many of them in his lifetime. However, today, perhaps no Urdu poet has evoked as much interest among scholars as him. Why does this fascination continue even now?

Scholar-poet Shamim Tariq—whose book on Ghalib's era and India's first war of independence (1857), *Ghalib Aur Hamari Tehrik-e-Azadi* (Ghalib and Our Freedom Struggle) had generated much debate in Urdu circles a couple of years ago—calls Ghalib a "supremely fortunate poet. In his lifetime, he was considered secondary to his two contemporaries, Zauq and Momin. After his death, biographies were written by authors like Altaf Husain Haali and Abdur Rehman Bijnori. They rediscovered him, putting the poet on a pedestal no other poet could reach."

Remarkably, Bijnori heaped laurels on Ghalib when he said that there are only two divine books in India: the *Veda* and *Diwan-e-Ghalib*, Ghalib's collection of poems. And renowned essayist Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui writes that Ghalib is among the few personalities about whom "I feel I should have been born in his time and befriended him.... There are two enduring legacies of the Mughals, the Taj Mahal and Ghalib."

Gulzar, who brought the poet to millions at home through his serial *Mirza Ghalib* in 1988, says he always wanted to pay homage to the poet who also brought him laurels. After the Delhi government permitted him to commission a bust of Ghalib, he asked Rampure to sculpt it, even sending him some rare photographs of Ghalib, sourced by former president Dr Zakir Hussain (another diehard fan of the poet) from Germany.

Apart from his huge poetic oeuvre (11,000 couplets in Urdu, 6,600 in Persian), Ghalib has left behind a great body of letters. He is justified when he congratulates himself on inventing a new style of letter-writing in Urdu. Simple, direct and conversational, Ghalib's letters mirror the poet's personal angst; his taste for the good life; and the "travesty" of the times he lived in. Addressed to his countless friends and pupils in far-flung areas, his letters contributed immensely to the evolution of modern Urdu prose.

Mumbai-based Mir Jaffar Imam's book Mirza Ghalib & the Mirs of Gujarat, testifies to this. Based on his letters, the book focuses on Ghalib's "lesser-known relationship" with Gujarat. Comprising 61 letters—many of them addressed to the Imam's ancestors (the Nawabs of Kamadhia) and dated between 1859 and 1869—the book shows how Ghalib loved Gujarat and its people. Spending his entire life in northern India (Delhi, Agra) and Calcutta, Ghalib never visited Gujarat. And yet the poet comments on various fascinating aspects of life in the state. "Most people think Ghalib is the poet of north India as he remained confined to Delhi," says Imam. "When I stumbled upon his letters to his admirers in Gujarat, I immediately thought of bringing out a book. Ghalib's letters make for delightful reading. As you read them, you feel you're in a dialogue with him." When Imam's great grandfather Nawab Mir Jafur Alee Khan of Surat invited Ghalib to visit his city, an ailing Ghalib, with characteristic humour, replied: "Kisi surat main Surat nahin aa sakta." (By no means can I come to Surat.)

It is Ghalib's universal appeal that inspired theatre director Salim Arif to undertake *Ghalibnama*, a play-reading of Ghalib's letters, interspersed with rendering of some of his *ghazal*: "His letters talk about the seasons, his mood swings, his perennial poverty, and his fight for pension," he says. "From trivialities to profound thoughts, his letters



speak eloquently for him and his era. I am enchanted with his style. The *ghazal* we have included have some contextual connection with the letters we read out."

Another well-known admirer is Delhi-based cultural and social commentator Firoz Bhakt Ahmed, who is also Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's grandnephew. In fact, it was his public interest litigation filed in Delhi High Court that initiated the restoration of Ghalib's haveli. "Ghalib's verses reflect that life is a collage of indefinite human expressions—sometimes the beloved, sometimes the observer, sometimes the follower bowing before the Lord, and at times cynical and withdrawn," he explains. "Often, he would bear the biggest hurt, and surprisingly break down over the smallest of accusations. Like him, his poetry was intriguing. Restless by nature, his writing told of his torment. All that he experienced and observed was nakedly poured on paper."

Ghalib stood head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in his craft but was not taken too seriously by many of them in his lifetime. However, today, perhaps no Urdu poet has evoked as much interest among scholars as him

Bakht is aghast that some people are wrongly claiming credit for the restoration of Ghalib's *haveli* in Chandni Chowk but he leaves it to the poet himself who said: "Gham-e hastii ka Asad kis se ho juz marg ilaj/Shama har rang mein jaltii hei sahar honey tak." (The suffering that is life, Asad, knows no cure but death/All through the night must the candle burn, without taking the breath.)

Through his *ghazal* and letters, Ghalib continues to enrapture his faithful readers. A much misunderstood man in his lifetime, he nonchalantly made fun of his own defeats, and laughed

at his failing health. Mocking his advancing years, he wrote: "Go haath mein jumbish nahin aankhon mein to dum hai/Rahne do abhi saagaro-meena mere aage." (My hands may not be working but my eyes are still strong/Let the liquor flow before my eyes.) When Ghalib sat down to pen his Aapbeeti (autobiography), he couldn't help but ask: "Poochchte hain woh ke Ghalib kaun hai/Koi batlao ke hum batlain kya?" (They ask who Ghalib is/Can anyone tell me what I should say?). Ghalib may have failed to fathom his own unparalleled greatness, but the world continues to discover his genius. *

CULTURE • LEISURE • LIFESTYLE • BOOKS • MISCELLANY

Double talk

Ventriloquist Gev Tavadia helps Khursheed Dinshaw see the lighter side of life

entriloquist Gev Tavadia Putells Andy—the wooden his doll—that he is too short motors and retorts that he was brought up on condensed milk. The audience gathered at the entertainment centre in Lonavla's Hotel Laguna guffaw in delight. Though the laughter borders on

raucous, for 60 year-old Tavadia, it's

his greatest source of contentment.

Pune-based Tavadia stumbled upon his funnier side in 1976 when he met renowned ventriloquist Claude Kenny, who had come to perform

for an event at Thermax, where
Tavadia worked. In 1981, when
Tavadia quit Thermax and
found himself without a job,
he met Kenny and expressed his
desire to become a ventriloquist.
Kenny gave him recorded tapes of his
own performances to help hone his

skill. Three weeks later, when Kenny could not make it for a performance in Mumbai because of a bad throat, he asked Tavadia to take over. The show, which was scheduled for 20 minutes, went on for 43 minutes. Today, Tavadia performs at three to four shows every month, and has made many appearances on TV. "I don't promote myself, it's just word of mouth that gets me shows," says

Continued ...



Etcetera

Continued from page 63

Tavadia, who also runs an entertainment company, Spenta Hospitality.

Ventriloquism has also led to some hilarious moments off stage—like the time when he was walking down a street and met his friend's father and small son. "We saw a mannequin standing in a show window," recalls Tavadia. "To humour the kid, I started to talk to the figure and it seemed to reply back. Soon a crowd gathered around us. We moved away but the crowd kept calling 'hello' to the mannequin. The owner of the shop tried explaining that it was only a statue but the crowd argued that it was real as it had spoken two minutes back!"

For all his celebrity, he is grounded by criticism and feedback from his wife Debbie and sons Savio and Agnel. "How many people bother to make others laugh?" asks Tavadia. "I like to think of my skill as a blessing." His skill is also something he would love to share with others: "If someone wants to learn the art, my doors are always open. Of course, though I can teach ventriloquism, they will have to get their humour on their own."

AN OLYMPIAN JOURNEY

See the evolution of the Olympic Games since the time they started in 1859. The British Council is hosting an exhibition of 127 posters and memorabilia associated with the Olympics in the past 100 years. The collection, drawn from the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, also features the rarely seen poster of the cancelled Helsinki Games of 1940. At Bhau Daji Lad Musuem, Mumbai, till 15 March.











camaraderie in colour

Much like Holi, Basanta Utsav, a celebration of the arrival of spring is brought in with a splurge of revelry and bonhomie in Santiniketan. A tradition launched by Rabindranath Tagore, today the Utsav draws together everyone at Visva-Bharati University—students, professors and tourists. Photographer Shilbhadra Datta returns with his lens soaked in colour



harmony celebrate age march 2011 65

Babe in the WOODS

Driftwood washed up by the sea finds new life and definition in Raji Punnoose's Bay Island Museum, reports an enchanted **Nisary Mahesh**

or many years now, every time Raji Punnoose visited her hometown in Kottavam in Kerala, she carted along a bag full of driftwood. As the chunks and blocks tumbled out of her bags, people couldn't quite fathom her obsession for the abstract pieces; but the sensitive silver could see unique shapes in the bends and ART slopes of raw trunks, stumps and twisted roots that others couldn't. When she retired in 2001 as a teacher from Government Model S S School, Port Blair, she had amassed 125 pieces of driftwood.

"I just wanted to pursue it as a hobby and decorate my house that was being constructed at Aymanam near Kottayam," says the 60 year-old. Her carefree plans took a more serious turn when she met an artist from West Bengal who egged her to share her collection with the world. Enthused and inspired, Punnoose set up Bay Island, a museum of driftwood—the only one of its kind in India—in 2004. Located at Kumarakom, the museum

into enchanting shapes, gathered from the beaches of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Many of them were gathered when Punnoose accompanied her husband Punnoose Cherian, who was chief engineer of the Ministry of Shipping & Transport in Andaman & Nicobar, on harbour inspections. She remembers many occasions when she walked several kilometres through dangerous tsunamiprone zones dragging heavy logs all along the shores.

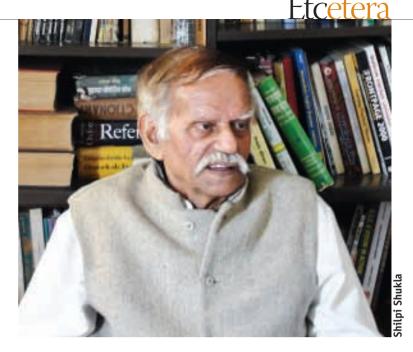


Though she has no artistic background, Punnoose skilfully trims wood into the shapes she has in mind after scrubbing off fungal layers with glass pieces. Each piece takes hours and days to reach perfection, and no part is added to complete a shape.

The museum has an array of striking sculptures, such as a crocodile found off Port Blair's Wandoor beach; a Jarawa woman; a handicapped family; lion, elephant, sharks, dolphins, hen, grooming chicks, penguins, blooming rose, pheasant, crow, pelican, cormorant, chameleon; and pieces reflective of the Kargil War and Subash Chandra Bose's Chalo Dilli campaign.

Punnoose purchased the land for the museum using her provident fund and erected the building with a bank loan of ₹ 1 million coupled with financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Culture. "It's Kerala's only specialinterest tourist destination and a futuristic asset for Indian tourism," she says with pride. The museum bagged The Most Wanted Innovative Tourism Project Award in 2004; a place in the Kerala government's official tourism website; a mention in tourism directories around the world; andthis year-entry into the Limca Book of Records. It has also registered its name recently with Guinness World Records as the first driftwood museum designed, owned and operated by a woman. The entry fee is just ₹ 25, probably the lowest charged by any museum of this kind in the world. All profits earned are donated to charity.

People from over 75 countries have visited the museum including students, archaeologists, and international dignitaries. Many of them have quoted enticing prices for her collection but she refuses to sell. "None of it is mine, every piece here belongs to Mother Nature," she says humbly. After the 2004 tsunami, the Supreme Court has come up with rules against transferring wood from the Andamans. So this museum may be the first and last of its kind in India.



LITERATURE

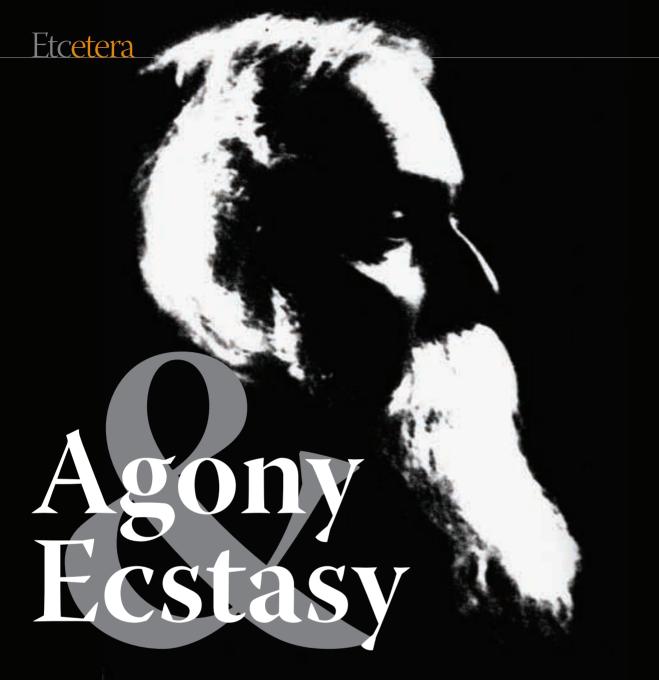
High on Hindi

Though English occupies an exalted status in our country, we needn't fear it ever usurping the throne of our national language Hindi, thanks to people like Dr Vishwanath Mishra. The Delhi-based 78 year-old has been giving free Hindi lessons to countless Members of Parliament, foreign diplomats and CEOs for the past 20 years—he has even tutored former president K R Narayanan.

A staunch Gandhian, Dr Mishra has made it his life's mission to teach Hindi to every non-Hindi speaker. "I don't charge a fee for teaching Hindi to Indians," says Mishra solemnly. "This is my service to the nation." A product of Banaras Hindu University (BHU), and later a professor there, Mishra devoted 30 years of his life—1967 to 1996—teaching Hindi to foreign students at the university. In 1991, he designed a teaching module, '30-Hour Hurried Hindi Classes', which also won him several teaching stints in the US, where he delivered Hindi lectures at various universities. After retirement in December 1996, Mishra started Bhasha Bharti, an institute to teach Hindi to Indian and foreign students in Delhi and Varanasi. Today, Bhasha Bharti finds a mention in the globally popular travel advisory *Lonely Planet*.

Mishra is not alone in his ardent mission. "My elder two sons teach Hindi at the Varanasi branch of Bhasha Bharti, and my younger son and daughter conduct classes at the Delhi branch, along with me," says the proud father of four, seated in his modest home in Hauz Khas in south Delhi. As we leave Mishra, we can't help but ask him a question: Isn't it difficult teaching those known for throwing chairs at one another during Parliament sessions? "Interestingly, these MPs make diligent, disciplined students," responds Sanyam, Mishra's third son, who despite holding a master's in German, prefers helping his dad spread the message of Hindi far and wide.

—Shilpi Shukla



RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S MOST FAMOUS COLLECTION OF POEMS, GITANJALI, EVOKES JOY AND WONDER EVEN 100 YEARS AFTER IT WAS FIRST INKED. BUT NOT MANY KNOW THAT IT SPRUNG FROM AN OUTPOURING OF TORMENT IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE. ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF GITANJALI, FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO PARTHA AND PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE LEAD US TO THE TEARS BETWEEN THE LINES

itanjali was written in the first decade of the 20th century when Rabindranath Tagore experienced a series of punishing losses. He lost his wife Mrinalini Devi in 1902, followed by his eldest daughter Renuka in 1903. Within the following two years, the poet would see his father and idol Maharshi Debendranath Tagore breathe his last. And in 1907, the final blow: Shamindranath, his youngest child, passed away. But Tagore never let his grief usurp his wisdom. Rather he distilled it to a touching realisation, "Death is not extinguishing the

light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come."

When Shamindranath died of cholera, Tagore remained unperturbed. Instead, he sought solace in prayer. His endeavour to set his mind free from the spell of bereavement and his unflinching faith in the Supreme Power shone through a poem he composed on 13 December 1907.

Make my heart bloom

Oh my God.

Make it clean, bright and beautiful,

Oh my God.

Wake it up, gear it up

Make it brave my God.

Make it prosper, full of life and bold:

Make my heart bloom

Oh my God.

Unite it with all,

Make it free from all bonds,

Spread your peaceful melody

In all my endeavours.

Calm my heart at your feet,

gladden it, gladden it,

gladden it my God.

Make my heart bloom

Oh my God.

The plea of a mourning father is buffeted by a poet's attempt to drown his inner self in a pool of spiritual thinking to accept Death, the inevitable. "I am ready to accept more grief, and even if it is more than that, I must obey your command with respect...," he said. But the anguish that wrenched the father's heart could not be ignored altogether. "I feel a deep howling in my heart, I know I cannot give my attention to anything until I can quieten it down," he brooded. Yet soon after, the deep anguish in him disappeared magically as he later wrote, "The night Shamee left for heaven, while travelling in a train, I saw the sky awash with the beam of a full moon and nothing was conspicuous by its absence. I felt a prompt within: 'Amidst all everything is present, I too belong to this vastness. My duties are yet to be finished; I have to continue till I exist'..."

On 25 June 1910, cardiac failure claimed the life of Saroj, a bright and

jovial 16 year-old boy, the bosom pal of Shamindranath. Rabindranath had always treated Saroj—or Bhola, as he called him-as his own son. (Tagore and Shrish Chandra Majumder, Saroj's father, were close friends.) The little boy had filled the void left behind by the premature demise of his own 'Shamee' and his death rocked the core of his heart. Though Tagore never shed tears for Saroi, his cries of anguish can be heard in the song he composed thereafter: "Today I can identify the nature of rain in man/It runs roaring in its impenetrable cloak."

However, neither the death of his loved ones nor severe financial crunch could dampen Tagore's indomitable spirit or his longing to welcome nature in whatever form it stood before him. As Teiesh Sen, a teacher at Santiniketan, wrote in his memoirs, on rain-drenched mornings at the Ashram it was not just the boys who would swim in the River Khoaibrimful and gurgling with the advent of monsoon-but Tagore too would step out to enjoy the playful lashing of raindrops. What else would inspire him to write the following lines on 30th August, 1909?

Today it pours incessantly

In full Monsoon.

The sky-splitting shower

Knows no bounds

Wind roars quite often, roaming amidst the grove of Shal

And water rushes meandering across the meadow.

Who is it that blows away the tassel of clouds

And dances along?

My friend, my mind is lost in rain,

And the storm leaves it rolling

aground,

I know not who is it that the ecstasy spilling over my heart

Falls upon his feet.

What a murmur of joy I feel,

In my heart today,

That opens every door,

The fool in my heart wakes up

In autumn.

Who is it so exuberant

In and away?

The true devotee of God never renounces the world but moves along with it seeking panacea to heal the wounds of human race. The poet who experiences true inspiration is also an enlightened soul. He does not shut his doors to the outside world but refines the world through his imaginative capacity and offers the world an antidote for its maladies through his works. A spiritualist conveys himself to the rest of the world by means of sermons and teachings whereas a poet leaves his thought behind in the form of his art. The poet's soul is connected to the divine force, whereas his physical self is linked to the people. For him, complete bondage to the divine force means complete freedom. For both spiritualist and poet, deliverance lies not in renunciation of the world but in bondage.

As poet W B Yeats wrote appropriately in his introduction to *Song Offerings*, Tagore's book of English prose translations of his own verses: "These verses...as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon the rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth..."



link and you may just miss Srirangapatna on the dusty highway that connects Bengaluru to Mysore. It would be a crying shame, though, because this seemingly non-descript town, enclosed by the Cauvery to form a verdant island, was once a grand stage where a magnificent tale of valour and treachery was played out; this was the citadel of warrior king Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, the 'Tiger of Mysore'.

Part of the Kingdom of Mysore from 1610, Srirangapatna (the British called it 'Seringapatam') became the de facto capital of Mysore under Hyder and Tipu. In fact Tipu, who assumed power after his father's death in 1782, eventually held the legitimate Wodeyar king of Mysore captive and extended the kingdom's frontiers to include a major part of southern India. Although he was able to defeat the British in 1783, he succumbed to them in 1792, when he was forced to

QUICK TRIP

half his kingdom. The end came in 1799 during the momentous 'Battle of Seringapatnam', where Tipu's fort was stormed and the Sultan was killed, betrayed by one of his own.

sign a treaty surrendering

The sheer romanticism of Tipu's legend has birthed many artistic ventures; this town is the crucible of that legend. Here, the past whispers to you through the walls of his palace, echoes through the ramparts of his fort; swirls in the river's eddies—if only you allow yourself to see, and listen. All it takes is a day.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Fort: Triumph and tragedy flash before your eyes as you walk through the fort. Juxtaposed with the obelisk that marks the place where Tipu fell is the grandeur of the Masjid-E-Ala or Jamia Masjid, enhanced by two octagonal minarets, silent sentinels through time. Tipu is believed to have

performed the first *imamath* at the mosque himself. An inscription bearing the 99 names of Allah also records the date of the mosque's construction in 1787.

Ranganathaswamy Temple: Located in the Fort, this is the source of the town's name and a key centre of pilgrimage for Vaishnavites. Dedicated to Lord Ranganatha—the reclining form of Lord Vishnu—the shrine with a magnificent *gopuram* was built by the rulers of the Ganga dynasty in the 9th century and gilded further by Hoysala and Vijayanagar kings. Tipu too was a generous patron of the temple, a sign of the communal harmony that prevailed during his rule.

Daria Daulat Bagh: A beloved retreat for Tipu, this Summer Palace was built in 1784. Perched on the Cauvery on a 1.5-m platform, it is a treasure trove of art—frescos, paintings, murals, engravings—enclosed in an Indo-Saracenic teak structure. A walk

Etcetera

NAVIGATOR

Locator: Srirangapatna is 19 km from Mysore, off the Bengaluru-Mysore highway.

Getting there: It is connected by bus and train from Bengaluru and Mysore. The nearest airport to Srirangapatna is in Mysore.

Where to stay: Although you can see Srirangapatna on a day trip from Bengaluru or Mysore, it's more comfortable to stay the night. There is a variety of well-priced hotels available in town (rates range from ₹ 400 to ₹ 2,500) with beautiful river views:

Amblee Hotel Resort: 08236-206166, (0)9341912221, (0)9845002665

Balaji Garden Resort: 08236-53297, 53298 **Fort View Resorts:** 08236-53177, 52777

Hotel Mayura River View: 08236-52114

Young Island Resorts: 08236-217351, (0)9845190925

Getting around: Hire a car to take you around town—all the landmarks are close by, so be sure to negotiate a good deal. On a budget? If you don't mind a bumpy ride, jump onto a 'luxury' autorickshaw—the seats are wide and your driver will happily double up as a tour quide.

Also worth a visit:

27 km upstream.

The 57-acre Ranganathitu Bird Sanctuary, 5 km away, is a breeding site for a variety of species, including the painted stork, openbilled stork, black-headed and white ibis, river tern, great stone plover and the Indian shag. The spectacular Brindavan Gardens is just 12 km away; the sound-andlight show every sunset attracts thousands of visitors.

Shivanasamudra Falls, the second biggest waterfall in India and 16th largest in the world, is







through the palace, which is set in a landscaped garden, offers a colourful glimpse of Tipu's life and battles, and reproductions of landmarks in the Fort like the mosque and the temple.

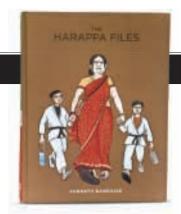
Gumbaz: Built by Tipu Sultan in 1784 as a mausoleum for his father Hyder Ali and mother Fathima Begam, this imposing structure now houses his own tomb as well. Occupying pride of place in the expansive Lalbagh garden on a high and wide platform with an open veranda of polished pillars, the magnificent tomb is a marvel of traditional workmanship: the large dome, ebony doors inlaid with ivory, and

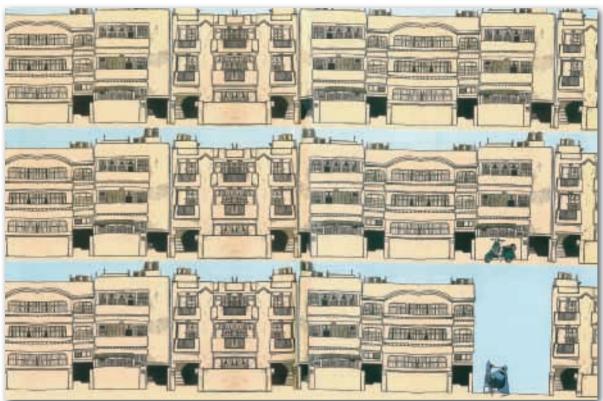
carved stone windows. Inside, tiger stripes cover the walls, a striking tribute to Tipu.

Colonel Bailey's Dungeon: This brick-and-mortar structure, which measures 30.5 m × 12.2 m, is an exercise in symmetry. Named after a British colonel who died here in 1780 AD, Tipu imprisoned Britons Captain Baird, Colonel Brithwite, Captain Rulay, Frazer, Samson and Lindsay here; they were chained to stone slabs fixed on the walls of the dungeon. During the siege of Srirangapatna, one of the cannons rolled back and fell into the dungeon—it's still there.

Beyond type

Jit Ray in conversation with 'graphic novelist' Sarnath Banerjee





nternational bookstores have featured 'the graphic novel'—a narrative work where the story is conveyed using sequential art in experimental design or comics format—on their shelves for over a quarter of a century, with examples like Sin City, V for Vendetta, Watchmen, Persipolis and Sandman. In India, however, such offerings have been rare.

Sarnath Banerjee, regarded as one of the pioneers of the Indian graphic novel, would like to change that. A student of biochemistry, he went on to study communications and image at Goldsmiths College at the University of London. A co-founder of comics publishing house Phantomville—

inspired by the 12 bound volumes of Phantom comics he inherited from his grandfather—he has written three graphic novels: *Corridor* (Penguin Books, 2004); *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (Penguin Books, 2007); and his latest *The Harappa Files* (HarperCollins; ₹ 499; 215 pages).

Interestingly, though he is regarded as a poster boy for the genre, he is not particularly comfortable about being tagged as a graphic novelist. "Over the years, I have realised I don't belong to any of the styles of narratives or content that most graphic novels abroad adhere to," he explains. "It's just easier to explain myself to publishers if I describe myself as a graphic novelist."

As our conversation about The Harappa Files slips into a comfort zone at a cafe in South Mumbai, an attractive woman in her mid-50s walks in and appears to take over the entire space, including Banerjee's attention. "You see, these are the kind of characters from where my stories flow; look at how a woman, supposedly past her prime has gobbled up the entire space," remarks Sarnath, as a smile lights up his stubbled face and his eyebrows lift to his ruffled hair. "You can tell this story of her only through images; if you write it all down in flowing text, it won't work."

Anxious not to be merely bracketed as a graphic novelist, Banerjee proudly boasts of how a mathematician once described him as being "politically astute" as opposed to being "politically informed", like the creators of V for Vendetta and many other western graphic novels. Speaking of his latest offering, he points out how "some of the stories are surreal, some extremely rooted, some are fabula, some picaresque, some reportage"... none of which penetrate the existing graphic novel base. He explains how he has to "wade through very serious, codified information and intentionally come out with a slip of paper... like a balance sheet, or a topography map." It is through the creative tension between the text and images, and the tension within the images that the politics come through.

Though the reading of these simple balance sheets—or narratives—that emerge out of complex sifting of even more complex, serious codified information can be difficult, Banerjee is irked at his work being called 'intellectual'. However he concedes, "The reader does need to have the kind of ammo required to process an image and text that might have multiple meanings". His reader, he says, is a "post literate", a person mature enough to be open to any kind of reading after being exposed to a vast variety of literature.

"But then, The Harappa Files can be read at various levels, just like a Tintin comic, for example," adds Banerjee. "It can be read as a string of good stories. Though, yes, to get the connection between the stories you've got to use your intelligence." Admittedly, you tend to miss many details on the first read of The Harappa Files, which reveal themselves on a later read through witty poignancy. For example, Sarnath points to a double spread with three strips of identical houses; in the second strip, a scooter appears in front of the building and in the third, that same house disappears leaving behind a cement mixer in the vacant spot.

WORLD

SCAN

THE GIST

Rehabilitation, Reclamation and Redevelopment Committee (GHRRRC) has conducted "a gigantic survey of the current ethnography and urban mythology of a country on the brink of great hormonal changes.... Changes of such enormity that they would be barely comprehensible to civil society." One Sri Sarnath Banerjee, "a creator and small-time publisher" of comic books has been given the responsibility of making the decade-long findings of this survey. Sri Banerjee goes on to create The Harappa Files, a string of graphic commentaries that "address the cracks in post-liberalised India". Though Sri Banerjee applauds the far-sightedness of the survey, he worries that the consequence of his project will be the release of the dreaded Harappa recommendations, making it mandatory for all citizens to sign the draconian, ultra-invasive Form 28B, giving the government the power to decide the fate of every single citizen.

The Greater Harappa

This poignancy is reiterated by a series of reportages or 'Files' on advertisements and products that have become synonymous with nostalgia. "Nobody really wants to go back to that era that I talk about, says Sarnath with a chuckle, "barring maybe, your readers! The era of Nehruvian protectionism, where you can blame everything on the foreign hand, where you had a certain grand idea of what the West was; where you were envious of the Pakistanis having access to their bottle of Coca Cola." What's next? Sarnath says he has decided to bid adieu to writing and illustrating in search of alternative ways of storytelling. We'll wait and watch.

Life by Keith Richards (Orion; ₹ 995; 564 pages): Fans of The Rolling Stones will have a hard time keeping their hands off this memoir by the band's guitarist and songwriter. Richards pours out all the anguish and 'ecstasy' (much of it powered by the mood-altering substance of the same name) the Rolling Stones experienced through the 1960s and 1970s, including drug busts, rifts with vocalist Mick Jagger, and his love-hate relationships with drugs.

Family ties

₹ et in modern Africa, in the midst of an attempted military coup, Aneesha Capur's STEALING KARMA (HarperCollins; ₹ 299, 233 pages) is a poignant story of a mother's relationship with her daughter. Mira, raised in a convent, is married to a man in Nairobi who's 15 years older. As she struggles to adjust to an alien country, her cosseted life is irrevocably changed with the death of her husband. Her husband's assets are frozen owing to his link to a prominent African lawyer who was involved in the coup.



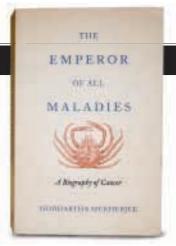
Embattled and upset, she withdraws into herself, neglecting her daughter Shanti. Now, Shanti must forge her own life while coming to terms with her mother's indifference towards her. Capur brings her characters to life beautifully, highlighting their insecurities, helplessness and quest for lovethis makes them very identifiable, abundantly human, and the book very readable.

—Anuya Chauhan

A monster's life

n 1989, Varmus and virologist J Michael Bishop were awarded the Nobel Prize for their discovery that mutations induced by chemicals or X-rays caused cancer not by 'inserting' foreign genes into cells, but by activating proto-oncogene, the precursor of the cancercausing gene, which is a normal cellular gene. This miniscule piece of history surfaces in school and medical texts, only to be forgotten. There are several such information capsules associated with the deadliest disease called cancer. Sidney Farber, a paediatric pathologist at the Children's Hospital in Boston, worked on the cells of the dead for magical solutions. Many experiments later, in 1948, Farber came to be known as the 'father of modern chemotherapy'—a forgotten or unknown factoid again. What stays with us is the fact that cancer is still incurable today. For some chemotherapy and radiotherapy works and for others there's a strong potion of willpower that makes them transcend unfathomable hurdles.

US-based oncologist Siddhartha Mukherjee recounts the life, growth and many heads of cancer in a first-of-its kind biography



THE EMPEROR OF MALADIES: A BIOGRAPHY OF CANCER (Fourth Estate; 568 pages; ₹ 499). Known both to William Shakespeare and Carla Reed (a 30 yearold kindergarten teacher and patient of leukaemia who becomes Mukherjee's patient in 2004), cancer is a puzzle still and its survivors credited to miracles even by medical practitioners. Mukherjee goes back in time through exemplary cases and miraculous survivors to try and find the key in our cells, the fundamentals of our bodies. Whether those he tracks survive or not is not of importance, for it's not supposed to be a tear-jerker. What's enough, though, is that while analysing the complexities of the disease with simple finesse and subtle emotions, Mukherjee turns out a volume with as much appeal as a work of fiction, a page-turner that will go down in history as much as its subject has.

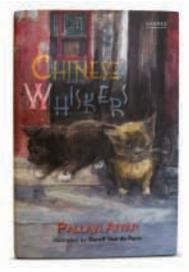
—Meeta Bhatti

She refused to let another doctor perform her bone marrow biopsy, so I walked over from the lab on a warm morning to perform the procedure. She looked relieved when she saw me, greeting me with an anxious half-smile. We had a ritualistic relationship; who was I to desecrate a lucky ritual? The biopsy revealed no leukaemia in the bone marrow. Her remission, for now, was still intact. I have chosen these cases not because they were "miraculous" but because of precisely the opposite reason. They present a routine spectrum of survivors—Hodgkin's disease cured with multidrug chemotherapy; locally advanced lung cancer controlled with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation; lymphoblastic leukaemia in a prolonged remission after intensive chemotherapy. To me, these are miracles enough. It is an old complaint about the practice of medicine that it inures you to the idea of death. But when medicine inures you to the idea of life, to survival, then it has failed utterly. The novelist Thomas Wolfe, recalling a lifelong struggle with illness, wrote in his last letter, "I've made a long voyage and been to a strange country, and I've seen the dark man very close."

Tales of catitude

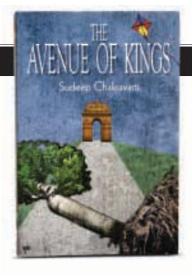
allavi Aiyar's debut book Smoke and Mirrors introduced us to the mundane and mirthful side of China. In her second book **CHINESE WHISKERS** (Harper; ₹ 399; 223 pages) she treads the same path—through hutong neighbourhoods fragrant with incense and dimsums—to tell us the real story of China through two cats, Soyabean and Tofu. The tender feline bond is tested when Soyabean becomes a model for a leading brand of cat food. The story, which could have unravelled as a lighthearted fable on urban China, gains sobriety because of the canvas on which it is mounted: the run-up to the Olympics; the allusion to the SARS virus; and the tug of ideals between old and new China. The book also wipes the haze of glitter that clouds our perception of our fastdeveloping neighbour. As a migrant worker tells Tofu, the 'dustbin' cat: "Our great leader Deng Xiaoping said it didn't matter if it was a black cat or white cat as long as it caught mice. But he forgot to add that what really matters is whether it's a rich cat or a poor cat. You see there are no mice to catch for the peasant cat at all. The fat cats in the city gobble them all up, leaving nothing for the rest."

—Rajashree Balaram



Inside outside

oom, boom, pow. A foul murder: a Sikh lad succumbs to a mob baying for blood following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Lost love: a young romance turns to ashes in the face of distance and divergence. A country divided: the remains of the day after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. These are the blows Brandy-or Barun, son of Tarun, grandson of Arun-Ray must survive in THE AVENUE OF KINGS (Harper Collins; ₹ 299: 222 pages) by Sudeep Chakravarti, a powerful triptych of novellas. The personal and the political are intertwined for our protagonist (you may have already met Brandy in Tin Fish, a bittersweet tale of growing pains in Mayo College); his dreams for his country and his love Suya in ashes; tenderness and turmoil warring with disenchantment and cynicism even as he scrambles for succour in unexpected places. Journalist-author-political commentator Chakravarti pulls no punches; his writing is real and relentless, and his depiction of youth and a



country in churn, uncompromising. Indeed, the first two novellas are almost musical in their rhythm; while the first, "The Avenue of Kings", is fire and brimstone, brutal in its intensity, the second, "The Cradle of Innocents", is a haunting requiem. The final segment of the book—"The Well of Three Wishes"-is less resonant; while you can't fault the message of hope and renewal, as exemplified by the well of wishes and Aziza, the young Muslim girl, the delivery of it appears a tad forced. No matter. Chakravarti has the (rare) power to draw you in and keep you there, long after the last page is turned. All too viscerally, you feel the 'passing of promise' that Brandy refers

That quy, de Bono, something, Marty's great guru of management self-worth, kept going on about lateral thinking, like it was some manna fallen from gora heaven, the same as music, or cola—as if life without Pepsi or Coke was like a life without breathing, instead of their being what these really were, coloured soda that made bellies bounce and nostrils sing. If that de Bono chap had been in India, he would have lateral coming out of every orifice. We had the copyright on lateral, on schizophrenia, on every kind of confusion, and solutions to that confusion. The difference was just that goras wrote books about it....

to when he sees the 'Avenue of Kings' (Rajpath in Lutyen's Delhi); his pain commingles with your own for what we are as a nation; what we have been; and what we might have been. Boom, boom, pow.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Riding the waves

eemingly eternal, civilisations couldn't be more fickle. All that remains of them are figments, fossils and impressions on the rocks. Hundreds of thousands of intrepid men have etched their stories on this earth, leaving behind only memories (many fictional). The stories, though, share texture, feel and throb with those from other far-flung generations. Stories of war, valour, passion, faith, sex and conceit.... Legendary Bengali author Saradindu Bandopadhyay unfolded such a tale of love and deceit in Tungabhadrar Teere a few years before his demise in 1970. In this first English translation, BY

THE TUNGABHADRA (Harper Perennial; ₹ 299; 253 pages), Internet professional and translator of classics **Arunav Sinha** brings alive an era when two princesses from the Kalinga



travel upstream the Tungabhadra to marry King Devarya II. The elder princess Bidyunmala is to be officially betrothed to the king, while the younger Manikankana wishes he would marry her as well. Almost there, a storm usurps the marriage procession and a young Arjunverma rescues Bidyunmala. Decidedly against polygamy, Bidyunmala abhors the idea of marrying Devarya who already has three queens, and falls in love with Arjun, a stranger who can walk faster (on his bamboo stilts) than a galloping horse. From a guest to messenger to the head of the king's Turkish army, and from the gallows of death to king's right-hand man, Arjun takes us on an enchanting ride through what might be taken for history if Bandopadhyay didn't admit it to be 'historical fiction'.

—Meeta Bhatti

Timeless memories

Your soul is a repository for the earth's remembrances, says George William Russell

e experience the romance and delight of voyaging upon uncharted seas when the imagination is released from the foolish notion that the images seen in reverie and dream are merely the images of memory refashioned; and in tracking to their originals the forms seen in vision we discover for them a varied ancestry, as that some come from the minds of others, and of some we cannot surmise another origin than that they are portions of the memory of Earth which is accessible to us.... I have brooded over the grassy mounds which are all that remain of the duns in which our Gaelic ancestors lived, and they builded themselves up again for me so that I looked on what seemed an earlier civilisation, saw the people, noted their dresses, the colours of natural wool, saffron or blue, how rough like our own homespuns they were; even such details were visible as that the men cut meat at table with knives and passed it to the lips with their fingers. This is not, I am convinced, what people call imagination, an interior creation in response to a natural curiosity about past ages. It is an act of vision, a perception of images already existing breathed on some ethereal medium which in no way differs from the medium which holds for us our memories; and the re-perception of an image in memory which is personal to us in no way differs as a psychical act from the perception of images in the memory of Earth. The same power of seeing is turned upon things of the same character and substance. It is not only rocks and ruins which infect us with such visions. A word in a book when one is sensitive may do this also.



No ancient lore has perished. Earth retains for herself and her children what her children might in passion have destroyed

Whence or when were the originals of the pictures we see in dream or reverie? ... And if we are forced to dismiss as unthinkable any process by which the pictures of our personal memory could unconsciously be reshaped into new pictures which appear in themselves authentic copies of originals, which move, have light, colour, form, shade such as nature would bestow, then we are led to believe that memory is an attribute of all living creatures and of Earth also, the greatest living creature we know, and that she carries with her, and it is accessible to us, all her long history, cities far gone behind time, empires which are dust,

or are buried with sunken continents beneath the waters. The beauty for which men perished is still shining; Helen is there in her Troy, and Deirdre wears the beauty which blasted the Red Branch. No ancient lore has perished. Earth retains for herself and her children what her children might in passion have destroyed, and it is still in the realm of the Ever Living to be seen by the mystic adventurer.... There is nowhere we go where Earth does not breathe fragments from her ancient story to the meditative spirit. These memories gild the desert air where once the proud and golden races had been and had passed away, and they haunt the rocks and mountains where the Druids evoked their skiey and subterrene deities.

The fact that Earth holds such memories is itself important, for once we discover this imperishable tablet, we are led to speculate whether in the future a training in seership might not lead to a revolution in human knowledge. It is a world where we may easily get lost, and spend hours in futile vision with no more gain than if one looked for long hours at the dust. For those to whom in their spiritual evolution these apparitions arise I would say: try to become the master of your vision, and evoke the greatest of earth memories, not those things which only satisfy curiosity, but those which uplift and inspire, and give us a vision of our own greatness; and the noblest of all Earth's memories is the august ritual of the ancient mysteries, where the mortal, amid scenes of unimaginable grandeur, was disrobed of his mortality and made of the company of the gods.

Excerpted from The Candle of Vision (London Macmillan & Co.; 1918), a book on Celtic mysticism written by George William Russell (1867-1935), an Irish nationalist, poet and writer

We go 50 years back in time to bring you products, people, events and fashion that influence the world



t's been 50 years since Chi-Chi the giant panda—one of the most adored exhibits at the London Zoo then—made its way into our hearts and minds through the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) logo. Ever since a group of naturalists, biologists, scientists and policy experts came together to form the WWF in 1961, Mother Earth and its creatures have learnt to reclaim lost hope. Active in more than 100 countries through 7.5 million members, the WWF works to protect natural areas and wild populations of plants and animals, including endangered species all over the

world. It also works passionately to spread the use of renewable natural resources and reduce pollution. Today, WWF—which has been rechristened the World Wide Fund for Nature world over apart from Canada and the US—has myriad programmes through which you can participate in the cause, including a symbolic adoption programme where you donate money for the upkeep of an endangered animal and lifetime membership. As Sir Peter Scott, founder of WWF, said, "We shan't save all we should like to, but we shall save a great deal more than if we had never tried."

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MARCH 1961

- On 6 March, minicabs were first introduced in London.
- On 8 March, Max Conrad circumnavigated the earth in eight days, 18 hours and 14 minutes, setting a new world record.
- On 13 March, black-and-white currency notes ceased to be legal tender in the US.
- On 15 March, South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth of Nations.

CHEAPUCCINO

n. An inexpensive, low-quality cappuccino, particularly one from a vending machine; a cappuccino made from brewed or instant coffee. Also: **cheappuccino**. [Blend of *cheap* and *cappuccino*.]

Example: Wondering what a Blended **Cheapuccino** is? Well, it's a blended coffee drink that you make at home. Since most of us are trying to cut costs, a great way to save a whole lot of money is to give up the Starbuck@'s [sic] habit.

—"Blended Cheapuccino", *That Girl Can Cook!*, 8 June 2010

Arguments out of a pretty mouth are unanswerable.

—English poet, essayist and politician Joseph Addison

copyfighter

n. A person who opposes copyright laws and practices that he or she perceives to be unfair.

-copyfight v.

Example: With the rushed passage into law of the Digital Economy Act this month, the fight over copyright enters a new phase. Previous to this, most **copyfighters** operated under the rubric that a negotiated peace was possible between the thrashing entertainment giants and civil society.

—Cory Doctorow, *The Guardian*, 16 April 2010

garden-to-fork

adj. Describing or relating to food grown in a person's own garden. Also: **garden to fork**.

Example: Head teacher Mo Brown said: "What an amazing achievement by our green, mean eco-team. This rich **garden-to-fork** experience is the very essence of Curriculum for Excellence."

-Selkirk Advertiser, 25 June 2010

landscraper

n. An imposingly long building, particularly one that houses a commercial enterprise, such as a factory or hotel. Also: **land-scraper**.

Example: To put up almost a mile of space-age, super-luxury grandstand, including a four-block, 11-storey hotel, within 12 months—the 'longest **landscraper** in the world'— and then to establish two different racing surfaces, one turf, one the artificial Tapeta, which won universal approval, is an amazing achievement.

—Brough Scott, "Lloyd Webbers win Dubai millions", The Sunday Times, 29 March 2010

skeptimistic

adj. Simultaneously skeptical and optimistic.—skeptimist n.

Example: Well, if we collectively understood the imminent danger to our way of life, we might change. But history is full of examples that show people don't change until disaster strikes. So who knows. Perhaps in this era of information and knowledge, we just might find the wisdom to shape a different historical outcome. Until then, I remain cautiously **skeptimistic**.

—Everette Surgenor, "Cautiously skeptimistic: Can we revamp Canadian education?" The Globe and Mail, 28 December 2010

splinternet

n. The Internet splintered into multiple segments, streams, or classes based on factors such as cost, speed, platform, or political motivations.

Example: Each new device has its own ad networks, format, and technology. Each new social site has its login and many hide content from search engines. We call this new world the **Splinternet** (with a nod to Doc Searls and Rich Tehrani, who used the term before us with a somewhat different meaning). It will splinter the Web as a unified system.

—Josh Bernoff, "The Splinternet means the end of the Web's golden age", *Empowered*, 26 January 2010

flunami

n. An overwhelming number of flu cases in the same area at the same time. Also: **flu-nami.** [Blend of f *u* and *tsunami*.]

Example: "A colleague of mine and some others around here are starting to call this whole problem a **flunami**, which it probably is, based on the numbers of cases we're seeing," said James Downey, an infection control officer at Toronto East General Hospital.

—Caroline Alphonso, *The Globe and Mail*, 13 January 2011

jail mail

n. A letter to the editor sent by a prison inmate.

Example: In prisons across the country, with their artificial pre-Internet worlds where magazines are one of the few connections to the outside and handwritten correspondence is the primary form of communication, the art of the pen-to-paper letter to the editor is thriving. Magazine editors see so much of it that they have even coined a term for these letters: **jail mail.**

—Jeremy W Peters, *The New York Times*, 7 January 2011

RATCHET PRINCIPLE

n. The tendency for bureaucracies and organizations to accumulate new powers, rules, and similar elements of control, while also resisting the removal of existing elements of control. **Example:** The EU has adopted the **ratchet principle** in which it's virtually impossible to reverse the centralisation of power.

—William Rees-Mogg, *Mail on Sunday*, 8 November 2009

HELP, HELP!

As we age, we cannot ignore emergencies as something that happens to someone else. It's important to be prepared. HelpSoS, India's first emergency response and monitoring service, offers you immediate round-the-clock assistance using a combination of GPS and mobile technologies. On registering for this service, you get an audio monitoring system that activates on the touch of a button and instantly connects you to the HelpSoS monitoring centre. The product range includes an emergency pendant linked to a base phone unit that is connected to the home phone line, and an emergency



communication device with GPS. The GPS and the HelpSoS Real Time Location tools collaborate to create a virtual fence; when seniors with cognitive disorders, such as Alzheimer's, exit this fence the device sends an alert to the HelpSoS monitoring system. Register soon at www.helpsos.com. They are giving away 250 devices free along with two months of free service.

Conscience is the inner voice that warns us somebody may be looking.

-American editor H L Mencken

mortgage mill

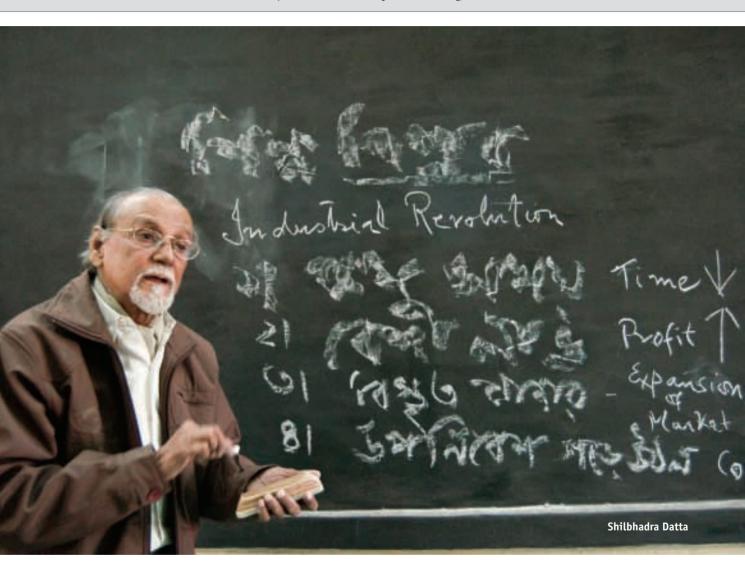
n. A company that automatically approves mortgages, particularly to unqualified buyers.

Example: During the housing boom, lenders created **mortgage mills** and put people into overpriced homes with mortgages that were difficult to understand and even more difficult to maintain. They often didn't bother to verify incomes or an applicant's long-term ability to keep up with mortgage payments.

—Michelle Singletary, *The Washington Post*, 17 October 2010

"If properly motivated, even those we label worthless can shine"

Prasanta Banerjee, 74, Kolkata, for coaching weaker students



or Prasanta Banerjee, 'passing it on' acquired special meaning when he was still a schoolboy. Today, he is giving back to his students what his headmaster passed on a long time ago. Glaucoma may have dimmed his sight and cancer affected his speech but Banerjee spends a few hours every week at Srimat Swami Praganananda Saraswati Vidhalaya in Howrah, Kolkata, coaching students who need an extra hand. Banerjee was himself a 'failure' before he was admitted to Praganananda Saraswati Vidhalaya. Here, he was transformed from a backbencher to a top scorer only

because his headmaster believed in him. It was this gratitude and passion for teaching that brought him back to his alma mater as a teacher after his graduation. "Thanks to the compassion of *Dadu* [his former headmaster], I found a berth as a teacher in this school." After retirement in 1998, Banerjee has continued to coach weaker students free and with no remuneration from the school. Thus, while private tuitions are banned but are still thriving, our grateful student can be found correcting papers and stirring young minds with the same zeal he felt 50 years ago.

-Partha Mukherjee & Priyanka Mukherjee

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