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harmony

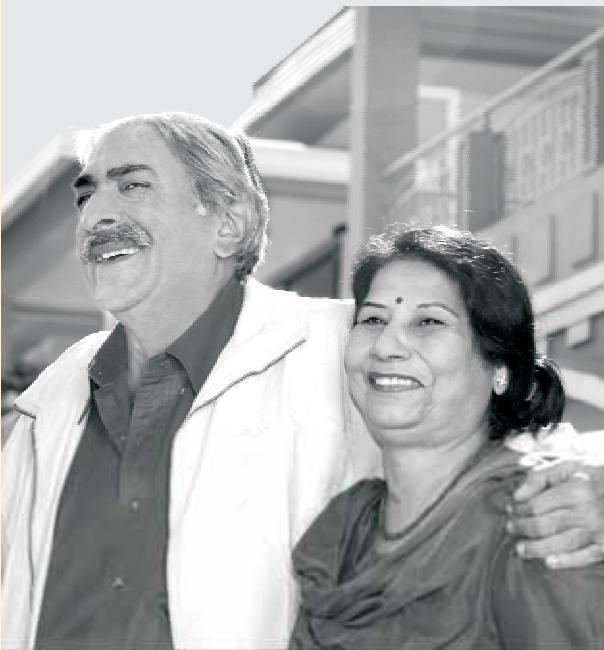
celebrate age



**Silvers who
sizzled in 2006**

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The magazine for silver citizens



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OUR 10 PER CENT IS YOU

'TEN PER CENT'—I SAW IT emblazoned across the cover of a national newsmagazine. That's the economic growth some people are predicting for India in the near future. National and international media have been consistently writing about the surge in our economy and the growing profile of our country. It's good news and a source of great pride for us.

But what about the other 10 per cent? I'm talking about silvers, who now comprise about a tenth of our population. While we revel in our newfound economic prosperity, we must not forget the people who, over the years, have helped us reach where we are, with blood, sweat and, sometimes, tears. Any success requires a firm foundation and ours has been crafted by this 10 per cent, whose contribution to nation-building often goes unacknowledged.

It's time to change this. As we continue to build roads, ports, railways, let's also invest our time and the money in the coffers of government to bolster social infrastructure. This requires a

two-pronged approach on the part of government. First, fulfil your social contract to silvers. Every society owes its elders at least a basic level of financial security and healthcare—this is non-negotiable. Second, recognise the potential of silvers. Rather than dismissing them as has-beens in need of handouts, co-opt their skills. With the economy booming, this is an opportunity like no other to take silvers back into the workforce.

Getting back to work will boost their self-confidence. More important, it will help them stay financially self-reliant, an area of acute concern for most. This was brought home when television channel CNBC-TV18 recently visited the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai, for a show. It wanted to provide silvers a chance to find out more about the stock market and their options—the queries of members were answered by financial experts. The questions came fast and furious, revealing not just the concerns of silvers but their financial acumen. We need to cash in on this acumen and acknowledge that the experience

RITU NANDA



of silvers is invaluable to us, and their talents immense.

Proof of this are the inspiring stories we bring you month after month in *Harmony*; of men and women who have forged exciting second careers for themselves after retirement, who make a difference to the lives of others in ways that defy numbers like age, and who have overcome every kind of physical setback to emerge stronger, more vital. This is what our 10 per cent is all about—you, our constituency. And on the cusp of this New Year, we assure you we will not let the government forget you, your needs and aspirations. That's our word.

Tina Ambani

A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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Publisher **Anthony Jesudasan** Editor **Tina Ambani** Deputy Editor **Meeta Bhatti** Assistant Editor **Trina Mukherjee** Senior Writer **Arati Rajan Menon**

Special Correspondent **Teena Baruah** Trainee Writer **Smita Deodhar** Consultant Editor **Sudeep Chakravarti**

Design Head **Ritu Nanda** Visual Coordinator **Anuradha Joshi** Production Manager **Rajeev Nambiar** Graphic Designer **Mamta Jadhav**

Design & Imaging **Haresh Patel, Anand Sutar** and **Rohidas Adivkar** Editorial Coordinators **Glenn Fernandes, Anita Rosario**

General Manager, Business Development **Shrenik Mehta** Deputy Manager **Anuya Chauhan**

Editorial & Marketing Offices: 4th Floor, Maker Chambers IV, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Tel: 91-22-22785423 (Editorial), 22785472 (Marketing).

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LOOK FOR
**ONE
-on-
ONE**
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by **Mamta Jadhav**

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"A monthly income from my home while I continue to live in it?"



After a life spent working, you have now retired. Your one big asset is your house. You have invested for your senior years but unforeseen rises in the cost of living always takes its toll. Unfortunately till now there were no systems in place that allow people like you to spend their retired lives protected from the economic realities of life.

We now offer 'Saksham' that uses the value of your house to provide you the dignity and security during your retired years. It allows you to get a fixed monthly annuity that helps you to plan your life better. We will lend you money secured by the house property. The tenure of the loan is pre-decided and you get the monthly amount throughout the tenure period.

The best part is that you continue to live in the house during the period of the tenure... And even longer. We will not ask you to settle the loan immediately when the loan period expires. You and your spouse have the right to continue staying in your house for your lifetime, or your spouse's, if she outlives you. At no point in time will we ask you to clear the loan amount, or vacate the house.

Finally you, or your heirs, can settle the loan by repaying the money or, if necessary, the property can be sold at prevailing market value and loan repaid and the rest of the money goes back to the family



For more details, please contact our relationship managers at any of these numbers or write to us.

Marketing Department
Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.
Dheeraj Arma, 6th Floor, Anant Kanekar Marg,
Bandra (E), Mumbai 400 051
Tel: (022) 26470338/9 Fax: (022) 26582176.
Email: saksham@dhfl.com
Website: www.dhfl.com

column one

We're back with Hotlist, the annual Harmony ritual that stands for success. As always, the list for 2006 comprises a mix of people from all walks of life. Twelve people with courage to craft their destinies and ability to touch our lives in a positive way.

You may not agree with some of the people on our list of silvers of the year but such lists are never definitive; at best they are indicative of a certain degree of achievement and commitment.

But you can play a part in deciding who is featured next year. Write to us with your nominations and reasons for them. The only criteria: silvers nominated should have the courage of conviction to catch up with their dreams.

That's what we believe at *Harmony*: chase your dreams! Set your own agenda, however basic. Even something as simple as participating in the Senior Citizens' Run, part of the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, on 21 January. About 3,000 silvers have already registered for the 4.3-km run. While it's too late to enrol (there's always next time), when you watch the silvers blaze their trail let it inspire you to go that extra mile in your own life.

The drive to better ourselves has led us to spruce up our website, www.harmonyindia.org. We're trying to make it more informative and easier to navigate, and early feedback suggests we are on the right track. Check out the site and write to us. We value your suggestions. From all of us at *Harmony*, a very happy 2007.

—Meeta Bhatti



Tina Ambani's editorial, "Season of Sparkle", in the November 2006 issue of *Harmony* was thought provoking. I agree that it is not winning but participating that can

boost the confidence of silvers and motivate them to make their life more purposeful. Unfortunately, elders do not make opportunities for themselves. Old ladies are experts at needlecraft but their talent and potential are seldom noticed. Retirees can guide youngsters in office procedure and negotiation skills. A senior acquaintance of mine went to America for six months, did a course in counselling and is now working in a hospital with terminally ill patients. This new lease on life has worked wonders for her personality and life. When we help others, we help ourselves even more. The need of the hour is to open avenues for senior citizens where their creativity and experience is put to use. After all human beings don't live by bread alone—the soul too must be constantly nourished.

S SAMPATH KUMAR

New Delhi

The letter of the month wins Orthaheel footwear, from Orthofit, a Mumbai-based sports medicine and rehab clinic



I recently read *Harmony* for the first time and enjoyed it. A magazine that encourages elders to lead a positive life is a great idea. The sparkling editorial by Tina Ambani sets the pace for the rest of the magazine. Thereafter, it is all good, healthy and meaningful reading. From now, I will be a part of the *Harmony* family, and contribute my bit!

COLONEL R D SINGH

Jammu

I picked up a copy of *Harmony* from a magazine stall and was impressed. The editorial mix couldn't have been better: from 'Orbit' to inspiring profiles of seniors with a zest for life, from 'Body & Soul' to 'Etcetera'. Though I am not silver yet, I have the pleasure of the company of several seniors at home. I am sure

they will look forward to reading *Harmony* every month.

ANAND KHURANA

Agra

My wife, aged 63, is being treated for cancer of the liver at Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Hospital, New Delhi. Her diagnosis: *Cancer of Liver; Hepatocellular Carcinoma (Poorly Differentiated); Stage III B (T3N1MO); HT, DM, Hypothyroid*. We seek advice from people who know more about this disease.

S P CHADHA

New Delhi

We request readers to email contact.mag@harmonyindia.org. We will pass on the information.

—Editors

I would like to inform readers about a new avenue for self-employment introduced by the Income Tax Department. The 'Income Tax Preparer', as he will be called, will prepare the tax returns of individuals, families, small-scale organisations and whoever else may need his services. The department has made arrangements with NIIT to train 5,000 graduates from the age of 21 to 35 for this. Working from home, they will get paid either 3 per cent of the assessed tax amount or Rs 250. Retired silvers who are graduates or professionally qualified and are fit to work from home should also be permitted to work as income tax preparers, after a short period of training. The government should consider this.

**ARUN CHANDRA
MUKHOPADHYAY**

Kolkata

Owing to the efforts of our Association of Senior Citizens, Royal College, Mira Road, Mumbai, silvers have made considerable gains. I would like to inform you about them. The Appellate Public Information Officer and Chief Post Master General, Maharashtra Circle, Mumbai, informed us on 8 November 2006 that they have issued instructions to all units in Maharashtra to have two queues in front of each counter—one of which will be exclusively for senior citizens. And Public Information Officer and Deputy General Manager, Western Railway, Mumbai, informed us on 2 April 2006 that directives have been issued to all divisions that there should be separate queues for senior citizens in all railway hospitals, dispensaries, health units, etc. These orders

were implemented in April in the Borivali dispensary, with which our members are attached. Other silvers can take up these matters with their local authorities in order to receive the same facilities.

M V RUPARELIA

Mumbai

I recently watched a movie called *Shararat*, about a young man sent to serve quality time with senior citizens living in an ashram. One of them asked the protagonist a question: "Is there any law in India that makes it mandatory for children to look after their elders or give them an amount to look after themselves?" The answer was no. This is a matter of great importance and the government must act soon. Also, many more homes must be built for silvers across India and Harmony could take the lead in this.

ASHOK BHATIA

Mumbai

I would like to tell you about a recent study by Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA, which says happiness plays a significant role in maintaining good health. According to the study, people who stayed happy and thought positively were less likely to become ill.

Here, I recall an address by the late Dr K L Chopra, a noted heart specialist, who was chairman of the Heart Care Foundation of India. Speaking at a seminar in New Delhi in April 1990, he said atmospheric pollution in cities contained oxidisers that were responsible for the increasing incidence of heart diseases. At the conclusion of the talk, Dr Chopra added, "Negative thoughts of

CONTRIBUTORS



Delhi-based **Renuka**

Chatterjee, 54, was a hotel executive before she was overtaken by a desire to write. She joined travel magazine *Destination India*, in 1985, and then moved to *The Times of India*. "By 1991, I couldn't bear another word of my own writing, so I quit!" she confesses. A year later, when Penguin advertised for editors, she gave it a shot. "I haven't looked back since," says Chatterjee, who moved to HarperCollins in 1997 as editor-in-chief—after a stint as deputy editor of *Cosmopolitan*, which reaffirmed her conviction that she was through with journalism—and to Roli Books in 2003 as senior editor. Her job: to develop the Indialnk fiction list, and the Lotus non-fiction list. "At times I feel I'm drowning in manuscripts, but I still love it."

jealousy, anger, hatred and greed also produce damaging chemicals, secretions and excess of free radicals that cause heart attacks and other diseases. On the other hand, positive thoughts like those of love, charity and compassion produce immunity against diseases." This has now been scientifically validated.

CHITRALEKHA SAGGAR

New Delhi

ANALYSE THIS



IF ONLY!

What would you do if you could live your life over again? Well, most British pensioners would have more sex! According to a poll of 1,500 pensioners commissioned by television company UKTV Gold, seven out of 10 people aged 65 and over said they would make more time to make love if they could turn back the clock. Sex was followed by travelling the world (57 per cent) and changing professions (43 per cent) as the most popular wishes pensioners had. Other regrets included saving for a pension (40 per cent), standing up to their boss (33 per cent), marrying someone else (21 per cent), spending more cash on luxuries (19 per cent) and setting up a business (16 per cent).

A COMMON FACE



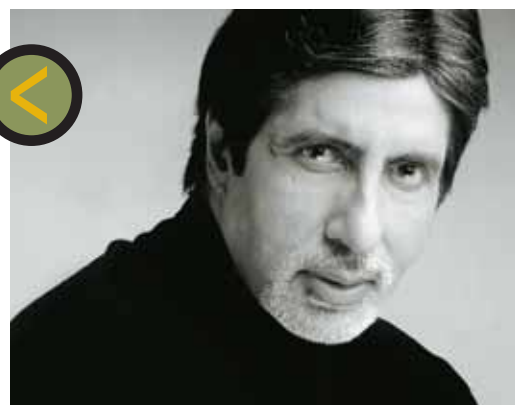
It's not just a joke that **when you live with someone for years, you start looking like them**. Research suggests that this might happen over time and scientists at the University of Liverpool set out to discover why. They asked 11 men and 11 women to judge the age, attractiveness and personality traits of 160 married couples. Photographs were viewed separately, so they didn't know who was married to whom. The participants rated men and women who were couples as looking alike and having similar personalities. Also, the longer the couples had been together, the greater the perceived similarities.

The researchers speculate that the sharing of experiences might affect how couples look. "There could be biological reasons for a link," lead researcher Tony Little writes in journal *Nature*. "Testosterone is linked to masculine face shapes and it also affects behaviour. Also, the face displays emotions and, over time, expressions may become written in the face." For example, someone who smiles a lot may develop lines suggestive of someone who is happy.

TRENDS

THE NEW 60

You are no longer 60 years 'old', but 60 years 'young', according to an Internet survey by marketing information company AC Nielsen, conducted in 41 countries. **"More people are spending their 60s as they would have their middle-age,** while those in their 40s are ready to turn back the clock to the flirty 30s," goes the survey. "We are living longer, significantly increasing the number of years we are old, relative to the years we are young," Sarang Panchal, customised research executive director at AC Nielsen, tells *The Times of India*. "Amitabh Bachchan in his 60s is more sought after among Indians than any other younger actor, while examples of Indian politicians reaching their peak of their career much past their youth are plenty." When the survey asked Indian consumers about their attitude toward age, 70 per cent agreed the 30s are the new 20s and the 40s, long considered to be the end of youth, are actually the new 30s.



GREATER LOVE



There's probably only one thing more special than a grandparent: a great-grandparent. And with Americans living healthier lives, more people are likely to have great-grandparents in their lives longer. Kevin Kinsella, head of the Ageing Studies branch of the US Census Bureau, refers to it in *The New York Times* as a **'great-grandparent boom'**.

By 2030, more than 70 per cent of eight year-olds in the US will have a living great-grandparent, estimates Kenneth W Wachter, chairman, department of demography at the University of California, Berkeley. "But no one is keeping track of them," adds Kinsella. "The Census Bureau doesn't even know how many grandparents there are, let alone great-grandparents. We just know their numbers have multiplied. In 2000, there were more than 50,000 centenarians, a 35 per cent increase from 1990, and we estimate the total will surpass 580,000 by 2040." Whatever the number, demographers agree that family trees today often resemble a beanpole: thin (because there are fewer children) and long (because there are more living generations).

NEWSWORTHY

TRACKING YOUR BILL

Here's the latest on the proposed **Parents and Senior Citizens (Welfare and Maintenance) Bill**. On 30 November 2006, Finance Minister P Chidambaram announced the draft Bill had been sent to a group of ministers for consideration. It aims to create an enabling mechanism for the elderly to claim need-based maintenance from their children, including adopted and stepchildren as well as grandchildren. If passed by Parliament, the legislation will ensure the minimum level of financial security for silvers. The provisions of the bill will be applicable to persons over 60 years of age. However, according to the draft, as many women are widowed before attaining the age of 60, their maintenance would also be ensured.



IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS



The UK and Ireland have age on their mind. Both countries recently launched mammoth **research projects to study ageing** and its impact on society.

In the UK, the five-year, £ 20 million (about Rs 15.84 crore) New Dynamics of Ageing Programme (NDA), launched in partnership with the UK Funders Forum for Research on Ageing and Older People in late October 2006, will explore all

dimensions of ageing, from biology to cultural aspects. It will bring together research bodies, policy makers, practitioners, product designers and representatives of silvers to address the challenges that ageing presents to individuals and the country as a whole. "With such a study, the future prospects of British society can be transformed," claims Professor Alan Walker, director of NDA, in *The Times*. "We need to help people live longer and die quicker. That means increasing their healthy lives for as many years as possible while shortening their final age of illness and disability."

Meanwhile, Ireland launched its most ambitious study of ageing ever in early November 2006. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), led by researchers at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), will provide a detailed picture of the lives of over 10,000 people as they age over at least a 10-year period. Research indicates that by 2030, one in four Irish people will be over 65 years of age, with the greatest increase being in those over the age of 80. "We know that our older people are among the least healthy in Europe," lead investigator Rose Anne Kenny of TCD tells *The Guardian*. "We need to know why this is and what needs to be done to develop the best models of care for our older citizens." TILDA will begin with a pilot study early next year. The full study will then commence in September 2007. The study is estimated to cost € 14 million (about Rs 8.32 crore).

TAKING A STAND

An innovative plan by new Senior Superintendent of Police Alok Kumar Singh promises **security to silvers in Kanpur**. Every police station in the city will 'adopt' a childless silver couple. "A constable will prepare a list of all the childless couples falling under the jurisdiction of respective police stations," Singh told *Hindustan Times*. "All details, like list of relatives, tenants, servants, friends, vendors, doctor, their illnesses, telephone numbers, will be collected. Police officers will meet such couples once a month and try to solve their problems. For this, we will take help from NGOs." Residents have welcomed the plan. City-based social worker Dr D C Shukla told the newspaper, "If the police really follow this project meticulously, it will be of great help."



CRUISING!



One-hundred-and-seventy silvers in Mumbai got a rare treat on 27 November 2006 when the Indian Navy organised an exclusive cruise for them as part of its annual 'Navy Week' celebrations. Silvers boarded a ferry craft on which they enjoyed a tour of the naval base and Mumbai harbour. "I loved watching the submarines and the missiles," Pushpa Joshi of the Indian Association for Retired Persons, told *The Indian Express*. And Gopal Talwar, from the Association for Senior Citizens, remarked, "The vastness of the sea made me feel so insignificant. I felt like a small speck in the ocean. But I was at peace with myself."

OVERHEARD



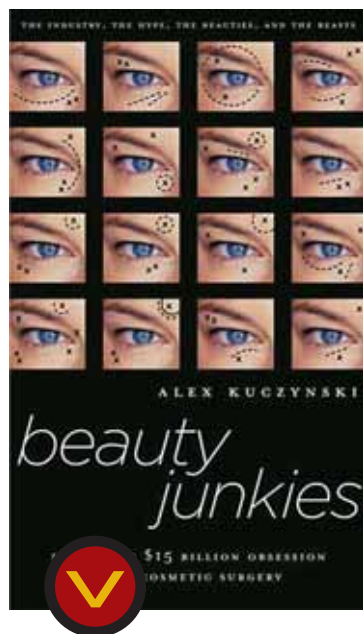
"We've allowed ourselves to become morons in our obsession with youth. What about maturity and wit, empathy and experience, the richness only time can give you? Instead, all people seem to care about these days is pert breasts and a geisha-like unlined face. It would be funny if it weren't so pathetic."

—Dame Anita Roddick, 64, founder of The Body Shop, in Marie Claire magazine

Mission Kashmir: Under the Integrated Social Security Scheme, more than 4,000 silvers in the militancy-infested Kupwara district in Jammu and Kashmir will get assistance worth Rs 1.20 crore from the state government.

MEDIA WATCH

NIP, TUCK, SLASH



Alex Kuczynski, a 30-something feature writer at *The New York Times*, hopped on board the anti-ageing train very early—she tried Botox at 28, got her eyes ‘fixed’ at 29, and had liposuction done on her thighs and a filler injected into her lips at 30 before she

apparently realised the errors of her ways. Evidently the ideal person to write *Beauty Junkies* (Doubleday; 290 pages; \$ 24.95), an exposé of the cosmetic surgery industry. A few choice statistics from the fact-packed book: in 2004, nearly 12 million surgical and non-surgical beauty procedures were performed in the US, including 290,343 eyelid jobs, 166,187 nose jobs, 478,251 liposuctions and 334,052 breast augmentations. Since 1997, breast implants are up 147 per cent; liposuction's up 111 per cent; tummy tucks, 144 per cent; and Botox use, 2,446 per cent. According to Kuczynski, the two harsh realities that steer these soaring numbers are that women today are greying more reluctantly than any previous generation, and that many surgeons and dermatologists actually prefer big-bucks, high-satisfaction cosmetic work to, say, cancer surgery.

TV TURNS SILVER



Shows starring older actors are dominating prime time in the US. Actor James Woods, 59 (see photo), acts in *Shark*, where he plays a maverick attorney who teaches novices how to play to

win. Another cutthroat lawyer is Victor Garber, 57, the lead in *Justice*. Ted Danson, who became famous as a bartender in the iconic *Cheers* 24 years ago, is now 58 and stars in comedy *Help Me Help You*. Then there's *Twenty Good Years*, a comedy starring John Lithgow, 60, and Jeffrey Tambor, 61. “This is to appeal to the new power demographic of 40 to 59 years,” says TV analyst Ken Dychtwald in *The Chicago Tribune*. “Young people just don't have the money. And with them preferring to surf the Net and play video games, it behoves the networks to cast a wider net.”



WILD SILVER

MONKEY BUSINESS

Male chimps like their women older. According to a recent study by anthropologist Martin Muller at Boston University, male chimpanzees will chase down and fight over the oldest females, while the youngest female chimps are forced to beg for masculine attention. “It is one of the biggest behavioural differences between humans, who value younger females, and our closest biological relatives,” writes Muller in journal *Current Biology*. “In fact, the very oldest adult females were the most sought after among chimps. They don't have to do anything to get the males interested. Anyway, older female chimpanzees are more dominant socially.”

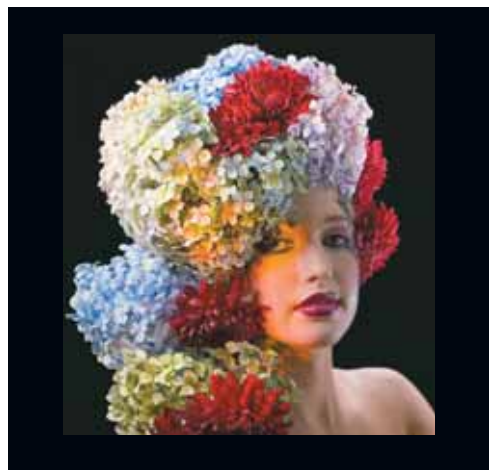
Allowance for silvers:

The Shanghai municipal government will offer a monthly allowance of 200 yuan (about Rs 1,100) to poor silvers. Those in ill health will receive an additional 200 yuan. The plan will take effect on 1 January.

LOVE THAT!

WHEE!

To keep silvers active, the city of Nuremberg in Germany will soon open an **exclusive playground** for them. The project was inspired by research from the Finnish University of Lapland, which showed that seniors experienced improvements in balance, coordination and speed after only three months of 'playing'. "We will have a running and roller-skating track, a soft badminton court and a trampoline, which is easy on the joints," Deputy Mayor Hans Förther, who is in charge of sporting activities in the city, tells magazine *Der Spiegel*.



HAIR TO STAY

There's a non-descript little hair salon on Anjing Street in Taidong, eastern Taiwan, which is always packed to the gills with pretty young things. The reason: **73 year-old Lien Hui-chu, who's renowned for her haircuts** in the city and feted as 'magic stylist' in text messages and blogs (web logs). "I rely on my experience of over 50 years," Lien tells *The Taipei Times*. "And I keep reading magazines and watching TV to keep abreast of the latest trends. That's why I still haven't been replaced by the times." Now, Lien has cut back on her hours and works only half the day. But she still cuts about 600 heads of hair on average each month. "These young things don't want anyone else to do their hair and they won't let me retire. And I'm not sure I really want to either!"



H-ETIQUETTE

AT THE TABLE

Here are some things to remember at the table: toothpicks must be used in the restroom, never in public. If a dining companion gets salad stuck in their teeth, try to catch their eye and subtly alert them.

Also, do not powder your nose or apply lipstick at the table. And if you can't contain the urge to cough, cough into your napkin, but never use your napkin as a tissue.

INNOVATION

SMART WALK

The humble walking stick just got smarter with the 'i stick', an **intelligent walking stick** developed by a group of scientists from the Franhofer Institute for Experimental Software Development in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The device has a sensor that can detect if the stick is in a horizontal position, which may



happen if its elderly owner has fallen. It then automatically sends a signal to a control unit that plays a message, instructing the owner to pick up the stick. But if the stick remains on the floor, the control box dials an ambulance or pre-programmed number of a relative. The scientists are now looking for a distributor for their invention.

FACE SUPPORT

Following the continued quest to find non-surgical means to fight skin ageing, here's a product that's become increasingly popular: the 'face bra'. Developed a couple of years ago in the US, it is now being aggressively marketed in the UK and Europe for men and women. The bra, made of cotton, is impregnated with a combination of natural minerals (sodium, carbon, magnesium, potassium and boron) and aloe vera that reduce facial sagging and bloating, according to its creator Vicki Southard.

"The minerals penetrate the skin, flushing away toxic waste and tightening the skin in the areas that show age the most, the neck, chin and under eye," she claims in a press release. "Most people will see a difference after two to six treatments." The product is recommended for 30 to 40 minutes daily for the first week, and then a couple of days a week. The price: £ 50 (about Rs 4,400) for a kit that contains 20 treatments. For more details, go to TheVitalityShopuk.com.

TECH TALK WITH PUROHITS



Diebold, noted manufacturer of ATMs, recently unveiled its 'Branch of the Future' concept in Las Vegas. It features 'welcome stations' in banks where customers are identified by their fingerprint and offered service according to their needs and profile.

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR DECEMBER

Food for thought. Does your family rave about your pickles, jams and chutneys? Get together with some of your friends and organise a food sale. In November, a group of silvers in Chennai organised a sale-cum-exhibition of food at Kelly's, a city department store. "My daughter has always told me that my *avakkai* mango pickle was good enough to sell," Shyamala Balakrishnan told *The Hindu*. "Today, I sold 15 bottles!" Indeed, the response was so good that the store is now exploring the idea of packaging and retailing some of the products.

Picture this. If photography is a hobby, explore the idea of putting up an exhibition of your work at your local community centre. And persuade other shutterbugs to join you. In Englewood, Colorado in the US, silvers at assisted living and adult day-care facility Buckingham Place unveiled an exhibit titled *Living Legacies*, a collection of their favourite people, places and moments. "A very nice young man wanted to buy a photo of my late husband in his US Navy uniform," said Sherry Rubel, 82, told *The Colorado Sentinel*. "I told him that he could look all he wanted, but that one wasn't for sale."



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Welcome to the section where you can share your thoughts and experiences on anything under the sun. Write in with full contact details, and make this space your own!

THE ART OF CRAFT



In 1970, when I was 67 years old and leading a retired army officer's life in Delhi, I found time hanging heavily on my hands. I had learnt the art of carpentry in Modern School, Delhi, when I was in school. I decided to use that training to start a carpentry workshop.

A vacant servant's quarter on the premises of my house provided the required space. I engaged two

At 93, I still run my workshop; if you are occupied, you stay young

carpenters and a polisher and bought some books on furniture design and teak from a

timber shop. Soon my workshop was ready to hum with the sound of saws, hammers and chisels!

I selected some designs, drew working sketches and gave instructions to my carpenters. In due course, I produced a dozen furniture samples. To display them, I held an exhibition, to which I invited friends and acquaintances. The exhibition was a great

success. Everybody appreciated the quality, design and value for money offered by my products. After the exhibition, I received plenty of orders and my workshop became a busy place.

However, I never made any money. In order to turn in a profit, the scope of operations would have to be increased to at least six carpenters, two polishers, a bigger shop floor, larger financial investment, and an office with office staff and capital. As I did not have the necessary resources, I was content to keep the venture at a scale where I felt comfortable. Making a profit had never been the objective anyway. It was supposed to keep me occupied and give me creative satisfaction, both of which it did. My wife Bali and two daughters Amita and Geeta were very supportive of my enterprise.

Today, at 93, I still run the workshop with one carpenter and a part-time polisher, but I accept fewer orders. I have learnt one thing: as long as you keep occupied, you remain fit and young.

—Brigadier (Retd) Anant Singh,
New Delhi

LAMENT OF A TERRORIST

From the mud of this earth
You did make me, oh lord!
Did you then knead it with thine own gracious hands?

Was it the holy earth of this land
That thou did mix with the waters of the gurgling streams
That tumble down the mountain vales
Where the gods live?

Did you, oh Lord! Pluck the flowers
From the banks of the lake
And crush them and mix their varied hues
And their fragrance in the substance of my being?

Did you gather the morning breeze
That rustles through the pine
Growing on the slopes of the hill



Wing Commander S K Gorowala with his wife

And blow it on the heart of my inner being?

Did you shape me with thine own hands--
With those that thou did
Cast the angels in heaven?

Did you nurture me in the glory of thy sun--
Thy grace, thy all-engulfing kindness
Thy love?

Did you my Lord?

Then why was I not like the Buddha or the Christ?
Why did my heart fill up with
Bitterness and hatred?

Did you not see me pour dust on my own head?
Oh my Lord! Why did you not then
Hold my hand and clasp me to thy bosom
Forgiving my follies?

—Wing Commander S K Gorowala,
Secunderabad

Author's note: This poem was written subsequent to the mindless massacre of innocent Sikhs after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. And it is probably just as relevant today.

SANAH'S DILEMMA!

My four year-old granddaughter Sanah, my daughter Radhika's child, loves to play with balls. Whenever she visits me in Gurgaon, even before us elders have exchanged pleasantries, she picks up the ball I have bought for her, chooses a suitable spot and commands gleefully, "Come Nani, let us play." It is only after 10 to 15 minutes of play that she lets me off, going off to play on the swing with my elder granddaughter Pooja. Radhika and I can then settle

down to talk. Whenever Radhika calls me from Delhi to inform me about their next visit to Gurgaon, Sanah snatches the phone from her and asks me what colour ball I have for her this time. If she is not happy with my reply, she places an 'order' for the sort of ball she would like.

My ball-tossing sessions with Sanah have awakened the child in me. On a recent trip to Germany, I decided to buy a ball for myself. While Sanah was collecting the goodies I had brought for her from Germany, her eyes fell on the 'special ball' I had bought. I told her this was Nani's ball and she could play with it whenever she visited me. And that's what she did the next couple of times.

Then, one day, the ball disappeared. However, I found it on my next visit to Radhika's house—carefully hidden among Sanah's toys. When everybody started talking about how Sanah had taken it away, she realised she had done something wrong. I decided to ignore the matter and let Sanah keep the ball. But her conscience started troubling her. After that, each time I visited her, she would try to give me an explanation about how the ball landed up in her house, and try to return it. I would tell her, "Sanah you keep it, Nani will buy another one." I even went to the extent of buying myself a

**Playing with my
granddaughter has
awakened the child in me**

new ball. The next time I visited her house, I carried it with me. But she insisted I take the old ball back, pushing it into the pocket of my jacket.

With Sanah's birthday fast approaching, I told Radhika, "I think I will give her a hamper of balls." However, seeing my daughter's alarm at the thought of half a dozen balls rolling around the house, I purchased a doll instead. But then I couldn't stop myself and bought Sanah just one ball—a 'crazy ball' that keeps bouncing and bouncing! I wrapped it along with the doll in the box. When she opened it, Sanah gave me one of her sweetest smiles ever. I knew that the guilt for taking my ball was finally gone, and my granddaughter was happy again.

—Saroj Chowla, Gurgaon

We reserve the right to select articles, which will be edited to suit space and editorial considerations. Harmony takes no responsibility for advice offered in this column. For more Your Space letters, log on to www.harmonyindia.org



Ram Mohan



Lalu Prasad Yadav



B Ramalinga Raju



Dr Anil Joshi



Buddhadeb Bhattacharya



U K Sinha

Silvers of

Success is hard to define but easy to spot. You'll know what we mean when you see our annual list of achievers. From seasoned politicians and a poet-lyricist to an ad genius and an activist crusading for our right to information, our winners are diverse—different lives, careers, voices. But they have success in common.

Seasoned filmmaker-lyricist Sampooran Singh (yes, that's his real name) Gulzar, 70, continues to reinvent himself effortlessly, experimenting with fresh ideas, words, and poetic styles, while Chitra Palekar has achieved a personal breakthrough, coming out of the shadows to direct her first film at the age of 59. And ebullient 51 year-old ad guru



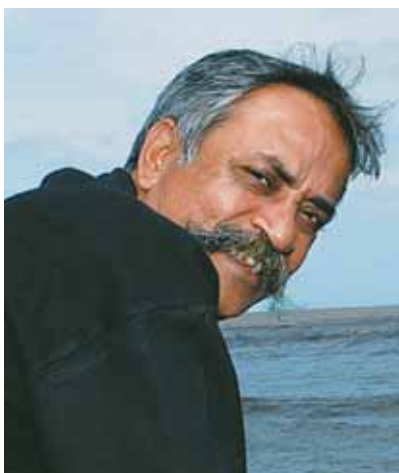
Aruna Roy



Dr Anand Karve



Gulzar



Piyush Pandey



Chitra Palekar



Upendra Tripathy

f the Year

Piyush Pandey continues to sell everything to India—and India to the world.

Success can also touch other people's lives. IAS officer Upendra Tripathy has given residents of Bengaluru the best bus service in the country and activist Aruna Roy has reminded us of our

responsibilities as a democracy, and our government's responsibility to us. Finally, there's vision. In times when conventional energy sources are drying up, Dr Anand Karve has given every individual the chance to go green. These are just some of our 12 achievers—read on and see how they did it.



ASHESH SHAH



RAM MOHAN

75

FOR BRINGING
CHARACTERS TO LIFE

The pioneer
of animation in
India, Ram Mohan
celebrated the
completion of
50 years in
the industry by
setting up a
school to train
future animators

In 2006, when director Govind Nihalani decided to make an animated film starring a baby camel, he knew only one man was capable of creating the frisky Kamlu: 75 year-old Ram Mohan. Mohan, who completed 50 years in the industry last year, is chairman of studio Graphiti Multimedia since 2002—its work includes the ad for Top Ramen noodles and *J Bole To Jadoo*, an animated series. In July 2006, Mohan set up the Graphiti School of Animation in Mumbai to train students in technique and technology.

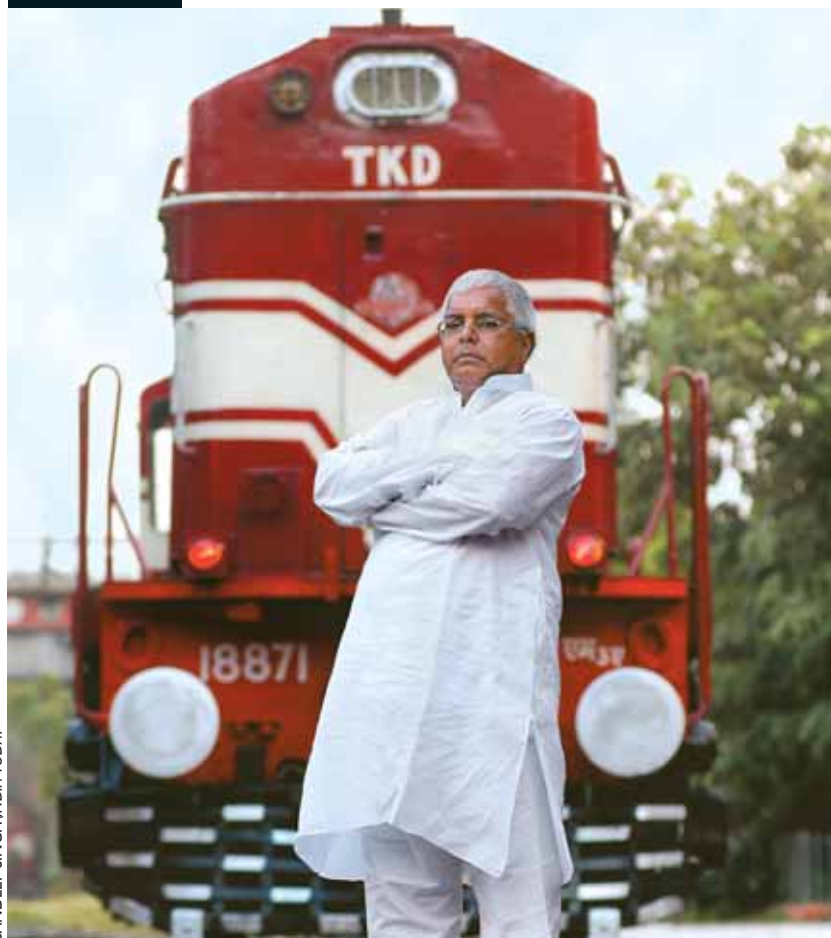
Mohan himself had little formal training, learning on the job. With over 100 films to his credit (three have won National Awards), his best-known work includes the *Meena* series (his favourite) on the girl child for UNICEF, and *The Legend of Rama*, produced with Japanese Yugo Sako. So why was Lord Rama white in *The Legend*? “A blue character has negative connotations in Japan,” explains Mohan. But he tried to make amends by making Ram’s shadow a deep blue!

Understanding foreign sensibilities will become very important as more work gets outsourced to India. “Tie-ins with foreign firms allow us to upgrade technical skills and enlarge budgets,” says Mohan. The only bottleneck: lack of manpower. “We need about 10,000 skilled animators but have only 300.” The School of Animation should help. Meanwhile, Mohan intends to spread his wings further, taking Brand India to the global animation industry. “I plan to develop a graphic style that will be recognised as uniquely Indian.”

—Smita Deodhar

LALU PRASAD YADAV

58

FOR PUTTING THE
RAILWAYS ON TRACKHe got volumes,
not margins,
to fuel change

BANDEEP SINGH/INDIA TODAY

Anyone who has travelled on a train recently, and experienced the dirty stations, cockroaches for fellow passengers, execrable toilets and interminable delays—or, been stunned by news of a bridge collapsing on a train—may wonder why there is such a fuss about the vision of Railway Minister Lal Prasad Yadav. After all, this is the same man who is held responsible for running Bihar to the ground.

It's all about money. Indian Railways, predicted to hit Rs 61,000 crore in the red by 2015, is now in the black, with a surplus of Rs 11,280 crore in 2005-06—without a rise in fares. How? By playing on volumes. As

the same resources carrying more throughput will result in greater profits, you get higher volumes, not higher margins, to fuel change. Yadav introduced round-the-clock freight loading, which accounts for nearly 70 per cent of revenues—though critics are talking about the dangers of overloading. And he reduced passenger fares to achieve better occupancy. There's more: the option to add or remove coaches; wide implementation of online ticketing; upgrading passengers automatically to avoid empty seats; discounts to those offering additional freight; and permission to private players to run container services. More than Yadav, his team deserves credit for executing this plan, the roots of which were laid before he took

over. However, his willingness to let his officials get on with it without interference, and success in altering public perception of the railways have won him respect from unlikely sources.

Like the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, which has made him a case study for its students. And, even more surprisingly, Harvard Business School and HEC Management School, France—both want to learn more about the man and his strategy. Meanwhile, Yadav's plans include doubling transport capacity and increasing the speed of trains, all part of his mission "to make Indian Railways the world's No. 1". He'll have to clean up the loos, of course.

—Arati Rajan Menon



I know you've travelled a long way to see me
but don't be disappointed if you didn't, because I saw you.



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SUMET INDER SINGH/INDIA TODAY



ARUNA ROY

60

FOR HER FIGHT
TO KNOW

Roy is the nagging
conscience
of democracy
who demands
accountability
from government
through her
tireless campaign
for our right to
information

She is the nagging conscience of Indian democracy. Over 15 years ago, Aruna Roy's organisation Mazdoor Kisaan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) began to expose corruption of local officials in Devdungri, Rajasthan. The MKSS built a movement that triggered debate for the right to scrutinise official records. Finally, in 2005, her efforts led the Centre to implement the Right to Information Act, which gives citizens access to information, from municipal budgets to records of state purchases. The battle spilled over to 2006, when Parliament tried to amend the Act by excluding file 'notings' from its purview— notings are remarks of officials and play a vital role in deciding the future of a project. In retaliation, the feisty activist unleashed protests, email and signature campaigns across the country. She won again.

Born in Tamil Nadu, Roy resigned from the IAS in 1975 to join the Social Work and Research Centre in Tilonia, Rajasthan, set up by husband Sanjit 'Bunker' Roy. She worked there until 1983 and then moved to Devdungri in 1990 to start her crusade. "We cannot cast a vote and sleep for five years," she says. Her activism, which won her a Magsaysay Award in 2000, is showing results. In Madhya Pradesh, citizens are demanding to see the books of the PWD. In Uttar Pradesh, people want an audit of the food distribution system. And in New Delhi, the local electrical authority has been forced to fix streetlights that haven't glowed in years, crack down on power thieves, and open contracts to scrutiny.

—Teena Baruah



ANDREW AITCHISON



DR ANAND KARVE

70

FOR HIS 'GREEN'
REVOLUTION

Karve's compact biogas plant uses rotting food and vegetables, and costs Rs 9,000 to install. And while an LPG cylinder costs Rs 8-10 a day, biogas costs just Rs 2

Last year, one man gave everyone the option to go green. Dr Anand Karve created a biogas plant that uses rotting food and vegetables to produce methane, a domestic fuel. Unlike large plants that use cowdung and cost about Rs 20,000, Karve's is the size of a fridge, uses easily available feedstock and can be installed for Rs 9,000. While an LPG cylinder costs Rs 8-10 a day, biogas costs just Rs 2. For this, in July 2006 the Pune-based researcher received his second Ashden award for sustainable energy from the London-based Ashden trust with a prize of £ 30,000. Karve won his first in 2002 for producing briquettes from sugarcane trash.

Bucking convention is in his genes. Grandfather Maharishi Karve championed female literacy. Dr Karve's crusade is no less relevant. He set up Appropriate Rural Technology Institute (ARTI) in 1996 to find Indian solutions to Indian problems. Sometimes people are sceptical. Like cotton farmers in Vidarbha, who fought shy of Karve's plan to plant seeds in plastic bags instead of waiting for the rains. But sugarcane farmers in Western Maharashtra gave it a try—and doubled their yield. Now, he's hoping people cotton on to the biogas plant. More than 1,000 people are already using it and restaurants and industries are showing interest. "When the subsidy on LPG is removed, households will consider it," he predicts. He has roped in about 20 NGOs to spread the word. Karve has also set up two companies to market ARTI's technologies. "There is no alternate to alternative fuel."

—Smita Deodhar

GULZAR

70

FOR GETTING INDIA
TO SING ALONGRefreshing and
reinventing his
style doesn't
bother Gulzar,
whose lyrics defy
genre and age

PRODIP GUHAHT

The wordsmith in Gulzar is trying "something different" in Mani Ratnam's *Guru*. He's trying to forge a new sound with his lyrics, from slogans like *Ek lo, ek muft* to describe the birth of twins to earthy ditties to evoke romance. No one's surprised. Winner of the Sahitya Shiromani Samman in June 2006, since the beginning of his career as lyricist in 1963, the poet-filmmaker has proved that his lyrics defy genre, or age—two of the biggest hits last year were *Beedi* in *Omkaara*, where

he gets rustic and raunchy, and *Kajrare* in *Bunty Aur Babli* where he turns *qawwali* into Q-funk.

Refreshing his style doesn't bother Gulzar. "I am grateful I can still walk and talk with youngsters without a walking stick," he says. "Change is inevitable." But he hasn't forgotten his purist roots. His non-film album, *Koi Baat Chale*, with Jagjit Singh has *ghazal* and, for the first time, a new poetic style he has created, *Triveni*, with three-line stanzas. In 2006, he's also been busy

writing the theme song for the 2010 New Delhi Commonwealth Games, *Chal Dilli Chalein*; penning dialogues and screenplays for young directors like Vishal Bharadwaj and Shaad Ali, where he's happy to be "learning a new language of self-expression"; and doing voiceovers for children's books—he has authorised Arushi, a Bhopal-based NGO working for blind children, to print 15 of his books in Braille. This 70 year-old is nowhere close to a swan song.

—Trina Mukherjee

ONE MORE FEATHER !



Galileo Express Travel World Awards 2006

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AIR INDIA**

DR ANIL PRAKASH JOSHI

54

FOR BRINGING LIGHT
TO LIVES

Joshi has brought
electricity and
development to
700 Himalayan
villages using
simple technology



AJAY GOYAL

Scientist Dr Anil Joshi says with a chuckle, “I am forever lecturing someone. I must have a terrible reputation.” He needn’t worry. In 2006, the man who brought electricity to 700 villages in the Himalayan hinterland by upgrading watermills (see *November 2005 issue of Harmony*) received a Padmashri and a Jamnalal Bajaj award. In October 2006, Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation (HESCO), which he set up in

1978, recharged seven water springs in Rudraprayag. And earlier in the year, Joshi used the help of teenagers from The Doon School to help Fatehgram village, about 37 km from Dehradun. They helped upgrade watermills, build a road, repair an irrigation channel, and build toilets and makeshift schools. Now other schools are signing up.

“I’m motivating future planners, industrialist and policymakers,” says Joshi. His own motivation

came when, as a botany teacher, he found himself complaining about the technological bankruptcy of the mountain people—he has tried to change that with HESCO. But this simple man, who still cycles uphill 9 km every morning to reach his “work station”, realises there’s still a long way to go. Joshi’s vision: an India where rural votes cannot be bought over a bottle of cheap country liquor. “And we shouldn’t settle for less.”

—Teena Baruah

Education and development go hand in hand for B Ramalinga Raju of Satyam Computer Services, whose revenue crossed \$ 1 billion (about Rs 4,500 crore) in April 2006. The 51 year-old chairman is using his network to “inform and educate”. The Byrraju Foundation, established in his father’s memory in 2001, combines philanthropy with a business twist: it spreads primary education, and cuts costs for the company in back office work.

How does this work? Take, for instance, the VirtuaLab project introduced in October 2006 in

72 rural high schools in Andhra Pradesh. Students will get science kits designed by Chennai-based Aid-India and audio-visual lessons through state-run Mana TV. The cost is Rs 30,000 per school with the prospect of churning out hundreds of educated job seekers. Sounds improbable? Not if you have heard of ‘Gram-IT’.

Gram IT centres connecting rural resources to urban needs were set up by the foundation in August 2005. The staff maintains databases from Satyam’s back office documents, like tax receipts and ledgers. With two centres in Jalli Kakinada (Raju’s ancestral vill-

age) and Ethakota, recruitment has started in two more villages with 10 more to come up in 2007. Hiring a BPO for the same work would have cost much more.

Raju has also funded data centres to bring prosperity to rural Andhra Pradesh—around \$ 10 million (about Rs 44.7 crore) has reportedly been spent on health and education programmes. This doesn’t mean cities have been ignored. An emergency helpline (108) set up last year in Hyderabad has saved over 5,000 lives. By 2010, Raju plans to take the service nationwide.

—Radhika Rajamani



B RAMALINGA RAJU

51

**FOR MARRYING
EDUCATION AND
DEVELOPMENT**

**Raju’s foundation
spreads education
at the primary
level—and cuts
costs for the
company**



SUBHENDU GHOSH/HT

BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYA

62

FOR PULLING BENGAL
OUT OF THE RED

Bhattacharya topped the *India Today* poll for 'Best CM' for decidedly capitalist reasons—West Bengal received Rs 5,000 crore of FDI in 2006

Growth, development and investment are no longer dirty words in West Bengal, thanks to Buddhadeb Bhattacharya. In September 2006, the Marx-spewing poet-playwright topped the *India Today* poll for 'Best Chief Minister' for decidedly capitalist reasons.

With the blessings of this chain-smoking (Benson & Hedges!) maverick, domestic industrialists and foreign investors are rediscovering West Bengal, giving the state a real chance at pulling itself out of the red—in every way. The numbers say it: Rs 5,000 crore of foreign direct investment in 2006, the third highest after Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Today, West Bengal has the second highest growth rate (5.49 per cent) among Indian states, after Karnataka.

It's been quite a turnaround. For 30 years, West Bengal had witnessed a steady decline on all fronts except, perhaps, land reforms and agriculture. Industry took a battering with the strong-arm tactics of Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU) workers, who had the official sanction of the ruling Left. The result: lockouts of local industrial units, skeletal infrastructure and soaring unemployment. Making a commitment to accelerate West Bengal from *bandh*-mode to work-mode, Bhattacharya, who took over from Jyoti Basu in 2000, decided enough was enough.

A translator of Russian poems and Gabriel Garcia Marquez novels into Bengali, Bhattacharya started talking information technology instead. Soon, Azim Premji, Narayan Murthy and

honchos from IBM were listening. In 2004, Wipro set up a 17-acre campus and centre in Kolkata. Others in the IT sector followed suit. In 2006, he struck the next big deal—an MoU for Rs 40,000 crore with Indonesian real-estate giant Salim Group to build roads, bridges, health cities, motorbike factories and special economic zones (SEZs) across the state.

Moving beyond Kolkata, smaller cities like Siliguri, Asansol and Santiniketan are also attracting real-estate investment. The latest deal: Tata Motors' car factory project in Singur district, slated to become a mini-auto hub and bring in investments worth Rs 1,000 crore.

Not everyone's thrilled. Bhattacharya's critics—including political opponents, eight business chambers of Kolkata and activists like Arundhati Roy, Medha Patkar and Mahasweta Devi—claim the 1,000 acre of land for the Tata project, much of it fertile, has been acquired through political arm-twisting and party pressure.

Others are asking uncomfortable questions: Is it a good idea to overlook diminishing agricultural returns and focus only on industry? What about educational reforms with over 4 million dropouts at the primary school level in the state? Why not revive sick units instead of offering sops to new industries?

But the CM, who has cemented his position after winning a second term in May 2006, is holding firm that industrial investments hold the key to progress.

—Trina Mukherjee



SOUMIK KARINDIA TODAY



U K SINHA

54

FOR CHASING
PENSIONS WITH
PASSION

Messiah of the
once-struggling
UTI, Sinha is
tapping into
the savings of
the unorganised
sector and
taking mutual
funds beyond
urban India

Despite new products announced every month, analysts say the mutual fund (MF) business is still feeble in India. Until October 2006, total assets under management were estimated at Rs 300,000 crore, of which less than 30 per cent was in equity. One of the biggest problems is that the bulk of funds come from a handful of cities and towns. One man is hoping to change this: U K Sinha, CMD of UTI AMC (Asset Management Committee), champion of the MF.

The messiah of the once-struggling UTI is tapping into the mass of savings of the unorganised sector. And he has begun with the Bihar State Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (Compfed), India's largest federation of milk cooperatives. From its 400,000 members, Sinha, with the Bihar government, is mobilising Rs 100 per month as subscription to a UTI MF until the age of 58, when they have the option to withdraw their money or get a monthly pension. UTI has successfully tried this micro-pension initiative with Ahmedabad-based SEWA Bank. Shabanaben, one of the first investors in the scheme, is convinced that it will get her "pension that will be her stick in old age".

Now Sinha is eyeing other milk cooperatives. Next: shopkeepers, vendors, and hawkers. At the core of his efforts is "the campaign for future growth drivers in the MF industry to include products in sync with lifecycle needs, packaged to offer services like insurance, pension, savings and capital guarantee". That rings like silver.

—Meeta Bhatti

PIYUSH PANDEY

51

FOR SELLING INDIA
TO THE WORLDPandey cured the
colonial hangover
of the ad industry
and made the
Indian idiom cool

Arrre maasi!" That's how Piyush Pandey reportedly hailed a French waitress at a swank eatery in Cannes a couple of years ago. It's unconfirmed—but probably true. After all, such *gulli-danda* exuberance is what you expect from the man who cured the colonial hangover of the advertising industry and made the Indian idiom cool. And he's forced the world to listen. In September 2006, Pandey, executive chairman and national creative director, India and South Asia, of Ogilvy & Mather (O&M), was appointed to the Ogilvy Worldwide Board. In October, he made TIME magazine's list of 'People to Watch in International Business'. The first Asian to be

the president of the jury at the Cannes International Advertising Festival (in 2004), Pandey rounded off last year with an invitation to be a judge (for the second time) at the British D&AD Global Awards 2007.

Not bad for a guy from Jaipur who was a professional cricketer and tea-taster before giving advertising a shot. He joined O&M, Mumbai, in the 1980s as a client-servicing executive. But the genie was out of the bottle when he wrote the words *Chal meri Luna* for a scooter ad and the lyrics of *Mile sur mera tumhara*. Pandey was shifted to the creative department and hit gold with iconic slogans like *Jor laga ke haisha* (Fevicol), *Kuch khaas hai*

ham sabhi me (Cadbury's), and *Har ghar kuch kehta hai* (Asian Paints). Indian ads were finally being made with Indian ideas for Indian sensibilities, bringing back consumer focus to advertising.

This approach, which he calls "common sense", has spawned a new generation of acolytes, apart from winning him over 600 awards. His finest moment, though, was the ad for the Cancer Patients' Association that won gold at Cannes in 2002—channeling the 'Marlboro man' ads, the visual features a sad cowboy standing next to his fallen horse, a warning on passive smoking. The irony: Pandey is a chain-smoker himself.

—Arati Rajan Menon

She's proof that dreams can come true at any age, in Technicolor. In 2006, at 59, Chitra Palekar, who has had her finger in every cinematic pie, from producing to script-writing, finally took the cake, directing her first film, the critically acclaimed *Maati Maay* (A Gravekeeper's Tale), a Marathi adaptation of Mahashweta Devi's *Baayen*.

Palekar has come out of the shadows; her past, including a divorce from Amol Palekar, behind her. "When I read this story, I knew

this was the film," says Palekar. "It was lyrical yet hard-hitting." It was also the right time. "I wanted to test my capacity, not just fantasise about what I could do."

Turning fantasy into reality was a labour of love. When funding proved difficult, Palekar decided to go it alone with the help of family and friends. Her old unit members helped in kind with their services. And Nandita Das and Atul Kulkarni willingly agreed to act in the film, which is about how patriarchal society treats a woman who defies social

norms. "I became a student learning everything from email to digital editing," says Palekar. "It's a new life for me." Part of this life is reading, watching films and daughter Shalmalee, 34, a professor at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. Palekar's calendar is already booked for early 2007. She has film festivals to attend in Thailand, the US and Israel before thinking about her next project. "Finally, I feel the urgency of living," she says with a throaty chuckle.

—Arati Rajan Menon



CHITRA PALEKAR

59

FOR COMING OUT
OF THE SHADOWS

Palekar, who has been producer, actor and script-writer, finally directed her first film, *Maati May*



V RAMESH



UPENDRA TRIPATHY

50

FOR THE BEST BUS
SERVICE IN INDIA

While New
Delhi's DTC
and Mumbai's
BEST reported
losses last year,
BMTC, with its
eco-friendly fleet,
reported a profit
of Rs 114.88 crore
in 2005-06

India continues to look to the West for ideas but last year, a commission appointed by the European Union studied the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) as a model for excellence—while New Delhi's DTC lost Rs 600 crore and Mumbai's BEST lost Rs 200 crore, BMTC reported a profit of Rs 114.88 crore in 2005-06. Steering this success is IAS officer Upendra Tripathy, managing director since 2003.

At work, Tripathy, an Oriya who speaks Kannada fluently, and poet—he released a book, *Caged*, in 1992—sets a blistering pace. “I want every office-goer to stop travelling by cars and two-wheelers and use our buses,” he says. BMTC's 4,150-bus fleet now deploys only eco-friendly buses and was the first in India to introduce low-floor AC Volvo buses—there are 29 now and 20 more will come in March 2007 (with a proposal of 1,000 buses in future). BMTC is also implementing an online GPS-GIS system for tracking vehicular movement.

The inspiration came from Tripathy's days studying in Ottawa, Canada. “You could access the exact arrival time of the bus at your stop, sitting at home.” With 1,200 buses on the pilot project in 2006, the entire fleet will come on board by the end of 2007. BMTC will also introduce a passenger information system at all stops to provide arrival and departure timings. Routes will be put on the Web so people can get the info online. The new system will have fringe benefits—recently, a stolen bus was traced, not by the police but thanks to the GPS device fitted on it.

—Mukta Hegde



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Winter of contentment

Dr Pushpesh Pant turns indulgent with his recipes for the season

Winter has always been perceived as the season of gastronomic self-indulgence. This is the time when we eat to our heart's content; when our bodies store up calories to keep the body warm and provide added nutrition to build up necessary reserves to cope with the dipping temperature.

A long time winter favourite is *halim*, a classic recipe popular in Awadh and the Deccan. The traditional recipe calls for nightlong toil and prescribes slow cooking and laborious mashing with giant sized ladles in mega pots. But have no fear; the dish is as delectable even when it is made silver-friendly. It serves admirably as a simple yet elegant one-dish meal. Providing the perfect foil is the refreshingly light *dahi ka halwa*.



DAHI KA HALWA

Preparation time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Serves: 3-4

INGREDIENTS

- Yoghurt (*dahi*): 500 gm; fresh and thick; hung to drain all water
- Clarified butter (*ghee*): 60 gm
- Semolina (*suji*): 60 gm
- Sugar-free sweetener: 100 gm
- Cardamom powder: 1 gm
- Rose water: 30 ml
- Almonds: 6-8; blanched and slivered
- Pistachios: 6; blanched and slivered
- Raisins: 1 tbsp
- A pinch of mace powder
- A pinch of saffron diluted in warm water

METHOD

Heat the *ghee* in a heavy pan; add semolina. Keep stirring on low fire till it turns golden. Remove from fire, add *dahi* and stir well. Add sweetener. Return to fire and cook, stirring continuously till *halwa* thickens and begins to come off the sides of the pan. Add cardamom, mace, saffron and rose water and stir well. Keep on fire for another five minutes. Garnish with nuts and dried fruits.



HALIM

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

Serves: 2

INGREDIENTS

- Mutton: 250 gm; boneless; cut into 1-inch pieces
- *Daliya*: 100 gm
- Onions: 100 gm; sliced fine
- Desiccated coconut: 1/2 tsp
- Yoghurt (*dahi*): 1 tbsp
- Red chilli powder: 1/2 tsp
- Ginger paste: 1/2 tsp
- Garlic paste: 1/2 tsp
- Clarified butter (*ghee*): 3 tbsp
- Cloves: 3-4
- Green cardamoms: 2-3
- Cinnamon: 1 small stick

- Limejuice: 1 tsp
- Salt (low sodium) to taste

Garnish

- A sprig of mint leaves
- A sprig of green coriander
- A large green chilli; deseeded and chopped fine

METHOD

Marinate the meat in garlic and ginger paste blended with curd, red chilli powder and salt for about half an hour. Boil the *daliya* in half a litre of water till tender. Heat the *ghee* in a heavy pan and fry the onions till brown. Remove and drain. Put the whole spices in the same pan and add the meat when they change colour.

Cover and cook till all moisture evaporates, fat leaves the sides and the meat is nicely browned. Mix half the meat with *daliya* and simmer for about five minutes. Mash well, then add the reserved meat to it. Sprinkle the limejuice, garnish and enjoy! If you are pressed for time, you can pressure-cook. For a lighter white-meat option, replace mutton with chicken. 🍴



Dr Pushpesh Pant, our culinary expert, is a documentary producer, author and die-hard foodie

Weigh your life

Dr Pradeep K Chowbey talks about obesity, which is likely to emerge as the single most significant public health problem in India a decade from now



BMI (KG/M²) OBESITY

< 18: Undernourished

18 – 22: Average

23 – 27: Overweight

28 – 37: Obese

> 37: Morbidly obese

If you have a BMI of 27 kg/m², you have less to worry about. You are overweight but at no increased health risk owing to the excess weight. However, a person with a BMI of more than 28 is obese and likely to suffer from related ill effects.

It is generally accepted that obesity has a role to play in determining longevity. People with a BMI of greater than 30 kg/m² have a 70 per cent increased risk of death compared to those with a BMI of less than 30 kg/m². And for the elderly, excess weight is like extra baggage that needs to be lugged around. With progressing years, it adds to the stress on all ageing body systems and can make the body sluggish and severely curtail physical activity.

There's another way to determine whether you are obese: calculate your waist-to-hip ratio. According to guidelines, the ideal ratio for Indian men should be 0.88; for Indian women, it should be 0.8. If these values rise above this, the harmful effects of obesity can come into play.

Thin may be out—but fat is definitely not in. It can adversely affect your health and active years.

In India, decrease in physical activity with increasing age aggravates the problem.

WHAT CONSTITUTES 'OBESE'?

The term obesity implies a disease of excessive accumulation of body fat. The emphasis is on 'disease' and 'body fat', not excess weight. You may be overweight but you may not be obese—yet. In order to find the level at which excess weight

becomes harmful, it is necessary to quantify obesity. The best way to do this is to calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilogrammes with the square of their height in metres:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (in kg)}}{\text{Height}^2 (\text{m}^2)}$$

Once you have calculated your BMI, you can then compare the value against the standard Asian BMI guidelines to know if you are overweight, obese or just normal:



WATCH OUT FOR THE 3 DS

Obesity has been found to be associated with the 3 Ds: disease, disability and death. Nearly

prostate, skin infections, and endocrine disorders. An obese person is also likely to suffer from psychological and social problems owing to prejudice on the part of others, which may lead to depression.

OBESE IN INDIA

Obesity has been labelled the worst pandemic of the 21st century and if current trends continue, it is likely to emerge the single most important public health problem in India a decade from now.

Most studies on the urban and rural population to document the

lower prevalence of obesity than the previous study, probably because of the low economic status of the participants.

LIFESTYLE, THE CULPRIT

Lifestyle is the biggest culprit. Increasing affluence often translates to poor eating habits with plenty of fat and sugar and not enough fibre, and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle.

Sometimes, obesity runs in the family. This implies a genetic predisposition that allows excess fat storage when food is plenty and energy expenditure is reduced. Hormonal disorders like hypogonadism, hyperthyroidism and Cushing's syndrome (an abnormal bodily condition usually caused by adrenal or pituitary hyper function) are also associated with obesity.

The most worrying discovery in recent years has been the onset of obesity-related diseases, like hypertension, diabetes and cardiac problems, at much lower BMI values among Asians compared to people in the West.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Obesity is the result of an energy imbalance when energy intake is higher than output. The idea, then, is to decrease energy intake and increase output. Treatment for obesity is the same whatever the age group—you can lose weight naturally with diet and exercise or try medication and surgery.

Rate of weight loss is slower in patients with physical restrictions. Weight loss may be accompanied by hair fall and sagging skin. If unacceptable, sagging skin can be surgically

Studies reveal a higher rate of obesity in the middle class, and among women

30 diseases have been linked to obesity. For the elderly, obesity accelerates osteoarthritis (characterised by degenerative changes and wearing down of the bone and cartilage of joints) on all weight-bearing joints. It reduces breathing capacity and makes even simple physical activities difficult. The extra weight adds pressure to the heart, which has to work harder and tires quickly.

If you are obese, chances are you would suffer from one or the other: osteoarthritis, hypertension, diabetes, cardiac problems, obstructive sleep apnoea (sleeping disorder characterised by excessive snoring, forgetfulness, gasping for breath, morning headaches), cancer of breast, colon or

incidence of obesity show a higher rate in the middle class and among women. It is also found to increase with age. The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi conducted a pilot study on obesity among Indian elderly in 2004. A total of 206 seniors attending a geriatric clinic were questioned on their social, economic, health and dietary status. The mean age of the participants was 68.5 years. The majority (62.6 per cent) were male and middle-class. The study found that 34 per cent of the men and 40.3 per cent of women were obese. Another study conducted among the elderly in urban slums of Delhi (H S Gopalan; *Nutritional Status of the Elderly in Urban Slums of Delhi*, 2004) reported a



corrected but surgery is not recommended for people over 65 years. Hair loss, though, generally stops once weight stabilises.

DIET AND EXERCISE

Dietary restriction requires a change in quality and quantity of intake. If you go low on

Exercise increases energy output. It tones the body and gives an added boost to the effects of dietary restriction. Regular exercise also helps with obesity-related ailments like hypertension and diabetes.

DRUGS AND SURGERY

Certain drugs cause loss of appetite, thus decreasing energy intake, such as Sibutramine, Orlistat, Phentermine, Bupropion, and Metformin.

But you must consult your doctor, as all of them are associated with side effects such as nausea, bloating, oily stools, and flatulence. Only the first three of the above-mentioned drugs are approved for long-term use. However, drugs induce weight loss of only about 10 per cent of excess weight and may not help those requiring large amount of weight loss. Obesity management requires a multi-disciplinary approach. When a patient has a BMI of 37 and more,

QUICK TIPS

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle. Go for brisk walks of 30 to 45 minutes every day.
- A diet rich in fruits, salads and proteins is recommended. Avoid fried, oily, fatty and junk foods and sweets.
- Even simple physical activity like doing household chores can keep obesity at bay.

dietary restrictions required for inducing and maintaining weight loss. Bariatric surgery has two broad categories: surgery of restriction, like gastric banding; and surgery of malabsorption (poor absorption of nutrient materials from the alimentary canal), like intestinal bypass.

Gastric banding is a restrictive procedure where size of stomach is reduced by placing an adjustable silicon band on the stomach, just below the food pipe. And **bypass surgery** adds an element of malabsorption by bypassing a segment of the intestine where food is absorbed. Both procedures reduce stomach volume to about 30 ml. After surgery, the amount of food intake must decrease and all food must be chewed thoroughly. Bariatric surgery is not cosmetic surgery—it is intended to increase longevity and quality of life in morbidly obese patients. In the elderly, bariatric surgery is primarily prescribed for improving quality of life. ■

Dr Pradeep K Chowbey is chairman, Department of Minimal Access Surgery & Allied Surgical Specialities, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi, and president, Obesity Surgery Society of India

You may be overweight but not obese— check your Body Mass Index to be sure

carbohydrates (cereals) and fat (dairy, oily food) and reduce the size of each meal, you will manage to restrict caloric and energy intake, resulting in weight loss.

However, a majority of patients regain the weight (some even gain more) the minute they stop their dietary restriction. This form of weight loss followed by weight gain is known as yo-yo dieting and is a common phenomenon observed in obese individuals.

has a disabling or life-threatening condition owing to obesity, has been obese for five years, and is between 18 and 65 years of age, surgery is a viable option today.

Technically known as 'bariatric' surgery, surgery to treat obesity is relatively new in India though it has been around for over half a century in the West. Bariatric surgery alters the digestive system by decreasing stomach size and/or decreasing length of the intestines. It ensures that the patient is easily able to follow



Know your feet

Dr Arun Bal answers readers' queries on diabetic foot problems

Q I am a 55 year-old man and Type 2 diabetic. Can I get diabetic foot?

A Even when you have managed to keep your blood sugar level in check, diabetes affects the nerves and blood vessels of your body, especially in the lower limbs. Nerve dysfunction starts after about three to five years of the onset of diabetes when sensation in the feet reduces. The patient does not feel injury, pain, heat, cold or any other sensation. As the nerves are not functioning properly, the muscles in the feet swell up. This causes a change in the shape of the feet (deformities) and exposes the feet to injury. Thus, it is very important for a diabetic to take basic care of the feet (*see next answer*). Damage to the nerves is inevitable so, right now, medical care is the only preventive remedy. Taking good care of your blood sugar reduces the progression of nerve damage significantly.

Q I was diagnosed with diabetes last year at the age of 62. My friends are already advising me on appropriate footwear. Why is it so important to take care of your feet even when you are not suffering from diabetic foot?

A All diabetic patients must undergo annual tests to find out the actual level of nerve and blood vessel function in their feet. These can be done in most diabetes clinics. As nerves weaken over the years, they cannot function properly and this leads to the reduction of sweat and sebum glands in the lower limbs, especially the feet. The skin becomes dry and fissures are formed. Dry skin leads to itching and this causes injury. Therefore, diabetic patients should regularly apply moisturiser or a lanolin-based lotion after cleaning their feet twice a day. Never walk barefoot, always wear socks with footwear even indoors and while sleeping. Fissures on the skin of the sole can be dangerous, leading to infection. The type of footwear and size should be selected after consulting your doctor.

Q My friend's father recently had to undergo surgery that left part of his foot amputated owing to an infection that had turned gangrenous. He was 69 and diabetic. Is there no alternative to amputation when it comes to diabetic foot injury?

A Once the blood vessels are blocked, infection is difficult to control. Early diagnosis is necessary and quick angiography (a test that uses an injection of a dye to make the arteries easily visible on X-ray) and vein bypass can help save the foot. Diabetics must remember to take care of even the slightest foot injury. They must not bear any weight on the foot till the wound heals. Usually, infection spreads because the patient keeps walking, leading to irreversible damage.

Q I am a 51 year-old woman. I have diabetes but it is under control. Of late, my feet are often swollen and blistered. My nails have turned hard and discoloured though I keep my feet clean and dry. Will regular pedicures help?

A Visit your doctor and check if you are suffering from diabetic foot. The skin becomes delicate owing to nerve damage and loses resistance to trauma. Even walking barefoot indoors can cause blisters and swellings. A pedicure in a beauty parlour is dangerous for diabetic patients as they already suffer from complete or partial loss of sensation. Follow your doctor's advice for cleaning feet and use thigh-length pressure stockings to prevent swelling.

Q I am a 63 year-old housewife. I bathe with hot water during winter. Although the water feels hot on the rest of my body, my feet don't feel a thing. Is this a symptom of loss of sensation?

A You have not mentioned whether you are diabetic. For a diabetic, the first sign of nerve dysfunction is loss of sensation. Therefore, a test for nerve damage should be done immediately. Also, rule out diabetes by checking your blood sugar. ■

Dr Arun Bal is a diabetic foot surgeon at S L Raheja Hospital, Mumbai, and president, Diabetic Foot Society of India



Happy heart

Shameem Akthar tells you how to keep your heart healthy

As a new year dawns, you can choose between creating a robust heart that will power your life or neglect it by assuming the role of 'cardiac victim'. The heart is the master player in our body, catering to the functioning of our 300 trillion cells. Keeping it healthy makes sense, not just physiologically but emotionally and mentally. Studies have established a clear link between depression and heart health.

The book *Heart Health* by the American Yoga Association Wellness Guide, authored by Alice Christensen, cites many studies that prove this link. Depressed people feel less motivated to incorporate heart-healthy makeovers. They also need more negative support offered by nicotine, alcohol and drugs, like sleeping pills. Depression, a form of high-grade stress, encourages plaque formation and vessel blockages. There is also evidence that depression is associated with increased production of free radicals (that damage our insides) and fatty acids (that damage blood vessel linings). Christensen says yoga

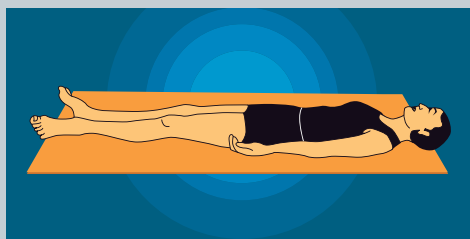
offers the best help, improving the body's resistance to the damaging effects of depression. Breathing exercises recharge your emotional self into taking greater control. And yogic meditation awakens the rejuvenating parasympathetic nervous system. A yogic diet is known to reduce cholesterol levels, help lose weight, and finetune your emotions to a new state of lightness.

Your programme should include a practical yoga *asana* routine of 10 to 15 poses—with modified versions of major *asana*; breath control (*pranayama*) that includes balancing exercises such as alternate nostril breathing (*nadi shodhana*), calming ones like victory (*ujjayi*) and humming bee (*bhramari*)—and a long sleep (*yoga nidra*) in the corpse (*shavasana*) pose. Ten to 15 minutes of daily meditation may be done at a time when you are least likely to be disturbed. The entire programme can be done in 30 to 45 minutes. Complement this by relooking at your diet; consult a dietician to discuss your favourite foods and learn how they affect you. If changes are required, start incorporating them. You will soon experience a lightness of being that precedes and accompanies your physical well-being. ■

Yogic moves

Yoga heart visualisation

Lie down with your body relaxed and eyes shut. Take your attention to each body part. Start with the right side, right hand and move down the torso. Do the same for the left side. Shift your attention to the torso, and then neck upwards. Then, focus on your heart centre. Imagine you can feel the pumping motion of the heart. Link this to your breath, so both the breath and your heartbeat slow down owing to your awareness. Imagine the blood flowing smoothly through your body, without blocks. Imagine



MAMTA JADHAV

seeing the plaque falling off, melting in this free-flowing blood. See gooey lumps of fat disappearing from the vessels. Keep this image clearly in your mind for some time. Then, visualise yourself doing robust physical acts. Imagine people commenting on your stamina and cheerfulness. Keep this image of yourself in your mind for some time. After some time, begin to externalise your awareness by shifting your attention to your breath, heartbeat, sounds in the room. Moving your hands and feet gently, roll over to sit up. Open your eyes. The entire visualisation should last 10 to 15 minutes.

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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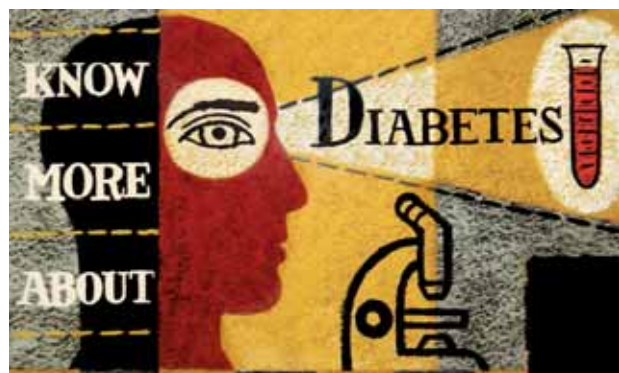
HEALTH BYTES

BEAT THE BLUES

Feeling blue? It will pass, say psychiatrists of the University of Texas in the US. All you need is patience to try out combinations of treatments. The duo studied 3,671 depressive patients, who were put on three to four treatments before they recovered. The study appears in the November issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. In another study conducted at Northwestern University, Illinois, psychiatrist Emma Adam and her team discovered that people who go to bed feeling sad wake up with a surge of energy-boosting hormones. They studied hormone levels in 156 people aged between 54 and 71, and asked them to write a diary recording their feelings at night. Those who went to bed with depressive thoughts experienced a surge of hormones during sleep that raised their sugar levels and blood pressure and brought down their stress levels. The study appears in the November issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of the Sciences*.



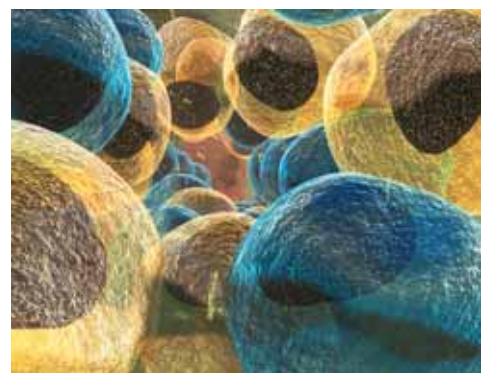
MONEY FOR NOTHING



Literacy and affluence don't guarantee good health. A survey by Delhi's Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research shows that diabetics ignoring their health mostly belong to 'high income group' households. Only 13 per cent of such patients had a glycosylated haemoglobin test done once a year; 16 per cent had an annual eye check-up; 3 per cent had a foot check up; and 32 per cent had a cholesterol and lipid profile examination. The study, conducted by Dr Jitender Nagpal and Abhishek Bhartia, will be published in the next issue of *Diabetes Care* journal. "Two common excuses for lack of diabetes care in India are poverty and lack of education," says Dr Nagpal. "This is why we chose 819 diabetics from affluent areas in Delhi." The institute plans to carry out a similar survey after five years.

STEMMING THE TIDE

Here's something to make India proud. The departments of biotechnology and orthopaedics at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi have collaborated to establish scientific trials on the use of



stem cells to improve bone regeneration, using a procedure that is in the final stages of approval. "For the first time across the world, stem cell research trials are being conducted on such a large scale," says Surya Bhan of the department of biotechnology. These will be held simultaneously at AIIMS, PGIMER in Chandigarh and Christian Medical College in Vellore, on 300 patients suffering from loss of blood supply to the bone. Repeated magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) will be done to show whether the procedure has been effective. The trials will be completed in two years and the results published in medical journals for authenticity. Finally, once approved, the procedure would cost approximately Rs 2,000—conventional treatment is tagged at Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh.

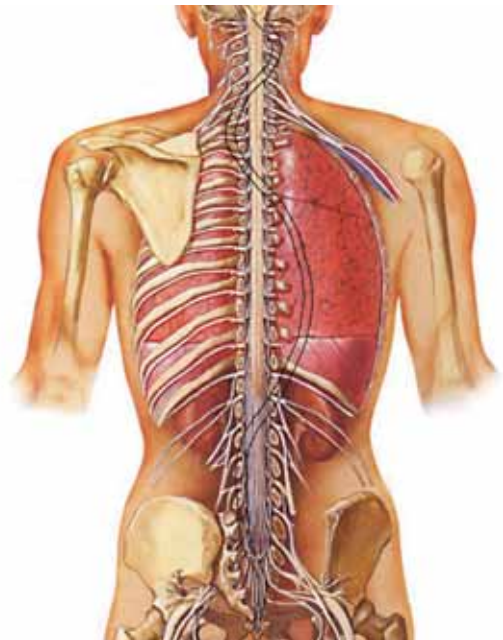
MOVE TO HEALTH

Small movements that form part of Pilates (an exercise technique that works on improving flexibility and strength) can make a huge difference to patients suffering from Parkinson's. According to a recent report by the Associated Press, these controlled movements can counter the degenerative effects of the disease, like tremors, slowness of

movement, rigidity and poor balance. The Parkinson Centre of the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland has completed a pilot study that indicates improvement in the rigidity and balance of participants during its twice-weekly Pilates classes. The centre already has a waiting list for its next round of classes. A few Pilates instructors in the US are also offering classes specifically for people with the disease. "What I've noticed, first, is confidence," says LaViertes Clark, owner of Body Balance Pilates studio of Oregon. "Just because you are diagnosed with a disease doesn't mean the end of the world."

BACK-TRACK

Planning sciatica surgery? Think about it one more time. A new study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* says people suffering from herniated or ruptured disk in the lower back usually recover, whether or not they have surgery. A team led by James Weinstein, a professor of orthopaedic surgery at Dartmouth Medical School in New Hampshire, USA, conducted trials on nearly 2,000 patients in 13 spine clinics across 11 US states. People suffering from lower disk pain are often told by doctors that delaying surgery may lead to permanent nerve damage, a weakened leg or loss of bowel or bladder control. But this did not occur in the course of this two-year study. Patients who had surgery often reported immediate relief. But by six months, patients in both groups reported marked improvement. "Time is usually your ally, not your enemy," insists Weinstein.



WATCH YOUR HEAD



Here's a red alert: men who suffer from frequent migraines are now said to be at a higher risk of heart attack. Tobias Kurth, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, Boston, studied more than 20,000 men with migraines for 16 years. None of them suffered from heart disease at the beginning of this long-term research project. But by the end of the study, Kurth's team noticed a high recurrence of cardiovascular disease such as hypertension and elevated cholesterol in them. "Migraine is not so much a risk factor, but a sort of risk marker," says Kurth. The study appears on www.ninds.nih.gov, the website of the US National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Log on for more details.

HEALTH BYTES

BLOCK OUT

This tiny implant has the potential of saving thousands of lives. Cardiologist Steven Almany of William Beaumont Hospital, Michigan, has developed the 'Watchman' device, which seals off a little section of the heart in case of clot formation. The device is planted using a catheter inserted into a leg vein. If it works—Almany has already implanted it into over a dozen



patients and is keeping his fingers crossed—it could provide protection to thousands of silvers suffering from irregular heartbeat.

By stopping clots in the heart from entering the bloodstream, the device could prevent a vicious stroke that leaves about 33 per cent of its victims dead, and another 33 per cent disabled.

WONDER PILL

Rimonabant, the magic pill that helps you lose weight, quit smoking, manage your lipid profile, and control diabetes, is coming to a pharmacy near you. Pharma major Cipla is likely to launch the drug in India in a few months. Rimonabant was first developed in 1994 to fight obesity and has been recently found to control blood glucose levels and other cardiovascular risk factors in people with Type 2 diabetes. It is already available in Europe. "The pill blocks off nerve receptors in brain and fat cells that tell the body to overeat and consume nicotine," explains Dr Anoop Misra, head of department of metabolism and diabetes at New Delhi's Fortis Hospital. The combined effects work wonders in diabetes patients.



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Why: With a normal diet and no major ailments, nutrition supplements are useless. Extra vitamins aren't absorbed by the body; they just shoot up your pharmacy bills.

Calcium tablets and tonics.

Why: They cause constipation. Eat a calcium-rich diet instead, like milk, green vegetables, eggs, fish, ragi and wheat.

Anti-arthritic drugs or painkillers like Diclofenac, Paracetamol, Nimusilide, and Cox II inhibitors.

Why: They may cause addiction, ulcers, or gastric trouble. It's much better to deal with the primary cause, obesity. Watch what you eat; go for walks twice a day; do physiotherapy; and choose a line of treatment that works on the affected joint exclusively.

Sedatives and tranquilizers like Alprazolam, Diazepam.

Why: They may cause addiction, drowsiness or dullness. Identify the actual cause of pain. Do regular exercise. Avoid sleeping in the day for more than 30 minutes. Do *pranayama* (breathing exercises) for 15 minutes before bedtime.

Laxatives like liquid paraffin, Senna, milk of magnesia.

Why: They are habit-forming and may cause dehydration. Increase fluid and fibre intake instead.





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Face inward

Look within, contact your spiritual nature, urges **Wayne Dyer**

The most important insight you can have is to realise that you have been facing the wrong way for the better part of your life. Take a moment to experience what I mean. Picture yourself in any position you like. Standing, sitting, lying down, whatever is easiest for you to imagine. What you see, in this exercise, is a you who is looking away from yourself, outside of yourself. Now, imagine being able to shift around and face the opposite direction. If you could in some magical way do so, you would be facing inward.

This is not some form of mental gymnastics. It is a way of knowing your spiritual identity. If you meet the challenge, you can take the path of your sacred quest. We've all been taught to look beyond the self for power, love, prosperity, health, happiness and spiritual fulfilment. But it's possible to reverse our gaze from outward to inward. And when we do, we find an energy we've sensed but not identified.

There dwells within all human beings a divine energy. The power of this energy permits us to perform every function in the vast repertoire of human thoughts and behaviours. There are two aspects to this: The outer aspect causes the heart to beat, the lungs to inflate and the senses to function—it keeps our physical bodies alive. The inner aspect of this energy is dormant, but it can be awakened.

This inner universe is vaster than the outer universe. When the divine light within you is experienced directly, it adds radiance to life. When you discover your sacred self, you awaken this dormant inner energy and let it guide your life. The word most commonly used to describe this inner force is 'spiritual'. In my interpretation, spirituality is not

dogma or rules. It is light and joy and focuses on the experience of love and inner bliss, radiating those qualities outward.

In his book *Mystery of the Mind*, Swami Muktananda describes what the direct experience of divine energy is like: "One day this light will explode, and you will see it everywhere. The divine light of Consciousness will begin to fill your eyes, and then wherever you look you will see it. You will see its radiance in people, in trees, in rocks, and in buildings. You will see the same consciousness rising and falling in every wave of thought and feeling that passes through your mind; wherever your mind goes you will find your own inner Consciousness, the creator of the world. You will see that the entire universe is contained within your own Self. You will realise that it is you who are being reflected everywhere and that it is your own reflection that passes before you all the time."

You have within yourself this power of transcendence over the ego-dominated life. You can face inward, directly contacting your spiritual nature. You can then live each of your days, regardless of what you may be doing, with the sense of bliss that comes from being on the path of your sacred quest. Making that light explode for you involves understanding who you are and what it is that you are doing here in this thing called your body.

**When the divine
light within you is
experienced
directly, it adds
radiance to life**

The starting point to your sacred quest is understanding that the universe and our participation in it are not haphazard things. It causes the planets to orbit, the galaxies to stay in place, the seedlings to sprout, and you to breathe, walk and think. This invisible intelligence is in everything and it is everywhere. You cannot hold it or see it or smell it. But you know that it is there. ■

Excerpt from *In Your Sacred Self: Making the Decision to Be Free* (2001; HarperCollins; 384 pages), which offers a spiritually oriented approach to life. Dyer, a US-based psychotherapist, is the author of 10 books

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I am a 73-year old former announcer for Vividh Bharati and All India Radio, residing in Vasai, Maharashtra. I am an experienced drama artist on AIR and have written and directed plays for the same. I currently write articles for leading journals. Anyone interested in requiring my skills and services may get in touch. **Contact Chandra Bharadwaj at 95250-2460258**

I am a 60-year-old doctor based in Secunderabad and have collected contact details of geriatricians practising in southern cities like Hubli, Kochi and Secunderabad. Anyone interested in the database can call me up.

Contact Dr P Vyasamoorthy at 27846631

KMM Academy of Health Sciences (Kochi) conducts a three-month correspondence course on geriatric care. For more details, **Contact: kmm_academy@yahoo.co.in, www.geriatricsindiacenter.com**
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I am a 66 year-old stamp and coin collector based in Vishakapatnam. I am also interested in health and spiritual matters. Those interested, please call. **Contact Uppala Veereswara Rao at 0891 2535330, mobile: 94410 58023**

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Personal Classifieds



Picture this!

Tushar Kanwar tells you how direct-to-home (DTH) television is poised to give cable operators a run for their money

Cable TV stormed into our living rooms in the late 1980s and revolutionised the way we watched TV, with channels competing for the same mind-share. But some things didn't change—unending complaints about poor service, unreasonable installation charges, and blatantly indifferent cable operators.

The next technology on offer had largely to do with the conditional access system (CAS) that the government has been trying to implement since 2003. Going by CAS directives, from 1 January 2007 all pay channels will have to pass through a set top box (STB)—or they could be blacked out of homes with cable in the four metros. The system is already operational in Chennai, to be followed by Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata in a phased manner.

With a local STB, you can unlock encrypted signals beamed up to satellites by channels on your TV set. The STB connects your TV to a signal source like a satellite dish, cable line, or the Internet. It also enables the TV to decode digital broadcasts. Also called a receiver, an STB is necessary for viewers who want to use their regular TV sets to decode and receive digital broadcasts. You pay for what you want to view. The catch: an STB box can cost around Rs 3,000, and

you need one for each TV set you own. Also, relocation means getting new STBs.

One way to beat these blues is direct-to-home (DTH) TV, which lets you use your own dish antenna for quality digital entertainment (see *December 2005 issue of Harmony* or log on to www.harmonyindia.org/hportal/VirtualPageView.jsp?page_id=1977).

Your dish directly relays satellite signals of different channels to your television instead of you receiving them through the cable network operated by your cable guy. Unlike local STBs, if you purchase DTH hardware, you can use the same unit anywhere.

THE COMPONENTS

For DTH TV, all you need are your dish and STB to unlock encrypted signals. You get better transmission and sound, and local language commentary and different camera angles during a cricket match—DTH standards include interactive camera angles, interactive news and games, electronic programme guides for a complete listing of schedules, and multi-language commentary. And you don't have to miss the next episode of your favourite soap because of the inefficient services of your cable operator.

OPERATORS, BEWARE!

Indeed, the government's intention to implement CAS and

THE PRICE OF DTH

Dish TV Freedom Plan

Initial investment of Rs 3,291 for 60 channels

Monthly subscription of Rs 60, plus taxes

Dish TV Welcome Plan

Initial investment of Rs 3,590 for 80 channels

Rs 160 per month in South India and Rs 180 in North India, plus taxes

Dish TV Maxi Plan

Initial investment of Rs 3,890 for 125 channels

Monthly subscription of Rs 300, plus taxes (*All prices include the rental of the STB for five years, plus the first three months free*)

For more details, go to www.dishtvindia.in

TataSky

Initial investment of Rs 2,999 for the STB

Rs 1,000 for installation/warranty

Rs 200 per month (plus taxes) for approximately 70 channels

For more details, check out www.tatasky.com

an onslaught by DTH service providers is definitely a wake-up call to cable operators. They will have to upgrade signal quality to match the advantages of DTH as DTH customers can now take their pick of channels, pay not more than Rs 350 (for 100 channels and more) per month and get superior services.

CHOOSING RIGHT

Currently, there are only two full-scale DTH services: Dish TV and TataSky. Dish TV became operational in October 2003 and TataSky came out in June this year. There's also Prasar Bharti DD Direct Plus, but it offers a limited subset of about 20 Doordarshan free-to-air channels and 15 private channels. There are two more on the anvil: Kalanidhi Maran-promoted Sun TV and Reliance Blue Magic plan to start operations by mid-2007.

But for now, you have to choose between Dish TV and Tata Sky. A quick look at the features of both:

Technology: Both provide STBs that can beam hundreds of channels. Right now, Dish TV beams about 160 channels and Tata Sky has about 70. Don't worry if your TV set supports only 30 or 40 channels. The remote control of your STB takes over all the functions of your old TV remote. You can also choose to retain your existing cable connection if you want, as the STB connects to the TV's audio video (AV) input points.

Price packages: Dish TV offers three packages whereas Tata Sky offers only one (*see box*).

Extras: Dish TV edges out the competition here, with features like 'movies on demand', charged extra at up to Rs 50 per movie—select the movie, pay via your bill/recharge card and the movie is available for viewing immediately. It also gives you the option of buying an 80 GB (gigabyte) digital video recorder for Rs 15,990. It's not cheap, but you can use it to store pictures and songs, record programmes from more than one channel for later viewing, watch multiple channels all at once, and even pause live TV and pick up the action later. TataSky has audio channels and movies on demand in the pipeline. Both services provide basic games for kids.

So is DTH the answer to your TV prayers? Not exactly. Most find the initial cost steep (Rs 3,500 to Rs 6,000), not to mention incremental costs if you have more than one TV in the house (each requires a STB). Then, cable may still work out cheaper unless DTH providers lower entry costs. Payment collection and servicing are also likely to be issues, unlike the cable chap who has a wider network and standardised collection system in place.

On the plus side, your TV will start looking and sounding better overnight, especially if you've invested in a home-theatre system. And you can jettison your truant cable operator. ■



Tushar Kanwar is a Bangalore-based technology writer. He writes a weekly column in Graphiti, the Sunday magazine of The Telegraph, Kolkata. Mail your questions to Tushar at harmony@kanwar.net

Matter of trust - Part II

Legalpundits explores the procedures that go into making a public charitable trust

Q How do you register a charitable trust?

A The applicant should sign the form before a notary or regional officer at the charity commissioner's office. The applicant must also submit a copy of the trust deed; the original can be produced later for verification. Other documents required are a sworn affidavit (by the trustees making the application) before a notary and executed on non-judicial stamp paper of Rs 10, and a consent letter, prepared and signed by the trustee/s other than the trustee who made the application.

The trustee of the public trust should also send a memorandum in the prescribed form comprising details of the trust to the sub-registrar of the sub-district appointed under the Indian Registration Act, 1908, within three months from the date of creation of the trust. This should be signed and verified by the trustee or agent authorised by the trustee.

On the receipt of an application, the deputy or assistant charity commissioner makes an inquiry to ascertain the origin, intent, nature and object of the trust in compliance with Section 19 of the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1950. Processing the application takes about six to eight weeks. A notice informing the applicant for a formal hearing is dispatched usually 10 to 15 days in advance. The applicant generally has to appear in person or depute his lawyer. The original trust deed should be produced for verification at the time of hearing. On completion of the inquiry, the deputy or assistant charity commissioner records the findings with reasons and can make an order for the payment of the above-mentioned registration fee.

Q Who regulates or monitors trusts?

A Charity is a matter of state control, so different states of India have their own legislation in the form of trusts or endowment acts to govern and regulate public charitable trusts. As these charitable purposes are defined in the Endowment Act, they need not be confirmed or approved by the court. The courts of law take a decision based on the provisions as outlined in legislation. If a "charitable purpose" is unclear or does not fall within the ambit of the Act, the deputy or assistant charity commissioner has the discretion to refuse the application.

If a public trust is created by a will, the executor (appointed by the person making the will) has to make an application for registration in the manner provided in Section 18 (of BPTA 1950) and apply *mutatis mutandis* (an order from the court declaring the validity of the will) within one month from the date on which the probate of the will is granted, or within six months from the date of the testator's death, whichever is earlier. A person can make a provision in his will establishing the reason for starting a trust out of his wealth for the interest of the public at large.

Exemptions

Income of a charitable trust is exempt according to Sections 11, 12, 12A, 12AA

and 13 of the Income Tax Act. Apart from the object of public utility, promotion of sports and games is also considered a charitable purpose. Therefore, any association or institution engaged in the promotion of sports and games can claim exemption under Section 11 even if it is not approved under Section 10 (23) - Circular No. 395, dated 24 September 1984.



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Q I am a 57 year-old housewife and keep shifting base with my bureaucrat husband. I keep myself busy conducting cookery classes. We will be settling down in Mysore after his retirement and I would like to start a regular course for beginners. But I am wary as I have no technical qualifications. Are there any regular cookery courses available for people like me?

Cooking is a skill that can be developed at home. If you have a flair for experimentation, you can excel as a cook. A degree will help you get a job in the hotel management or catering industry but it would not necessarily make you a better cook. Instead, you can begin to teach straightaway. It's easier to attract students if you are permanently stationed in one place. So begin by announcing your cookery classes by inserting a small advertisement in local newspapers, putting up small boards in your locality, or distributing small handwritten or printed handouts at key shopping areas in the city.

Keep a file of details of your early classes ready, in case someone wants to take a look. Start surfing the net to look out for new and exciting recipes. Cookery sites like www.cuisinecuisine.com, www.fatfree.com, www.tarladalal.com, www.sanjeevkapoor.com, www.recipedelights.com and others offer a good mix of recipes, cooking tips and updates on regional Indian cuisine. You should also contribute your recipes for online viewers and enter recipe contests for greater visibility. Visibility on the web can really help as you can become a regular contributor to sites and gain good ratings or credibility from viewers and your future students.

Q I am a 60 year-old retired bureaucrat and have studied music therapy abroad. I would like to pursue it in India too. Are there courses available?

Music therapy is an established alternative method of healing, used to treat children and adults with disabilities or illnesses. There are various institutes in India that teach it, like the Indian Music Therapy Research and Development Foundation, Kerala, P K Salve Kala Pratishthan in Maharashtra and Mumbai-based NGO United Way of Mumbai. Their websites are indianmusictherapy.com/index.html, www.pksacademy.com/VocalMusicTherapy.htm, and www.unitedwaymumbai.org/drumtherapy.asp. You can also write to the US-based National Institute on Developmental Delays at pop@nidd.org for the latest updates on music therapy.

Q I am a retired All India Radio employee. I did not get the time or opportunity to lend my voice to radio programmes while at AIR. I would like to do so now. How do I go about getting voice-over assignments?

If you have been doing vocal training and exercising your vocal chords regularly, you may get lucky with voice-over assignments. You need to check if your voice has a fresh, smooth, energetic, and versatile quality before taking the next step. Speak to family and friends and get their feedback about your voice. To seek assignments, perhaps you could go back to AIR. You can also contact any other recording and production companies or studios. There are sites where you can upload your profile and companies can contact you directly for different projects. These projects vary from radio jockeying to doing voice-overs for advertisements or regional television serials. One such site is www.voices.com/find-voice-over-jobs.html. Hosted by senior voice-over artiste Harish Bhimani, it gives you practical tips. Also check out the following URLs for tips or openings for dubbing/voice-over: www.sudeepaudio.com/recruitment.htm; www.toonzanimationindia.com/toonz.htm; www.utvnet.com.

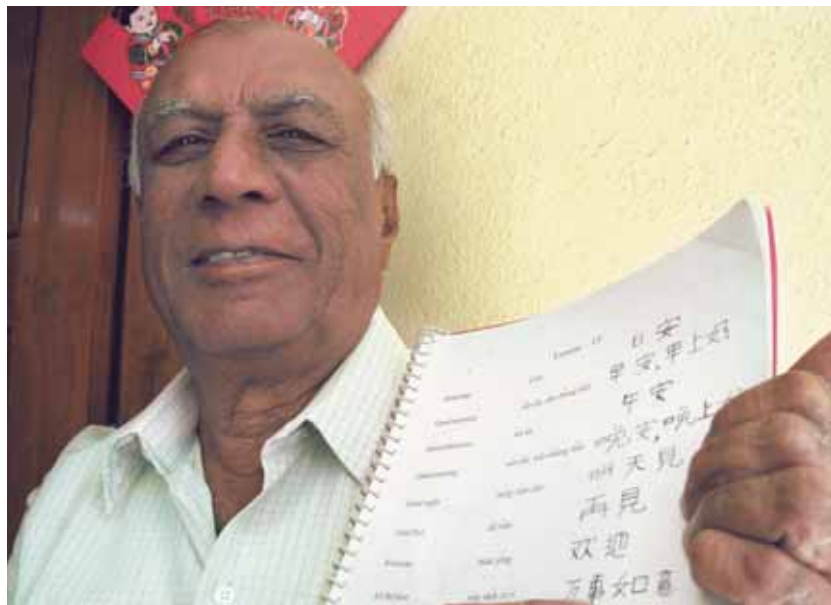
Bringing China home

Former IB officer **B S N Rao** teaches language in Bengaluru

BS N Rao is always on the move. Five times a week, the 74 year-old zips across Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore) to teach Chinese to willing students. And six days a week, he conducts group classes in a rented room in a house in his neighbourhood. And if a student can't make it to class, Rao is only too ready to hop into a bus or auto-rickshaw and head for the student's house.

"I took up teaching to keep busy," says Rao. After a 30-year career in the Intelligence Bureau spent all over India, he retired in 1990 and moved with wife Dhanwati (now 66) and his five children to Bengaluru, their hometown. A year later, he started work for a private security agency. For almost seven years, he did what he had often done before—making discreet enquires and preparing reports. In 1995, Rao saw an advertisement for the post of a part-time Chinese teacher for city-based company MICO. He had learnt Chinese many years ago when he worked in the Northeast. "I was posted near the Indo-China border at the time," he recalls. He completed a two-year course in Chinese conducted by the School of Foreign Languages in New Delhi.

So when he saw the ad almost three decades later, Rao sent in his bio-data and was offered the job. "I had to refuse because it



ABHIJIT GHOSH

Rao has taught over 50 students, with many returning to study further

clashed with the timings of my job," he says. But right after he came back home, he fished out his old study material and conducted a test on himself.

"A new language helps you bond with strangers"

"After a 30-year gap, it came back to me in a flash," he says. He decided to go it alone as teacher.

Rao placed an ad in a city magazine and started getting calls right away. His first student was a housewife who wanted to join her husband, who was posted to China. It was the beginning. Staff from companies like Hewlett

Packard, Global Soft Ltd, Rotary Electronics and Wal Mart, who often send employees overseas, began signing up.

Mandarin is the commonly spoken language in Mainland China and Taiwan, and the medium of education in Rao's classes. His basic course consists of 20 classes, two hours long, and his charges are Rs 150 per hour. He teaches simple conversation skills with a vocabulary of more than 500 essential words. So far, Rao has taught more than 50 students and some of them have returned after the basic course to study further. "A new language helps you bond with strangers," says the proud teacher. Incidentally, Rao is yet to visit China.

—Mukta Hegde

Send queries to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org; for second career options, log on to www.harmonyindia.org



In Krishna's footsteps

Devotees from India and all over the world flock to Vrindavan and Brajbhoomi.

Usha Rai tells us why

I have been to Vrindavan often, and with each year my fascination increases. Maybe it has something to do with my greying hair! Although you really don't get 'peace' because it is crowded, visiting the temples and *kund* helps me reflect inwards. People from central and North India and Bengal and foreigners enchanted by the lore of Lord Krishna also flock to Vrindavan, which is

about three hours by road from Delhi. For widows, especially from Bengal, it is a final resting place where they come for *moksha* (salvation) so they are not reborn.

Though the population of Vrindavan is just 4 lakh, it is estimated that, every year, 20 million people visit the city and surrounding Brajbhoomi (a radius of 84 *kos* or 254 sq km around the old Vrindavan) where

the Krishna legend was enacted centuries ago. Devotees believe the Lord was born in Mathura and then brought to Gokul, 25 km away. As the story goes; foster mother Yashodha brought him up in Nandgaon, 55 km from Vrindavan; and Barsana, 55 km from Vrindavan, is the home of Radha, his consort. According to folklore, Vrindavan, with its once exquisite gardens, is where the *rasleela* (the cosmic dance with



(Left) Yamuna ghat in Vrindavan; deities at ISKCON temple: despite the squalor of the city, it vibrates with colour and festivity

Krishna and the Gopis) was enacted. Popularly called the Govardhan Karambhoomi, the region is known for miracles apparently enacted by the young Krishna—lifting a mountain, killing demons. It is said that when Kalia Nag, the serpent, polluted the Yamuna, he drove him out and cleansed the river. Quite obviously, another visit of the Lord is needed because the river is now reduced to a polluted sliver of its old self.

In Vrindavan itself, there are 6,500 temples—every home has a temple—and it takes you about three days to see the important ones. Take a guide as the roads are confusing and they regale you with stories woven around the marble, brick and mortar of

the city. I prefer to go early mornings or late in the evening around the time of *aarti*.

While the temples are clean and house exquisite idols in marble

are full of red and gold dresses for deities, mountains of marigold and other flowers, incense sticks, coconuts, and sweets to be offered to the gods. The main attractions are

There are 6,500 temples in Vrindavan—it takes three days to see the important ones

and silver, the streets are narrow and filthy with open drains. Unfortunately, neither the rich Marwaris, who have poured crores of rupees into the temples, nor the municipal corporation, have bothered about the haphazard growth of the city and the garbage. Lurking in alleys and swinging from temple spires, monkeys grab food packets and sunglasses. There have been attempts to catch the *vaanar sena* and relocate it to a forested area but they keep coming back.

Despite all the squalor, there is an enchantment about Vrindavan. The common form of greeting to one another is *Radhe Radhe*. It blends with the sound of prayer bells and the heady fragrance of incense and sandalwood in and around the temples. The markets

undoubtedly the temples. Housing a pure gold idol and a 50 kg gold pillar, the Ranganath Mandir of Balaji is probably the only temple with a distinct similarity to the temples of the South. Reportedly the largest temple in North India, it is over 150 years old and was built by Seth Lakshmi Chand, who also constructed the Dwarka Deesh temple in Mathura.

Shahji Mandir is architecturally one of the finest temples in India. Constructed 139 years ago, it has spiral columns and walls with inlay work. Constructed by Kundanlal Shah and Pundalal Shah—two jewellers from Lucknow associated with the Nawab of Audh—it has exquisite paintings on the walls, chandeliers and a gold Basanti room

where the *murti* was installed on Basant Panchami day.

Vrindavan's oldest temples—Govind Dev, Madan Mohan, and Gopinath (built by Raja Mansingh of Jaipur)—were damaged by Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. But the principal deities of Govind Dev and Gopinath were moved to Jaipur, and the idol of Madan Mohan was moved to Karoli, also in Rajasthan. New temples were constructed and new *murti* installed in Vrindavan. The most popular temple in Vrindavan today is undoubtedly the Banke Bihari Mandir in Beharipura. When the prayers of devotees are answered, they return with *swastika* made of gold and silver as offerings. According to lore, the main idol of Banke Bihari, said to be over 550 years old, sprang out of the earth, almost as if to listen to the voice of Swami Haridas, the guru of Tansen, the fabled singer at the court of Mughal emperor Akbar.

Radha Raman and Radha Ballabh are two other must-see temples. It is said that Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came in search of Vrindavan some 550 years ago. Radha Raman and Radha Ballabh are among six temples built in that period. Six disciples of Chaitanya (known as *pracharak* or *Goswami*) were given the responsibility for these temples and their descendants continue the tradition.

Foreigners coming to Vrindavan flock to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple. You can see them dancing joyously, many wearing a *dhori* and sporting a *choti* (tuft of hair on their heads), chanting *Hare Krishna*. The chant can also be heard at the Akshaya



(Top) The bank of the Yamuna river; inside the ISKCON temple: people from India and overseas enchanted by the lore of Krishna flock here

Patra complex, established by a Bangalore-based group of IT professionals to provide midday

sunsets, *diya* are floated in the waters—often as thanksgiving for a wish that has been granted.

Govind Kund is a calming retreat; as the sun sets, *diya* are floated in the water

meals to schoolchildren. Thousands of *chapatti* are transported on conveyor belts for kneading, rolling, cutting and roasting. The food cooked for the children in huge cauldrons is first offered to the gods—ensuring hygiene.

After receiving blessings and *prasad* from Banke Bihari and Ranganath Mandir, I retreat to Govind Kund in Vrindavan, an expanse of water, to escape the crowds. At

Though there is festivity all year around, the best times to visit are during Holi and Janmashtami (the birth of Lord Krishna). In March, during Chaitra Mela, the deity of Ranganath Mandir is taken out for *rath yatra*.

The monsoon is time for Teej or the festival of swings. In August, during Janmashtami, every temple holds special prayers. In September-October, Sharad



FACT FILE

WHEN TO GO

The best times are during Holi and Janmashtami, in March and August.

HOW TO GET THERE

By road: Vrindavan is 147 km away from Delhi, 56 km from Agra and 15 km from Mathura. You can take a bus from Delhi or Agra to Mathura and then take a 'share' tempo, taxi, or bus. All these are available throughout the day.

By rail: Mathura is a major station on the Delhi-Chennai and Delhi-Mumbai main line. Vrindavan also has a station. Several express trains connect Mathura from other cities like Bangalore, Kolkata and Agra.

By air: The nearest airport is Agra.

WHERE TO STAY

Best Western Radha Ashok, Mathura. Tariffs range from Rs 1,450 to Rs 1,825 for AC singles and Rs 1,700 to Rs 2,325 for doubles. Tel: 0565-2420064, 2530395

Hotel Mukund Palace, Mathura.

Tariffs range from AC singles from Rs 700 to Rs 900, AC doubles from Rs 800 to Rs 950, and AC suites for Rs 1,500. Tel: 0565-2410316, 2410326; Fax: 0565-2504512

Hotel Sheetal Regency,

Mathura. Tariffs range from Rs 900 to Rs 1,000 for deluxe (single or double) and Rs 990 to Rs 1,500 for super deluxe options. Tel: 0565-2404401, 2404597; Fax: 0565-2400106

In addition, there are several *dharamshala*, *ashram* and guest-houses where you can get a room from Rs 150 to Rs 1,000 a day.

TRAVEL TIPS

■ Whatever the price, all hotels face power cuts. So it's a good idea to go equipped with a torch, candles, and mosquito repellent cream.

■ Considering the rush throughout the year, book your accommodation at least two months before your visit.

Navratra is observed with *bhajan*, nightlong chanting and singing. Skilled craftsmen compete with one another to make exquisite idols of Durga. For eight to 10 days, Vaishnava and Shakti *puja* go side by side till the immersion of Durga in the Yamuna. In the months of *Kartik* (October and November), lakhs of pilgrims descend on the city for Govardhan *parikrama*. Devotees can also be seen doing a 'car *parikrama*', depending on age and faith! I too have done this *parikrama* once, barefoot, seeking the return of a nephew who had been taken by militants. Makar Sakranti (14

January) marks the advent of the New Year. And mid-February to mid-March, Vrindavan celebrates Holi, with flowers, colour, cowdung and wet mud thrown at devotees. It is also famous for its *lathmar* Holi, played with sticks, where women beat the men and dance in abandon.

Finally, there's another good reason to visit Vrindavan—the food. The milk, yoghurt and sweets of Brajbhoomi are delicious. *Peda* from Mathura are famous; equally exciting are *jalebi*, *imrati* and *kachori* of Vrindavan. But your doctor may not agree! ■

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House of cards

The Top of the Raintree

By Kamalini Sengupta

Indialnk (Roli); Rs 295; 293 pages

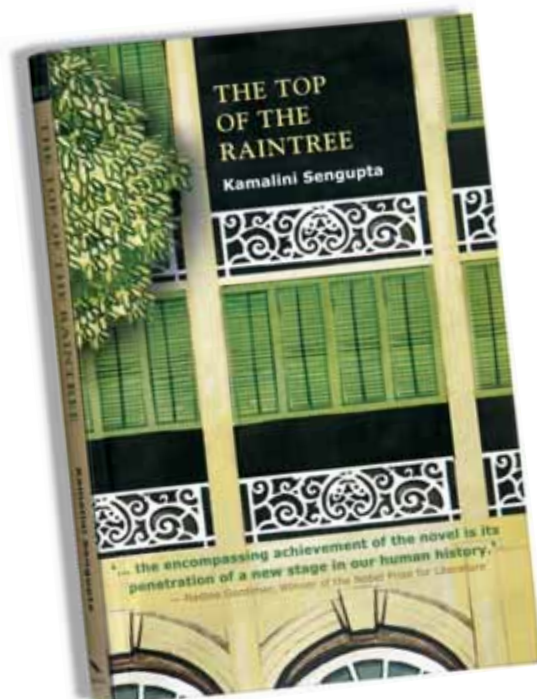
The idea of a house as protagonist has already been covered in literature. E M Forster did it almost a hundred years ago in *Howard's End*. Former IAS officer Kamalini Sengupta goes down the same road in *The Top of The Raintree*, her second novel.



Inhabited by manic pigeons and acerbic-tongued ghosts, The Rajmahal, a turn-of-the-century mansion on Chowringhee in Calcutta has a distinct voice—it reserves the right to confer approval or disapproval on its tenants, expressing its concerns at their tribulations, tut-tutting when they screw up, sighing with soft pleasure when they enter into liaisons of which it approves. Built by minor Bengali royalty and then refurbished by a rich Sardar before being sold to a Muslim developer who converts it into apartments (after reserving the top floor for himself and the ground floor for the Sardar's family), The Rajmahal plays host to a motley bunch who give it enough to talk about through the years.

There's Jack and Myrna Strachey, a British couple who move in before Independence and decide to continue living in India afterwards. Proshanto Majumdar, a marine engineer, and wife Mohini are a childless couple whose life—and marital bed—comes alive in their silver years. Another resident is Anatoly Sergeivich Petrov, a Russian patron of Bengali theatre who's made Calcutta his home and theatre actor Reena Devi his wife. And Anglo-Indian widow Maudie Jessop, who moves into her brother's flat in The Rajmahal.

In tandem with all these lives runs the story of Surjeet Shona, a complex hybrid, descendant of the first two owners (Bengali and Sikh), a young widow and mother who lives on the ground floor and tends her garden with the raintree whose destiny



becomes linked with that of the Maliks, the elegant Muslim landlords who live upstairs.

Through these characters, Sengupta paints a picture of societal churn spanning almost an entire century (from the 1900s to the 1990s) and how the colonials and the colonised deal with it. We see a well-established social structure in which everyone fits just so, crumbling with the advent of Independence and the mania that follows, transforming the formerly genteel Calcutta into a war zone where the vanquished turn victors and the dispossessed demand ownership. Issues of nationhood, rootlessness, status, age and religion confront the inhabitants of The Rajmahal at every turn—while some characters handle their new realities with equanimity, others approach hysteria, unable to handle this brave (and scary) new world.

This may be a slim book but it is a *huge* tale, of many lives, ways of life, a city's log of a turbulent era. And Sengupta manages to pull it off. Almost. Although the descriptions of Calcutta are sumptuous, characters are fleshed out and divergent plotlines come together well enough to satisfy the reader at the end of it all, there's one thing missing in this book: spark. The editing isn't crisp enough and Sengupta's words tend to plod—pity, because they have a great story to tell.

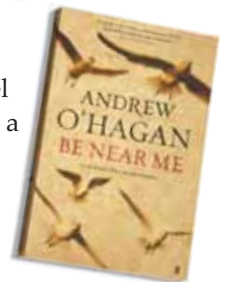
—Arati Rajan Menon

BRIEFLY

Backed by impeccable research, **William Dalrymple** rescues Emperor Bahadur Shah II from anonymity in **THE LAST MUGHAL** (Penguin/Viking; Rs 695; 579 pages). The tolerant and talented Zafar (his pen name while writing poetry) died five years after the Indian sepoy mutiny of 1857 in Burma, an 87 year-old surrounded by a smattering of loyal retainers, indecisiveness proving to be his fatal flaw. Dalrymple's words fling you back in the heart of Delhi in 1857, where he dissects the mutiny through the prism of Zafar's life. This is one of those rare finds—a history book you want to read over.



Andrew O'Hagan shows off some seriously lyrical prose in his Booker Prize long-listed novel **BE NEAR ME** (Faber; Rs 495; 278 pages), a tale about the contradictions of a religious life in a faithless age. Father David Anderton, a 56 year-old repressed English priest who moves to a Scottish parish, befriends two rebellious teenagers who live in a world alien to him. But this friendship ignites the suspicions of a town that resents strangers. Towards the end, trapped in class hatreds and threatened by personal flaws, the priest laments, *At the centre of himself a man cannot choose whom to love. The heart will always have the last word.* A beautiful and brave book.



Love blooms via email between middle-class Neel Pandey in New Delhi and Puerto Rican Reporter Angela Cruz in New York in **Neelesh Mishra's ONCE UPON A TIME ZONE** (HarperCollins: Rs 195; 248 pages). There's one catch: Cruz thinks Pandey is Neil Patterson of Manhattan. This is an amusing tale of BPO culture and outsourced love, with family drama, lesbians, gangsters and visa scams thrown in for good measure. But while Mishra, a journalist and songwriter for Hindi films, is able to keep his plot humming along, he loses control of his words. Ponderous in places, rambling in others, they mar what would otherwise be a breezy read.



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Reality check

Ambitions become realistic with age, says **Renuka Chatterjee**

I had just returned from the Frankfurt Book Fair when the news broke about Kiran Desai winning the Booker Prize for *The Inheritance of Loss*. “Kiran Desai’s won the Booker,” I bellowed to my 91 year-old father. Unfortunately, I was shouting into the wrong ear, the one that’s almost stone deaf. To compound matters, my maidservant’s name is also Kiran. “What’s Kiran done now?” my father responded worriedly, imagining some fresh domestic crisis. It took quite a bit of explaining, and it was eventually only when he read the news on the ticker tape on CNN-IBN, that the penny dropped. “Oh, you mean Anita Desai’s daughter,” he said, and, then, that faraway look when he’s remembering times past on his face, “She was a very pretty girl... we were all sweet on her. Used to drop in quite often at our house in Cavalry Lines.”

He was referring, of course, to Anita, not Kiran, who couldn’t have been even a twinkle in her mother’s eye in those days. I couldn’t help wondering how Kiran would have reacted to first being mistaken for domestic help, and then dismissed as merely her mother’s daughter.

But that’s the beauty of growing older—selective memory. The passage of time does help you remember the things that matter and let amnesia take the rest. Time gives a different perspective to the worst of experiences. It is possible to see the humour in situations that seemed nothing but grim when they happened. And the old platitude—when one door closes, another opens—is by and large true.

When I had to walk away from a job I had given my heart and soul to, it did propel me into another that was a definite leap in my career. And even when there is neither humour nor professional or material

gain to alleviate the pain of a traumatic experience, just the fact that you have been through a tragedy and come out of it sane, strengthens the spine and spirit in ways that you only realise in hindsight. When that realisation dawns, it gives you courage to face life with far more equanimity.

There is also a de-cluttering process about growing older that must be appreciated. Having stubbed your toe on failure a few times, you are more realistic about what you can, and can’t do—instead of chasing the moon, you’re more likely to focus on ground realities. It isn’t surprising, then, that your success-to-failure ratio seems to improve.

I’ve learnt one golden rule—when common sense tells you something can’t happen, it usually doesn’t. The amount of time, and disappointment, I’ve saved myself since I accepted this, is amazing. A friend, and my personal astrologer, phoned me on Diwali and said she had wonderful news: 2007 was going to be the year all my desires would be fulfilled. I told her she was probably right; I had no desires left, so there was nothing to fulfil!

When common sense tells you something can’t happen, it usually doesn’t

Of course, I wasn’t being entirely honest. I would still love to win that lottery and buy my dream house; I still do have a goal or two left to achieve in my career before I finally resort to growing cabbages in the back garden; and, having given up on love and romance for myself, I now wish them for my son. But that’s a pretty short list

compared to the ones I used to have. In days gone by, I would tell myself that if I ever did run into a fairy godmother or a genie in a bottle who would grant me three, just three wishes, I’d be hard put to decide what to wish for. At any given time, when I was young, my wishes would run into at least three times that number, with parts and sub-parts! Yes, there’s a lot to be said for growing older. Now, where is that fairy godmother? ■

Renuka Chatterjee, 54, is senior editor, Roli Books

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Premature ageing

Amita Malik wonders if young people are ageing too soon

It might be strange that I am worrying about young people ageing too soon. Because ageing by itself is a natural process but ageing prematurely

is not. When I look at 90-plus Zohra Segal, bouncing around when she is 93, shooting off to foreign countries and obviously enjoying every moment of life, I feel cheered. I am just a few years younger and hold her as a role model but have found it almost impossible to keep up with her.

At the other end of the spectrum I came across two younger people. Both in their 40s, they were worried about the normal worries of age that seem to have overtaken them. One of them is someone who loves nature. I have gone bird watching with him when he was in his late 20s and early 30s and driven up to the hills with him for a holiday with family and friends. But now he is hardly in town, always flying off to assignments. He sounded quite dejected the last time we spoke. He said he had no time for exercise. He used to play tennis, at least over the weekends. "I have no time for even that," he said sadly. "I am working so hard. I now have blood pressure and cholesterol problems."

I immediately protested, since he runs his own career. "All this is simply not worth it," I said. "These are the best years of your life when you should have time at home with the family, your little son. Your nine-to-nine routine and frequent trips can surely be cut down and give you some time to relax." "No way", he said, "there is too much competition. I am at the peak of my career and if I let go by even an inch I will be left behind."

That really set me thinking about the stresses of modern city life, where even driving to office is a struggle. I thought of the relaxed life led by my

professor father in the Northeast, with summer vacations and other holidays, enough time for the family to go for picnics or to teach us driving. Dinner used to be an occasion with the entire family seated together, telling each other about their day. My friend's little son is missing all this. What a pity!

My other friend, also in her 40s, is beautiful, has a lovely teenaged daughter and apparently no financial or other worries. She also happens to be a dancer. But she told me sadly that owing to arthritis she has had to give up dancing. She also showed me her arms, which seemed to have got into a curve. "You are something like half my age," I said to her, almost scolding her. "I got backaches and arthritis because of stress in my later life and the process of ageing. You have no business to start so early."

"What can I do?" she replied, "It's the stress. I have endless problems with my domestic servants. They are untrained, lazy and sometimes quite dishonest. I think our lives are now run by our servants." I had to agree with her to a great extent. My part-time maid, the best I can get in a flat without a servant's quarter, may be honest, but she has to be reminded every time about her chores, she comes to work at any old time and is sometimes rude in the bargain.

These trivial things are now ruining our lives. When we lived abroad, we managed without servants because of the amenities available and the luxury of picking up food

at moderate prices if we did not have time to cook. And there are always the young schoolchildren who would come on a Sunday and clean up your house and smile when you offer them tea and cake together with their modest fee, because you admired them for earning their own spending money. It is only recently that students in colleges have woken up to the idea of doing small jobs to finance their studies. I wish we had more of that in India. ■

**Modern city
life, where even
driving to office
is a struggle, is
very stressful**

Amita Malik, often referred to as 'the first lady of Indian media', is a columnist and film critic

H PEOPLE

ALWAYS ASHA



Harmony's first cover girl **Asha Bhonsle** is in the news again. The 74 year-old will sing with Australian bowler Brett Lee, 29, in a new album featuring love songs. The theme: foreign boy woos Indian girl. At first glance, the pairing may seem completely off side but Lee is a trained guitarist and self-taught singer. He even performs with an Australian band when he isn't on tour. "I knew Lee could sing and strum so I wasn't apprehensive," Bhonsle tells media. "He's young, good-looking, intelligent, polite and, most important, musical." She has even managed to teach him a bit of Hindi—he can now write 'Lee' and 'Asha' in the language.

MILESTONE



Appointed. Former CBI director **R K Raghavan**, 65, the head of a committee to suggest ways to curb ragging in educational institutions, by the Supreme Court. The Raghavan panel is expected to submit its report and recommendations by March 2007.

IN PASSING



The last ruler of independent Tripura **Kirit Bikram Kishore Deb Burman**, 72, died of heart failure on 27 November. He was crowned maharaja in 1947 when he was just 13 years old. Though Tripura merged with India in October 1949, Burman remained in power till the regency council was dissolved in 1951. He is survived by wife Maharani Bibhu Kumari Debi.

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BIRTHDAYS



The Hindi film industry's He-Man **Dharmendra** turned 70 on 8 December, quietly, with no celebration or fanfare. Fellow actor and friend Shatrughan Sinha and sons Sunny and Bobby Deol telephoned to wish the actor-turned-MP. And what about second wife and Rajya Sabha MP Hema Malini? "I wished him a happy birthday a day in advance," she says.



Sonia Gandhi celebrated her 60th birthday in style on 9 December. Guests included the Prime Minister and a slew of ministers, and Delhi Chief Minister Shiela Dikshit. Humbler party members burst crackers, distributed sweets and danced to celebrate. And the All India Mahila Congress distributed clothes, blankets and other household items to the poor.



You'd expect this high flyer to party the night away on his birthday. But liquor baron **Vijay Mallya** opted for a low-key celebration on his 51st birthday on 18 December. Unlike last year's five-day-extravaganza in Goa that had the who's who of the film and glamour world in attendance, this year Mallya's family and staff sang *Happy birthday* to him at his Kingfisher Villa in Goa.



Legendary actor **Dilip Kumar**, who inspired superstars like Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan, turned 84 on 11 December. Born in Peshawar as Yusuf Khan, he worked in an army canteen and later a fruit stall before getting his first break in cinema in *Jwar Bhatta* (1944), acting opposite Devika Rani. There was no looking back, with hits like *Jugnu*, *Mela*, *Babul*, *Andaaz*, *Udan Khatola*, *Devdas*, *Deedar* and of course *Mughal-e-Azam*. In 1966, he married Saira Banu, 22 years his junior.

SAY IT OUT LOUD



Arguments are to be avoided; they are always vulgar and often convincing.

—Irish playwright poet and author Oscar Wilde
(1854-1900)

I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even invite me.

—American humour columnist Dave Barry

If you go in for argument, take care of your temper. Your logic, if you have any, will take care of itself.

—American scientist and author Joseph Farrell

It is not necessary to understand things in order to argue about them.

—French businessman and dramatist Pierre Beaumarchais (1732-1799)

Silence is one of the hardest arguments to refute.

—American humorist Josh Billings
(1818-1885)

THE WORD IS OUT

New terms that have made their appearance in newspapers, magazines, books, websites and other recorded sources

man flu *n.* A severe cold, mistakenly self-diagnosed as the flu, particularly by a man. Also: **man-flu**.

Example: Psychologist Professor Geoff Beattie says: "Exaggeration is endemic. But **man flu** is a case of self-deception." Men appear to be conditioned to think that anything that stops them dead in their tracks must be flu, rather than the common cold. A cold simply doesn't sound serious enough.

—Jane Symons, "Women Also Catch Man Flu",
The Sun (England), 30 November 2006

Chindia *n.* China and India taken together, particularly as an economic entity or market. [Blend of *China* and *India*.]

Example: **Chindia** is threatening the world's economic pecking order. The 'China-India' juggernaut will be a \$ 16 trillion economy—on a 'nominal' basis—by 2020, predicts CLSA, a leading international securities research firm.

—"Unstoppable Chindia", *Hindustan Times*, 15 October 2006

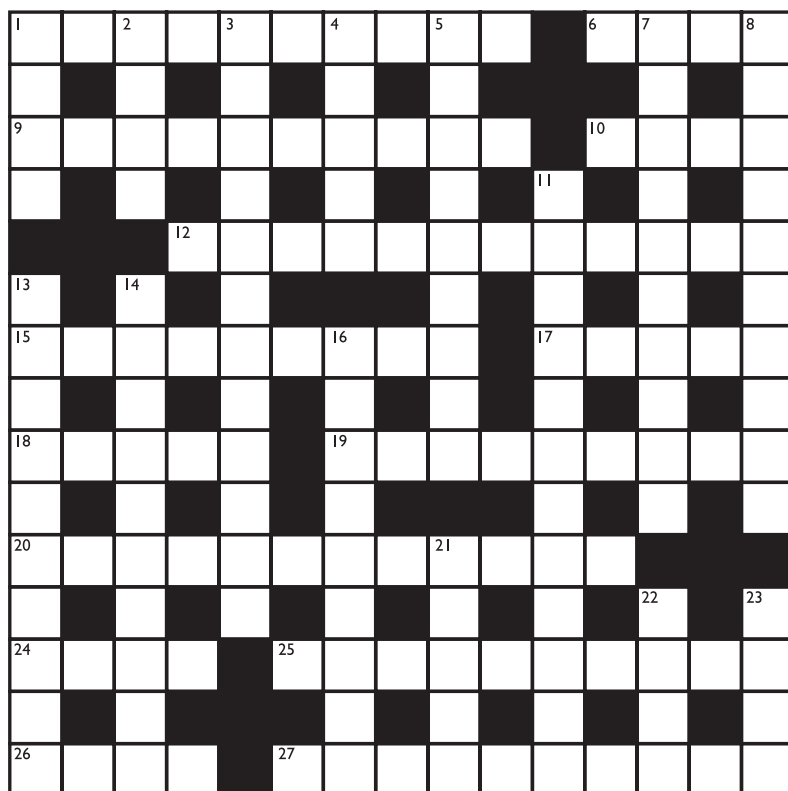
flexicurity *n.* Labour practices that give companies the flexibility to fire workers as needed and offer fired workers the security of government-backed benefits and retraining opportunities. [Blend of *flexibility* and *security*.]

Example: Latest estimates suggest that 34,000 private-sector jobs will be created this year in Denmark. For this, many economists fulsomely praise **flexicurity**—a peculiarly Danish blend of a flexible labour market, generous social security and active labour-market policy with rights and obligations for the unemployed. Under this strategy, workers end up paying high taxes, but trade job security for a guarantee, should they be laid off, of time-limited but generous unemployment pay that they can live on and a promise that they will get new jobs fast.

—"Flexicurity; Denmark's Labour Market",
The Economist, 9 September 2006

Courtesy www.wordspy.com

HEADSTART



EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 28

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS

- 1** A mythical call to halt, in her spiteful stride, a Helen cine-set on exacting her vamping toll? (4 3 3)
- 6** The legendary Mysorean originally considered for 'Birju' Sunil Dutt's role by Mehboob Khan in his 1957 *Mother India* epic (4)
- 9** That ultra-cute across-the-line Sachin shot going well over the fielder stationed there for a possible mishit? (5 5)
- 10** So on the target was a William Tell, Gessler-aiming his bow-and-arrow at the apple of his eye (4)
- 12** On which Don Bradman's pet

baggage man & scorer, Bill Ferguson, rose when, as a 'dot' ball, it came to be faultily entered in the 'board' scorebook? (5 2 5)

- 15** Cheap leap where you are expected to swing (1 3 5)
- 17** Rounded convex moulding for volume between circular bookends (5)
- 18** The one dragging 'Lolita' Lyon to court? (1 4)
- 19** V V S Laxman must, before emerging as the picture of willowy comfort (4 5)
- 20** What Lata Mangeshkar, as 'The Aayega aayega aayega Voice That Haunts', is perhaps still looking for in terms of an 'official' life-and-times biographer? (1 5 6)

- 24** Detective's guide to the answer here? (4)
- 25** Rises spiritedly to the bait offered by the girl with the come-hither look? (4 3 3)
- 26** Perform a staggering act? (4)
- 27** Here's something for the Woman of Substance to look in the eye? (1 4 5)

DOWN

- 1** Rupee one coming out of Buick? (4)
- 2** Look sexy? (4)
- 3** 'The Sardar of Turbaned Spin' in the Test-case of Bishan Singh Bedi (4 2 6)
- 4** Moses urging editor to be victor (5)
- 5** Something that Ajit Agarkar, for all his promise with the bat, regrettably ended up as (1 4 4)
- 7** Humanely called for in the case of the way the wives of Henry VIII went? (1 4 5)
- 8** What Aishwarya Rai, sadly, appears to be, after having looked down at us from every other mag on the stall (5 5)
- 11** Something as which Ameen Sayani (with his Binaca Geetmala *paaidaan*-play) still rules in our 8 p m-Wednesday ears (3 2 3 4)
- 13** Crazy Turkish commander's drive where alone the lemur is to be found? (10)
- 14** Let's hope Ash, still up there on the 12th floor of 'La Mer', goes on to do it with her Abhishek (3 2 5)
- 16** If it turns, it won't be in broad daylight! (1 4-4)
- 21** After Henrik (5)
- 22** Hare resembling a small ostrich? (4)
- 23** Thing you associate with That Wonderful Gene Tierney-Tyrone Power starrer? (4)

For answers, see Page 81

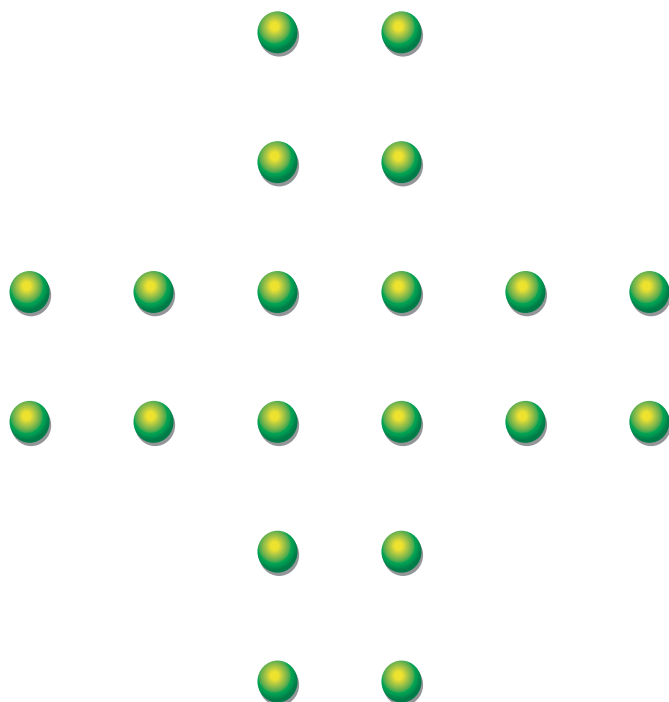
Raju Bharatan is the originator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' crossword in *The Times Of India*, where he set the first 1,500 puzzles

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. The clue, *Walls have them yet they hear not*, has *EARS* for its answer. Next, *pertinacity* could split into *Pert in a city, face to face* into *facet of ace*. For *ANISEED*, the clue could be: *Carminative I see inside and outside*—*AN(I SEE)D*. The possibilities are endless.

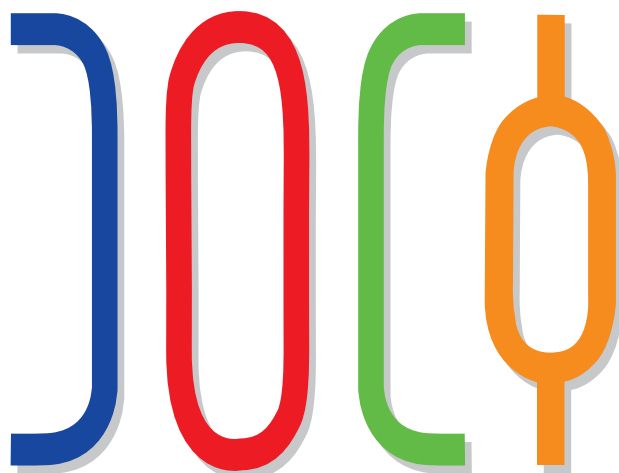
BRAIN GYM

PICTURE THIS

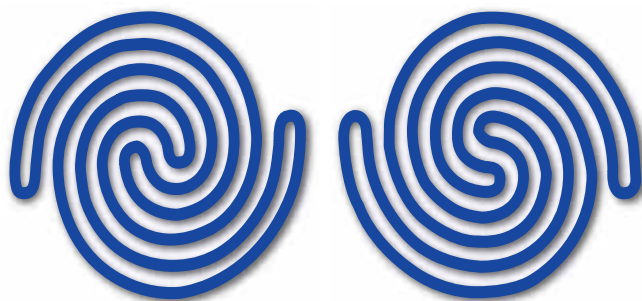
1. Count how many perfect squares of all possible sizes are hidden in the cross of dots. A square is counted if any four dots are placed exactly in its respective corners.



2. Which month is indicated by the strange symbols in this illustration?



3. One of the two spirals in the illustration consists of a single piece of rope that has its ends joined. The other spiral consists of two separate pieces of rope, each with joined ends. Can you identify which is which using only your eyes?



EVEN SPLIT

Below are 12 six-letter words. Each word is split in half to make three-letter pairs, for example, DOMINO would be shown as DOM and INO. These three-letter pairs are all listed below. Put the pairs together to find the 12 six-letter words. None of the letter pairs may be used more than once unless they appear more than once in the box.

TER DOW ANT TER FAB ACE

TLE MAT RAP WIN HOL DLE

HEM BAN LOW TEA KIN SOL

PEL RIC SER SHO BOT WER

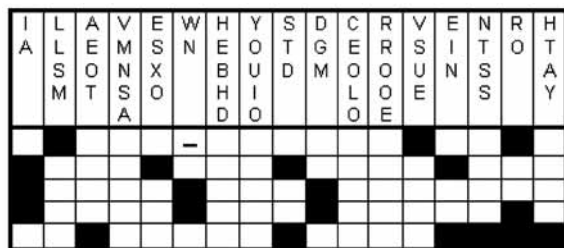
HEADSTART

BRAIN GYM

DROP QUOTES

Solve the puzzle to read the quotes. All the letters are given to you, but can you determine the right place for them? The letters in each vertical column go into the squares directly below them, but not necessarily in the order they appear. A black square indicates the end of a word. When you have placed all the letters in their correct squares, you will be able to read a quotation across the diagram from left to right.

1.



2.



Answers

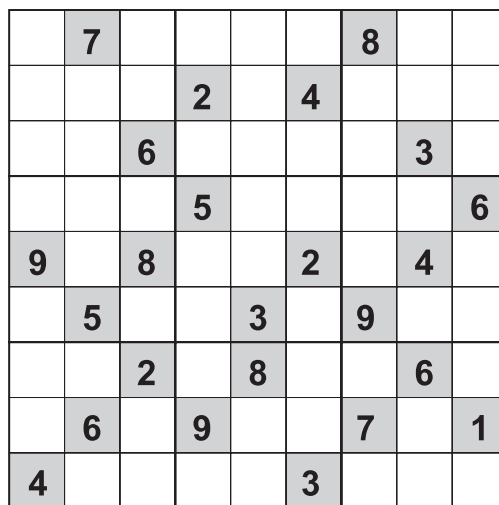
EVEN SPLIT

ANTHEM	HOLLOW	SHOWER
BANTER	KINDLE	SOLACE
BOTTLE	MATTER	TEASER
FABRIC	RAPPEL	WINDOW

DROP QUOTES

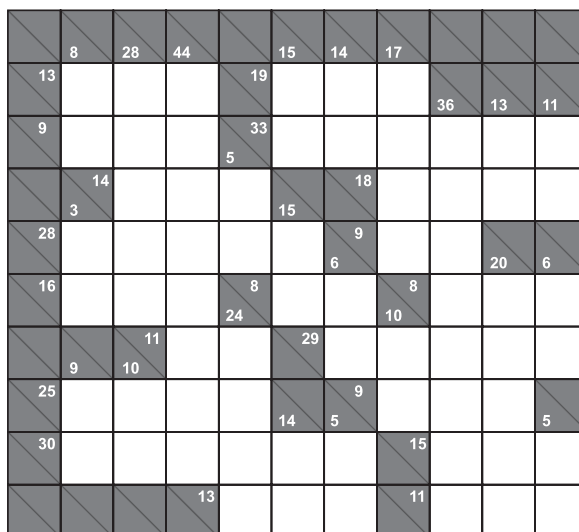
1. A tax-dodger is a man who does not love his country less but loves his money more.
2. Laughter is the shock absorber that eases the blows of life.

SUDOKU FOR YOU



Choose a number from 1 to 9, and place it in the grid. Every digit from 1 to 9 must appear once, and only once, in each of the columns, rows and in each of the sets of nine boxes.

KOFFEE WITH KAKURO



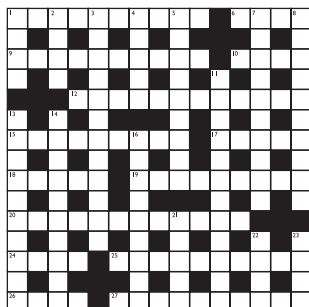
The object of a Kakuro is to insert digits from 1 to 9 into the white cells to total the clue associated with it. However, no digit can be duplicated in an entry. For example, to total 6, you could have 1 and 5, 2 and 4 but not 3 and 3. You may, however, use a number again in the same row or column.

EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 28

78

ACROSS:

1 bell the cat (drawn from Helen's cat-like look); 6 Sabu (The Elephant Boy); 9 clear sweep; 10 dead (*on the target*); 12 Point of Order (Point, in the scorebook, standing for dot ball); 15 a hep place (its 9 letters rearranged: cheap leap); 17 ovolo (o/vol/o: volume between circular bookends); 18 A SUER (A/SUE/R); 19 look tense; 20 a 'ghost' writer; 24 clue; 25 goes for her, 26 reel; 27 a man's stare



DOWN:

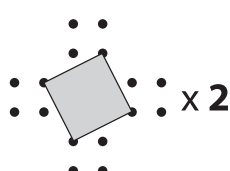
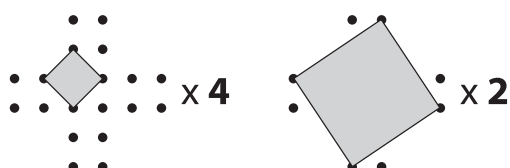
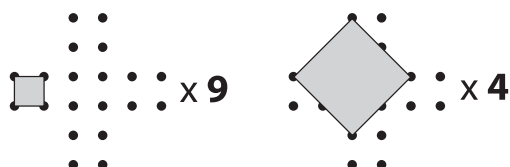
1 Buck: one (i) coming out of Buick; 2 leer; 3 'turn' of phrase (turn meaning spin); 4 Edwin: Ed/win (reference to Edwin Moses); 5 A Zero Hero; 7 a head count; 8 under cover; 11 Top Of The Pops (was Ameen 'Geetmala' Sayani); 13 Madagascar (Mad/Aga's/car: crazy Turkish commander's drive), the lemur is to be found only in Madagascar; 14 set up house; 16 a glow-worm; 21 (Henrik) Ibsen; 22 Rhea (Hare rearranged, its 4 letters); 23 (That Wonderful) Urge

BRAIN GYM

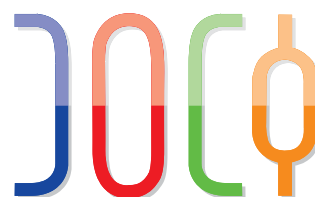
Picture this

1. 21 perfect squares. They are shown in the following five diagrams.

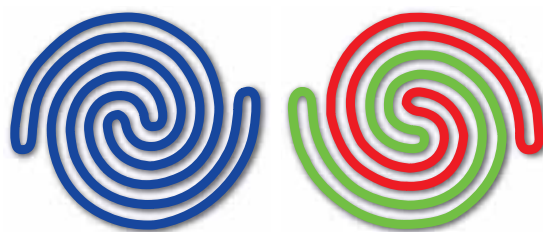
79



2. Covering the top halves of each symbol reveals the month JULY.



3. The spiral with the single rope is the left one as shown in the illustration. The right spiral consists of two pieces of rope.



SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

80

2	7	9	3	1	6	8	5	4
3	8	5	2	7	4	6	1	9
1	4	6	8	5	9	2	3	7
7	2	4	5	9	1	3	8	6
9	3	8	7	6	2	1	4	5
6	5	1	4	3	8	9	7	2
5	9	2	1	8	7	4	6	3
8	6	3	9	4	5	7	2	1
4	1	7	6	2	3	5	9	8

SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

	8	28	44		15	14	17		
13	6	2	5	19	8	6	5	36	13
9	2	3	4	5	7	8	2	1	6
	14	9	3	2	15	18	3	6	7
28	2	6	8	3	9	6	7	2	20
16	1	8	7	8	6	2	10	5	2
	9	10	11	9	2	29	4	8	3
25	8	2	6	9	14	5	9	2	4
30	1	8	2	7	9	3	15	8	5
			13	6	5	2	11	7	1



TEXT: ANJANA JHA; PHOTO: SHILBHADRA DATTA

“Death is more universal than life. After working with people who have been diagnosed with cancer, I want to stand by their side and add life to their remaining days even if I cannot add days to their lives.”

Economist Saktipada Das was 32 years old when he died of an undiagnosed haematological disease in 1970. Almost three decades later, his brother Dr Santanu Das, 63, founded the Saktipada Das Memorial Foundation (SDMF) in Kolkata in 1999. He was based in the US and funds were not an issue. But the project only took off when younger brother **Samiran Das**, 61, gave up his successful event management company to work as chief functionary of the foundation. His focus: underprivileged women, who often die undiagnosed. Supported by cancer institutes in Kolkata, SDMF works to generate awareness, thus enabling early detection. It also arranges referrals. Recently, SDMF has shifted its focus from the South Dumdum municipality in Kolkata to Sundarbans in West Bengal, where it has launched an early detection programme with the help of international bodies like the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) and the American Cancer Society. To date, SDMF has helped over 1.32 lakh people, something that makes Samiran Das, and wife, Debjani, 54, proud.

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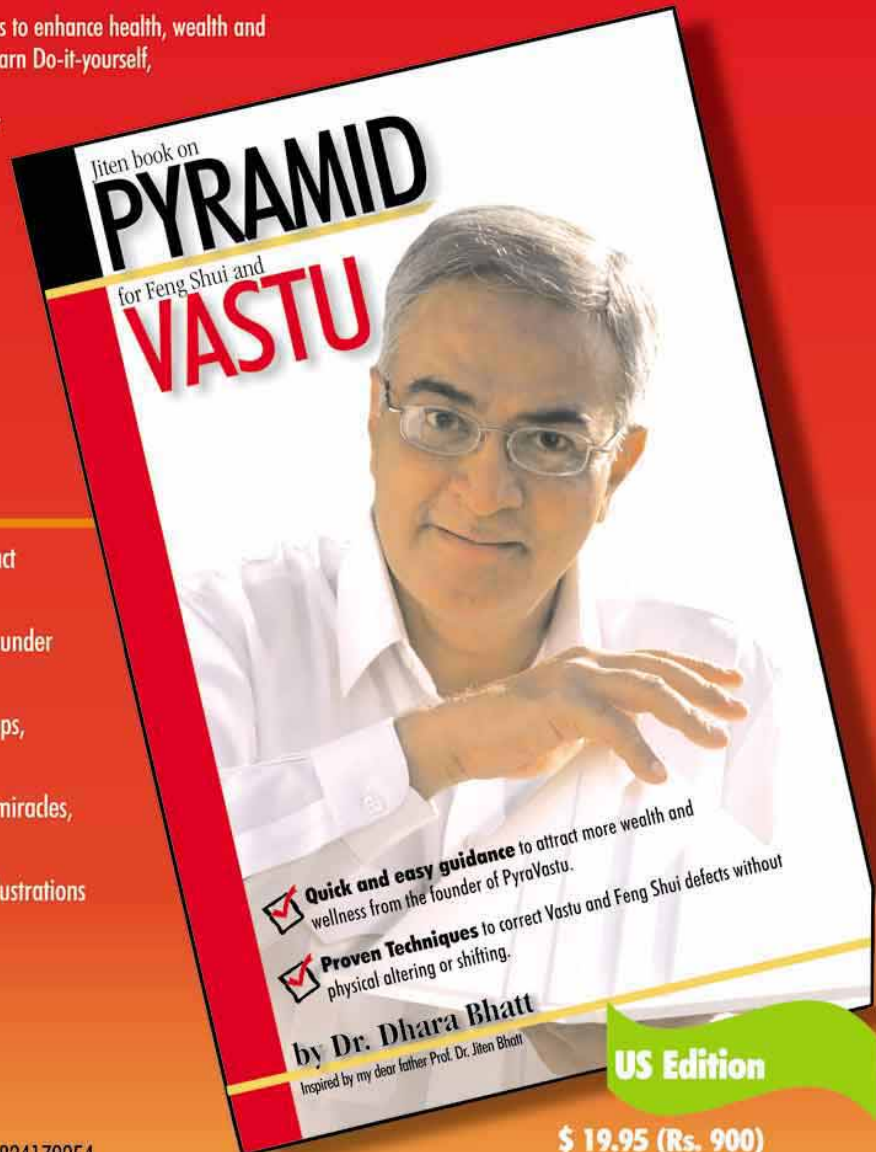
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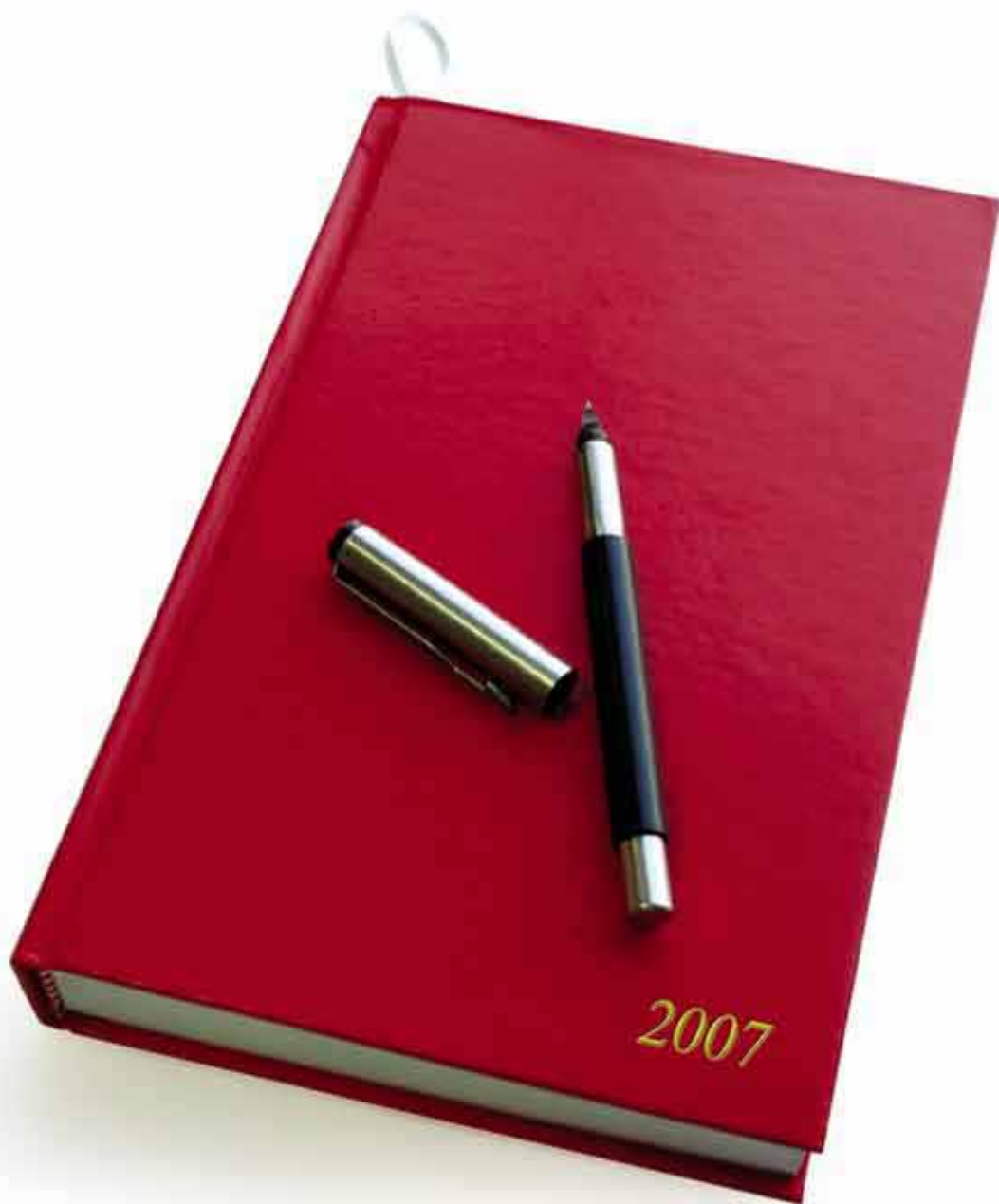


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