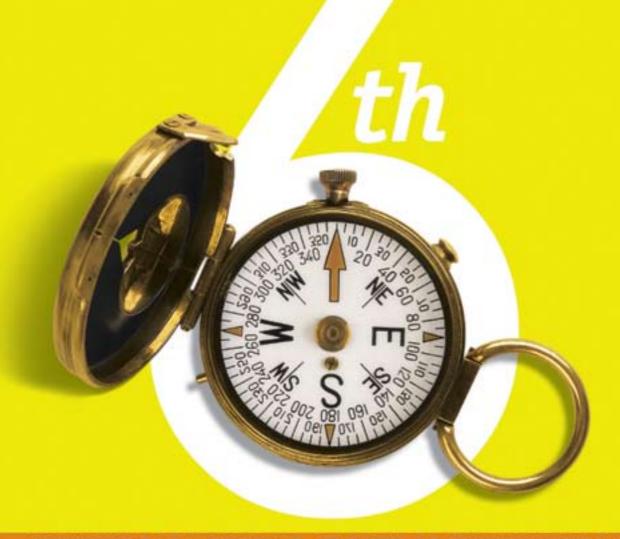
Celebrate age



ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL: TICKET TO HIDDEN INDIA

INTERVIEW

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SIXCANDLES

Six. That's the number of candles on our cake this month. Harmony for Silvers Foundation celebrates another birthday, one more milestone in our journey to empower silvers across India.

There is undeniably much to celebrate: a thriving magazine that pushes the editorial envelope to tackle sensitive and relevant issues that often go ignored in the public space; an interactive website that impels an increasing number of silvers to form a vibrant community on cyberspace; and an interactive centre that continues to bring value, meaning and cheer to the lives of its members.

Other than these core initiatives, the Foundation has expanded its reach with our Research Division, which conducts scientific studies on ageing and policy research; Harmony Publishing, which prints special titles for silvers; the annual Harmony Silver Awards, where we honour silver achievers; and the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run at the Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru marathons. In fact, over 1,500 silvers came together at Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on 23 May to participate in the Harmony Run at the Sunfeast World 10K.

What's more, advocacy remains an imperative for us and we are proud to partner with the like-minded to further the silver cause, whether it is to spread awareness on Reverse Mortgage or offer a helping hand to any silver who needs it. For instance, on 10 May, Harmony for Silvers Foundation, in partnership with FESCOM, Mumbai Police, HelpAge India and other organisations, collaborated with the Nargis Dutt Memorial Charitable Trust to launch a helpline for silvers in Mumbai (see 'Orbit'). Indeed, Harmony's tireless activism has catalysed a greater awareness of silver rights and silver potential in the media, which is worthy of a celebratory toast.



But, in keeping with the Ayurvedic maxim of six tastes sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent—these past six years have brought their share of disappointment too. We have witnessed the apathy of civil society to the plight of impoverished silvers; the condescension shown by media in relegating silvers to bit roles in their respective domains; the heart-wrenching tales of silvers who face oppression from those they love most; and, most troubling, the reluctance of so many silvers to recognise their own potential and unite to fight for their rights.

It is said that God created the world in six days. Six years down the road, I must confess that we are far from creating a perfect one for our silvers. But for every heartbreak and missed opportunity, there is a victory; the protagonists unknown but their situations universal—a hard-fought win to protect one's property; a second career crafted; an old fear conquered and new skill learnt; a dream dreamt, and then realised. These are the candles that light our way, keeping us inspired, motivated and committed to the cause. Let these candles be your signposts of hope; walk with us, keep the faith.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony-Celebrate Age-June 2010 Volume 7 Issue 1

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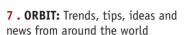
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Editorial & Marketing Offices: Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Tel: 91-22-30327108 (Editorial), 30327102 (Marketing). Email: contact.mag@harmonyindia.org Printed and published by Dharmendra Bhandari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

(Ina Ambani





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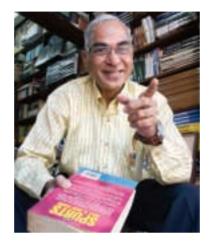
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COVER FEATURE



TICKET TO HIDDEN INDIA Six writers show us

the way to self-dicovery through travel













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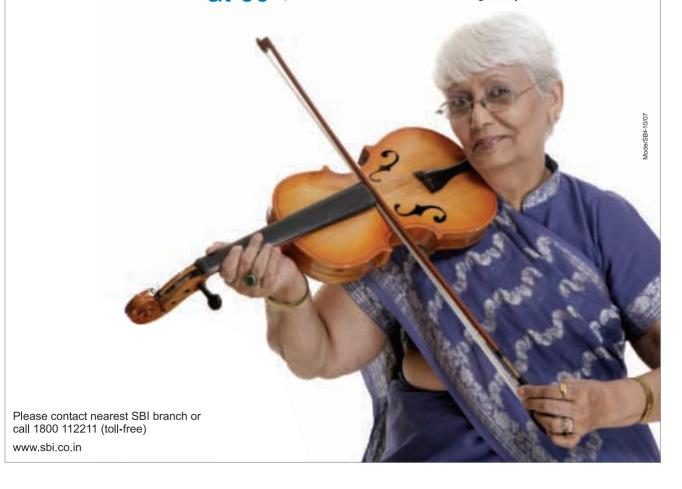


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column

Each one of us inhabits an all-new world in our mind. Through it, we are capable of dreaming up a bright future, weaving varns of a successful and healthy life and even travelling far and wide. The fun is to actually do it; outside our mind, in the real-present moment. Travel magazines bring us the best in adventure, fun and exotica. But you need to chart out your own course, considering you need that extra special information. On our sixth anniversary, we thought of giving you some (six for six years of *Harmony*) tailor-made packages—those that will take you to an India you will love the most; one that has the right measure of, yes, adventure, fun and exotica at a friendly pace and price.

A walk in the hills near Almora, boat ride on the all-purifying Narmada, safari through the Sunderbans, a historical and shopping trip to Chandni Chowk in Delhi, a royal treat in Chettinad and hike to forts in coastal Maharashtra comprise our irresistible package. Our writers are all passionate travellers. To know about their other vocations, go to our 'Contributors' section where they tell you why they do what they do.

Thank you all: our consultant editor Malvika Singh, whose idea this was; Timeri Murari; Royina Grewal; Nikhat Grewal; Sanjiv Valsan; and 55 year-old Lalita Phadkar, whom I would especially like to acknowledge. According to Harmony's Assistant Editor Arati Rajan Menon, who painstakingly coordinated this special package, Ms Phadkar can restore anyone's faith in humanity.

On that note, we wish Harmony travels far and wide through you, our readers—our real world.

—Meeta Bhatti



ll senior citizens are not equal, particularly in India. There are about 90 million senior citizens in India, but only 2 per cent are educated and financially comfortable. The rest are uneducated and have no property, savings or income. The well-to-do silvers, like retired bureaucrats, judges and corporate executives, have managed their savings smartly through bank deposits, investments and shares. They have flats, bungalows and farmhouses; their children are working in big companies; and they enjoy a good social life. I believe that this 2 per cent or 'Grade 1' of senior



citizens need to bring about a change in their approach to their fellow senior citizens, the 98 per cent or 'Grade 3', who are poor, illiterate, ailing and mostly live in rural areas. The state must give every senior citizen a pension of at least Rs 500 and a free bed, and free or subsidised food, as well as encourage cooperative agriculture with equal distribution and implement the Land Ceiling Act strictly. There must be income limits for the corporate sector and there should be a watchdog body to monitor their activities to safeguard the interests of shareholders. Further, many of the NGOs in our country have become bureaucracies thriving on aid from governments and international organisations; their workers living luxurious lives at the cost of public money. They should focus on projects for rural elders and those living in urban slums. Indeed, all of us as a society must endeavour to share material wealth equitably and sacrifice self-interest for public interest.

P C Singhi, Mumbai

our informative cover story Y "Flexible Strategies" in the May issue of Harmony made for good reading. Advances in medical technology make treatments like total joint replacement an option for arthritis sufferers of any age. Some people mistakenly believe that senior citizens—those in their 80s and 90s—are too old for the procedure. The key to deciding on surgery is open communication with your doctor. Nowadays, knee replacement surgery is successful in most patients. With increase in longevity, more and more senior citizens are demanding a better quality of life. They should get it.

Vinod C Dixit, Ahmedabad

CLARIFICATION

The article "Summit of Dreams" that appeared in the 'Your Space' section in the May 2010 issue of Harmony was a submission from Dipti Dasgupta. Her name was inadvertently misspelled.

Similarly, in the feature "The Artist & I", which appeared in the same issue, the names of the writers Partha Mukheriee and Priyanka Mukherjee were inadvertently misspelled. We regret the errors.

—Editors

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CONTRIBUTORS



Dr Indira Jai Prakash's column in this issue ('Concern' - "Room for Improvement") focuses on the mismanagement of old age homes in India. Jai Prakash took voluntary retirement from her position as professor and chairperson, department of pyschology, Bengaluru University. She is a research consultant and trainer in gerontology and gender issues. She has been a UGC Career Awardee; Commonwealth Fellow: Salzburg Fellow: Deutsch Visiting Professor at Institute fur Gerontologie. Heidelberg; and expert advisor to the Ageing and Health Division, WHO. She has authored 18 books and monographs, and has over 140 research papers to her credit.

This month, for our "Ticket to Hidden India" cover feature, Harmony's consulting editor Malvika Singh takes us on a tour of Chandni Chowk ("Delhi 6") and columnist Timeri Murari explores the hidden treasures of Chettinad ("Opening Closed Doors"). We are also proud to feature, for the first time, Royina Grewal, who writes on her travels along the Narmada ("The Virgin River"); Lalita Phadkar, who ambles through the hills of Uttarakhand ("A Walk in the Clouds"); Nikhat Grewal, who negotiates the dark and alluring Sunderbans ("Run Silent, Run Deep"); and Sanjiv Valsan, who follows the echoes of the past through the forts of Maharashtra ("Call of the Sahvadris").



Royina Grewal has written Sacred Virgin, Travels along the Narmada and In Rajasthan, A Travelogue, both travel narratives as well as The Book of Ganesha and In the Shadow of the Taj, A Portrait of Agra. She is currently nearing completion of her first novel, a historical based on Babur. She has also written monographs on Chanderi and Mandu, based on the conservation and development of these culturally sensitive towns. Her interest in history is also expressed in the six Son et Lumiere productions she has conceived, scripted and directed. Grewal and her husband live between Delhi and an organic farm in Rajasthan.

Marketing expert Lalita Phadkar enjoys undertaking branding projects, especially where brand creation hasn't happened yet in India, like the arts and culture space ("museums, performance troupes"). She is also part of an initiative in the civil society space called Mandaan. "I have returned to interests that my IIM education forced onto the back burner like writing, reading, and learning languages simply because they're there," says the 55 year-old. "I began to play the piano at the age of 50! I also want to explore as much of our world as I can before my knees give way." Phadkar and her husband live with their dogs—"a golden retriever, Simba, and a once-stray, Pixie"—in Delhi in a home with a garden full of assorted birds and squirrels.





Nikhat Grewal is a child psychologist. After graduating from the Anna Freud Centre, London, she joined The Sriram School in Delhi as counsellor. Later, she opened her own practice and uses play and art therapy to help children overcome difficulties. "Nothing recharges my batteries more than hopping onto a bus/train/plane heading to exotic destinations," she says. Grewal edited an anthology of essays written by young women in 2007—Scar Tissue published by Women Unlimited. She is also a columnist for *Parenting* magazine. Believing in the power of the human spirit and its connection to the earth, she recommends, "The best therapy is spending even a few days in places where nature is at her most magnificent."

Sanjiv Valsan is a freelance travel writer, photographer, consultant and documentary film researcher based in Mumbai. He mostly works on magazines, books, newspapers, personal art projects and for nonprofits. He has worked on projects for National Geographic channel, BBC World, NGOs, newspapers and magazines. Valsan also occasionally volunteers for plant and animal-related nonprofits. Though he has trekked in Malaysia, Sweden, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Himalaya in Sikkim, Darjeeling and Himachal Pradesh, his love for the mountains began in Maharashtra's Sahyadris, where he used to trek regularly. "You don't need to be super-fit to do these walks," he says, "as long as you are young at heart!"



NEWS » VIEWS » PEOPLE
» RESEARCH » TRENDS » TIPS

OPEN YOUR EYES TO EVERYTHING THAT'S NEW IN THE SILVER WORLD







O»NEWSWORTHY

Fertile future

C etting a precedent for civic bodies in the country, a local body in Kerala's Wayanad district has evolved a novel scheme to provide less strenuous jobs to silvers. Launched by the Edavaka Gram Panchayat under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the project, titled 'Thanal', has employed 600 silvers in 15 nursery units in the district. Each unit tends between 10,000 and 25,000 fruit-bearing saplings and each silver earns a minimum wage of Rs 125 a day.



Smile!



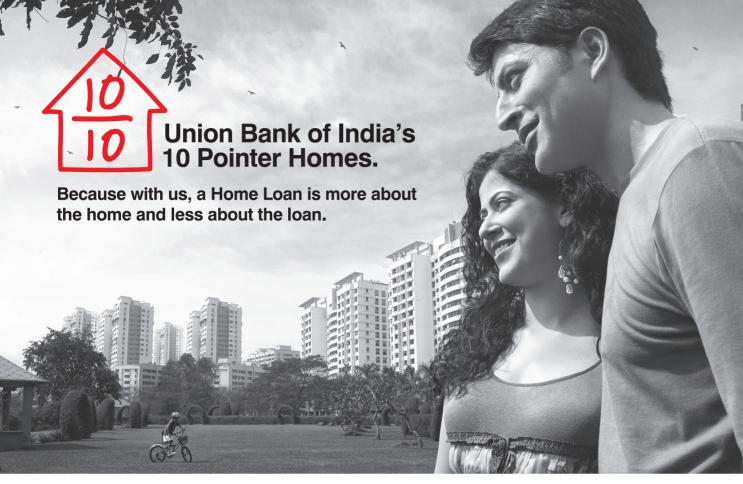
SILVERS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

will soon be showing off brandnew pearly whites. In April, the state government announced the launch of its 'Happy Smile Denture for All' scheme that aims to provide dentures free of cost to everyone over the age of 65. This service will be made available in 76 health centres in the state and about 10,000 silvers are expected to benef t from it in the next three years. That's not all. The state will also establish a Rs 50-million 'Centre of Excellence for Geriatric Health' at the Government Ayurvedic Postgraduate College in Kangra. Now that's reason to smile.

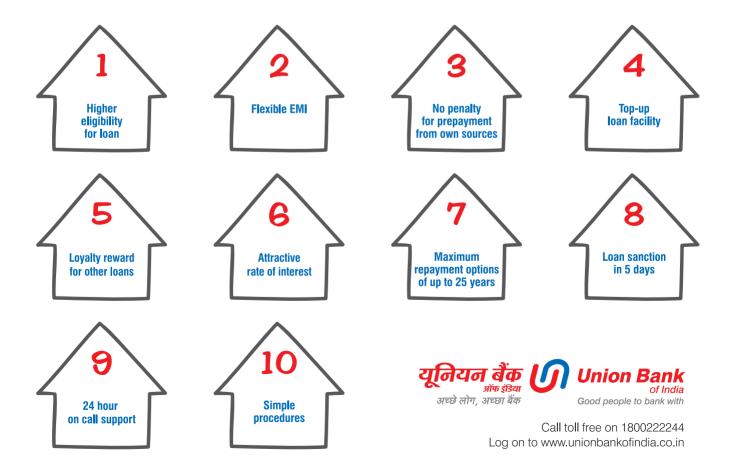


Act 2

Nine tribunals are now functional in the capital under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act, 2007, but Delhi Chief Minister Shiela Dikshit is already thinking ahead. In May, she announced the establishment of an appellate authority for silvers who are dissatisfied with the ruling of the tribunals. In addition, the government will establish at least two senior citizens' recreation centres in each constituency; increase the number of beneficiaries under old age pension schemes from 250,000 to 350,000 in the current financial year; issue stickers that say 'senior citizen' on the electoral cards of silvers; and release a guide that details all the facilities and opportunities that are due to elders under various schemes.



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O>EVENT

Listening EAR

n 10 May, the Nargis Dutt Memorial Charitable Trust, in collaboration with Ambulance Access for All Foundation, Mumbai Police Elder Helpline, Harmony for Silvers Foundation, Silver Innings Foundation, HelpAge India and FESCOM, launched a helpline— 1298—for silvers in Mumbai. It was inaugurated by MP Priya Dutt on behalf of the Trust.

The brainchild of Sweta Mangal (see photo), co-founder and CEO, Ambulance Access for All Foundation, the helpline will connect silvers to NGOs and assist them with counselling services. "Now, by dialling 1298, seniors can have access to a directory of NGOs who can help them on a variety of issues," said Mangal. The helpline provides silvers with information on daycare centres, legal issues, financial matters and the Right to Information Act. Coming up in the next three



months: information on yoga centres, *dabba* services, and mobility aids.

The guest of honour, actor Asha Parekh, was impressed with the helpline's prompt response during a test drive. "With the increase in the number of nuclear families, silvers feel lonely during times of distress," she said. "It's heartening to know that help is now just a phone call away." Mumbai Police Commissioner D Sivanandan also applauded the effort. "We should make registration of all silvers mandatory and give them a sticker of all essential numbers," he said.

O>TRENDS

Connected@100

THE MOST POPULAR COMMUNICATION AND ENTERTAINMENT TOOLS today—instant messaging, digital music players and video-sharing on the Web—are no longer the preserve of teeny boppers. According to American insurance company UnitedHealthcare, American centenarians are increasingly in tune with technology. Its Evercare 100@100 snapshot survey of 100 centenarians found that 8 per cent have sent a text message, up eight times from two years ago; more than 10 per cent have watched a video on video-hosting site YouTube; 12 per cent have listened to music on an iPod or similar music player, triple the figure from three years ago; and 27 per cent use new gadgets like digital recorder TiVo and exercise game Wii Fit. Most heartening, 82 per cent communicate with a friend or family member on a daily basis. "Staying connect-



ed to a social group is vitally important in old age," says Dr Mark Leenay, a senior vice-president at UnitedHealthcare. "Thus, it's wonderful that our 'super-seniors' are increasingly using technology and are connected to pop culture." You can read the study at *evercare100at100.com*

Mrs. Pushpa Bhargava, 70 yrs

Women are different, and so are their knees



What causes knees to hurt?

stairs, can become extremely painful.

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

Women are different, and so are their knees

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

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O» ANALYSE THIS



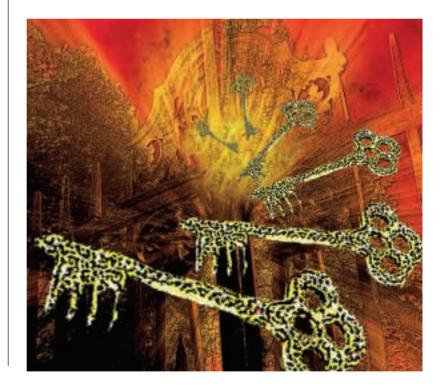
GRUMPA?

THE NEXT TIME YOU FEEL CRANKY,

blame your brain. A new study by the National Centre for Geriatrics and Gerontology in Obu, Japan, suggests that silvers are often in a bad mood because their brains react differently to chronic stress. The research team put three month-old and 24 month-old rats under stress by placing them inside a wire-mesh container for one hour every day for two weeks. "Before the start of the treatment, the two sets of rats had similar levels of the stress hormone, corticosterone," writes study leader Hirotaka Shoji in journal New Scientist. "All the rats had higher levels of the hormone after two weeks, but the old rats had signif cantly more. The old rats also showed increased activity in areas of the brain associated with anxiety and decreased activity in regions linked with controlling emotions."

Key to a mystery

teenager from the Reisterstown in Maryland, USA, is now the focus of the international scientific community. Brooke Greenberg is 17 but has the body and cognitive skills of a toddler. And as Reuters reports, scientists are hoping to unscramble the conundrum of ageing by sequencing her genome. Preliminary research by the University of South Florida's School of Medicine suggests that her failure to grow could be linked to defects in the genes that make us all age. If this is confirmed, it could suggest new therapies for age-related diseases. "We think she has a mutation in the genes that control her ageing and development so she appears to have been frozen in time," says team leader Professor Richard Walker. "If we can compare her genome to the normal version, we might be able to find those genes and see exactly what they do and how to control them."





THAT'S WHAT THE GLOBAL SMART HOMES MARKET WILL BE WORTH BY 2014, GROWING AT A RATE OF 16.5 PER CENT FROM 2009 TO 2014. SMART HOMES ENABLE SILVERS TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY FOR MUCH LONGER SPANS OF TIME.



O» MEDIA WATCH

Sunset cocktail



AMID ALL THE STAR-FILLED ROM-COMS, legal and medical dramas and talent contests, an offbeat show is slowly creeping up the American television ratings: Sunset Daze, a reality show that follows seven silvers living in Sun City Grand, one of the largest retirement communities in Surprise, Arizona. Make no mistake, though, this is no litany of woe, ailments and depression. The protagonists of the show are not unhappy wallflowers but active, adventurous silvers discovering new possibilities in a new home, as *Media Life* magazine tells us. For instance, 72 year-old Jack is discovering the singles' scene; 68 year-old Sandy is looking for a real man because she's tired of her "BOB" (battery-operated boyfriend!); and 70-something, flamboyant Gail, a sometime-actor who never really made the spotlight, is determined to keep the greasepaint on. "We're here because it's an active place," 74 year-old LaWanda Price, one of the participants on the show, tells The New York Times. "Retirement is just the beginning of a new life." Let's hope the show comes to India soon.



Learning curve(s)

or actor and one-time pinup queen Raquel Welch, coming to terms with ageing was doubly hard. "We can all agree that ageing is challenging but, believe me, it can be even more so for a fading sex symbol," writes the 69 year-old in *Raquel: Beyond the Cleavage* (Weinstein Books). In the book, which is as much memoir as a prescription for ageing with grace, she chronicles her career, which began at the age of 19; personal life (two children and four divorces); and constant struggle to reconcile her private persona with her extremely public self. Welch also speaks candidly about how she tackled menopause, experimenting with hormone replacement therapy (HRT) only to settle for yoga and eating right. "The point of the book was to remind women that their fears and anxieties were not special to them," she says. "If my own travails, worries and insecurities, which were magnif ed by being in the public eye, were surmountable, so are everybody's."

WORK ON: EFFORTS BY THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT TO CONVINCE COMPANIES TO KEEP WORKERS BEYOND THE AGE OF 62 ARE BEARING FRUIT, ACCORDING TO A STUDY. OF THE 3,200 COMPANIES SURVEYED, MORE THAN 60 PER CENT SAID THEY



WOULD KEEP THEIR SILVER WORKERS. AND OF THE 9,400 LOCAL EMPLOYEES FROM VARIOUS SECTORS WHO HAD REACHED THE AGE OF 62, 92 PER CENT SAID THEY WERE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE WORKING.



>>> WILD SILVER

Bow-wow!

The anti-ageing revolution has not escaped the canine world. In May, Nestlé Purina, the pet foods division of the global nutrition and foods company, launched Pro Plan Senior 7+ Original, a new diet to delay brain decline among dogs. This is no idle boast. Research commissioned by Nestlé—and published in the British Journal of Nutrition—establishes that older dogs fed on the formula, which is enriched with medium chain triglycerides (MCTs), display improved memory, learning capacity and ability to adapt to new situations. No word yet on when the product will hit shelves in India.



DRUG DEPENDENT: ACCORDING TO GERMAN HEALTH AUTHORITIES, 1.7 TO 2.8 MILLION WOMEN AND MEN OVER THE AGE OF 60 CAN BE DESCRIBED AS 'ADDICTED' TO PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS OR PAINKILLERS. WHAT'S MORE, OVER ONE IN FOUR RESIDENTS OF NURSING HOMES OVER THE AGE OF 70 ARE ADDICTED TO PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS.

O»LOVE THAT

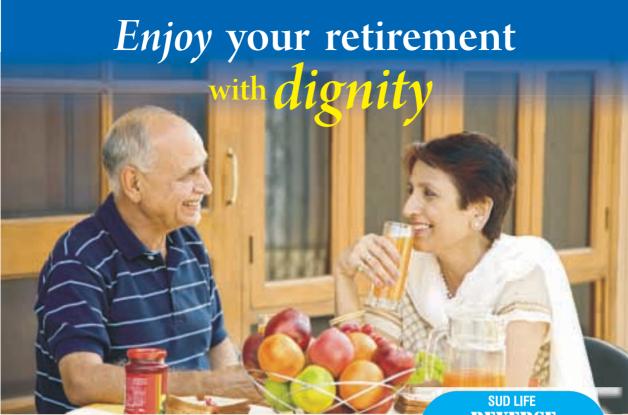
Tea and TANGO

Since 1936, the Oxford Annual Pensioners' Tea Party, held every January, has been an integral part of the town's social calendar. This year, the party was pushed down to April owing to inclement weather but was no less of a success, with 320 silvers showing up at Oxford Town Hall for a raffle, dancing, a sing-along and, of course, tea. Funded by the proceeds of the fortnightly tea dances held at the town hall, the event began as a trip to the cinema for silvers and evolved over the years into its current avatar. "The best thing about the party is to see old friends reunite," organiser Mo Tweney, who's been doing the job for 27 years, tells local newspaper Oxford Mail. Like 80 year-old Arthur Davis, who has only missed one tea



party in the past decade. And Doreen King—the 79 year-old says, "I've been coming here for years and my mum

used to come here before that! The tea party is part of all our yesterdays, and tomorrows."



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O» H PEOPLE

Age of adventure

Radhakrishnan prefers not to talk about himself—though there are enough reasons for him to do so. In April this year, the 81 year-old inaugurated the Kerala Sailing Academy at Panangad, on the outskirts of Kochi, soon after returning from his month-long sailing expedition from Aden to Kochi via Salalah. Though most people would be amazed at his adventurous spirit, Radhakrishnan prefers to brush it off. "It was not such a big deal." The self-effacing silver also loves to design, build and fly lightweight aircraft when he is not riding the waves. Between 2003 and 2005, he designed and built the country's first ocean-worthy sailing catamaran at the Raman Research Institute using 50-ft hulls manufactured in Coimbatore by Kochi-based company Praga Marine. These days the octogenarian is busy working on the same catamaran to make it more ocean-hardy. A scientist ("by accident", as he insists), Radhakrishnan still puts in a full day at the Raman



Institute in Bengaluru (named after its founder, Nobel laureate C V Raman). When *Harmony* asked Radhakrishnan about his next expedition, all he says is, "I'm working on it." He sure is!

TAKE A TRIP.



Go off the beaten track and plan a holiday with your friends this year—there's plenty of help at hand. For instance, Mumbai-based travel company INORBIT Tours has started a new division called 'Senior Citizen Tours', which will organise trips to exotic destinations at different times of the year. Tie-ups with foreign tourism boards and social organisations ensure a comfortable and silver-friendly experience. Following successful tours to China, Hong Kong and Macau, the company plans to take silvers to Sri Lanka, Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Europe. For more details, call Om Prakash, director, INORBIT Tours, at 022-24229281 or email omprakash@ inorbittours.com

IN PASSING

Management guru **Dr C K Prahalad** died in San Diego on 16 April. He was 69.

The world's oldest person **Kama Chinen** died in Tokyo on 2 May. She was 114.

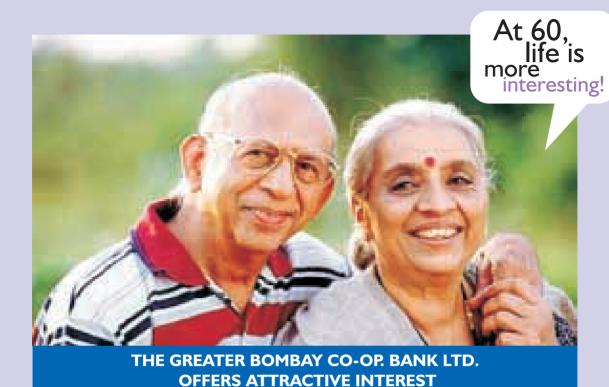
Actor **Mac Mohan**, better known as 'Samba' of *Sholay* fame, passed away in Mumbai on 10 May. He was 71.

Former vice-president of India **Bhairon Singh Shekawat** passed away on 10 May. He was 87.

Singer **Ronnie James Dio** of heavy metal group Black Sabbath passed away on 16 May. He was 67.

BIRTHDAYS

- American political activist Bianca Jagger turned 65 on 2 May
- American musician and pianist Billy Joel turned 61 on 9 May
- Writer Nayantara Sahgal turned 83 on 10 May
- Spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar turned 54 on 13 May
- Playwright and actor Girish Karnad turned 72 on 19 May
- Actor Paresh Rawal turned 60 on 30 May



CURRENT RATE OF INTEREST ON DEPOSITS

ON DEPOSITS FOR SENIOR CITIZENS.

MATURITY PERIOD	Interest Rates in Percentage (Per Annum)		
MATURITY FERIOD	General Public	Senior Citizens	
15 days to 45 days	4.00	4.00	
46 days to 90 days	5.00	5.00	
91 days to 180 days	6.00	6.00	
181 days to less than 1 year	6.50	6.50	
1 year to less than 2 years	7.25	7.75	
2 years to less than 3 years	7.25	7.75	
3 years upto 7 years	7.00	7.50	
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HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

SWEET FAREWELL

I asked Grandpa, "Why have you stopped eating? Doesn't death bring pain?" The sun's rays shone through the solitary window of the small room and lit up the grim setting. Grandpa looked serene. He had been lying in bed, eyes shut, with a rudraksha mala [prayer beads] in his hand, awaiting death for the past month at Benaras Mukti Bhawan. "Not at all. Death, here in Kashi, the City of Gods, is considered the most sacred," he said. "I opted to die here. My father, grandfather and their forefathers all took this route to death and their souls found salvation. To me, death means liberation. Those who die here on the banks of the Ganga attain moksha [salvation], the ultimate salvation."

It was 1985. My grandfather was on his deathbed and there wasn't a hint of tragedy. For his imminent salvation, every member of the family had assembled. And death for the grand old man seemed like another visitor that they were expecting any moment. Grandpa had been a university professor and an active social worker after he retired. In his early 90s, his health deteriorated and he voiced his last wish to be brought to Benaras.

More than 40 days had passed. It is believed that some people attain *moksha* in 10 to 15 days. "Salvation-seeking patients gradually reduce their food intake and, towards the end, survive only on the sacred water



Sharma is awed by the cycle of life

of the Ganga," explained my father as we went for a stroll. "After their demise, their family cremates the body on the ghats." Soon, my mother rang up to say that Grandpa had attained salvation. When we returned, the *purohit* [priest] was preparing the last rites. Grandpa looked delighted and gratified. When the pyre was lit on the ghats of the Ganga, my phone vibrated. My father-in law joyfully broke the news that I had been blessed with a beautiful daughter.

A huge cloud of smoke was emanating from Grandpa's pyre. I remembered the time when I was just five. I had swung my arms around Grandpa and said, "Daadu, a new electrical transformer is being installed in the street. The old one has been removed as it's worn out. Now, there won't be too many power cuts." Grandpa had smiled, "It is only after the old is gone that the new one will be put in its place." Now, I realised the true meaning of his words. He was gone, yielding place to the new. The love he had given me was returned in the form of my new daughter.

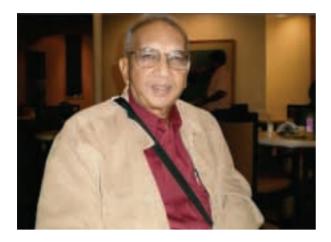
—Jaswinder Sharma, Panchkula

PANIC IN PARIS

It may be the world's romantic capital but Paris can present some unexpected adventures too. My adventure unfolded in May last year, when my family and I took a trip to Europe. We checked into our hotel in Paris late at night but I was up bright and early the next day. Armed with my camera and hotel key card, I told my wife I would be back in 30 minutes.

Paris is indeed charming. Our hotel was in the old part of town, with narrow cobbled streets, and buildings whose architecture dated back to the early 20th century. Clicking pictures, I walked to the Grand Boulevard station of the Paris Metro. Then I decided to retrace my steps but took a wrong turn! And to my dismay, the hotel key card that I was carrying in my pocket did not bear the hotel's address or telephone number.

Passers-by either didn't speak English or were unwilling to help with directions. I walked into another hotel from the same hotel chain that I was staying in, and asked for directions. The receptionist said there were nearly 44 Mercure hotels in Paris!



Patre: lost and found in Paris

I paced the streets for nearly two hours. I had no money except for a couple of credit cards, no mobile phone and my feet were aching. Finally, I reached the Gare du Nord station, where a young man told me I had strayed nearly 3 km from the Grand Boulevard Metro station. None of the cabbies I approached were willing to oblige. I began to worry as I had neither eaten breakfast nor taken my blood pressure medicine. I was beginning to panic and was thinking of going to the police for help when a young taxi driver offered to help. After 15 minutes of driving around, I suddenly spotted my hotel. I was ecstatic! My wife and son were equally relieved.

Once back inside the hotel, I asked the receptionist why there was no address on the hotel key card. She simply smiled, took out a piece of paper and stuck a stamp of the hotel's address and telephone number on the card. As they say in France, voila!

-Rajashekhar S Patre, Bengaluru

FORWARD MARCH

Former American president Abraham Lincoln famously said that it is not the years of life that count but the life in those years. The twilight years can be a new beginning as it is a time when life gives you another opportunity to expand your horizons. I am a retired colonel and have served the Indian Army for 23 years, which included the opportunity to participate in the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. After that, I held various positions in the Indian Information Service (I&B Ministry); worked as an advisor to a corporate house; and then donned the hat of professor with various journalism and public relations institutes.

Even after I retired in 1999, I decided I would continue to learn. I started writing short stories, poems and novellas, and have penned 58 books in both Hindi and English. I have also written in newspapers about the problems of the elderly. Writing gives me immense creative pleasure and, last year, I was conferred the Lal Bahadur Shastri Award for my contribution to literature.

Reaching out to friends and peers has also given me a lot of satisfaction. Today, I am the founder-president of the Sangeet Surabhi Indraprastha, a senior citizens' welfare association in Delhi, and look after the needs and issues of fellow silvers in and around Patparganj. We arrange tours, talk shows and musical events to make sure silvers are engaged throughout the day. We also help silvers deal with health, income issues and sometimes simply lend an ear. In the evening, we get together for a game of chess, cards or yoga.

I am also vice-president of the Rajasthan Sanstha Sangh. There are around 800,000 Rajasthanis in Delhi, and when one is far away from home, one feels a sense of cultural alienation. To overcome this, we organise cultural programmes and even celebrate Rajasthani festivals. I am also president of the Hadaoti Samaj, an organisation for people from towns like Kota, Bondhi and Jalabad. If you think my itinerary is packed, well, there's more. I am also involved with the Directorate of Hindi under the Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry and travel to non-Hindi speaking areas like Shillong, Belgaum and Kerala to promote the national language.



Pal lives each moment meaningfully

Looking back, I feel the past 77 years of my life have been an exciting journey where each turn has given me the opportunity to learn something new and discover various facets of my personality.

—Col H Bhisham Pal (retd), Delhi



Indira Jai Prakash

Room for improvement: Old age homes in India should focus on 'continuum of care'

With its 300 year-old history of providing long-term care to older people, India recorded the establishment of its first old age home in 1782. Most old age homes are still run by secular organisations, religious groups and the state. Society and the state have always relied on joint families to provide long-term care to seniors. Co-residence with children was, and is still, the preferred living arrangement. While estimates vary, there are over 600 registered old age homes—52 per cent of them in South India with Kerala leading the list.

The need for old age homes is a reflection of the demographic and social changes around us. Lifespan has increased and people are living well into their later years. Families are smaller and nuclear. Traditional caregivers (usually women) are not available 24×7. Migration of the youth results in older people living alone. When family or community care is not available, institutions emerge to fill the need. But unlike in the West, old age homes have not been part of our 'normal' social scene. However, they are now mushrooming in urban areas-this is prompting state governments to support NGOs to start and run them at district levels for people below the poverty line. Old age homes are still viewed as the last resort as planned long-term care, disability-free ageing, quality ageing, community-assisted independent living arrangement and comprehensive geriatric care are all concepts still vaguely understood and yet to be practised in India.

How good are old age homes in India? There are obviously some very well-run institutions providing quality care with or without residents paying for services. Abhayashram in Bengaluru is one of the oldest homes providing

Old age homes should not be waiting rooms for people about to die but centres where active ageing is promoted

free care to many destitute elderly. There have also been instances in the city where the Elders' Helpline run by the Nightingales Medical Trust had to 'rescue' old people from homes where they were virtual prisoners. The Federation of Senior Citizens' Forums of Karnataka attempted to check on old age homes advertised in local newspapers. The ratio of actual (really existing) to bogus (on paper) old age homes was 1:4. There were homes where mentally challenged, chronic psychiatric patients and destitute elderly were herded together. The visiting team was denied entry in some places.

At present, only around 1 per cent of the elderly are living in institutions. Soon, out of necessity or choice, more people may opt for old age homes. If living in a care facility has to be a viable option for seniors, certain issues

have to be looked into. People who manage old age homes need to be trained to provide appropriate care for the changing needs and increasing dependence of elders. It requires knowledge, empathy, communication and stress management skills. One has to plan systematically for every 'resident'-which sounds better than the term 'inmate'-taken in. Financial, legal, familial, social, medical and emotional issues need to be worked out in detail. The aim should be to provide quality care till death, so that the dignity and autonomy of the person are respected. Inclusion is the key word. The family (even extended) and community should be involved in old age home activities.

Across the country, old age homes should provide regular, uniformly appropriate services to every person who needs them, no matter who manages the institution. Supervision to prevent abuse and exploitation is mandatory. Old age homes should not be waiting rooms for people about to die but centres where active ageing is promoted. The focus should be on 'continuum of care'-from minimum assistance to live independently to maximum end-of-life care when required. In short, they should be supervised and monitored; the staff should be trained and empowered; and the management held responsible and accountable.

Indira Jai Prakash, 58, is a Bengalurubased gerontologist

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THE HILLS OF UTTARAKHAND PAGE 35



CHANDNI CHOWK
PAGE 24 、



THE FORTS OF MAHARASHTRA PAGE 47



THE NARMADA PAGE 30



THE SUNDERBANS PAGE 52



CHETTINAD PAGE 42



One of the joys of silvering is the potential for discovery: finding new trails of the mind; avenues of possibility; vistas for growth and self-exploration. It's about finding what lies hidden, often in plain sight. The parallels to travel are unmistakable. Voyaging to a new destination or rediscovering a much-trodden one can awaken the senses and stimulate one's appetite for action and adventure. Indeed, there can be no better canvas to paint your own odyssey than India, with its breathtaking diversity. As this magazine crosses the six-year milestone, we bring you six personal voyages to destinations that are both unpredictable and inspiring. These are not just travels but journeys of the heart and mind that celebrate life—they are metaphors for the spirit of *Harmony*.



Delhi 6

Chandni Chowk brims with the vibrations of the past and the continuing rhythms of life

➡ Malvika Singh ➡ Prakash Israni

t was Mirza Ghalib's home. It was the central core of Shah Jahan's great city where social harmony, art, music and poetry lived in profound comfort with trade and commerce. Hindus and Muslims were one, brothers in arms, fortunate to be the life and soul of a special Dilli, a vibrant, resilient city that had embraced the essence of Sufism and where orthodoxy could be questioned. In some of his verses Ghalib made the rigid strictures and preaching comic like in this one:

The tavern door and the Preacher Are truly poles apart All I know is I saw him enter As I left to depart

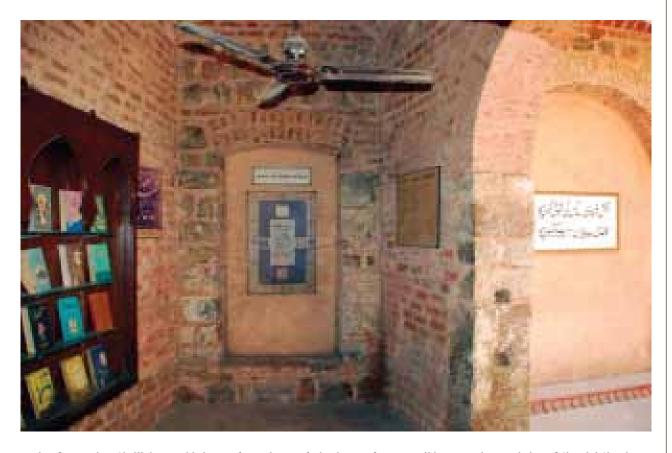
But this is not a story about Ghalib. It is about Chandni Chowk, the main and most prestigious avenue in Shahjehanabad that led out from the grand palace, ran along the great Jama Masjid and was intersected at right angles by the other major avenue, Faiz Bazaar. The city was walled in, interspersed with gates: Dilli Darwaza, Turkman Darwaza, Kashmiri Darwaza, Mori Darwaza, Lahori Darwaza, Kabul Darwaza and Ajmeri Darwaza. Off the main arteries lay the residential as well as business districts, spreading out into *kucha*, *katra* and *mohalla*, *bagh* and bazaars, *chowk* as the central meeting points that were carefully planned and built in relation to socioeconomic and cultural needs. *Haveli*, some grand and others far simpler, were the residences of the *Dilliwallah*. Water was adequate and the Emperor had ensured a working, efficient drainage system. The British lived outside the city.

It was a magical habitat then and remains a vibrant, albeit overloaded and crowded one, today. Water canals do not run placidly down the centre of Chandni Chowk any more but, instead, there is a constantly moving, dense, multicoloured tapestry of rickshaws, cycles and people. The trees that once









Books of poet Mirza Ghalib kept at his house; (opposite page) the domes of Jama Masjid command a grand view of Chandni Chowk

AS ONE WALKS THROUGH THE SEEMING MESS, EXTRAORDINARY REMNANTS OF A FINE TRADITION CONTINUE TO ENVELOP YOU, GENTLY PERMEATING THE SPACE AROUND YOU. **THE ETHOS LIVES ON**

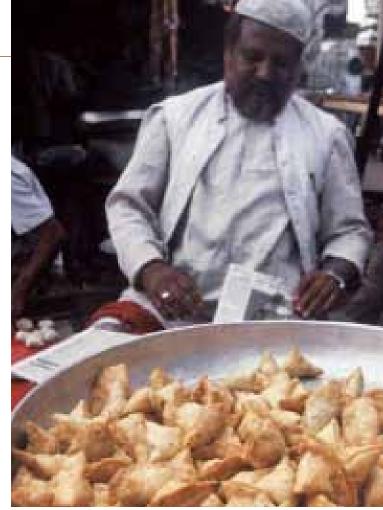
stood as umbrellas bringing shade and dappled light to keep the cool have been replaced by a million wires crisscrossing each other, knotted up and gnarled, a canopy symbolic of chaos and mal-planning. Where once people of the city met to shop and eat together, wander in the gardens and picnic, or watch a cockfight, before wandering home at night on a normal day, today there is no space for those civilised aspects of life and living.

Sir Thomas Metcalfe, the British Resident, lived on the periphery outside and beyond Kashmiri Darwaza. A description of Delhi by his daughter

Emily Bayley, written in 1848 upon her arrival in Delhi, reads: "At about one o'clock in the morning I looked out of my palanquin, and saw in the glorious moonlight the minarets of the Jama Masjid, one of the chief beauties of Delhi. As we got nearer I could see the wonderful red walls that surrounded the city...it was the most marvellous moonlight I have ever seen, and as we crossed the river, the view in both directions of this magnificent city lying before us was quite wonderful..." There are other descriptions where she talks about the shops along Chandni Chowk with their exotic and colourful wares.

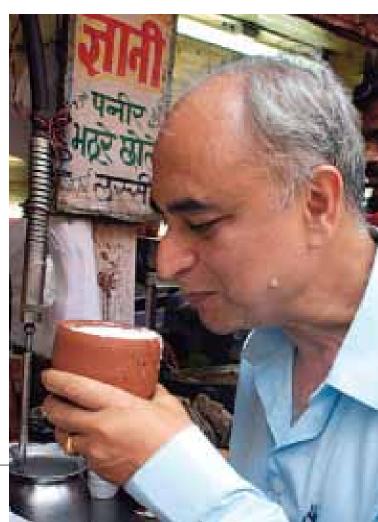
Modernity brought in its wake the most alien and appalling interventions that ruthlessly pierced through the beauty and intrinsic charm of this very extraordinary Capital of the later Mughals. That Dilli was severely ransacked, brutalised and mutilated by the British, alas never restored to its past glory. Even today, despite the scars, Shahjehanabad could revive and rejuvenate to re-establish itself as one of the unmatched avatars of Dilli. I say this because as one walks through the seeming mess, extraordinary remnants of a fine tradition continue to envelop you, drift by you, gently permeating the space around you. The











AT NIGHT, THE CITY SHEDS HER PROTECTIVE COVERS AND EMBRACES HER RESIDENTS. THEY COME OUT TO CHAT AND STROLL, TO BROWSE IN BOOKSHOPS AND ROADSIDE STALLS

ethos lives on. The fragrances, smells, colours and sounds, the people living in the *galli* and their old-world manners, the products on sale, the tried and tested herbal cure masters, healers, expert perfumers, artisans, booksellers, are all there, rooted and confident in their ancestral domain.

Dariba Kalan lies as it did centuries ago, an important lane that runs off Chandni Chowk. And off Dariba is the famed Kinari Bazaar, a treasure trove of unimaginable varieties of tinsel and trimmings for elaborate clothes, headgear, veils, elaborate ribbons and laces, pieces of brocade and silk used to cover baskets carrying dried fruits and sweets to the home of the bride and groom, decorative wedding buntings for entrances and archways and all the other fairytale-like ethereal embellishments that define special occasions. However, my favourite shop in Dariba is that of perfumer Gulabchand Johrimal.

As long as I can remember, every time winter came to Delhi, happiness was a visit to Chandni Chowk and this particular shop. Essences of every conceivable flower and fragrant plant sat in etched glass decanters waiting to be measured and carefully poured into smaller glass vials for those who bought the varieties available. Subtle 'mixes' into a base of sandal created unusual and bespoke attar for customers who have endorsed Gulabchand's products for generations. *Agarbatti*,

A street full of desire (clockwise): customers sift through swathes of ethnic fabrics; every lane in Chandni Chowk is crammed with shops selling snacks and savouries; creamy lassi in terracotta cups offer a blissful respite from the heat; perfume made from fresh flowers and fragrant plants sit pretty in decanters

the best in quality; animal fat-free soaps, like patchouli, mogra, sandal, khus, gulab and more; pure, essential massage oils; all transport you into a world of personal luxury, good grooming and style of days gone by. The importance and leisure time that women gave their bodies and soul, using organic formulas to keep their skin young and supple, their complexion smooth and clear, have made a comeback in recent times with brands competing with each other. But despite that, my 'favourite' shop retains the status of being the forerunner among a plethora of 'descendants' in the same business.

At the end of the curving lane is another 'must ferret about' shop where I have rummaged around looking for that one prized gem of a something that I cannot dream of finding anywhere else. Small junk shops are a joy in the rear lanes of Chandni Chowk. In another part is the wholesale sari bhandar where you can find, at comparatively throwaway prices, every type of woven sari made anywhere through the length and breadth of Hindustan. Shopping around Chandni Chowk is usually interrupted by a quick snack of a stuffed parantha at Paranthe Wali Galli, translated as 'Parantha Street'. The sheer joy of standing at the counter with one foot on an open drain, eating the best parantha in the world that brings forth memories embedded in a collective gene pool, is unparalleled despite any and every negative!

This part of Delhi gets better by night, late night, when the alien, commercial traffic of a metropolitan city, intruding into the lost magic of the past, goes to sleep. It is at that moment that the city of Emperor Shah Jahan, Bahadur Shah Zafar and Ghalib begins to come into

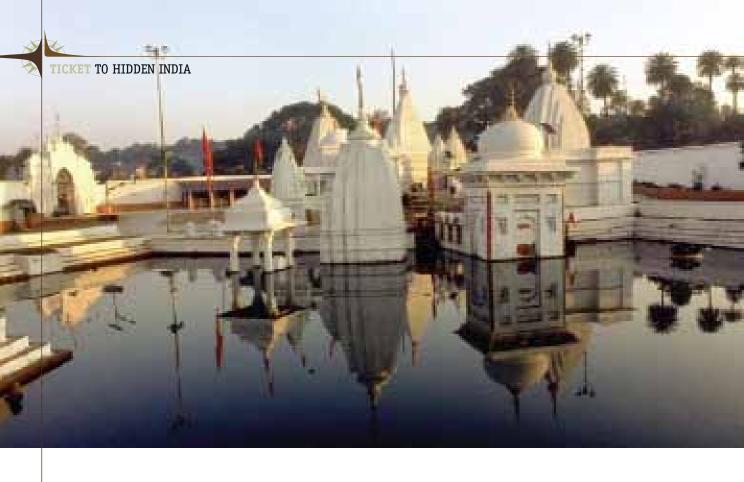
its own, celebrating what it knows and knows best. Life and living. Walking towards Pahari Imli, the highest point on this part of the terrain of Chandni Chowk, activity is at its height even beyond 11 at night. I feel privileged to watch the city shed her protective covers and embrace her residents. They come out to chat and stroll, to browse in bookshops and roadside stalls, eat the finest kebabs and raan at wayside eating places, Karim's being my very favourite. On a full moon night, with moonbeams glancing off the Red Fort walls in front, and lighting the path of Chandni Chowk, to sit in silence on the high steps of the Jama Masjid and imagine what 1848 must have been like, is a treat that we Dilliwallah have access to and should make a periodic ritual.

A night-out-till-dawn is something truly special. The wide-eyed wandering about ends with a large helping of fresh *nihari* (meat stew), served piping hot at the first glimmer of dawn, eaten with a soft *naan* or rich *shirmal* (traditional flatbread). And, before heading home and to sleep, just when the sun takes its dominant position overhead and the harsh noises of traffic begin to invade the natural exuberance of the night gone by, delicate, syrupy, hot *jalebi* washed down with a glass of milk make for a delicious grand finale.

This is the Dilli of the poet Zauq who wrote with emotion: "Kaun jaye paar ab Dilli ki galiyan chod kar." (Who would want to suffer separation from the lanes of Delhi?)



MALVIKA SINGH, WHO LIVES IN DELHI, IS A WRITER AND PUBLISHER OF SEMINAR MAGAZINE



The virgin river

The capricious Narmada, benevolent and passionate, means dif erent things to dif erent people

→ Royina Grewal Rajendra Janglay

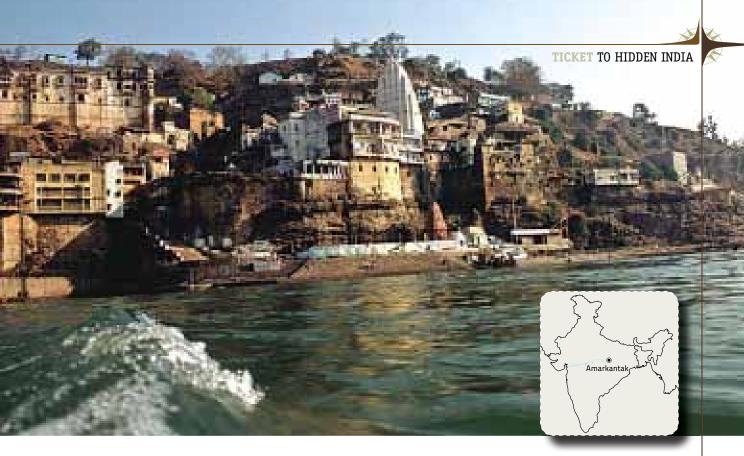
he Narmada is one of the most variable and seductive rivers in India. Winsome and beguiling one moment, passionate and furious another. She remains for most of her course like a mountain stream, youthful and vivacious, roaring over falls, leaping over canyons and occasionally pausing languorously in deep pools. And she alone among India's many sacred rivers is virgin.

Depending on where you meet her and how, the Narmada can mean different things to different people. For the many turbulent stretches in her course she is called Rewa, from the Sanskrit *rev* to leap. But she is also Manananda, who brings eternal bliss; Rajani the spirited; Kamada who fulfils desire; Vibhatsa the terrifying one; and Manasvardhini who craves the lifeblood she has nurtured. Ferocious, insouciant, benevolent.

I had been captivated by the Narmada as a child during excursions from Mhow where my parents lived for a while, paddling in the river, watching fish, tossing a twig into the water and watching it swirl away. Beatific hours that canonised the river with nostalgia. Years later on a train from Delhi to Bombay, I remember crossing the

Narmada more blue to me than any river on earth. An enticing streak winding to the horizon and beyond. Meanwhile the river had become the focus of a nationwide controversy regarding dams that would still wide reaches of rushing water, swamp the forests that flanked her and force hundreds of thousands of her people to move from their forest huts to tin shacks in resettlement camps. I was finally impelled to take the first of many trips to discover the Narmada before and after the great dams.

I read everything I could find on the Narmada reviving memory and filling in blank areas till I was sated with



The Shiva temple at Omkareshwar; (opposite page) a cluster of temples at the source of the Narmada at Udgam Kund, a sacred tank

myths that transformed the physical river into an apotheosis of sanctity. Each legend reaffirmed her holiness and transformed each bend and curve, every confluence into magical places where wishes come true, where prayer and penance are more effective than anywhere else on earth. Sentiments endorsed by the popular saying "Yamuna pane, Ganga snane, Narmada dhyane." While it is necessary to bathe in the Ganga and drink from the Yamuna, mere contemplation of the Narmada ensures salvation.

At the Amarkantak plateau high up in the Central Indian highlands where the Narmada rises, wide golden meadows parted by the narrow blue stream of the river are framed by deep shadowed sal forests. I had driven here from Jabalpur with a stop en route in the magical sal forests of the Kanha National Park. Amarkantak is of course named for the immortal throat of Shiva. After he swallowed the poison, produced among other things from the churning of the ocean,

the great god came to this plateau to soothe his heated throat. It was here that the *deva* approached Shiva. There was drought on earth and famine, they said, and begged him to relieve the dreadful thirst of the land. Shiva meditated for many days. So powerful was his tapasya that a drop of sweat formed on his forehead and fell to the ground. From it arose a maiden so lovely that the deva were smitten. They pursued her but she eluded them. Shiva laughed and decreed that no man may ever impede his daughter whom he named Narmada, she who gladdens the hearts of men.

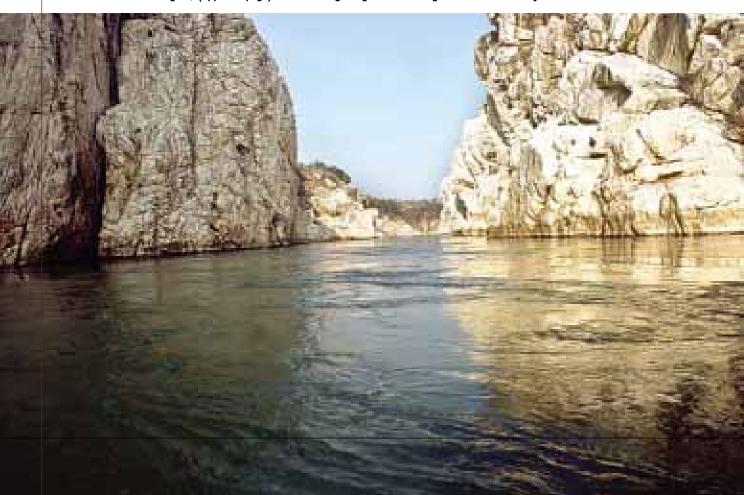
The Udgam Kund marks the site of this celebrated event. The sacred spring splashes gently through a cowhead spout and settles into the serene pool. Temples clustered around the tank are mirrored in the still water. Floral offerings float with scum at the edges and coins gleam in the mud at the bottom. Here the infant river begins its westward course, while a short distance away the Son, one of

FACT FILE

When to go: November to March **Getting there:** The most convenient railhead/airport for Amarkantak is Jabalpur, 245 km away. You can break journey at Kanha National Park, 169 km from Jabalpur. The famous marble rocks at Jabalpur are well worth a visit. For Hoshangabad, the closest railhead/airport is Bhopal, 60 km away. Both Omkareshwar and Maheshwar are best approached from Indore (railhead and airport). Indore to Maheshwar: 91 km; Maheshwar to Omkareshwar: 55 km. Mandu, 41 km from Maheshwar and en route to Indore, is another delightful destination in the region. Bharuch is a railhead and has an airport. To fully explore the Narmada, I suggest a series of trips: Jabalpur-Amarkantak; Bhopal-Hoshangabad; Indore, Maheshwar and Omkareshwar with Mandu as an option; and finally Bharuch.



The glorious Dhuandhar waterfalls where the Narmada plunges from a height of 150 ft; (below) marble rocks rise 100 ft on either side of the Narmada at Bhedaghat; (opposite page) crowds throng the ghat at Hoshangabad for Narmada Jayanti





WHILE IT IS NECESSARY TO BATHE IN THE GANGA, DRINK FROM THE YAMUNA, MERE CONTEMPLATION OF THE NARMADA ENSURES SALVATION. YAMUNA *PANE*, GANGA *SNANE*, NARMADA *DHYANE*

India's few male rivers that also rises on the plateau, thunders down a cliff to flow east towards the Ganga. A delightful myth explains the difference in their directions. The Narmada and the Son were to marry. But the groom succumbed briefly to the flirtations of a rivulet. Furious, the Narmada flounced off to the west. She forswore men thereafter and vowed to remain virgin. And in her virginity rests her supreme sanctity.

Dams on the Narmada and her tributaries have made it difficult to travel her course by boat. But at Hoshangabad almost halfway to the sea, around 160 km from Jabalpur, I drifted on the river in a flat-bottomed boat that smelt of water and sun. The hills that flank the Narmada for most of her course were now just a smudge

on the horizon and the river flowed through a wide and fertile plain. The Narmada was wide and full-bodied, flowing over a forest of aquatic weeds that undulated in the current. The water had blueness of depth and calm but beneath the surface the current pulsed urgently. The wind ruf ed the surface, the sun glinted off wavelets and in places it seemed as though a shower of fireworks had fallen.

A spectacular river festival, Narmada Jayanti, the day of the river's birth, is celebrated annually at Hoshangabad. At a *mandap* in the centre of the stream a priest offers *panchamrit*, the five holy offerings—milk, ghee, *dahi*, honey and fruit—to the sacred river to shouts of *Naramdey har* (praise to the Narmada) from the huge crowd assembled at the ghat. A faint streak of

light appeared in the distance. Gradually it grew brighter and bigger and became a huge band of light that slid down the Narmada. As it came closer I realised the band was made up of hundreds of thousands of tiny lamps floated downstream by devotees. The *mandap* was surrounded by a flickering sheet of fire. The crowd on the ghat roared its devotion and the Narmada flowed blazing into the night.

Omkareshwar, around 250 km from Hoshangabad, is at the end of a series of gorges now largely submerged by the Indira Sagar and Omkareshwar dams. The Narmada parts to flow on both sides of the island shaped like the sacred syllable Om. Its temple honouring Shiva in his manifestation as a Jyotir Linga is beautifully carved and the cavernous interior is replete with



sanctity. Curiously, the inner sanctum is not placed over the spire but is off to the left of the *mandap*, leading to a theory that the real Jyotir Linga was walled off centuries ago. The lingam of living rock rests in the sanctum in a small pool of water, the level of which miraculously remains constant irrespective of how many worshippers pour water over the symbol of the deity.

I once witnessed a related phenomenon at the ghat. The occasion was Ganga Dussehra, the day when the great river is said to bathe in the Narmada to cleanse herself of the sins of mankind. She is believed to come as a black cow and emerges white, purified. I did not see the cow but at the auspicious hour of the Ganga's immersion. I did see the water level of the Narmada rise by 2 ft. A miracle that ecologists explain is wrought by the release of water held in the roots of the trees of the dense forests along the banks. Most of these are now submerged, the natural flow of the river is interrupted and Ganga Dussehra will remain only a memory.

It is no longer possible as it once was to float downriver from Omkareshwar to Maheshwar in the bountiful plain of Nimar. A dam again. As the true beauty of Maheshwar is revealed best from the water, I took a boat a few kilometres short of the ancient town drifting past the ancient left bank temples of Kaleshwar and the gentle Jaleshwar-the former dedicated to the destructive aspect of Shiva, the latter honouring the deity as god of water, reminders of the great god's constant presence along the Narmada. Legend affirms that as reward for the Narmada's austerities Shiva and his consort Parvati promised to reside forever along her course. Indeed even many pebbles in the river, worn down by the water, are shaped as lingams.

The Ahilya Ghat at Maheshwar ascends from the river in sets of steps aligned with an aching symmetry; its perfection framed by the formidable bastions of the medieval fort. Clustered spires of temples as well as the frontage of lavishly carved scalloped arches enhance the impact. This ancient temple town, mentioned in both the Ramayana and Mahabharata, was revived by the famous Holkar queen Rani Ahilyabai of Indore. The young widow, who directed conquering armies, outwitted the best brains of her day and brought prosperity to a land devastated by war, is venerated in Maheshwar even today.

A weaver hard at work at Rewa in Maheshwar

The clatter of handlooms drew me to the Rewa weaving centre set up by the current generation of Holkars to perpetuate the town's 250 year-old tradition of weaving the famous Maheshwari saris. A most successful attempt to upgrade the viability of the craft and sustain traditional lifestyles. Yards of fabric fringed with intricately patterned borders grew from the movement of shuttles, bobbins and wooden beams as weavers called out to one another in amiable camaraderie.

At Sahastradhara a few kilometres downstream, jagged basalt dikes divert the Narmada into the legendary 100 streams. The river quickens, convulses and explodes in a melee of foaming water gushing from multiple chutes, flaunting her enormous power. The dikes are said to be the remains of a dam that was swept away by the virgin fury of Shiva's daughter whom the great god decreed may never be impeded by man. Many locals believe that even if the great dams on the river are not washed away by the fury of the river, the weight of the water on the faulted bed of the Narmada may cause devastating earthquakes.

Many miles further west and downstream of the Sardar Sarovar dam, I had climbed atop an old lighthouse at the estuary of the Narmada near Bharuch. The evening sun spotlights a flurry of water far out at sea, said to be a pool of fresh water. And thereby hangs another story. It is said that Samundra, the sea, taunted Narmada and told her she had no option but to mingle her waters with his, to become his wife. But the virgin river was adamant. At the estuary the main stream slips underground and emerges out at sea, as Samundra's daughter.



ROYINA GREWAL HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY ON HER TRAVELS ACROSS INDIA. SHE LIVES IN DELHI



The pine-scented hills of Uttarakhand have a thousand languid tales to share

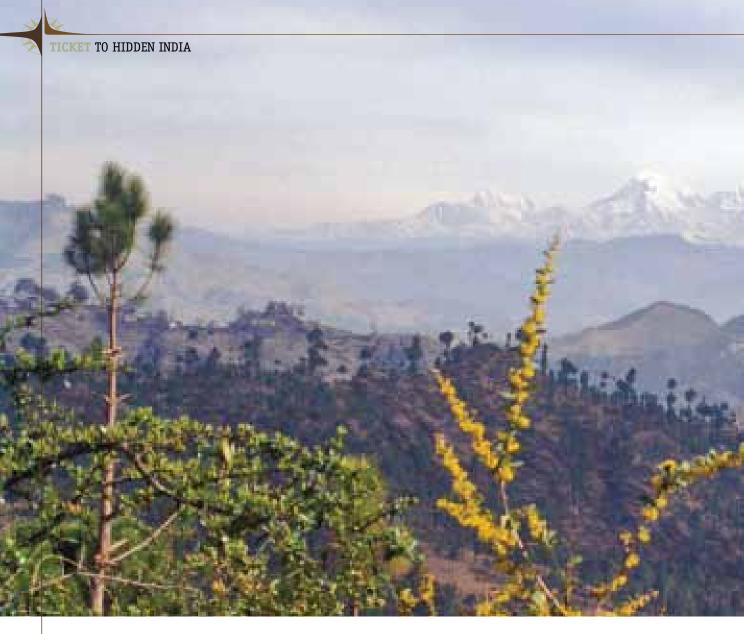
◆ Lalita Phadkar Prakash Israni

wake in the predawn, momentarily disoriented. Yesterday, in Delhi I was suffocating in what people fear is going to be the second hottest summer ever. Today at 6,800 ft, in the hills of Uttarakhand, overlooking Almora and Ranikhet, it's crisp and chilly, the fruit trees outside my window just shapesuggestions in the mist.

In the time it takes me to grab a mug of tea and change into walking gear, the snow peaks emerge from the dispersing mist in a horizon-sweeping semicircle right in front of me. The first sun rays turn Trishul a light pink even as Nanda Devi, Nanda Ghunti, Panchachuli and the rest of the peaks begin to glow a pearly white. Seeing the peaks in March is a blessing. I know they will disappear shortly behind clouds. But for now, they form the backdrop against which I ramble through this pine-scented land.

When we came to this hill peak 10 years ago, it was all dirt track, erratic electricity and a few scattered village houses. I fell in love with the soughing of the wind through the deodar forests, the pack of silver *langur* flowing past our car like a waterfall, the utter silence of the nights broken only by the coughing of leopard, the birdsong in the mornings. The eter-

nal peaks. Some things have changed since then. Today we have three-phase electricity, the Internet, a tarred, motorable, single-carriage road that ends abruptly a stone's throw from our house. Much, however, remains the same. We do have a small community of Delhi people with homes set in large tracts of land that merge into the landscape. But the locals are still the majority in this part of the hills, the rhythms of life still hill-rural: terrace farming, goats grazing the hillsides, women gathering oak leaves to feed their cows. Every day a single rickety bus wends its way up to our village and then turns around and goes back down again. Any traffic on our road



The snowy peaks of the Trishul-Nandadevi range

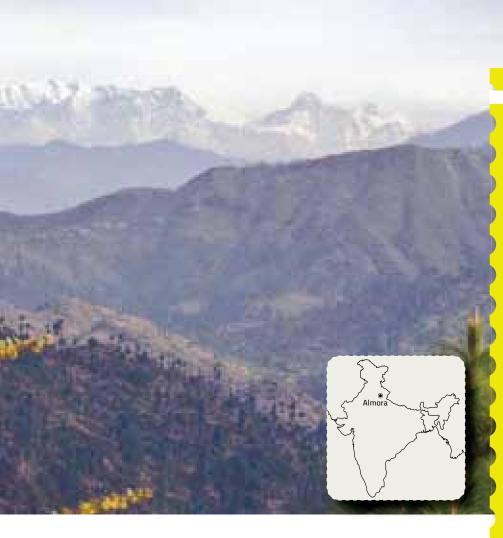
is still a rarity. This makes it ideal for a long walk in the clouds, without putting undue strain on my 55 year-old knees. So, though I carry a peach branch, fashioned into a walking stick in case I decide to scramble up any of the shortcut foot trails, for the most part I stride along in the centre of our vehicle-free road.

Today, watching the smoke from apple-branch cooking fires wisp above the hidden villages, I fantasise that flatted developments will never come to our hideaway. From a village tem-

ple atop a hill comes the chanting of the *Gayatri Mantra*. Listening to the temple bell, I marvel at how far sound carries in the crystal clear silence. As I walk I pass groups of children earnestly making their way to the village school. They stare, but when I greet them with a *namaskar*, they all solemnly return the gesture. Even very young children walk an incredible distance to get to school and back again. In this area, the pine has not taken over the hillsides. There are of course dry drifts of hillside carpeted by pine needles that, while scenting the air

beautifully, are deadly for the soil. But for much of the time, my walk wends through tree-studded slopes of deodar, clumps of oak and red splashes of *buransh*, the rhododendron bush, in full flower at this season. Wherever there is a clump of oak trees, there must be a source of water, the locals say. This is true. Small springs, rivulets, or just ground seepage mark the spots where oak gathers thickly.

Rounding a bend, the scene changes to one of cultivation and fruit trees, the apple blossom beginning to show



FACT FILE

When to go: September-October, February to April

Getting there: From Delhi, you can take a train to Kathgodam or Haldwani and then drive up to the hills—Hartola and Ramgarh are about two hours away. Or you can drive straight from Delhi; the journey would take you about eight hours.

Where to stay: There are many guesthouses and bed and breakfasts as well as hotels in Hartola (like Pinnacles Retreat) and Ramgarh (Writer's Bungalow; The Himalayan Heights; The Himalayan View Retreat; KMVN Rest House; Roop Kumaon Hotel). An Internet search will give you their contact details. *Driving Holidays in the Himalayas* (Rupa; Rs 595; 269 pages) is an excellent guide for your adventures in the hills.

Tips for travellers: Carry walking shoes, a stick and torch. You need warm clothes for chilly mornings and evenings; and a raincoat or umbrella.

its soft pink-white beauty in the village orchards. Our area lies in the fruit bowl of the Kumaon and from April to June, one can easily see why it is so called. Peaches, plums, pears, apricots and apples abound. Some trees groan with the weight of their fruit. The locals casually pick a plum here, a peach there, eating as they go; no one thinks of stopping anyone, for fruit is plentiful. The pity is that while in the plains the prices of fruit are exorbitant, here the hill people get a mere pittance from traders. What is desperately required is a system

to enable them to reach the markets in the plains directly, cutting out the middlemen.

One more turn of the road and it is as if no village ever was. The slope here is gentle though untamed, the rocks covered by soil, in which wild daisies spread and hollyhocks spring up. Here and there on the lightly grassed slope I see patches of random colour: a clump of yellow coreopsis, some nameless purple flowers, even, to my surprise, a bearded iris. Where did that come from? It cannot have grown wild here.

ONE MORE TURN OF THE ROAD AND IT IS AS IF NO VILLAGE EVER WAS. THE SLOPE HERE IS GENTLE THOUGH UNTAMED, THE ROCKS COVERED BY SOIL, IN WHICH WILD DAISIES SPREAD AND HOLLYHOCKS SPRING UP



Hills etched with asphalt and muddy roads en route

I am consumed by a great desire to see this flower close up, maybe even to transplant it to my garden where, as it is a bulb, one plant will over time become a thick bed of bearded iris. I eye what I can only call a goat path that seems to pass close by this plant and, with the foolhardiness of being only 30 years old in my mind, scramble up. It isn't really a difficult climb; there are projections that allow you to advance step by step. Soon I am near the ridge, next to my flower. Deciding that it looks too beautiful to uproot, I scramble on until I reach the top, where my labouring lungs inform me that while I may think I am 30, they think I am a fool. I throw myself down on the grass under a clump of trees, pant gently and gaze out at the limitless distance, cloud enshrouded now, which is the Himalaya. It's a perfect azure sky, the sun beginning to promise a clear hot day.

A flash of red draws my gaze to the trees. This is a beautiful bird; I wish I knew its name. Bird watching is a rewarding hobby in these hills. They are still filled with various species of birds, bright coloured, still bold. Riding the thermals, lazily circling I see an eagle. He has been around, I was told, the past few days. Yesterday, well after dark, a turquoise-blue bird with a fanlike tail blundered into our cottage and clung to the rafters, getting more fluttery as we clapped to get her to fly out. After the initial confusion, we doused all the lights, stopped clapping and waited. Soon, she saw her way clear and zoomed off into the starlit night with a chirr of joy.

I am ready now to go back to a hearty breakfast followed by a lazy day. As I prepare to descend I realise that while what goes up must come down, getting down this *pugdandi* (footpath) is going to require strategy. I try the heel-then-toe method I have been taught is the way to go down steep tracks. Technically the projections should help me, as should my peach branch. They don't. Abandoning dignity and my walking stick, I sit and slither down the path, ignoring the fact that the seat of my pants, indeed my trouser legs too, is rapidly becoming a dust-laden ruin. I can't do this at 55 years; frankly I doubt whether I could do it at 30.

As I slip-slide-slither the last foot or so, an old villager watches my progress with wonder and glee. I have made his day. A wide, toothless smile greets my descent onto the road. Grinning ruefully at him, I look back up the treacherous path. There comes a village lady, balancing a bundle of oak leaves on her head. Erect, her feet sure on the path, hands free at her sides, she descends, crosses the road and proceeds down the hill on yet



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TICKET TO HIDDEN INDIA

I REACH THE TOP OF THE HILL WHERE MY LABOURING LUNGS INFORM ME THAT WHILE I MAY THINK I AM 30, THEY THINK I AM A FOOL. I THROW MYSELF DOWN ON THE GRASS, AND GAZE OUT AT THE CLOUD-ENSHROUDED HIMAL AYA

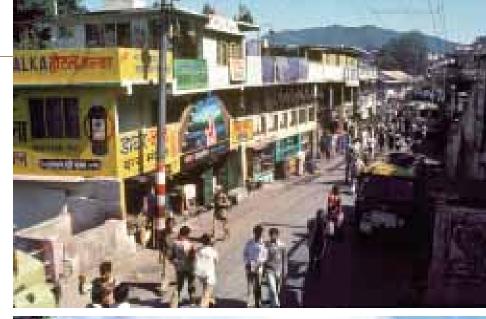
(Top to bottom) Quaint glimpses of life in the hills: the bustling Almora bazaar; the Budden Memorial Church; a panoramic view of Almora

another trail. I wish I could say this is because she is much younger than I am. I can't because I know that even that old villager could do the same.

The return walk is as beautiful, but the day is becoming a tad too hot. I duck onto an easy, undulating path shaded by a deodar forest, avoiding the sun. This will bring me close to home. As I walk, the thick stand of trees allows light to filter through gently, a dappled effect of sunlight and shadow. I collect a long porcupine quill lying across the path and, a moment later, hear a rustle in the undergrowth. Clearly the portly owner of the guill is not amused by this intrusion. As my stone and slate cottage hovers into view, I marvel at how invigorated I feel, the niggling joint spasms left behind on the plains where they were born. These mountains are beautiful. Not for the first time I realise that growing old here could mean that my best is still to come.



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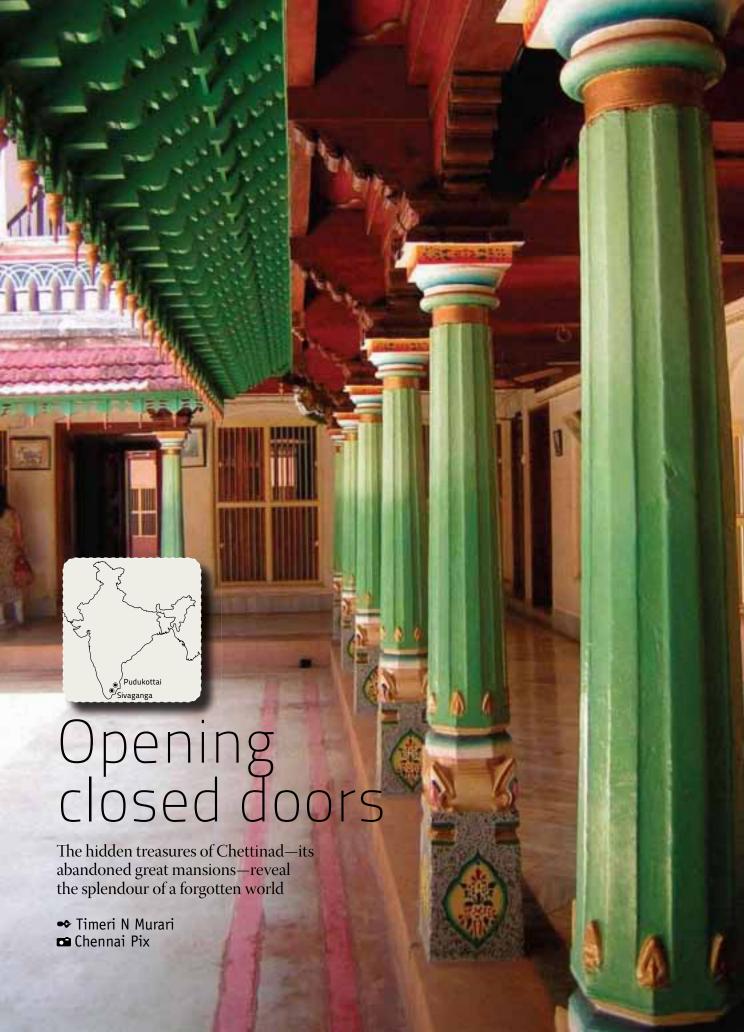
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hettinad is more a state of mind as its heart is hidden behind high walls and locked doors. Although physically it lies about 400 km south of Chennai, it does not have a clear, continuous

it does not have a clear, continuous border. We can't say "we're in Chettinad" as we travel, as it's divided into four large, ill-defined pieces, loosely connected, between Pudukottai in the north and Sivaganga to the south. One moment we are in Chettinad, the next we're out of it and back again. It's fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle with narrow gaps in between. It's only within the last decade that it has risen from its submerged neglect to the conscious awareness that such a place exists. Not surprisingly, in a nation of such diversity and gourmet sensibilities, it was the cuisine that was the bridgehead connecting it first to Chennai, and then to other parts of India. Five-star hotels started

A grand Chettinad-style house in Kanadugathan; (opposite page) bright colours and ornate pillars dominate the interiors serving Chettinad dishes, and then Chettinad speciality restaurants followed. Chettinad food is spicy—not too chilly hot—and mainly dry. Apart from beef and pork, you can savour shrimps, fish, chicken, crab as Chettinad specialities.

I grew up with Chettiar friends, but it was only when I became an adult that I first visited their ancestral home. In my youth, and even today, ever so often, my friends vanish to this distant place for some ceremony or the other, and to which none of us were invited. There was always an air of mystery to their comings and goings. Finally, when I made a documentary on the 60th birthday ceremony of a friend, I first set eyes on Chettinad. Back then, it wasn't an easy place to reach and I could understand the complaints of my Chettiar friends each time they vanished into that obscurity. I took the overnight train from Chennai to Chettinad town. Chettinad, the area, is divided into 75 towns and villages, and the other towns worth visiting are Karakudi, Devakottai and Soorakudi

to name a few in this geographic spread. Now, one can fly to Madurai and hire a car for the two to threehour drive, depending on which town or village one is searching for. Though the roads leading to villages in the interiors are still bumpy, the road from Madurai to 'Chettinad country' is far better now than what I remember from my past expeditions. For the most part, Chettinad is a dry, dusty landscape. You can drive for hours through a flat countryside and only see sparse vegetation and occasional rice fields. Chettinad is nowhere near any river, unlike other parts of Tamil Nadu, and depends on the monsoon for sustenance. If the rains are sparse, the land becomes harsh, offering little nourishment for the eye.

Its astonishing sights are not the great temple of Chidambaram or the countless other ones scattered around intricately carved stone hills rising out of the hard earth. Of course, these are certainly worth the visit if you are keen on pilgrimages to temples. The temple in Chidambaram, built around



430 CE and dedicated to Lord Shiva. is a magnificent work, as it spreads over 40 acre with its five courts and nine tanks. It depicts Shiva as Nataraja and you need a whole day to explore the many courtyards and chambers. Within the area of Chettinad are another 27 temples, nine of which are the clan temples of the Chettiars. Every Chettiar, wherever he or she is born, belongs to one temple, and cannot marry anyone within that temple. The temples are all a few hundred years old and still used for daily worship. The other Chettiar temples, reflecting their Diaspora, are in Rangoon, Colombo and Saigon.

However, the hidden treasures of Chettinad are the abandoned great mansions. To explore dusty exotica from another time, you need to know a Chettiar to unlock the doors and lead you into wonderland. Though sometimes, if you find a caretaker sitting outside one, he may open the house for the stranger to view what

lies inside. What is truly astonishing is that these magnificent houses tower above humble village homes and border the rice fields and dust maidan, as if they were plucked from a dream place far away and dropped into the middle of this nowhere. They're scattered all around Chettinad and not gathered together in one place. Why build such elaborate homes here, instead of Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, wherever? Why Chettinad?

The Chettiars are southern India's equivalent of the Rajasthan Marwaris. Like the Marwaris, money defines their profession. But they were far more adventurous. Chettinad was originally a part of the Pandyan Kingdom with its capital in Madurai. Even Chettiar historians are uncertain of their origins, and how they made their way to a place that eventually took their name. Centuries ago, they founded and inhabited 96 villages but over the years these have shrunk to 75, with the attrition of their numbers.

When the Pandyan Empire collapsed, the Chettiars-a very land-locked people-became ship chandlers and salt suppliers for the Chola merchant fleet, and gem dealers. Their first migration began with the Cholas as their ships sailed to Java and Sumatra. When the British ruled India, the Chettiars continued their profession as ship chandlers but also became financiers for English merchants, loaning them money for trade. With the spread of the empire, the Chettiars floated along with the imperial tide to settle in Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia and Vietnam. They built their temples there that still remain standing to this day.

Living in such distant exiles, those wandering merchants would return home only annually to visit their families. They came home with their big ledgers of accounts, written in a Tamil code that is no longer decipherable to their descendants. I saw a room full of them in a friend's house, perfectly

Hand-pounded spices lend the unique fiery flavour to Chettinad cuisine



THE CHETTIARS ARE SOUTHERN INDIA'S EQUIVALENT OF THE RAJASTHAN MARWARIS. LIKE THE MARWARIS, MONEY DEFINES THEIR PROFESSION. BUT THEY WERE FAR MORE ADVENTUROUS

preserved but ineligible to him. He was looking for a linguist to translate the accounts of his ancestors. Apart from money, they sent back to their dusty villages teakwood from Burma; French magnificent chandeliers bought from the French colonisers in Vietnam; and glazed marble tiles, paintings, lamps and whatever else attracted their sharp, acquisitive eyes in these foreign lands. Their mercantile adventures abruptly ended with the 20th century. The independent Burmese government confiscated their rice fields and expelled them; wars in Vietnam and Cambodia destroyed their businesses.

But before all that happened, they had built their palatial homes in their

small, ancestral villages. Most are built in the traditional southern Indian style with rooms bordering a central, large courtyard. Architecturally, they do not resemble one another, in either style, colouring or the artwork of deities above the entrance, with the balustrade crowning the homes as ornate as any from a Venetian palace. Look up before you enter. On either side of the front door are raised platforms below a sloping tile roof supported by teak pillars. These are resting places for travellers. The door frame is a work of art in itself, covered with the most intricate carvings of deities, and the entrance is high enough for a 10-ft-tall man to pass through without lowering his head. The houses are at least a hundred yards in length

and about half that in breadth. If there was more than one related family in the village, they built their homes in a straight line. When you stand at the entrance of one home, and all the doors along your sight line to the rear are open, you can look from this doorstep to the end of the house, then across the narrow lane, into the next house, see through that, and then to the third and fourth house. The line of sight does not deviate one inch.

Believe me, these homes are more magnificent than any of the *haveli* I visited in Rajasthan. You wander through the rooms with the awe of exploring a fantastical ruin and wonder what happened to the inhabitants who created it. Their beauty lies in

Budding musicians from a local art and music college





Chicken and meat occupy a cherished place on the Chettinad food map

the decorations. In the great central hall, polished teak pillars support the walkway above. Every pillar—about 10 ft high—has an elaborate carving capping it. The ceiling is a perfect replica of the intricate, multicoloured art work of a southern temple; the floor is marble, chequered black and white in some or just one colour in others; the door frames are teak too and again carved with mythological figures; French or Belgian chandeliers hang from the ceilings; paintings and sepia photographs of the ancestors watch you as you cross the deserted museums. As the mansions are built around these 'courtyards', there are smaller rooms running down the length of each building. They store the cooking utensils of the many family weddings that have taken place over the century. Each room belongs to one cousin or another, and they are all locked. And this is the true cause of the decline of these great homes. No one person owns them and no one person will take the responsibility to maintain their inheritance.

Today, all these great homes lie deserted with only caretakers watching over them. They resemble so many Mary Celestes afloat in the dusty landscape, deserted by crew and passengers. The mansions remain closed even when the family returns for one of their ceremonies, as they don't have the modern conveniences. Instead, the wealthier Chettiars stay in

their new air-conditioned houses with running hot and cold water. Many never return at all, having migrated to cities like Chennai, where they have established industrial houses—TI, Parrys, Spic, to name a few—or else wandered further afield to seek their fortunes in the States, Australia, Malaysia for good, even as their homes sank into ruins. If you are lucky, you can pick up those teak pillars, glazed tiles, Tanjore paintings and chandeliers from the antique dealers in the village. I have two pillars in my home, though smaller than the 10-ft ones.

Nevertheless, as a community the Chettiars are tightly knit, observing all their social customs. Despite their success in business and industry, they keep a low profile. You wouldn't think them wealthy unless you went to one of their weddings and are blinded by the gold and diamonds the women wear. Also, as a community they are extremely hospitable and very successful. Nearly every Chettiar I know has studied in the US or UK before returning home to join their family business. The most famous Chettiar is Home Minister P Chidambaram. While many like A C Muthia (Spic), M V Murguappan (Tube Investment) and A Vellayan (Parrys), to name a few, have thrived in industry, the lone exception is S Muthiah. This prolific writer and historian has chronicled the history of Madras/Chennai and, among his many books, he has also

FACT FILE

When to go: Between October to January; the weather tends to be a scorcher the rest of the year.

Getting there: The nearest airport is Tiruchirapalli (Trichy) airport, 100 km away. Trains that run from Chennai to Rameshwaram stop at Karaikudi and Kottaiyur.

Where to stay: If you want a taste of traditional Chettiar hospitality and food, try The Bangala in Karaikudi, a heritage guesthouse; for a more opulent Chettinad experience sign up at the 100 year-old Chettinadu Mansion on the Trichy-Rameshwaram Highway.

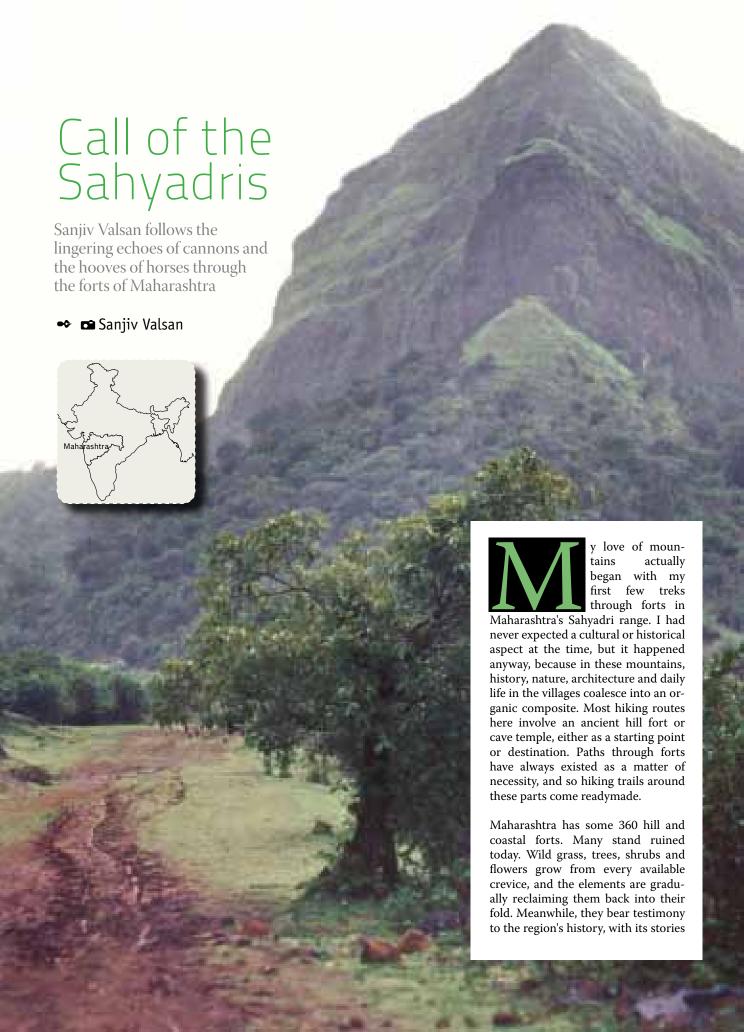
Must-shop: Athangudi tiles, colourful handmade terracotta tiles made from local sand; colourful wide-bordered handwoven Chettinad saris.

published a coffee table tome, *The Chettiar Heritage*, which has spell-binding photographs of those mansions. Like his many relatives, he still visits his sprawling ancestral home regularly.

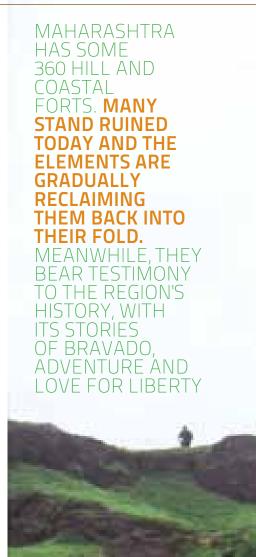
Fortunately, even if many Chettiars have neglected their inheritance, UNESCO has not. It recently recognised Chettinad as a heritage site, in the process inspiring some Chettiars to preserve their ancestral homes. One or two have even turned them into boutique hotels and Chettinad is fast becoming a popular destination for Indian and foreign tourists. The good news is that you can now find professional guides who will magically open a few of those locked doors to show you the splendour of a forgotten world.



TIMERI MURARI IS AN AUTHOR AND SCREENPLAY WRITER LIVING IN CHENNAI







An old cannon perched precariously near the fort's perimeter at Korigad

of bravado, adventure and love for liberty. You could say that the Sahyadris actually shaped geopolitics and way of life; the range forms the state's backbone and natural features formed the basis for all the hill forts, temples and villages surrounding them. Each time a fort changed hands, its new keeper made structural changes to make it even more impregnable. While some forts were built on hills, most were built around them—the surrounding forests and the actual shape of the mountain shaped their design. The result was an evolving process that combined architecture with natural formations and basic guerrilla warfare to enable immense defence capabilities, even in a relatively poor region with limited resources. Over the centuries, the Satvahans, Yadavs, Bahamanis and Marathas kept building new forts and redesigning older ones.

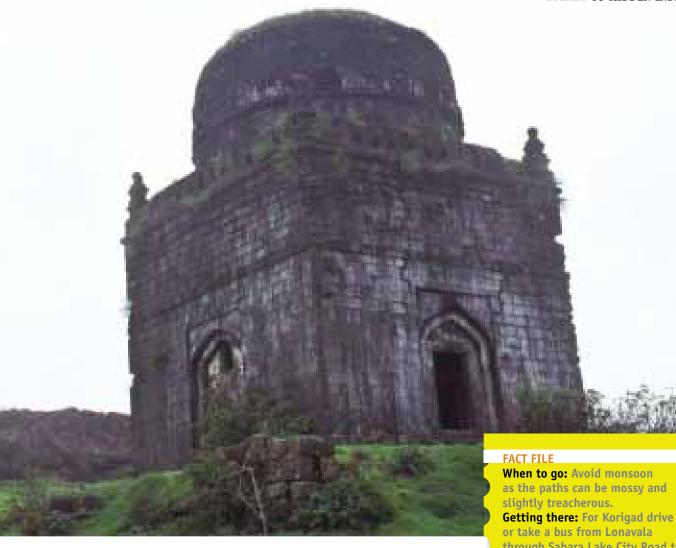
Walking these undulating routes has been a great hands-on way to appreciate the region, its landscape and history, especially as many hill forts are still only accessible on foot. While my most spectacular travels have involved some scary climbs, I have also immensely enjoyed some of the easier walks. They have often offered a similar visual experience, minus the ex-

treme climbs. The downside, though, is that they are more frequented by tourists for that very reason, and tend to crowd up on weekends. If you're young at heart, walk at a comfortable pace and appreciate nature—you'll love these easy day trips to forts, caves and historic passes.

KORIGAD

Korigad may be possibly one of the easiest hikes around Lonavala, but even experienced hikers come here in the monsoons, when wildflowers sprout from every crack and the hills get cold, green and misty. The one-hour hike leads up to the top of a flat-





An ancient dargah at Lohgad fort

topped fort wrapped in stone and surrounded by green fields and jungle.

Korigad is named after the Koraidevi temple on the fort. Its origins aren't completely clear; like the other forts here, it has had several keepers, many who renovated it. In 1657, Shivaji annexed the fort, along with the nearby Lohgad, Visapur and Tung forts. In 1818, Colonel Pranther attacked Korigad and, after three days of war, conquered it by blasting the ammunition storehouse, in what was a bloody battle. Today most of the surrounding area has been bought by the Sahara Group, though it is unclear how a corporation could be allowed to buy most of the access to a historical monument. Apart from the Koraidevi and Shiva temples, archaeological remains on the fort include old mortar guns and cannons perched close to the perimeter and aimed at the green vista, and some caves with ancient carvings and sculptures.

I had done this trek with torches on a misty full night, camping overnight in the Shiva temple on top. The greyish monsoon sunrise wasn't exactly dramatic, but I had fancied the idea of waking up in the mist to the sound of songbirds. The mist cleared as the paths can be mossy and

through Sahara Lake City Road to Peth Shahpur village. Lonavala is also the nearest railhead. For Lohgad alight at Melawli on Central Railway's Mumbai-Lonavala-Pune route. Naneghat connects the ghats and Junnar town to the route leading to the Konkan coast: it can be accessed from either side on foot. From the Konkan end, reach Vaishakare on the road connecting Kalyan and Ahmednagar. From the Junnar side, a shorter walk begins at Ghatghar, where the road from Junnar ends. Shivneri is 3 km from Junnar for which you need to take a right turn on the Kalyan-Murbad-Otur Road after Malshei.



Entrance to Lohgad

intermittently in the morning to unveil forts and distant peaks like Tung, Tikona, Matheran, Prabalgad and Karnala. Of course, you could also be an early bird and begin the walk at the crack of dawn to experience this.

LOHGAD

Though Lohgad is the longest trek listed here, in absolute terms, it's a leisurely three-hour walk with a bit of stair-climbing at the end. The fort is well preserved; the approach easy; and the climbs generally gentle.

Lohgad's origins date back to the pre-Satvahan period. In 1491, Malik Ahmed conquered it, and lost it again after the decline of the Nizam Shahi in 1636. Shivaji invaded and captured it soon after, but lost it again to the Mughals in the 1655 Raja Jaisingh Treaty. In 1670, the Marathas again scaled the fort's walls. In 1818, the British easily took the fort by capturing the neighbouring Visapur Fort and attacking Lohgad directly from there. Lohgad and Visapur overlook each other, separated only by a col, so the fall of one has always been followed by that of the other. This was a great flaw in the area's fortification.

My introduction to Lohgad was immediately after the first rains. The whole place had already exploded into green. The trail itself was short, so after an hour or so of brisk walking from the railway station and a couple of stops for tea at a village or two, we began the climb, reaching the first section of the fort in a few minutes. A circuitous walk up rock-cut stairs traversed three grand entrances: Ganesh Darwaza, Hanuman Darwaza and Maha Darwaza. The fort was teeming with monkeys. My advice is to keep away from them; they can get rowdy. We then reached the tableland, shrouded in a phantasmagoric mist, like a walk through a languid dream. We passed an ancient dargah and an enchanting little pond. It was tempting to just stay there, but better things awaited us ahead. Following the trail led to a ridge commanding a sprawling, crescent-shaped spur, called 'Vinsu Kaata' (the scorpion's tail), so named because of its shape. The 'tail' was completely screened by rain and mist, so we rested there for half an hour for the air to clear, before proceeding down along the stone walls on the tail's perimeter. The view of the Vinsu Kaata that unfolded was worth the wait.

If in doubt, ask for directions at the villages en route; you may even find basic accommodation there. The last time I went there, an enterprising villager running an eatery at the fort's base even offered to deliver lunch on top of the fort. All we needed to do was place an order on our cell phone!

NANEGHAT

Another one of my moonlight treks. For over 2,000 years, this ghat was how people moved from Paithan and Junnar to the ports of Kalyan and Sopara. We knew it wouldn't be difficult. However, the unexpected happened: rain in the middle of summer, our full moon gone. In torchlight powered by dying batteries, we carefully began the otherwise easy ascent. Luckily, the route was well-defined, and soon the moon reappeared—this time brushing the landscape with a wet, luminescent gloss.

Believed to have been commissioned by Naganika, wife of Satvahan king Satkarna, Naneghat's manmade cave is embellished with inscriptions from the Satvahan period, when this ghat facilitated trade and passage—a time of plenty and tolerance, when trade flourished, rulers were just and efficient, Buddhism developed in a big way alongside Bhagvata Hinduism, and women held a better position in society. Toll for using the trade route was collected in a large vessel at a checkpoint. Many locals still use the route as a shortcut. On the final stretch past the cave and up a rockcut staircase leading up to the top of a plateau, it was easy to imagine that perhaps some Buddhist monks and foreign traders who walked these steps might have been tempted to stay on and melt into the Indian pot.

SHIVNERI

Shivneri, birthplace of Shivaji, the icon of Maratha bravado in Maharashtra. is a mandatory spot for Shivaji enthusiasts, but it's also popular with families and first-time trekkers. You even see women in saris going up the stairs leading to the fort, with their kids. The fort emerges from a hill that towers protectively over Junnar town, and is surrounded by forests. If you're in Junnar, there's no way you can miss this fort. Stone steps lead to the top and it's difficult to get lost. Though these davs it is known more as 'Shivaji's birthplace' and almost entirely associated with his persona, Shivneri's history doesn't really begin there. In fact, Shivaji never managed to conquer the fort. The fort has had a string of owners, from the Satvahans, Chalukyas, Rastrakuts, Yadavs and Bahamanis to the Adilshahi before the Marathas, and finally the British.

Shivneri is now a bit like an old museum displaying a bit of each landlord's inputs. The breezy walk uphill passes remnants of fortifications, fountains, storehouses and other structures. There are also a cluster of rock-cut Buddhist caves around Junnar town, dating from 2 BC to the 3rd century AD. The caves mark the old trade route from Paithan to Kolhapur through Nevasa, Junnar, Shelarwadi, Shirwal and Karad. Curiously situated among the Buddhist caves near Junnar is the Lenadri Hindu temple, home to one of the hallowed 'Ashtavinayak' Ganapatis of the Sahyadris. Even if you aren't so keen on history, it's still an enjoyable hike, especially in the rains, and the view from the grassy top (3,343 ft) makes it worth the climb.



SANJIV VALSAN IS A MUMBAI-BASED TRAVEL WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER



Run silent, run deep

The dark and mysterious Sunderbans is unforgettable as much for its glory as its fury

➡ Nikhat Grewal 🖿 (courtesy) Nikhat Grewal

sat down and asked myself a question a few months ago. 'If I had the choice to explore any one part of India, which would it be?' The answer came to me in a second. The Sunderbans. A land that was as magical to me as it was distant. Mangrove forests and tigers that swim are all I knew about the Sunderbans at that point. I had to go. Quite used to travelling on my

own, something told me that this was a trip that had to be shared. But with whom? Honestly the answer was right there again: Mom. It was she who taught me to love the jungle, respect each living being and, most of all, to be aware of how all creatures are bound to one source, Mother Nature. When I was a child we would visit one wild-life sanctuary every holiday. Tigers in Ranthambore, rhinos in Kaziranga,

birds in Bharatpur; Mom and I explored them all. My mother worked in development, especially with women and children, and she was often out in the field, the work often discouraging. These little getaways were a wonderful time to just be, enjoy nature, and wonder at the peace and serenity being around it provides. So it wasn't difficult to convince her, and off we went on our mother-daughter adventure.



The name Sunderban, translated in local parlance means 'the beautiful forest', but the Sunderbans actually gets its name from the Sundari tree that grows in the area. It is a wide stretch of near impenetrable mangrove forest that abounds in biodiversity. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the vast area covers 4,262 sq km and is home to the largest tiger reserve and national park in India. Where the land meets the sea lies the archipelago of the Indian Sunderbans, with a larger portion of it spreading over into Bangladesh.

The first stop before embarking on the journey into the land of the mangrove is Kolkata. From there, you drive about an hour to the port of Sonakhali. Our friends, who run a guesthouse in the

Sunderbans, sent us their boat (which they will for all guests); we hopped aboard and were on the way to Bali Island. Our first ride on the Brahmaputra and we were mesmerised. The landscape, the zigzagging tributaries of the river, the silence of the forests were things I had never witnessed before. What I saw was not the glossy beauty of a tropical island. No, the many islands that make the Sunderbans engulf you in their eerie stillness and dark calm. I felt we had entered a land of stories and ancient secrets. A place where man is but little and nature still has her run.

Humans who have settled around the area have learned to live by fighting for their survival. You come across When to go: The weather is most pleasant between November and February: it starts to warm up from March. Monsoons set in from June to September, making travel difficult.

Getting there: The Sunderbans can be accessed from Kolkata by travelling on either the southeast or the southwest route. The southwest route takes you through Diamond Harbour to Kakdwip and Namkhana. You can take a boat from these places or from Gangadharpur and visit Lothian Island and surrounding areas. On the southeast route, which is more popular, you drive from Kolkata to Sonakhali from where you take a boat to your destination of choice (Bali Island; Sajnekhali, Basanti).

For more information on travel and living, go to *kolkatabirds.com* and *sunderbansnationalpark.com*



AS OUR LANGUID DAYS SPENT ON THE RIVER WENT BY, ONE THING BECAME INCREASINGLY CLEAR: **THIS IS A PLACE WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE INSEPARABLE FROM THEIR ENVIRONMENT;** THE FORESTS, THE RIVER, THE DARK SQUIDGY MUD

strange sights of locals engrossed in picking up bits and odds from marshy waters wearing masks of human faces at the back of their heads. The idea is to fool any man-eating tiger lurking at their backs by appearing to be watching over it! Visitors themselves have no choice but to stay within prescribed limits and are seldom permitted to alight from their boats.

The first glimpse of Bali Island is its sweet but efficient little dock, which leads up to the main road—a narrow path paved sparingly with bricks. Bali is one of the richer islands owing to tourism and the work put in by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) that rehabilitates poachers into tourism and community service. There are two places to stay for tour-

ists on Bali: The Mangrove Whistler Cottage, where we stayed, and Help Tourism huts. Both establishments are committed to encouraging ecofriendly tourism. They lay emphasis on not disturbing the balance of what already exists but blending in with the environment, thereby giving guests a definitive experience. The Mangrove Whistler Cottage is beautifully designed, inspired by local architecture with two big bedrooms and en suite bathrooms. All local huts are built on stilts with porches running along the front side. The best part is the verandah enclosed by mosquito nets overlooking a pond of lilies on one side and paddy fields on the other.

The first night we spent in the Sunderbans was like having front-row

seats to nature's nocturnal symphony. The nights are alive with noises. The buzzing, chirping, squeaking of insects, birds and animals that you can imagine but never see. And the omnipresent comforting tik tik of the tiktiki lizard. By Night 3 you sleep through it all! The Mangrove Whistler also offers you a stay on its launch for a few nights-aptly named Sundari, it is more houseboat than fishing trawler. With cabins below deck and an enclosed bedroom above as well as a glorious daybed, there could be no better place for introspection and to observe the poetry of nature. Without question, Mom and I had to spend at least one night on the water! As the sun began to set, we set off with the four-man crew, one of whom was an amazing cook. Just around



Life in the Sunderbans is governed by two forces, the river and the forest goddess Ma Bonobibi (right)

the corner from Bali Island is the Mohona—a word for a place where five rivers meet and there is a gap in the horizon. Yes, such places exist and the Sunderbans has names for them. Mohona, our resting place for the night. The trick while sleeping on a boat is to dock right in the middle of the river, not too close to the shore on each side, so any tiger who wanders by looking for dinner cannot climb onto the boat. The fishermen literally live by this rule. What a magical night that was; a million stars that appeared close enough to pluck from the sky. The sound of water lapping against the boat, the smells of earth and forest and, occasionally, the strains of a song sung from a boat close by.

As our languid days spent on the river and exploring neighbouring village islands went by, one thing became increasingly clear: this is a place where the people are inseparable from their environment; the forests, the river, the dark squidgy mud. Most families here are first to third-generation Bangladeshis, the others refugees from other parts of India. The one thing that unites them all is the call and need for land that is their own. A delicate balance of living off the land combined with the need to conserve it. As we chugged along in the launch, one of the crew told us of the legend of Bonobibi, the forest goddess who only protects those who enter her

forests with a pure heart. So strong is her hold among the people of tide country—life here is governed by the the *jowar* (high tide) and the *bhata* (low tide)—that no fisherman, honey collector, poacher or forest guard enters the forest without invoking Ma Bonobibi. In an era plagued with communal strife, she is a symbol of unity, worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims, for the tiger and the crocodile are not discriminating about who they eat! As you go along

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the river, small shrines to the goddess at the edge of the forest are a common sight. In fact, I found myself saying a little prayer for Mom and me.

Though Mom and I had visited many jungles, nothing had prepared us for a jungle as deep and impregnable as this. You can try but it is impossible to see through the first layer of the mangroves that hold the river at bay. A lurking tiger could easily sit camouflaged between the thick branches of the short mangrove tree and the wildly growing 'tiger bush'. I wondered often how many of those yellow-green eyes watched as we sliced across the water in a manmade boat. Tigers are not the only silent watchers of the forest; it teems with birds, some extremely rare like the elusive black-capped kingfisher. I am proud to say that my Mom managed to spot one. We also saw monitor lizards and snakes going for a swim and spotted deer grazing in the few patches of grass by the river. The Irrawady dolphins and tiger sharks swim deep within the water, rarely seen as they go about their aquatic business. Then, of course, there is the lord of the river, the one who waits patiently: the crocodile. According to the people who live amid these creatures, if you had to choose between an encounter with a crocodile and a tiger, you should choose the tiger. He will kill with one clean sweep of the paw unlike the croc who likes to play with his dinner, twirling his victims in the water, caught in his vise like grip until they drown.

A gruesome end to be sure. But vicious crocodiles aside, the hardest thing for us to witness during our stay at Bali was the contradiction between the education the children receive and the rampant unemployment. There are four primary schools for girls and boys on Bali and three high schools. Most children attend these. But where does all the education go? Owing to the terrain, there are few avenues for employment in the Sunderbans. Men fish, chop wood, poach or collect honey—all terribly detrimental to





the environment. But as an old man pointed out to us: "What else is there to do? The food has to come from somewhere." Thus creating a horrible Catch 22 situation of saving the forest only by giving the people something else to do. The love of the land keeps these people there and it is up to us not to forget them. Mom and I never will. Indeed, as we came away from this land of light and darkness, im-

mense sorrow and hardship, melodies in the wind and easy laughter, closer than ever but changed, we knew that we will have to go back to the river that now flows through our veins.



NIKHAT GREWAL
IS A CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST
AND WRITER BASED
IN DELHI



Dr Anjali Mukerjee

Cancer Cover: Eat healthy and boost immunity against the disease

Advancing age, declining immunity, environmental pollution, stress and poor food habits make silvers even more prone to cancer. Can you suggest any foods that can help prevent the development of the disease?

We have created a carcinogenic world where breathing clean air and eating pure food are becoming progressively dif cult. In later years, uncontrollable factors like genetic susceptibility and age make us even more vulnerable to diseases, including cancer.

Understanding how cancer develops

Considerable evidence suggests that one-third of all types of cancer are linked to diet. From the time a single cell suffers genetic changes, it could take as long as three to four decades for it to develop into cancerous, malignant tumours. Cancer cells thrive in a toxic environment that the body provides; poor food habits can provide a perfect habitat for the growth of such cells. However, the good news is that what you eat can interfere with the development of cancer and help inhibit its growth. In fact, you could prevent the advancement of the disease during its preliminary phase by eating right.

It's never too late to change your dietary habits. Fibre and antioxidants in food can help build immunity and develop the necessary defences of healthy cells. This prevents unnecessary damage to cells, which is a prelude to cancer. Nutrients like Vitamins E, C and A can suppress free radicals that damage existing healthy cells and turn them cancerous. Although diet becomes less powerful with increasing age, proper nutrition can help prolong lifespan and influence the development and spread of cancer.

Tips for cancer prevention

Based on the latest research, the following tips will help prevent and fight cancer:

• Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Daily intake of fruits and vegetables cuts the risk of



cancer of colon, stomach and lungs by half. Bright-coloured fruits and vegetables like pomegranate, bell peppers, orange, mango and tomato are packed with natural cancerfighting antioxidants.

- Consume two cloves of raw garlic every morning and half a raw onion with lunch and dinner every day. More than 30 different anti-cancer compounds have been identified in them.
- Learn to love soybean in the form of soymilk, tofu or soy flour for its anti-cancer potential.
- Increase intake of fibre-rich foods such as wholegrain cereals and pulses. Fibre helps food pass quickly through

Cancer cells thrive in a toxic environment that the body provides. The good news is that what you eat can interfere with the development of cancer and help inhibit its growth. In fact, you could prevent the advancement of the disease during its preliminary phase by eating right

the intestine and reduces our system's 'contact time' with carcinogens.

- Pay close attention to quality rather than the quantity of fat. Heart-friendly oils like olive oil, mustard oil and canola oil are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids and therefore among the healthiest. Omega 3 fatty acids found in fish oil, walnut and flaxseed are known to have amazing antitumour properties and are heart-friendly. Avoid saturated fats as well as trans-fatty acids found in red meat, whole milk, butter, cheese, hydrogenated oils and margarine.
- Sprout any kind of whole pulse and eat every day. They are rich in phytochemicals and proteins (that are far easier to digest) as well as enzymes in their natural form (that are known to have anti-cancer properties).
- Avoid intake of alcohol. Over a period of time, alcohol plays havoc with the liver, which is our body's primary detoxifying organ, protecting us from all kinds of toxins.
- Avoid smoking and chewing tobacco; they are the leading cause of oral and throat cancer.
- Have a multivitamin, multi-mineral tablet regularly to increase immunity.
- Take a brisk walk for 30-40 minutes, six days a week.

Although dietary modifications cannot cure cancer in its advanced form, a healthy lifestyle accompanied by good nutrition can help prevent cancer to a major extent. With age, it is best to live simply with good food habits and a reasonable amount of physical exercise.

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



DR JOE LEWIS ANSWERS YOUR OUESTIONS ON DIET, WEIGHT AND EXERCISE

I am 61 years old and suffer from osteoporosis. Though exercise is known to improve bone health, I believe this is not true of all exercise. Some exercises are apparently linked to bone loss. Please clarify.

Bone mineral loss begins around the age of 30. After reaching middle age, women ♦ lose bone minerals at a higher rate. With bones becoming weak, our susceptibility to fractures increases. Weight-bearing exercises and a calcium and Vitamin D-rich diet can help delay further bone loss. Before beginning any exercise programme, consult your doctor about the workout and any calcium or Vitamin D supplements you may require.

You can begin brisk walking with ankle weights. Wear good walking shoes. All exercises that offer resistance to muscles are weight-bearing-aerobics, climbing steps, dancing. Spend 20-30 minutes exercising daily and gradually increase repetitions. Start by investing a small amount on ankle weights, a stepper, and resistance bands. Alternate between resistance bands and weight training as the former offer a greater range of motion. Include balance exercises, which are essential to prevent falls and the risk of fractures. These exercises may be as simple as standing on one leg. Initially avoid flexion exercises such as sit-ups or any exercise that requires you to bend at the waist or twist the spine. These should be done only after consulting your doctor or physiotherapist. Similarly, be careful with high-impact exercises like running or jogging on hard surfaces.

Though swimming helps build muscles, it is not the best option to improve bone density. Extremes of exercise are known to negatively affect bone density, particularly when calcium intake is inadequate. Have milk, cheese, yoghurt, leafy vegetables, soybean and fish to boost your calcium and Vitamin D quotient.



Dr Joe Lewis is head of research and development at Kaya Life, a chain of professional weight-control centres (SMS Life to 54646)



If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee or Dr Lewis, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org







Zindagi ka asli 🌑 maza hai choti choti

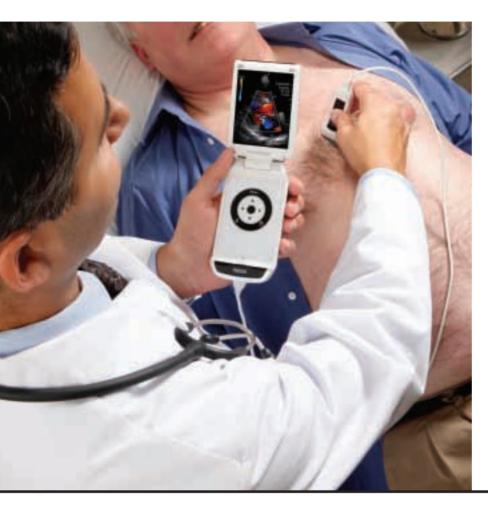


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Jaise rasoi 🥌 ka maza he asli namak 🦠 se ...

Ankur Namak Asli Namak

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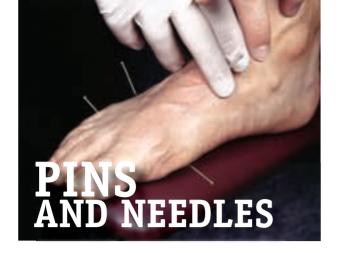


▼ oon, you can expect faster diagnosis in an emergency. Among one of the smallest gadgets available, the Vscan (launched by Bengaluru-based GE Healthcare) uses ultrasound technology for instantaneous, non-invasive imaging. This handheld device has a definite edge-powered by battery, it can be easily used in various clinical, hospital and primary care settings like an ambulance. Early diagnosis would help ensure correct and prompt medical intervention and faster recovery. With every scan taking two minutes on an average, the device's battery life of one hour is adequate for up to 30 patients. "Vscan is operated with uncomplicated buttons and gives reports within two minutes of being used," S Ganesh Prasad, director at GE Healthcare in Chennai, tells Harmony. "The estimated cost of Rs 560,000 is readily affordable by medical institutions. Currently, GE Healthcare is giving Vscan demonstrations at various government, private and Army hospitals." Based on the feedback, the company aims to manufacture more than 5,000 Vscans in the next five years.

Test to cure

A 16-YEAR STUDY conducted on more than 170,000 participants in the UK reveals that a single examination of the rectum and lower colon between the age of 55 and 64 reduced incidence of colorectal cancer and mortality. Incidence of colon cancer was reduced one-third in the test group that underwent the one-time test compared to the group that didn't; and mortality was cut by over 40 per cent. The finding is significant as

polyps (benign tumours) in the colon are extremely common. Their incidence increases with age; they are estimated to occur in 50 per cent of people over 60. Adenomas or polyps that become cancerous account for about 75 per cent of all colon polyps. Research shows that the procedure sigmoidoscopy—provides considerable protection as it examines the sigmoid (rectum and lower colon) where 65 per cent of colorectal cancers develop. Less invasive than full colonoscopy, any growth detected can be removed during this procedure. "Colon cancer is less prevalent in India than western nations," Dr M R Rajshekhar, colorectal surgeon at Chirag Hospital and Institute of Proctology, Bengaluru, tells Harmony. "Unfortunately many patients with symptoms like bleeding or pain initially go to quacks. Even doctors treat them for piles, and miss anal and rectal cancers in many cases. A simple rectal examination, preferably video-recto sigmoidoscopy, would be useful in symptomatic and high-risk groups."



ecognition by the World Health Organisation, the National Institute of Health, the Food and Drug Administration in the US and the National Health Service in UK has catalysed a modern revival of acupuncture—the procedure of inserting and manipulating filiform (solid and extremely fine) needles into various points on the body to relieve pain. While earlier research had shown that acupuncture can improve sensory and motor functions of people with spinal cord injuries, a new South Korean study published in Neurobiology of Disease has attempted to analyse the reasons. Inflammation occurring after spinal cord injuries causes nerve cell death and reduces probability of recovery. Researchers described how rats with damaged spines walked better after acupuncture treatment than those without treatment after 35 days. Rats with treatment also had lower levels of the inflammationcausing protein and less nerve cell death. "Holistic medicine strives for optimum integration of various aspects of alternative therapies like acupuncture, pranic healing and pranayama," Dr R K Tuli, senior consultant, holistic medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals in New Delhi, tells Harmony. "Surgical cures and other medical interventions are at best temporary. However, acupuncture alone cannot heal spinal injuries and has to be used in tandem with other therapies. Acupuncture treatment from a qualified doctor with relevant experience is important, particularly for older adults."

Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical giant Dr Reddy's Laboratories launched amlodipine benazepril capsules for hypertension in the US after receiving approval from the US Food & Drug Administration. Early last year, the company entered into a patent settlement with US-based Novartis Pharma, manufacturer of Lotrel capsules, a bio-equivalent generic version of the drug.

Fixed Dentures



Dr. Vijailakshmi Acharya MDS Conservative Dentistry & Endodontics; advanced training in Aesthetic & Implant Dentistry. Acharya runs a multispeciality practice in Chennai, and is a member of the Pierre Fauchard Academy and an Associate Fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry

Q1. I am 78 years old. Many of my front teeth are slowly loosening at the roots. Though I take good care of my teeth, I am worried. Please suggest an appropriate dental treatment for my problem.

Teeth rarely loosen over a short period of time unless there is severe infection involved. A slow chronic infection may start off at the bone and gum, as a result of which teeth may loosen ultimately. Other causes of loosening could be if you have not replaced missing teeth, causing the remaining teeth to be subject to greater stress, thereby weakening them. Some medications can also have harmful side-effects such as drying of the mouth, and thus foster infection and eventual loss of teeth. Regular checkups should help prevent these problems. You can have permanently anchored teeth using implants from reputed companies like Nobel Biocare to replace missing teeth.

Q2. I am planning to get lower dentures. Will I have problems eating normally or even speaking properly after that?

Lower dentures are usually a little inconvenient, as they tend to trap food and hamper speech. They are not very stable and, usually, you can only chew on soft foods. You can anchor your teeth with two or more implants depending on the amount of bone available. Nobel implants are made from pure titanium and and are available in a variety of options. Implants are artificial roots, which once fixed in the bone serve as a strong support to your dentures. Once the implants get attached in the bone, the lower dentures will be completely stable and you will be able to enjoy hard foods as well. Your speech will also be clear because these dentures are stable.

Q3. Are metal crowns harmful? What are the options? And what is Procera?

Metal fillings have long been known to be reactive in the mouth, especially when different types of metals are present. Metal-free restorations are becoming more popular, particularly ceramic. The latest trend is to use high-strength all-ceramic restorations. Procera, a ceramic restoration manufactured by Nobel Biocare, is ideal in such cases. These are often aided by computers using CAD-CAM design for a long lasting, safe and aesthetic crown. Procera comes with a global warranty.



Move with confidence: Yoga can improve motor control

Disuse can often weaken limb-eye coordination. This results in a shaky hold when we attempt to grip things, often leading to embarrassing accidents in day-to-day life. It can also make us misjudge steps, leading to serious injuries, and often limit us from enjoying sports or even dancing owing to a lack of confidence in performing the finer or focused tasks required in such activities.

The good news is that the brain's plasticity is enormous. Research bears out that the brain can be retrained to recover from neglect so that we can regain the limb-eye coordination that smoothens our daily living. As it is inactivity—not ageing—that causes loss of nerve receptors that activate muscular coordination, activity can reverse the damage.

Yoga is part of such activity. Its balancing poses are particularly beneficial as they work on proprioception, our sense of balance, by tweaking the cerebellum. The cerebellum is a part of the brain that is responsible for motor control. More precisely, it is involved with anticipating and preparing us for precise action by managing the flood of information from sensory organs. When it becomes rusty, we feel lack of coordination more acutely.

Single-legged prayer poses are easy to negotiate for beginners. But sense of balance must be constantly challenged if we wish to recover or strengthen our weakening faculties. The more advanced one-legged stands include the half-lotus forward bend (ardha baddha padhottanasana); tiptoe pose (pada angushtasana); boat (naukasana); spinal column pose (merudandasana); unsupported forward bend (nirlamba paschimottanasana); and the half-lotus leg stretch (ardha padma padmottanasana).

We must also increase the time spent in these poses; starting with a few seconds initially and gradually increasing duration to one minute or more, depending on regularity of practice. Initially, as balancing poses are not easy, especially where proprioception has been already compromised, it is better to use a prop, like a wall or bolster, to make the pose comfortable. Gradually, we should adapt to the challenges required of such poses and move away from props as our nerve connections begin to recover.

While static poses work on sense of balance, spatial skills can be regained through dynamic practices like sun salutation (surya namaskar) or flowing yoga (vinyasa), where one moves from one pose to another in a choreographed fashion. Both types of practice also work on the emotional self as the cerebellum is also involved with regulation of moods.



YOGIC MOVES Half-lotus tree pose (Ardha padma vrkshasana)

Stand up straight. Fold your right leg at the knee. Place right foot high on left thigh. Ensure that the right knee is not facing the front but is flared to the right. Place both palms together, making a *namaste* gesture, placing hands at chest or overhead. Hold your gaze to a spot in front to maintain focus. Hold for a few seconds initially, slowly gaining confidence and balance to increase duration to a minute, even more. Release and repeat for the other leg, holding for equal duration. Benefits: Apart from improving sense of balance and hand-limb coordination, this pose also boosts concentration and mood.

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)

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The ripple effect

The world is what we make of it, says **Annie Besant**

T n the path of spiritual aspiration, we must not expect to find the way easy and plain; for the spiritual life is not obtained save by repeated endeavour and constant failure, and the path of duty is not found but by undaunted perseverance. Let us but desire to know the right, and we shall surely know it, no matter by what path of anguish the right is to be found. In our daily life, let us practise to do the right, as far as we see it, and we shall surely see more clearly as we proceed. But since many become confused as to the guides who may aid them in their upward treading, and as to how they may know such guides, let us pause and see what are the tests and proofs of spiritual life, of the spirituality which is to be copied, to be lived, which is an example, a light, in the world.

The test and proof of the advanced spiritual man, fit to be the guide, the teacher, the helper of others, is in the perfection of the qualities that the aspirant is striving to produce in himself. He performs perfectly what the aspirant performs imperfectly; he incarnates the ideal which the aspirant is striving to reproduce. Around us on every side we see men and women seeking for light, struggling for growth, puzzled, confused, bewildered. To all and each one that we meet we owe a duty.... Duties are obligations we owe to those around us; and every one within our circle is one to whom we owe a duty. What is the duty that we owe to each? It is the definite payment of those debts with which we are familiar in our studies; the duty of reverencing and obeying those who are superior to us, who



Whenever a person comes within our circle of life, let us look to it that he leaves that circle a better man

are above us; the duty of being gentle and affectionate and helpful to those around us, on our own level; the duty of protection, kindness, helpfulness, and compassion to those below us. These are universal duties, and no aspirant should fail in the attempt at least to fulfil them; without the fulfilment of these there is no spiritual life.

But even when we have discharged to the utmost the debts enjoined by the letter of the law; when we have paid and fulfilled the obligations imposed by our birth, by our family ties, by our social surroundings and national karma; there still remains one higher duty which we may place before us as

the light to illumine our path. Whenever a person comes within our circle of life, let us look to it that he leaves that circle a better man, the better for his contact with us. When an ignorant person comes and we have knowledge, let him leave us a better-informed man. When a sorrowful person comes to us, let him leave us a little less sorrowful for our having shared the sorrow with him. When a helpless person comes and we are strong, let him leave us strengthened by our strength and not humiliated by our pride. Do not let us in our daily path be harsh, so as to confuse, bewilder and perplex others. There is enough of sorrow in the world. Let the spiritual man be a source of comfort and of peace; let him be as a light in the world, so that all may walk more safely when they come within the circle of his influence. Let us judge our spirituality by our effect on the world, and let us be careful that the world may grow purer, better, happier, because we are living in it.

Watch how your influence affects others: be careful how your words affect their lives. Your tongue must be gentle, your words must be loving; no slander, gossip, or harshness of speech, or suspicion of unkind motive, must pollute the lips that are striving to be the vehicle of spiritual life. The difficulty is in us and not outside of us. It is here in our own lives and our own conduct that the spiritual evolution must be made. Help your brothers, and do not be harsh with them. Lift them up when they fall, and remember, if you stand today, you too may fall tomorrow, and may need the helping hand of another, in order that you may rise.

Extract from a lecture delivered by Annie Besant at the annual convention of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, held at Varanasi in 1898. Besant was a prominent theosophist, women's rights activist and writer

"Online distance education is convenient for working professionals"



fter graduating in physics and mathematics in 1964 from Kochi, I completed my masters in social work from the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences. I simultaneously did specialised courses through distance learning from institutes like Tata Institute of Social Sciences. My career as a lecturer of social work began in 1966 at my alma maters, Sacred Heart College followed by Rajagiri College. In 1978-79, I was also programme coordinator for training teachers under the National Service Scheme for both Mahatma Gandhi and Kerala University.

I joined Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) in 1980, first as director (planning and development) till 1987 and then as registrar till 1992, when I became provice chancellor of Calicut University. In 1995, I moved back to CUSAT as pro-vice chancellor for the next four

years. After my retirement in 1999, I worked for two years as managing director of Deepika Group of Publications, followed by a two-year stint as advisor (microfinance) at Dhanalakshmi Bank. In 2003, I initiated the KMM Charitable Trust in memory of Mathew J Kollemparambil, a great humanitarian from Kerala, and started my own projects.

I had interacted with some professors of Eindowen University, Netherlands, during my stint at CUSAT. They inspired me to start an international centre for senior citizens and a geriatric hospital under the Trust. Unfortunately, legal problems resulted in the plan being aborted at the initial stage. So I began a geriatric training centre and multidisciplinary clinic offering free treatment to the elderly. Nonavailability of doctors and financial issues compelled me to close down the clinic in 2005.

The geriatric training centre-KMM Academy of Health Sciences-offers a postgraduate diploma course in geriatrics for doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and social workers. In 2005 we redesigned the course as an online distance education programme. The six-month course (the fee is Rs 7,500) comprises three months of theoretical studies, fieldwork and project reports. Online examinations are conducted and certificates issued through the General Social Care Council, UK. We have trained 500 professionals so far. Besides medical practitioners who help conduct the course, my sons Joshi (a doctor) and Jojo also help.

In 2007, I converted my ancestral home at Nayarambalam, near Kochi, into a guesthouse: Kerala Holidays Meadow. I'm now planning to develop a senior citizens' home with modern infrastructure in the heart of the city.

—As told to Nisary Mahesh

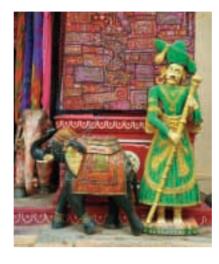
CRAFTING TOMORROW

EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR QUERIES AND CONCERNS ON JOBS AFTER RETIREMENT

I am familiar with different craft forms in India. After retiring next year, I plan to start a platform to facilitate the retail of Indian crafts. Is it a feasible business option?

Working as a crafts facilitator can give excellent monetary returns as well as artistic satisfaction. Besides knowledge about various crafts, you will need good interpersonal skills. You would require an initial investment of about Rs 50,000. Identify up to five groups of artisans by visiting markets and exhibitions in your city, like Dilli Haat and Dastkar in Delhi. Try to network with artisans from your native place—later, staying in touch over the phone will also suf ce. Though attracting retailers may pose a problem initially, your artisans should participate in exhibitions and trade fairs to display their products and make your presence known. Once contact is established and networking begins, you can expect retail outlets to place orders.

Understanding simple accounting and math is necessary. It is your responsibility to see that orders are completed on time. Ensure that artisans don't make commitments that they are unable to meet. Once the returns start after about eight months to a year, the process is fairly regular. The biggest satisfaction is helping artisans develop and market



their crafts, which may have been dif cult otherwise.

-Jatin Bhatt

Founder director of Edusign Consulting Pvt Ltd, Delhi-based Bhatt conducts workshops for artisans across the country

I recently retired as a teacher. Now I would like to utilise my culinary skills to start a dabba service for office-goers. Should I start by becoming a franchisee with a tiffin caterer in Mumbai?

Starting a tif n service is a good business venture for silvers and starting off as a franchisee can minimise the cost risks involved. The investment required for such a venture is reasonable: about Rs 30,000 to Rs 40,000. You will need essential equipment like utensils, mixer, grinder, and a large fridge. Before accepting the order, check the time required to make each dish for each order.

Once you become a franchisee of an established tif n service, orders will be passed on to you. We even send our men to collect the food. Proper packing and delivery to customers is our responsibility. The returns, which can be expected within a couple of months, will depend on the quality of food and the number of orders.

-Pradeen Sood

Sood is managing director of Golden Tiffins, a dabba business in Mumbai that helps silvers get franchises

I am a 56 year-old banker planning to take voluntary retirement soon. I am trained in Kathak and Odissi and would like to start a dance school for young children. Please suggest how I can go about it.

Starting a dance class depends mainly on your target group and the dance form you intend to teach. It involves hard work, especially if you don't have any teaching experience. However, it can be very satisfying if you are passionate about dancing. Ideally, you should start at your own place and limit the number of students to a maximum of six or seven. This would minimise the risk factor. If you wish to expand, you could later hire space and employ instructors.

Advertise your initiative in the neighbourhood through f yers. This would cost around Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000. Network with other dance classes in your area; it will help build your reputation. Collaborate with health clubs and negotiate for space to take classes. The charges are usually around Rs 300-Rs 500 per hour. Rates vary from area to area. Wordof-mouth publicity is very effective; if the feedback is positive, you can build a fairly good clientele within a year.

-Rocky Poonawala

Poonawala is founder of Rocky Poonawalas, a Pune-based institute for Latin American, ballroom and other dances



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- Working closely with Habitat for Humanity, we have so far built more than 350 houses as part of our community outreach programme, besides supporting the building of an additional 1,550 houses.
- We are also engaged in creating model villages in rural India. We have chosen 300 villages for this transformation whereby in a five year timeframe the villages would be self-reliant in every aspect, moving out of the "below the poverty line" status. So far more than 80 villages in India's hinterland have already reached the level of model villages.

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Trustworth

Legalpundits provides solutions for financial and legal eventualities

My uncle is in critical condition in a hospital in Mumbai. His incapacitation prevents him from signing cheques or withdrawing money from the ATM to pay his mounting medical bills. What can he do?

Senior citizens incapacitated by ill health, and who have no kith and kin to help them with intricacies of their finanical and legal matters, are vulnerable not just physically but financially. As explained in the June 2010 issue (see *Legalease*) of *Harmony*, one can appoint a trusted person as a joint signatory to the Person's main bank account—the one that holds the necessary funds for payment in case of an emergency.

In this issue, we will discuss the second solution.

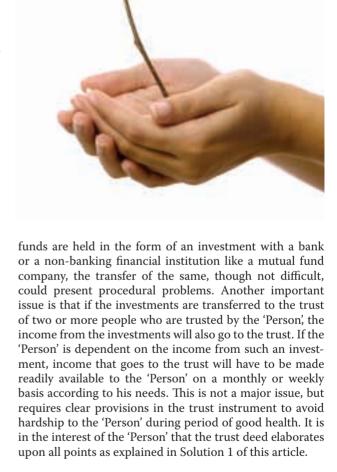
Solution 2: Formation of a Trust

A trust is an institution established to safeguard assets reposed in it for the fulfilment of the legal objectives for which it was formed. The Indian Trusts Act 1882 governs trusts in India.

In the present case, the formation of a private trust is possible, subject to clarification of certain matters. Two basic conditions are necessary to be fulfilled apart from the condition that the objective of the trust should be legal. Providing another trusted person access to the funds and assets of the 'Person' for fulfilment of financial obligations in event of an emergency where the 'Person' is incapacitated is considered a lawful or legal purpose. The other two critical conditions for the formation of a private trust to carry out the above mentioned objective are:

- Trust of moveable property: No trust in relation to moveable property is valid unless declared as aforesaid (by a non-testamentary instrument in writing signed by the author of the trust or the trustee and registered, or by the will of the author of the trust or of the trustee), or
- Unless the ownership of the property is transferred to the trustee (Sec 5 of The Indian Trusts Act 1882).

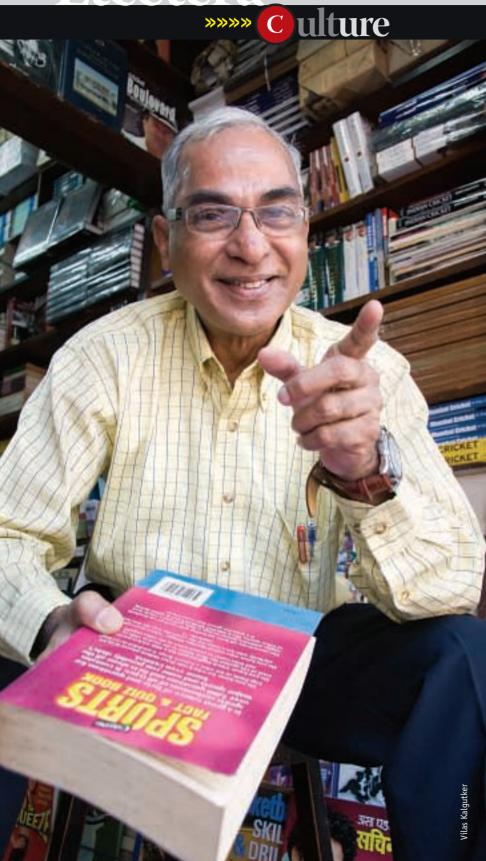
While the first condition is easy to fulfil and is a legal norm today, the second condition presents certain issues. If the



It is possible to prevent the situation that the query has raised. There may be other solutions to this problem. Innovation with legal and practical aspects of implementation could provide an easy solution that would best serve the case at hand.

This article has been written by Prachi V Manekar, a Bombay High Court advocate

Etcetera





Sporting encounters

At frst glance, Marine Sports Book Shop appears just like the many cosy shops and establishments along the busy Gokhale Road in Dadar, Mumbai. But, as its owner Theo Braganza tells you, it has a rare distinction: it only stocks books on sports; a fact that only two other bookshops in the world can claim. Whether it is cricket, baseball, hockey, chess, rugby or golf, Marine Sports has a book on every sport. Braganza's father opened the store in 1957 as a sports goods store and later expanded it to sell books on sports. Eventually, he discontinued the sports goods business and focused only on sports books.

Open from Monday to Saturday, the store operates on demand. You get your copy only after you've placed your order. Braganza delivers orders all over the country. "Order any book on sports, and I promise I can get it for you," says the 60 year-old cricket enthusiast. His conf dence is as impressive as his clientele. Ranji Trophy player Raju Mehta, journalist Ayaz Memon and even cricketing legend Sunil Gavaskar have bought books from him. "In 1972, Gavaskar wanted to read the Australian Cricket Annual before India's tour to Australia," recalls Braganza. "It wasn't available in India then; we got it especially for him from Australia." Now, he plans to launch a chain of book stores in metros across the country. Howzzatt!

-Eepsita Guha



hough 81 year-old Appunni Tharakan has been associated with Kathakali for the past 62 years, he has yet to see a performance right till the end. The Palakkad-based green room assistant has always been too busy doing the makeup and arranging the costumes for the artists.

LEGACY

Tharakan stepped into the world of Kathakali at 18. "I used to carry heavy cos-

tume boxes over my head for shows and was paid Rs 2 for each show," he recalls. Later, he mastered the skill of *chutti* (Kathakali makeup) and designing costumes, and joined Kerala Kalamandalam, the prestigious dance school. After Tharakan retired in 1984, he started designing costumes and undertaking *chutti* at his homecum-designing studio. Twenty years since retirement, he is still regarded as the ace Kathakali backstage assistant

in Kerala. Today his team includes his two sons: Nambiarath Sivaraman, 50, his part-time assistant as well as the head of the department of *chutti* at Kerala Kalamandalam; and Nambiarath Mohanan, 40, his full-time assistant. His grandson, Arun, 19, son of Sivaraman, is a winner at youth festivals for Kathakali and Koodiyattam.

"We were drawn towards Kathakali right from our childhood," says Sivaraman, point-

ing towards the trophies lined on the wooden shelves at the family's home in Palakkad. He holds a postgraduate diploma in *chutti*, a process that starts six to seven hours before a show. Sivaraman loves to innovate with makeup and does it without compromising on authenticity. For instance, earlier, the colourful shell of the black beetle was used for the headgear. But, owing to deforestation, the beetles disappeared and he decided to substitute

it with pieces of glass bangles. "We design more out of passion than any commercial interest," says Tharakan. It takes four hours to make a costume and each set is priced at Rs 100,000. Tharakan and his family offer costumes on hire for as low as Rs 500.

Arun believes he has much to learn from his family's synchrony. "My grandfather clings to traditions; my father is contemporary; and my uncle is a silent supporter," he says. Mohanan admits there are highs as well as lows to the job: "No one really bothers to compliment the team backstage." The Nambiaraths, however, have enough reasons to be proud. In August 2009, the Mangodu village hosted a two-day celebration in honour of Tharakan's 80th birthday. The patriarch, who has travelled all over the world, is happy, albeit slightly worried: "Today, foreigners have more interest in learning our art than we do."





INDIAN MEMORIES

Mumbai-based photographer Anusha Yadav (see photo) is out to trace the history, anthropology and change in culture and lifestyle of the 'great Indian family' through her delightful 'Indian Memory' project. Yadav started off by asking her friends to share old black-and-white album pictures on her blog. As the pictures came in, she found herself undertaking a comparative study on changes in gender dynamics, photographic compositions, spaces, and fashion. The sepia contributions can include anything from the past that offers a glimpse into nostalgia: photos of bridal couples; pictures taken in the Raj era; company pictures; or family group shots. Yadav exchanges ideas and shares discourses on the project on her blog www.indianmemoryproject. wordpress.com. Contributors are requested to attach a small note along with the pictures stating date, place, names and a couple of lines on the context in which the pictures were taken. You can send your contributions to indianmemoryproject@gmail.com

A woman of ethics

Eight hundred years after famed Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar penned the Tirukkural, a collection of 1,330 couplets on ethics, he has found an ardent disciple who leaves no stone unturned to propagate his teachings. K P Chellammal, a retired art C HERITAGE ference in Malaysia and Singateacher, expounds the Tirukkural through spiritual discourses, music, painting, literature, and folk dances-such as Karagattam, Kavadi

Chellammal writes the lyrics based on Tirukkural: composes the music: and choreographs the dance sequences. "Ethical living has even more relevance today in our supremely commercial world," says the 62 year-old. "Through my writings I can reach the elite, but folk dance and music are the best

and Manipuri.

means to reach the rural masses." The petite Karagattam exponent has traversed many streets in rural Tamil Nadu staging music and dance performances based on Tirukkural. She has even per-

formed at the World Tamil Conpore, besides Delhi, Kolkata,

Rishikesh and other states. Her hectic schedule includes visits to schools and orphanages to spread the message of Tirukkural.

The sprightly Chellamal has a PhD de-

gree; has authored many books; and received several awards for her unique contribution to culture and literature. And though some may find her passion a bit extreme, she is resolute in her purpose. She even conducted the marriage of her son Giriraj on the lines of Tirukkural and is planning to do an encore for her daughter Girija. Fortunately, she has an enthusiastic ally in her husband M S Rajamanickam who supports her in all her endeavours. On 25 April, she also fulfilled a cherished dream: installing a statue of Thiruvalluvar in her house. The occasion was celebrated amid much fanfare and attended by eminent scholars and dignitaries.

harmony celebrate age june 2010 73





Coin KING



In 1947, when S R Bhat received a coin from his school as a memento to mark India's independence, he didn't know it would trigger a lifelong hobby. "My mother insisted I preserve it as it was not just a coin but a token of our independence," he recalls. "The next day she gave me a few more coins that were going out of circulation." Today, the 62 year-old has amassed 6,200 coins from 420 countries that include coins on wildlife; 630 bi-metal coins from 144 countries: one each of all coins produced by the Republic of India; one each of all Re 1 coins ever minted from the British era till date; and Mughal coins and ancient coins. Pune-based Bhat also has some rarities like a coin made from clay; a guitar-shaped coin from Somalia: and a bamboo coin that is now banned in China. His collection ref ects both his patience and passion. Many of his coins come from remote countries like one from Burkina Faso in Africa, which is also



among his favourites. More intriguing than their nationality are the stories that hover around some of the coins. For instance, when Bhat set out to collect a coin from each country in the world, he had a tough time getting one from Senegal. "Senegal had issued only one coin in 1974 and I came to know of a man who had kept it as a souvenir," he says. "It took me four years to coax him to part with it."

—Khursheed Dinshaw

TRAIN OF THOUGHT

TO COMMEMORATE RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY, THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT LAUNCHED A SPECIAL EXHIBITION TRAIN CALLED THE SANSKRITI EXPRESS. THE TRAIN WAS FLAGGED OFF FROM KOLKATA'S HOWRAH STATION ON 8 MAY, AND WILL TRAVEL THROUGH DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY BEFORE RETURNING TO KOLKATA ON 8 MAY 2011. IT HAS FIVE COACHES—EACH DEPICTING VARIOUS PHASES OF LIFE AND WORKS OF ART OF TAGORE. THE FIRST COACH PROVIDES GLIMPSES INTO TAGORE'S LIFE THROUGH A SERIES OF SEPIA PHOTOGRAPHS; THE SECOND DISPLAYS SONGS, POEMS AND PROSE BY THE MASTER; THE THIRD JOURNEYS THROUGH HIS ESSAYS, NOVELS AND PLAYS; THE FOURTH EXHIBITS HIS PAINTINGS; AND THE FIFTH TAKES US THROUGH HIS CONCLUDING YEARS.

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

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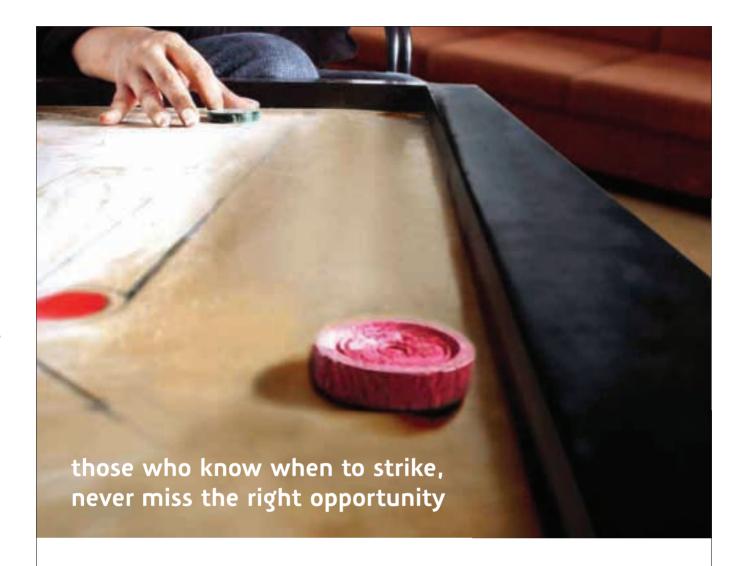
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PASSAGES

Made in NDIA

AN EXCERPT FROM ARYATARANGINI: THE SAGA OF THE INDO-ARYANS BY A KALYANARAMAN (ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE; 1969)

ncient Indian chemistry developed from two sources, medicine and industry. The manufacture of copper and bronze utensils and weapons in the age of the Rig Veda (5000-4000 BC) makes Aryavarta the pioneer in this industry. As we have seen earlier, the metallic weaponry of the ancient Aryans was numerous, and highly efficient. Even during Rig Vedic times, the Aryans had passed on from the Copper to the Iron Age. In the later Veda, there is unmistakable evidence of the mining of iron ore (described as syama-ayas) and the gradual replacement of copper, brass and bronze by steel, for the finer types of weapons, the tyres of chariots, the shoeing of oxen and horse, and some kind of domestic utensils.

By the time of the later Vedic literature, the manufacture of fine steel had become a widely distributed industry, whose reputation had, as we had seen elsewhere, travelled abroad to Persia and the Near East, during the early centuries of the 2nd millennium BC. (The so-called Syrian steel, named Damascus in historical times, was in fact either imported steel made in India or steel made by Indian artisans settled in Syria, under the Mithrani Kings.) The ore was smelted in furnaces, the flames being blown by bellows, made of skin, or occasionally of bird's wing. The 'steeling' process was probably centralised as a royal monopoly down to historical times, and closely guarded as a secret both in our own country and abroad, wherever the Aryan peoples had carved out a home for themselves. The chemical excellence of the wrought iron of ancient India has become an object of wonder to all those archaeologists who had seen the Guptan and other pillars, which have remained rustless even after being in the open for over 1,500 years. (The iron pillar of Dhar (1200 AD) is even larger than the Delhi pillar.) The Delhi iron pillar is described, by an English historian, as the product of great skill and labour and superb technical efficiency in preparing the metal, which, because of its purity, has been preserved so long.

The Atharvan shows acquaintance with the extraction of chemical essence and inorganic medicines. This knowledge



continued to make progress in post-Vedic times, till a comparatively high degree of proficiency was reached in the age of Charka and Susruta (7th and 6th centuries BC). The great grammarian Patanjali, in his treatise on metallurgy, gives elaborate instructions on metallurgical and chemical processes, especially the preparation of salts, alloys, amalgams and the extraction, purification, and the assaying of mineral products. It is very likely that Patanjali was aware of the use of mixtures, called vida, which contained agua regia and other mineral acids in potential. Unfortunately, the magnum opus of Patanjali is no longer available, although it is quoted freely in medical textbooks of a later time. That the Rasayana Sastra was very well understood in the century before Christ is evident from the writings of Nagarjuna (1st century BC/AD), who specialised in the preparation of mercurial compounds, and devoted an entire book to the subject. Early in 6th century AD, Varahamihira (the well-known astronomer) gave several recipes for the preparation of cement (a powder he calls Vajralepa, or a binder as strong as diamond), which was used extensively in the temple and palace architecture of the period.... In fact, by the Gupta period, India had achieved preeminence as an industrial nation and even Imperial Rome looked up to India as the most skilled nation in the world in such arts as dyeing, tanning, soap-making, glass and cement manufacture. "By the 6th century AD," says Will Durant, "the Hindus were far ahead of Europe in industrial chemistry: they were masters of calcinations, distillation, sublimation, steaming and fixation, the production of light without heat, the making of anaesthetics and soporific powers and in the preparation of metallic salts, compounds and alloys." The tempering of steel was brought to a state of perfection in ancient India, unknown in Europe till our own times. King Porus is said to have selected, as a specially valuable gift for Alexander, not gold or silver, but 30 pounds of steel!



"THE MIND IS A SAFE HAVEN"

ovelist-poet-playwright-journalist Shreekumar Varma, 55, may not want to trumpet his lineage from the rooftops but the cultural legacy of his great-great grandfather Raja Ravi Varma is evident in his book Maria's Room (HarperCollins: Rs 299; 324 pages)—he doesn't just write words, he paints scenarios that settle themselves snugly around you, holding you firm in the tortured world of his protagonist Raja Prasad. Raja is in a gritty, distinctly unglamorous Goa trying to write his next book while putting to rest the ghosts of his first unsuccessful literary venture and a deep personal tragedy. Even while he strikes up a liaison with a local girl, he becomes mesmerised by the story of another from a long time ago. It isn't long before past and present blur with the effects becoming manifest in Raja's book-and life. As much a thriller and mystery as lament of love and loss, Maria's Room explores the relationship between man and mind, as Varma tells Arati Rajan Menon....

How is *Maria's Room* different from *Lament of Mohini* (Penguin), your earlier book?

It is quite a departure. Lament depicts the way of life among the Namboodiris and the royal family in Kerala. It showcases a unique idiom and things about that way of life that have not been written about in English. Maria's Room is set in Goa. Like the protagonist Raja Prasad, I too went to Goa after the release of Lament to write my next book. That time was the trigger for this book. There are lots of elements blended in—a German I once encountered in Mahabalipuram inspired the pivotal character of Fritz;

even actors like Catherine Deneuve and Marcello Mastroianni provided me cues.

Maria's Room is a very dark book.

Yes, it differs from *Lament*, which is lighter, even humorous in parts.

It's also a book about the mind and how we can lose ourselves in it.

There's so much going on inside our heads; on one level, we are aware of it, on another it remains in our subconscious although it influences us tremendously. The wonderful thing about the mind is that you can inhabit a parallel universe inside. It is not available to you yet you can derive happiness and solace from it.

You write books, plays, poetry—which hat fits you best?

The hat is irrelevant; it's the story that matters. I always have two windows open on my computer and often jump from one to another. I don't plot my career; I do whatever interests me.

You maintain your own website: www.shreevarma.homestead.com. How can an author use the medium to connect with the reader? For instance, some authors publish work in progress on the Net

The medium is a wonderful way to interact directly with the audience. But I don't see myself opening my work out in that way—I would hate to lose control of the creative process! It's different if you do a play because you have to cede to the director but one is more possessive about a book.

You have also written many books for children, like Pazhassi Raja: The



Royal Rebel (Macmillan), and Devil's Garden (Puffin). Do you have to gear yourself up differently for this audience?

I teach creative writing to youngsters and it keeps me connected with the next generation. Having watched my two sons grow up has also helped.

You are a descendant of Raja Ravi Varma. Can such a legacy be an encumbrance?

It was hard when I was younger because sometimes the name ends up defining you. When I was introduced to people, the last line used to hold the most applause; it was disconcerting. Now, it is a source of pride. I believe I have been truly enriched by the creative aspect of the legacy and I don't shy away from it. Of course, we've never been ostentatious as a family. Or my name would be a lot longer!

As you grow older, do you see your age as a negative or positive?

When people dwell on your chronological age, one does feel old. But it is of no consequence if the mind is open, happy and positive. One positive of ageing is a bank of memory to draw upon. That can be useful for a writer.

What's next?

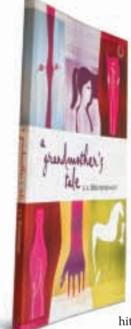
A thriller; a fast-paced read called *The Gayatri Club*.

BRIEFLY

"Death, repentance, desire, guilt, renunciation and filial love".... Set in a slum-sewer city, Upamanyu Chatterjee's WAY TO GO (Penguin; Rs 499; 359 pages) is not deviant for being defined by these life conditions. Its aberrance lies in the normalcy within it. Shyamanand is 85 and on his deathbed when he disappears. Preceded by a neighbour's suicide and followed by a neighbour's murder and another disappearance—of Shyamanand's son Jamun, owing to being engulfed by angst and remorse—the incident overwhelms Jamun's elder brother Burfi with thoughts of "fa-



thers biological and absent; Jamun, Shyamanand and Burfi ('had he been a good father?'), each absent differently". Jamun's ex-wife Kasturi, daughter Mithi and Burfi's scattered family wallow in their incompleteness to complete the picture. Chatterjee who revealed to us our own Indian landscape with English, Augustmakes his latest an unending abyss of loss, a reminder that "no one escapes from life". "Life was everywhere, invincible, surer than fate, than time, more certain than hiccup of death".



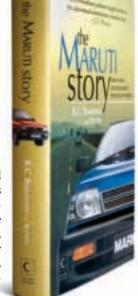
Sita and Surpanakha bond with each other over their gender. A modern Nair girl from a matrilineal family is at tenterhooks after being asked to change her first name after marriage. Kalidasa rewrites Shakuntala with actor Bipasha Basu in mind. And a modern Savitri refuses to pray for her dying husband, fearing another lifetime of servitude. These are just some of the stories in feminist writer C V Bhuvaneswari's anthology of short stories, A GRANDMOTHER'S TALE (Olive Publications; Rs 200; 184 pages). Through each of these 18 tales, she explores themes like women's subjugation, stereotyping, cultural alienation, and the travails of motherhood and old age. Bhuvaneswari's protagonists are an intriguing mixed bag: urban and rural, educated and illiterate, repressed and rebellious. While some of the stories are predictable, the overall impact of the book, which casts aspersions on patriarchy and middle-class hypocrisy, is hardhitting. "Behind every woman's silence is a story of

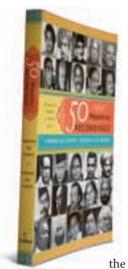
her oppression and silencing," writes Bhuvaneswari. A book like this serves to break the silence.

Here's how India's favourite wheels made it to the road in 1982-and kept rolling on cruise control. Maruti-Suzuki chairman R C Bhargava

tells THE MARUTI **STORY** (Harper-Collins; Rs 499; 383 pages) with help from journalist Seetha. From the controversyprone Sanjay Gandhi's vision to launch a 'people's car' to the establishment of a public-sector undertaking the automobile sector, the adoption of Japanese management principles and the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring to ensure the birth of the classic Maruti 800, the book reveals every chapter of the project, which set the benchmark for all future public-sector endeavours and put an entire country on wheels. Fact: till 2009, every second car to leave an automobile showroom was the Maruti 800.

> Even though Bhargava and Seetha tend to meander and ramble through the telling of it all, the story itself is epic enough to keep you tuned in. As Bhargava writes, "Today, the company-now free of government controls but facing competition from the world's major manufacturers who have entered the Indian market—still leads the way.... Not only that, cars made by Maruti can be seen in all continents." Sadly, this March, Maruti-Suzuki announced that it was phasing out the Maruti 800.





An early introduction to music, access to India's greatest musical icons and an appreciation for the nuances of *raag* and *taal* are some of the advantages of being the children of a maestro. Sarod legend Ustad Amjad Ali Khan's sons Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan parlay these into a book: 50 MAESTROS' RECORDINGS: THE BEST OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC (HarperCollins; Rs 350; 192 pages). Themselves musicians who have married the sound of the sarod with harmonies from

the occident, they share their encounters (and rare photographs) with treasures from across India—from M S Subbulakshmi, Girija Devi, Kishori Amonkar and Bhimsen Joshi to Begum Akhtar, Enayat Khan, Ustad Bismillah Khan and Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia. As formats go, this one is rather rigid: a short bio of each artist and personal reminiscences followed by select recordings. But if you get past the textbook nature of the presentation, this is a valuable guide for people wishing to dip their feet in the enchanting waters of Indian classical music. Even sweeter: the CD that accompanies the book with 27 of the chosen recordings.

Internationally celebrated authors like Paulo Coelho, Richard Bach and Isabel Allende have brought the inspirational literary tradition of modern fable mingled with metaphor and magic realism into our lives. Turkish novelist **Serdar Ozkan** follows in their footsteps with **THE MISSING ROSE** (Wisdom Tree; Rs 245; 192 pages), the tale of a woman's journey of self-discovery. Diana has lived much of her life influenced by peer pres-

sure; even studying law rather than following her passion for words, her worldview a pastiche of the reflections of others. But her life is transformed when her mother. upon her deathbed, reveals that she has a twin, Maria. This epiphany impels her to travel to Istanbul, a voyage that has deep spiritual ramifications: a search for the 'missing rose', which on one level is Maria, and on the other her own soul, that has so long been lost to her. Though predictable, the book deftly bridges Eastern and Western philosophy; explores human nature with great understanding; and is immensely readable—the fact that it has been translated into 35 languages should count for something!





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- Net Worth: US\$ 1,519 million
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There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

-Scientist Albert Einstein

Obesogen

n. A chemical that leads to obesity by increasing the production and storage capacity of fat cells; an environmental trigger that causes obesity.

Example: In 2006 he fed pregnant mice tributyltin, a disinfectant and fungicide used in marine paints, plastics production, and other products, which enters the food chain in seafood and drinking water. "The offspring were born with more fat already stored, more fat cells, and became 5 to 20 per cent fatter by adulthood," Blumberg says. Genetic tests revealed how that had happened. The tributyltin activated a receptor called PPAR gamma, which acts like a switch for cells' fate: in one position it allows cells to remain fibroblasts, in another it guides them to become fat cells.... The effect was so strong and so reliable that Blumberg thought compounds that reprogram cells' fate like this deserved a name of their own: obesogens.

-Sharon Begley, "Born to be big", Newsweek, 21 September 2009

Churnalism

n. Journalism that churns out articles based on wire stories and press releases, rather than original reporting. [Blend of churn and journalism.] Example: Last year, I highlighted for MediaGuardian how Northumbria police hold back serious crimes from the media. Meanwhile, the force's £ 1.5 m-a-year corporate communications department pumps out more press releases on falling crime rates, clampdowns, raids, initiatives and other stories designed to produce positive PR. The result, I believe, is that most crime reporting in the northeast is now little more than **churnalism**. -Nigel Green, "Media are increasingly relying on police handouts as a basis for crime stories", The Guardian, 7 December 2009

n. An error made while using the thumbs to type, particularly on a mobile device keypad. Blend of thumb and typo **Example:** How do you get rid of thumbos, those cell phone message typos? Practise. And some handy tips.

- "Touch type with your thumbs", One News Page, 17 March 2010

Lucrepath n. A person who is pathologically driven to make money.

[Blend of lucre and psychopath.] **Example:** Universities are a fruitful source of neologisms—I once had a couple of philosopher colleagues who coined the word lucrepath for an individual consumed by the desire for money—so I decided to look up 'disinvestments'.

-Frank Bongiorno, "The writing on the wall", Inside Story, 18 March 2010

Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of 80 and gradually approach 18.

—American author and humorist Mark Twain

Downager n. A person who acts younger than his or her age. **Example:** Experts have coined the term downagers—which they say reflects the growing 'act younger, live younger' attitude of the over-60s—and believe it applies to more than 100,000 Australians.

-Callie Watson, "Over-60s celebrate 'act-younger, live younger' attitude", The Advertiser, 1 February 2010

Recombobulate

v. To recover from a state of confusion or disorganisation.

Example: My heart was gladdened by an official-looking sign in the Milwaukee airport, just beyond the Transportation Security Administration checkpoint, hanging over where you put your shoes and coat back on and stuff your laptop back in the case: The sign said, "Recombobulation Area". The English language gains a new word. **Recombobulate**, America. Pull yourself together, tie your shoelaces, and if your pilot is wearing a button that says "To hell with the FAA", wait for the next flight. —*Garrison Keillor, "Running on anger"*, Chicago Tribune. *27 January 2010*

Solastalgia

n. Distress or melancholy caused by a significant change to one's local environment.

Example: Ecological degradation is not only affecting our external landscape; it's also influencing our psychic one.

Neologisms paint the picture: solastalgia is the depression caused when your local surroundings are damaged significantly; eco anxiety is a generalised worry about the environment.

—Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson, "Eco anxiety", The New York Times, 20 April 2008

BANK ON THIS



If you want to know what a man is like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals.

—Author J K Rowling in the Harry Potter series

DELEB*n. A dead celebrity, particularly one used to endorse products.* **Example:** Revenues from **delebs** are already rising as rights companies become more aggressive about advertising and product deals, says Reeder, whose company represents estates including Albert Einstein, Andy Warhol and Johnny Cash. ... [A] deleb cannot be caught sniffing cocaine or punching a nightclub bouncer.

—Katie Allen, "Yves Saint Laurent tops dead celebrity earning league", The Guardian, 29 October 2009

Grab-and-goer

n. A person who dislikes shopping, or does not have much time for shopping, and so tends to select items quickly and without much thought.

Example: The clichés are that women shop, men buy. But when I went shopping with people—and I went shopping with a lot of men and women—I found that a lot of women are what

men are supposed to be, which is the 'grab and goers', who hate shopping. When a man spends hours and hours and hours online looking for the right cellphone or something like that, he's shopping. But the culture tends not to notice that.

—Lee Eisenberg quoted in Sarah Boesveld, "Q&A: Good news—it's okay to shop", The Globe and Mail, 9 November 2009

No more long queues at the post office to transact on your savings account; post office recurring deposit account; time-deposits account; post office monthly income account; 15-year Public Provident Fund account: Kisan Vikas Patra: and Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme. The Department of Posts (DoP) has announced that it will soon launch core banking facility at 4,000 post offices—including 850 head post offices—all over the country. As part of the initiative, ATMs will be installed at select post offices and ATM cards will be allotted to customers who have an account with the post offices. The DoP plans to appoint a consultant to oversee the project, which will be fully implemented within two years. It is also in talks with various banks to enable usage of their ATM cards at the designated ATMs in the post office for cash withdrawals and balance enquiry. Talks are also on to implement a prepaid card project in partnership with reputed banks. The card will be re-loadable at all post offices, with amounts ranging between Rs 1,000 and Rs 50,000, and will

facilitate ease of non-cash, card-based

across the country.

transactions at merchant establishments

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Ice-creammm

Tradition and family values are often regarded as words buried in mothballs. But very often they take us farther than we could imagine. In 1960, a young Polish entrepreneur Ruben Mattus decided to launch his small family business of ice-creams under a quirky brand name-Häagen Dazs-that, not too long after, became synonymous with decadence and luxury all over the world. Earlier, Mattus used to sell fruit ice and ice-cream pops on a horse-drawn carriage on the streets of Bronx in New York. Though Häagen Dazs was first launched in just three flavours (vanilla, chocolate and coffee), today it's available in more

than 43 flavours in 50 countries around the world. In 1983, Mattus sold the brand to Pillsbury Company. Though the ice-cream is more expensive than any other brand, it also consists of the finest ingredients, like vanilla beans from Madagascar and dark chocolate imported from Belgium. Unlike other brands that pack more 'air', Häagen Dazs is distinctive because of its high density. The name, though, is definitely whipped out of thin air—Mattus tried out permutations and combinations of a series of nonsensical words till he found something that sounded suitably exotic and Scandinavian!

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JUNE 1960

- On 16 June 1960, Alfred Hitchcock's classic horror movie Pyscho was released in New York. The film, based on the novel by Robert Bloch—which in turn was based on the life of Wisconsin serial killer Ed Gein—received mixed reactions but went on to become a cult phenomenon.
- On 20 June 1960, Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB) a state-owned electricity regulation board, be-
- gan operations. It went on to become the second largest electricity generating utility in India after National Thermal Power Corporation.
- On 20 June 1960, Mali and Senegal gained independence. Previously known as the Mali Federation or French Sudan, it was a country formed by a union between Senegal and Mali.

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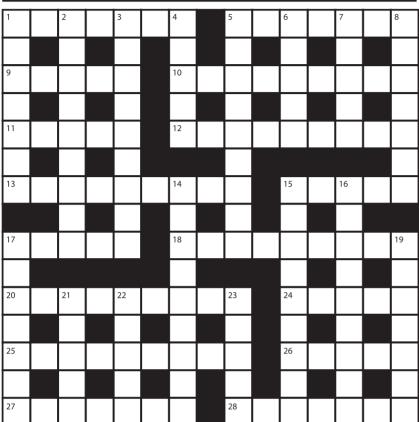
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EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 68



BY RAJU BHARATAN

- 1 Rim turning outside and inside a surprise SONY pick for starters (7)
- 5 Fast fading beauty of building a flying career with folded hands? (7)
- 9 Sitar viewing from behind 'wouldbe Tere mere beech mein girls'? (5)
- 10 Geetmala apartheid? (3 6)
- 11 Joint visible while showing a person the door? (5)
- **12** Order of priorities cutting all those tall claims to size (9)
- 13 The nine letters of Androcles? (45)
- 15 Associated Cement Company's Royal Artillery capital? (5)
- 17 A call to get behind the wheel (5)

- 18 It turns before T Fort at payoff
- 20 What Preity's joining an IPL shout for lbw came through as? (3 6)
- 24 Circular Yodh sumo wrestling ring
- 25 The kind of arresting listening Suhanee raat dhal chukee still is in Rafi's voice (3-6)
- 26 Town in Kurnool district portraying Don in All India (5)
- **27** Age at which you are ripe for attempting a six? (7)
- 28 The Calendar Girl's problem in posing for every other photographer (2 5)

DOWN

1 Debatable part of aggressively

- participating in the Lok Sabha proceedings (7)
- 2 The way Dilip Kumar dominated in Gunaa Jumna, could vou possibly believe that this Deedar director wielded the megaphone for that show, too, seeing how the 1961 Vyjayanthimala co-starring film was not in his New Theatres cinematic idiom at all? (5 4)
- 3 The 1956 Shakti Samanta hit film in which composer Hemant Kumar had Geeta Bali lip-synching Lata Mangeshkar as Dil chhed koee aesaa naghmaa while also, peerlessly, rendering the number himself as a tandem (9)
- 4 Aishwarya caught between England and Australia? (5)
- 5 Hardly any reason to 'sweat', Sunanda! (3 2 4)
- 6 Met to carry an intended thing (5)
- 7 Is virtuoso Yesudas's rendition of Kaa karoon sainee aaye naa baalam, in this 1977 Basu Chatterji film, not on a classical vocal par with Manna Dey's 1963 interpretation of Puchchon na kaise maine rain beetaayee in Meri Surat Teri Ankhen? (5)
- 8 Complex of girl's being close to her father? (7)
- 14 Describing Anil Kumble's faceoff with that Windies bouncer, something from which only a cricketer of his resolve could have returned to dismiss Brian Lara (3 4-2)
- 15 Only role the heroine finishing up as single in life is fit to play? (234)
- **16** Kind of competition against which Lata Mangeshkar broke through
- 17 So naturally going after Travancore
- **19** Pictures of the region between Cancer and Capricorn? (7)
- 21 Ore lifted to figure in double-cross impression? (5)
- 22 Liable lying flat? (5)
- 23 Sophia trailer? (5)

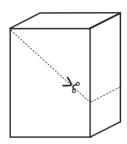
For answers, see Page 87

RAJU BHARATAN is the originator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' crossword in The Times of India, where he set the first 1,500 puzzles

Tips for beginners: A whole variety of clues goes into framing a cryptic puzzle. For instance, the anagram. The clue here could be: Unresting opponent of authority (Unresting being the 9 letters of insurgent rearranged). Another variety of clue is the palindrome—DEIFIED, when viewed backward or when viewed up in a Down clue, reads DEIFIED all the way. Next, there could be the clue (8-letter answer) reading: Complete view of daughter sandwiched between parents—PANORAMA (PA/NORA/MA). The 8-letter solution to the clue, The framework of our constitution, is SKELETON. At times, what looks straight could prove tricky. For example, the clue, How we stand, has UNITED for its 6-letter answer. The clue, How we fall, has DIVIDED for its 7-letter answer.

Then: Cereal box

Now: Magazine holder



Take a large-size cereal box. Cut it as shown in the diagram; glue printed gifting paper or any attractive coloured paper on it; and stack magazines inside.

The first paper-like substance papyrus was made by the Egyptians over 6,000 years ago by weaving fibrous plants and pounding them into flat sheets. The closest kin to paper as we know it was made in 105 AD by Ts'ai Lun, a Chinese official; he mixed mulberry bark and hemp with scraps of cotton and linen in water. The resulting pulp was pressed into mats and left in the sun to dry.

- Nearly 4 billion trees are cut down around the world for making paper.
- For every tonne of paper that is recycled, 17 trees get a chance to live.
- Today, the world consumes 300 million tonne of paper each year.



SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 68

ACROSS: 1 Mandira (m/and/ir + a); 5 Namaste (Airlines beauty with folded hands); 9 Ratis (sitar viewing from behind); 10 Hit Parade (9 letters rearranging as apartheid); 11 Hinge; 12 Shortlist; 13 Lion-tamer; 15 Accra (ACC/RA: abbreviated form of Associated Cement Company's Royal Artillery); 17 Steer; 18 Tit for tat (tI/T Fort/at); 20 Sex appeal; 24 Dohyo (one o in *Dohyo* is *circular*, the balance 4 letters rearrange as Yodh, hence Circular Yodh sumo

wrestling ring); 25 Ear-holder; 26 Adoni (A/Don/I: portraying Don in All India); 27 Sixteen; 28 No dates

DOWN: 1 Marshal; 2 Nitin Bose; 3 Inspector; 4 Ash.es; 5 Not to fret; 6 Meant (*me*/an/*t*: *met* to carry *an*); 7 *Swami*; 8 Electra; 14 Met head-on; 15 An old maid; 16 Cut-throat; 17 (Travancore) Sisters (Lalitha, Padmini, Ragini); 19 Tropics (Tropics); 21 Xerox (x/ero/x: ore lifted to figure in xx: double-cross); 22 Prone; 23 (Sophia) Loren

"I don't want water to become a luxury so I'm trying to save as much of it as I can."

Abid Surti, 75, Mumbai, for starting a unique water conservation plan



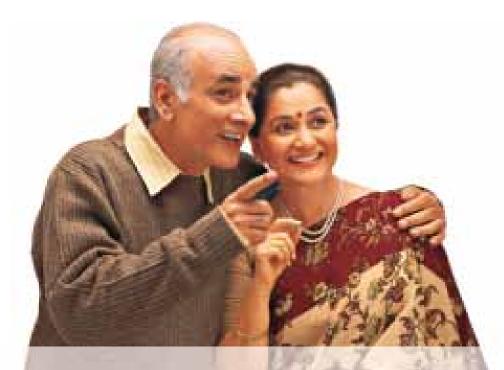
s the country reels from a water shortage, a septuagenarian from Mira Road—a far-flung suburb in Mumbai—has come up with an innovative solution. Abid Surti is a painter, cartoonist, author and playwright, besides being a 'one-man' NGO out to save every drop of water. Surti is the founder of Drop Dead, a unique initiative he set up in 2007 for water conservation. Every Sunday, along with a plumber and an assistant Surti visits houses in and around Mira Road and fixes dripping taps. His plan is simple yet ingenious. He simply replaces old O-ring rubber gaskets with new ones. The idea struck him in 2007 when he noticed the dripping tap in his friend's house. "A tap that drips water once every second wastes about 1,000 litre of water every month so imagine how much we all waste," he points out. Surti and his assistants raise awareness through posters and pamphlets.

Before fixing a tap, they obtain permissions from the housing society concerned. And Surti pays for all expenses from his pocket. He buys gaskets from the wholesale market for Rs 50 each and pays each plumber Rs 200 per day. In 2007, when he was awarded the Hindi Sahitya Sanstha Award by the Uttar Pradesh government, he even used up the cash prize to fix leaky taps! Every year his team visits around 1,700 houses and repairs about 500 leaking taps, in the process saving about 500,000 litre of water. His tireless efforts have brought him many accolades. And now, his local Mira-Bhayandar municipal corporation will chip in too. Surti has asked the corporation to set up an office and offer a bicycle so plumbers can be available on call. "Water conservation needs a counteractive body similar to the fire brigade that works 24/7," he says.

—Dhanya Nair Sankar



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