

harmony

celebrate age

JULY 2005 Rs 20

Silk and Steel

ANU AGA

Harmony Impact
Silvers in Delhi get
a new old-age home

Rocket man
Rakesh Sharma on new highs

A HIGHER INTEREST

A RECENT NEWSPAPER ARTICLE on the post office Monthly Income Scheme left me thinking. In Santoshpur in South Kolkata, silvers wait for hours at the local post office to collect the interest from their investment. The accompanying photograph of a 71-year-old gentleman, S P Bhattacharjee, waiting for his turn, drenched to the bone in the rain, moved me. The system at the post office, as it exists in most post offices all over India, is still slow. In Santoshpur, the official can process 15 applications an hour. Fearing another queue and another day of waiting, silvers here are hesitant to invest in the 9 per cent Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme, available only through the post office—despite the promise of greater returns.

On one hand you have the state public-relations machine gushing about the rising number of silvers investing in the scheme across the country. On the other is the grim reality of under-equipped post offices and banks. What is worse,

many silvers fear that with the next savings' term, there will be a further drop in the interest rate, eroding their standard of living. There is no financial security, only uncertainty and fear.

After the popular Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana was scrapped last year, the Senior Citizens' Scheme is the only one that provides decent returns. But here too, the interest is taxable. Even Pakistan, with a weaker economy than ours, doesn't tax the returns on investment up to Rs 1.5 lakh in its Bahbood Savings Certificates. Meant for widows and people aged 60 and above, these offer 10.08 per cent interest.

Isn't it time our government took care of our elders? It's something Finance Minister P C Chidambaram needs to think about.

Meanwhile, there is news every other day about various banks introducing special schemes for silvers. Recently, Andhra Bank announced its plan to open special

RITU NANDA



branches for seniors all over the country, beginning with Hyderabad. This announcement was made soon after the bank launched two insurance-linked deposits for silvers. Now, the United Bank of India has introduced a long-term term deposit scheme with 8 per cent interest for silvers.

I would like to congratulate them, and hope other banking institutions follow and introduce such similar services—or even minor facilities like separate queues for silvers. Until the government addresses the issue of tax incentives, any kind of relief is welcome. Spread the word.

Tina Ambani

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Cover picture of Anu Aga
by **Hemant Patil**

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column one

We have been inundated with letters and phone calls after our first anniversary issue. Many of you have called it a “class act” and how it made you feel less frightened about growing older. Some of you have taken vows to reinvent your lives by adding meaningful activities to your routine. We believe that change is good. And so are challenges. Thank you for your support to the spirit of *Harmony*. It will make us work harder.



This month, you will read about the adventurous Purohits trying to get a grasp of their new mobile phone. Giving them tips is Dinesh C Sharma, a Delhi-based science and technology columnist and their new neighbour. Never saying no to new technologies, Mrs and Mr Purohit learnt so much about computers from Sachin Kalbag in the past year that they can teach their silver neighbours a thing or two. But it was time to move on.

There is no right age to learn new things. The traditional rules of later life are being rewritten by almost everyone. For example, Vijay Mehra from Amritsar, featured in the Second Careers section, now runs a school after decades of running a business

On our cover this month, is Arnavaz Aga, former chairperson of Thermax India. Aga has reinvented herself in her own way. While at the helm of affairs, she decided she wouldn't extend her tenure and would hand over the responsibility to her daughter. She retired last year and began working for poor children, among other initiatives. The crossover happened immediately. As Aga shows, accept the changes as they come, or make some yourself.

—Meeta Bhatti

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I am a retired colonel running a residence for senior citizens from the middle and upper classes in New Delhi. In the two years since its inception, I have tried to gauge what the residents need and what keeps them happy. I must say that the problems associated with the housing and caring of silvers are multi-faceted. Every day, we read stories about the elderly suffering in some old-age home or the other. However, in some cases, I am sure this is just one part of the truth.

Everyone knows that the silver generation is hard to deal with. I know it because I, too, am a silver, and am running a residence for seniors. As we age, we acquire wisdom but also many idiosyncrasies, probably because we are learning to cope with our less fulfilling and inactive lives, our rapidly changing physical form and deteriorating looks, our thinning mass of bones and greying hair, and our diminishing social presence and interface. The children for whom we slogged all our lives have now flown the nest. The only choice we have is to live by ourselves. All this naturally makes us insecure. Adding to that insecurity is the realisation that we are closer to death. We become vulnerable, and thus overly possessive of our assets and money and increasingly distrusting of each other.

With all these inhibitions, when we choose to stay at a senior citizens' home we bring to it all our bitterness and doubts. Unable to exert our moodiness and tantrums at home with the family, we feel free to display all our pettiness and whims at the seniors' home. It is easy, then, to find the food and amenities not up to the mark. Many indignantly demand their pound of flesh for the money spent from the management and staff.

Whenever I have had the opportunity to interact with silvers at the Delhi home, I have often been appalled by their churlish behaviour and aggressive demands. An accommodating spirit and a desire to treat the other residents as one's own are all it takes to make life worth living.

COL (RETD) JASBIR SINGH

New Delhi

The letter of the month wins a gift from Vimal

A middle-class senior citizen would choose to travel by air only if there is an emergency like a death in the family or some medical compulsion. The return journey, however, is usually by train due to financial constraints. The reasons are many. Concessions offered to seniors are restricted to basic fares on return or circle trip tickets; discount only on domestic sectors; minimum seven days advance bookings; and a two-day stay at the destination. The All-India Non-Pensioned-Cum-Senior Citizens Retirees' Association requests the Minister for Civil Aviation Praful Patel, the government and the airlines to look into the matter.

ERNEST ABRAHAM

*Convener-cum-General Secretary,
All-India Non-Pensioned-Cum-Senior Citizens Retirees Association,
Bangalore*

In May, one of the leading dailies carried an article on how senior citizens in Kolkata are facing hardship after they opted for the postal department's monthly income scheme (MIS). The article brought to the fore the callousness and incompetence on the part of postal officials who were busy patting themselves for having initiated a new scheme with a higher interest rate than banks. It would be nice if *Harmony*, too, highlights such cases of heartlessness.

MARY ANN DASGUPTA

Kolkata

First, let me congratulate the *Harmony* team for bringing out a great magazine. The mixed bag of informative articles makes for good, healthy reading. However, I hope you don't feature only the elite and the affluent in your magazine. I am a

filmmaker, and have made a documentary on Kolkata's ageing rickshaw pullers. The documentary, shown at the 5th Mumbai International Short Film Festival in 1998 at Nehru Centre, paints a picture of the problems the rickshaw pullers of Kolkata face. Now, I am also planning a feature film on them since I feel strongly for them. It would be nice if *Harmony*, too, keeps its windows open for the poor to highlight their problems.

ANVER K SIDDIQUI

*Inter Languages Media
Visual Imaging for Social
Awareness,
Kolkata*

After reading the travelogue on Mussoorie, "The Sound of Falling Petals", in your April 2005 issue, I want to share with you my memories of Mussoorie 30 years ago. I am 83 years old now, but my memories of that lovely place are still fresh. My husband and I were in Mussoorie for five years, from December 1970 to 1975. He was then working in the National Academy of Administration, which is now called the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration.

When we reached there, winter was in full bloom. Everything around me was white. The snow seemed like falling petals of jasmine. A walk on fresh snow was a pleasure that can't be put down in words. I believe the good old days of hand-pulled rickshaws are gone, but I am sure even now an 8-km walk either to the Mall or on the shaded road of Camel's Back would be pure pleasure. Mussoorie is heaven.

C G MURTHY

Hyderabad

I am a subscriber to your magazine and I thoroughly enjoy reading it. The magazine acts as my companion. Hats off to you! I live in Mumbai and am dependent on public transportation. With the monsoon here, can you publish the BEST routes, timings and the stops made?

PROF SUMAN BAKHAI

Mumbai

As we have a national readership, it would be difficult to publish the bus routes of just one city in the magazine. However, the official site of BEST, www.bestundertaking.com, has the information you need.

—Editors

CONTRIBUTORS

Our man at large this month, **Pavan**

K Varma's

diplomatic calling has seen him serve in many countries.

In India, he has been press secretary to the President of India. He is currently director of the Nehru Centre in London. Varma has also authored several books, including the bestseller, *The Great Indian Middle Class*. His latest book *Being Indian: The Truth About Why the 21st Century Will be India's* (Penguin) has also been published in Britain (Random House) under the title, *Being Indian: Inside the Real India*.



Kirit Somaiya, 53, a former MP from North Mumbai constituency, leads a busy socio-political life.

Besides, being the vice-president of Maharashtra BJP, he is also the founder president of the Investors' Grievances Forum, started in 1994. The forum fights for the small investors' protection.



AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

We are looking for contributions from our readers. Write to us if...

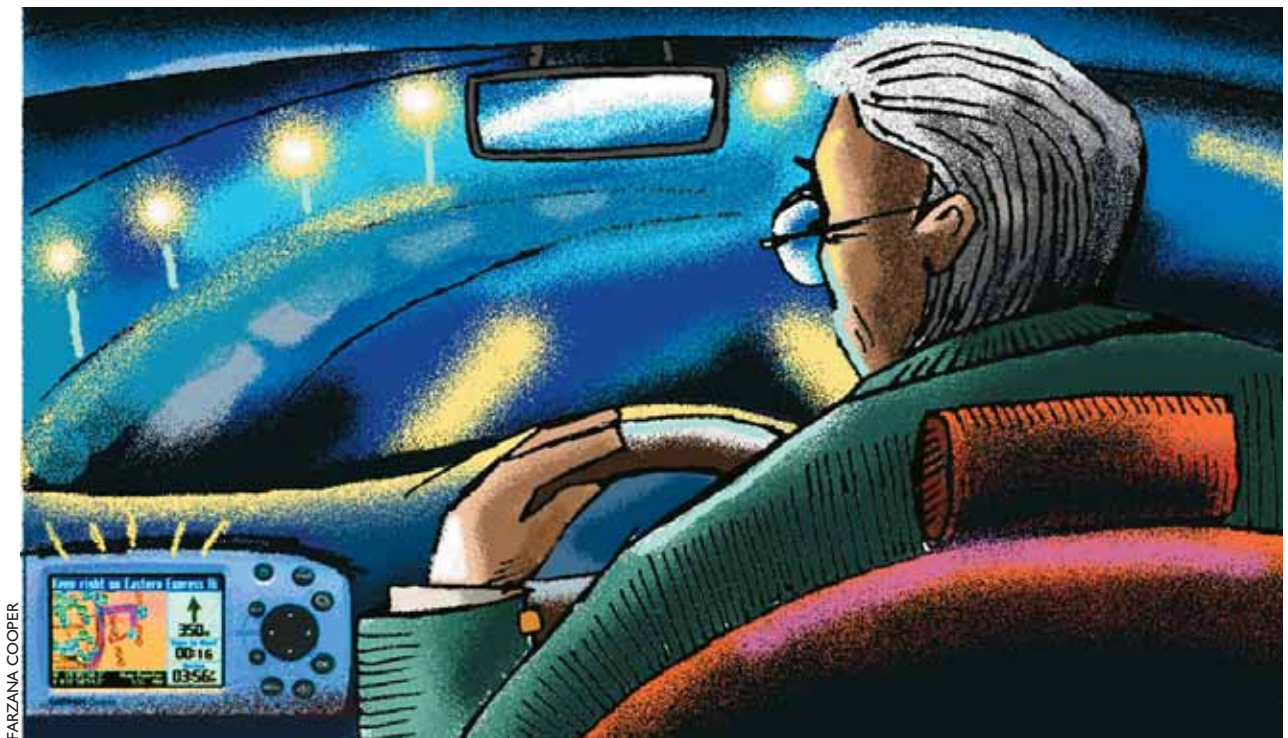
- You had an experience related to money or finance which others can learn from
 - You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
 - You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
 - You want to share your hobbies and interesting travel experiences with others
 - You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
- ...and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'

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ORBIT

Latest products and services, news and views, tips and cribs, quotes and reports—all to jumpstart your month

HARD DRIVE



HERE I AM

It may not make your car loaded like James Bonds' high-tech vehicles, but it comes close enough. The Turn-By-Turn Navigation System, developed by US-based manufacturer Garmin, is a super guide for seniors who drive. Currently being tested in Bangalore, Mumbai, Delhi and Pune, it will soon be distributed in India by Garmin's exclusive sales and service centre, Aerial Services Pvt Ltd. India-specific software and database have been developed by Pune-based Kalyani Net Ventures, a training and



engineering services company for the automotive sector. As for the device, a voice modulator reads out directions, updates fuel position, engine condition, offers options of a country map, city maps, landmarks like ATMs and hospitals and road network, and

displays the information on a screen. Similar in size to a car stereo, it can be plugged into the car battery and mounted on the dashboard. Hand-held versions are also available. It can also be linked to a vehicle tracking software. Price: Rs 12,000 for a basic model, and Rs 60,000 for a sophisticated version.

CRUISE CONTROL

In the US, car accidents are a leading cause of injury-related deaths among people aged 65 and above. But special 'speed of processing' (SOP) training to enhance visual information-processing ability could help prevent car accidents among older drivers, shows new research presented at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Geriatrics Society in Orlando, Florida.

Researchers from the VA Medical Center in Birmingham, Alabama, studied 45 veterans, aged 65 to 80, with impaired vision. A control group received 10 one-hour training sessions on how to navigate the Internet, and the other group received one-hour sessions of SOP training, a computerised instruction programme that gives users increasingly challenging visual attention tasks to complete. There was no difference in the field of vision in the two groups at the start of the study. Results show the participants who had SOP training had significantly faster times on tests that required them to identify a particular object amid different kinds of visual distractions on a computer screen. Lead study author Dr Richard Sims says if SOP proves effective in larger trials too, rehabilitation may be possible for older drivers with visual impairments.



SIMPLY STATS

HOME ALONE

Close to 8.5 million of India's elderly stay all by themselves or with other old people. According to the latest Census figures, about 11 per cent of India's 76.4 million people aged 60 years and above do not have a person below 60 living with them. This includes 4.9 million women (or 12.6 per cent of elderly women) and 3.6 million men (9.5 per cent of elderly men). This does not include those living in old-age homes. In rural areas, 11.9 per cent of the aged have to fend for themselves—in urban areas, the figure is 8.6 per cent.

Of the 8.5 million, over 3 million are aged individuals who live without any company at home. More than two-thirds of these, about 2.1 million, are aged women living alone, while there are about 0.9 million (9 lakh) old men in a similar situation. Another 5.2 million live in homes where the only company they have is another elderly person. Among this lot, the gender distribution is more even with 2.6 million women to 2.5 million men, suggesting that most of them may be elderly couples living on their own.



NEWSWORTHY

**SIXTY-SIXTY**

In May, Punjab lowered the official age for male senior citizens from 65 to 60. For women, it is already 60. The state government hopes the move will see an increase in the number of applicants queuing up for its Senior Citizens' Identity Card. The announcement, however, comes as more proof of the lack of a uniform age for senior citizens across sectors and states in India. Six years after the National Policy on Older Persons, advocated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, conferred the status of a 'senior citizen' on people who have reached the age of 60, state governments, ministries and departments continue to have different ages for extending facilities and concessions to seniors. It's time for standardisation.

GODSEND

Say goodbye to serpentine queues and cramped legs on your next pilgrimage to Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. If the initiatives planned by the Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanam, the trust that manages the temple, are put into action, seniors will be entitled to 'direct darshan' at no extra cost. This privilege, which cuts short hours of waiting outside the temple, normally costs Rs 1,000 and more, while the regular rate is Rs 50. Replacing "unhelpful staff" is also part of the planned overhaul. The multi-crore facelift measures, announced in May, include setting up 20 complaint booths across Tirumala, increasing accommodation options for devotees and renovating free lodging space for pilgrims.

Pension check

For pensioners in Lucknow, information on the status of their pensions is now a phone call away. On June 10, the district administration launched an interactive voice response system (IVRS) for pension-related information. Pensioners need to dial 09415012700 or 0522-2618888 and give their account number. A similar facility will soon be introduced for military pensioners too. There are around 50,000 pensioners in Lucknow district.

LOVE THAT!

CAT HOUSE

Ageing tigers in Sunderban forest in eastern India will soon have an old-age home. The West Bengal government will now take care of old tigers no longer able to catch prey and survive in the wild. The State Forest Department wants to begin rescue operations before the big cats target nearby villages. Spread over 45 acres, the 'home' will have a pond, mangroves, deer and other animals. However, the plan is yet to be finalised.



EVENT

SILVER SPIRIT

A unique performance took a Kolkata drawing room by storm on April 2. In a room filled with seniors, a 60-year-old woman Nilanjana Sen (right) read out lines from her diary in Kavita Poddar's South Kolkata residence.



This marked the launch of Old Wine, a platform designed to help silvers showcase their talent. It is the brainchild of Mira Kakkar, secretary and communications director of the Thoughtshop Foundation based in the city. Kakkar had been mulling over the idea for many years, looking for the right performer. Light broke when she met Nilanjana Sen, a homemaker who had walked into Kakkar's Southern Avenue office looking for a translator's job. "She was an excellent storyteller with a powerful presence," says Kakkar. "All she needed was a platform." However, none of the city's cultural groups were able to provide her that—until now. Bandana Saha, one of the participants, says, "Rarely are seniors given the importance that young artists get." Sen, though gifted, has no formal training. She has been living the life of a recluse after losing her younger daughter in 2001. Old Wine, she says, has given her an "opportunity to express herself". For details, call 033-24646718.



Unfair!

For many cosmetic companies, unfortunately, young will always be beautiful. The latest casualty of 'ageism' at the beauty store is British model and actor Elizabeth Hurley. After a decade of being the face of Estee Lauder, the international skincare and cosmetics brand, Hurley, who turns 40 this month, has been replaced by Oscar-winning actor Gwyneth Paltrow, 32. Hurley will now represent the brand's Re-Nutriv anti-ageing range.

MEDIA WATCH

ROCK ON

Rock legends The Rolling Stones found an unlikely ally in the US last month—arch-conservative commentator Isaiah Z Sterrett, known for his diatribes against all things ‘liberal’. When writer Henry Fountain wrote disparagingly in the *New York Times* about the Stones’ announcement of yet another world tour—“Must older people aspire to prance around singing Jumpin’ Jack Flash?”—Sterrett struck back in his column. Sterrett wrote, “Most older people needn’t aspire to prance or sing, since most older people, like most younger people, are capable of neither. But most older people aren’t part of the Rolling Stones.” Age should be a barrier to nothing, Sterrett said, citing the example of 101-year-old dancer Doris Eaton Travis, who is 40 years older than Mick Jagger, is still performing on Broadway. “I would go along with the Stones-are-too-old thesis only if the *Times* could produce five or six 30-year-olds with the energy of Jagger.” Touché.



ELDER POWER



Elders can save the world—if only the world lets them. That’s what Dr Bill Thomas, a geriatrician based in New York, argues in his new book, *What are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World*. Dr Thomas says society looks at old age and sees only decline, making it blind to some of the miraculous things old age has to offer. These include the historical role of old people—not old generals but old people—as peacemakers and stewards. He writes, “Elders can no longer win bar fights... They can’t enforce their will through violence on other people and they can serve as peacemakers for that very reason. And elders generally don’t lust after the latest sports car from Ferrari; they’re more interested in the well-being of their family.” He calls the emotional life of elders in general more positive, less negative, more resilient than the emotional life of younger people. And here’s the clincher: “Let’s not forget grandparenting. In a way, it’s a bigger invention than the wheel or fire. It has actually been critical to shaping who we are as a species.”



VIVA EUROPE

Go to Europe if you want a long career in films. That’s what British actor Charlotte Rampling, 59, believes. Speaking at the Cannes Film Festival in May, she said she was still working because European filmmakers were not as barbaric as those in Hollywood about ageing. “It can be quite beautiful,” she said. “A few wrinkles and looking different, that’s no reason to be put away. It’s a form of racism.” The actress has made almost 50 films over 40 years, including the 1973 classic *The Night Porter*.

TRENDS

SACK RETIREMENT

Here's a resounding 'NO' to mandatory retirement. According to a 10-country survey of global attitudes to ageing published in May by HSBC, the international banking group, 80 per cent of people believed employees should be able to carry on working at any age. Support ranged from 93 per cent in the US to 62 per cent in India. More than half thought retirement was a whole new chapter of life and a time for personal challenges and risks. Seventy-one per cent said they had taken steps to prepare for retirement and 77 per cent said they would work. Forty-five per cent thought raising the retirement age is the best way to tackle the financial burden caused by longer life spans and declining fertility. Only 26 per cent preferred higher taxes, and 15 per cent lower pensions.

The poll canvassed the views of 11,500 adults in Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, France, India, Japan, Mexico, the UK and US. "It is critical that governments, corporations and financial institutions understand these emerging trends if we are to successfully tackle these issues," says Sir John Bond, chairman of HSBC.

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR JULY

1. **Play hard.** Hold a sports competition for senior citizens in your community. More than a decade ago, silvers in the city of Boston decided to hold an annual event that allowed them to be more active. The result: the Greater Boston Senior Games, held every May, which have blossomed into a four-day sports event for people over the age of 50.
2. **Let silver shine.** Organise a local contest for silver beauties. Take a cue from China, which held its first ever Silver Aged Beauty Contest in April (see Orbit in *Harmony*, June 2005). From a field of over 6,000 entrants, 68-year-old Jin, a grandma who break-dances to keep fit, won the crown.
3. **Grow a dream.** Ask your neighbourhood park authorities for your own patch of green—and then let your imagination run riot. At the famous Chelsea Flower Show held in London at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, 300 veteran soldiers who live at the hospital helped design their own garden this year to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War
4. **Get on your bike.** Cycling is not only a great way to improve your fitness but also a means of socialising. Watson's Wanderers, a group of cycling pensioners from Chester in the UK, has recently won the Stay Active Award, launched by Powergen Staywarm, the fixed price gas and electricity service solely for the over-60s, to encourage silvers to keep fit.
5. **Cash in.** Did you ever collect stamps, LPs or coins? Launch a treasure hunt in your home and round them up. In Queensland, Australia, 76-year-old Ken Leitch, an avid coin collector, started up a mail order coin business on *eBay.com*. Leitch has over 100 online auctions and operates with a successful sales rate of 85 per cent.



Safe deposit

The United Bank of India has introduced a long-term term deposit scheme—between seven and 10 years—with 8 per cent interest for senior citizens.

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

LIFE'S A STAGE



FARZANA COOPER

"I am acting now." These words by late prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru still resound in my ears. It was a sultry day in May 1956. And the venue, or rather the stage, where Panditji said he was 'acting' was the drawing room of his home at Teen Murti Marg in New Delhi, which is now called Nehru Museum. I was directing *Bacchon Se Baatein*, a small documentary film for the Children's Film Society of India. A number of children had gathered to meet their beloved Chacha Nehru. Indira Gandhi, along with 12-year-old Rajiv and 10-year-old Sanjay, was also there. While Rajiv and Sanjay sat with the children, their mother rearranged the seating so that Panditji could sit properly. When the lights, mikes and camera were ready to roll, she requested that Papu, as she called Panditji, be called. The children were instructed not

to move from their positions so that the camera angle was not disturbed. Panditji sat on the sofa, picked up a small girl who was sitting in front of him and made her sit next to him. This relaxed the children and they felt at ease. "What should I talk about?" he asked me. "Anything that you want future generations to know," I replied.

The fans were switched off and the camera began rolling. Panditji spoke about stars, mountains and rivers. "You will never be alone if you make friends with stars. When you sleep in the open at night, you see millions of stars. Try to recognise them and learn their names. You will become their friends."

It seemed that at heart he was a very lonely man. In spite of being the darling of millions and being surrounded by so many men and women, he was like a lotus in water—unaffected by his surroundings and having his own purity of thought.

A child from the audience asked Panditji, "Have you ever acted in a film?" Panditji replied, "I am acting now." With these four words he let out the secret of life, the hidden key to happiness, and the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which says, "Perform every action with your heart fixed on the Supreme Lord; Renounce attachments to the fruits; Be even tempered in success and failure. For this attitude of mind will give you happiness."

Success and failure are both impostors. They are two sides of the same coin. In every success, there is a seed hidden for failure and vice versa. One must perform every action as if he is acting. On the stage, an actor loves, fights, weeps and laughs. Only after the scene is over does he come back to his normal behaviour. But sometimes, even actors can't leave their realities behind.

Let me tell you about a drama presentation of the Ramayana. After a powerful diatribe against Sita, the actor playing Ravana asked for her pardon in an undertone while the actress looked back adoringly. This was very strange indeed. Both characters were on opposite sides and could never behave so

sweetly with each other. Tulsidas, the sage who had penned the great epic, had never mentioned such lines where Ravana sought Sita's pardon. The audience was in turmoil. The producer of the play had to come on stage to placate the crowd. He revealed that the actors had got engaged that very day and were soon to be married. The audience had a hearty laugh.

I want to cite the example of Swami Ram Tirtha, a Vedantist from Punjab, to drive home my point. The swami returned to his hometown after a distant tour. "You look happy. Your mission must have been a success," his friends said. "Yes, I enjoyed it. Some people were abusing Ram and a few threw stones at him," the swami laughed. "How so? They ill-treated you, yet you are laughing," asked his astonished friends. "You do not understand. They abused Ram. They ill-treated Ram. Not 'me'. Ram is this body. 'I' was standing aside, enjoying the fun," the swami said.

Enjoy the fun, whatever may be the circumstances, and you will not feel the pinch of the 'sling and arrows of outrageous fortune'. We should treat life like a grand play and not get internally affected by anything good or bad, comic or tragic.

—Dr Pandit Vachaspati, Mumbai

ASSISTED LIVING

For long, organisations working with the elderly have felt the need for a good referral book that could provide information on assistive devices. As such a book is not available in India, a Pune-based organisation for the elderly—International Longevity Centre—approached me with the idea. I took up the task as I had about 10 years of experience working at the Queen Mary's Technical Institute for Disabled Soldiers at Kirkee, Pune. It's an NGO that works towards the rehabilitation of disabled soldiers.

As I began my research for the devices, I realised that the need for the book is much stronger now since the population of those above 60 in India is steadily growing. Twenty-five years down the line, about 17 per cent of the population will be silvers as against the current 8 per cent.

Advancing age brings with it innumerable restrictions. Simple things like sitting on a chair or reading a book or newspaper begin to feel arduous. Here, modern technology can come to the rescue. For those with creaky joints, a chair with a tilting seat can enable them to sit without much effort. For those who have difficulty eating with their hands, the use of articulate spoons and forks that bend at an angle—to make taking the food from the plate to mouth easier—can solve the problem.

In other words, use of assistive devices empowers silvers to lead an independent life. This, in turn, helps them to remain productive. It also leads to better inter-personal relations between generations.

My study involved talking to local manufacturers, bio-medical engineers from Pune, and the Maratha Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture. I also surfed the Net for hours. I realised there are thousands of assistive devices available in the international market.

I short-listed about 1,400 items that suited our requirements in terms of utility, cost and commercial viability. These devices have been listed under various categories with specification details, usage and the contact details of manufacturers. About 300 photographs have been used in the book to explain their usage. The book also contains the United Nations, World Health Organisation and Government of India policies on the subject.

I feel this 200-page guide will be a pioneering reference book in the country—useful to all. Now, it is awaiting sponsors to print it.

—Col (Retd) Arun Moghe, Pune



Palra's pied piper

All young men in Jhajjar's Palra village are proud to follow the footsteps of Umrao Singh Yadav, the only living Indian recipient of the Victoria Cross, writes **Teena Baruah**

In the Army, they say, wherever a *fauji* (army man) goes, the whole *paltan* (platoon) follows. It holds true for Umrao Singh Yadav, who has been an enduring symbol of pride and inspiration for the youngsters of Palra village. There isn't a single family in this 700-home village in Haryana's Jhajjar district that hasn't enlisted its young men in the Indian Army.

Yadav is a major reason. Over the years, he has continued to encourage the youth in his ancestral village to enlist in the Army and do the country proud. Delhi-based Brigadier Chittaranjan Sawant, a radio and television commentator for the Republic Day parade, says, "Palra, with 4,500-odd people, may well have the highest per capita personnel in uniform in the country."

Yadav, an 85-year-old honorary captain from the 22nd Field Artillery Regiment under the British Raj, is the only living Indian recipient of the Commonwealth's highest award for gallantry, the Victoria Cross. So far, only 27 Indians have received the honour.

In the grounds of his seven-room *haveli* in the village, Yadav gives the village youth tips on physical



Umrao Singh Yadav motivates a batch of new recruits at the artillery centre in Hyderabad in the 1970s

fitness, suggesting various leg and chest exercises for greater physical strength. One of his disciples is 30-year-old *havaladar* Rajesh Kumar. “We have learnt 50 per cent of our combat tricks from *Daddu* (grandfather),” he says. “For instance, he boosted our endurance by keeping us hungry for hours. This really prepared us for the endurance drills during training when we went without sleep and food for 72 hours at a stretch.”

Boosting enrolment in the Army has not been Yadav’s only preoccupation. When he returned to settle down in his ancestral village after retiring from the Indian Army in 1970, he mobilised villagers to set up a government school in the *mohalla* (neighbourhood). But, almost 35 years later, the school imparts education only till Class X. The reason, the octogenarian says, is because the Yadavs are a minority in the predominantly Jat community in Haryana.

After the school was set up, Yadav wanted to send his then five-year-old daughter Indira to one such school. His decision was met with stiff opposition from the village, where women still wear heavy veils. Refusing to cave in to the pressure, Yadav not only sent Indira to school but also to college. Indira, now 52, teaches history at the Bharatiya Senior Secondary School in Bhiwani, 60 km from Palra.

His efforts to bring about a social change around him have made him Palra’s poster boy. And six decades after his heroics in World War II, Yadav’s story of valour still echoes in the homes of Palra. He says it’s his training

that helped him endure the furiously fought war. He was part of the 2.5 million Indians and Nepalis who fought on all fronts from Europe to Burma (now Myanmar). On December 15, 1944, Yadav’s unit was fighting an advancing Japanese

toughest in the entire war. “The ferocity of the battle that Umrao Singh fought, and nearly died in, showed how difficult it was to fight the Japanese,” he says. The territory was mostly roadless, thick malarial forest, crossed by vast flowing rivers and often

Yadav insists that all boys who aspire to join the Army should follow a strict regime

Army in the Kaladan Valley of Burma when they ran out of guns and ammunition. While his *paltan* left to get supplies, Yadav—then a *havaladar*—volunteered to remain on the front line, alone. He seized a gun barrel and fought a desperate hand-to-hand combat that lasted for 20 minutes, killing 10 enemy soldiers. He was found six hours later, barely recognisable with 22 bullet and shrapnel wounds. A year later, King George VI awarded him the Victoria Cross.

Former BBC correspondent and author Mark Tully calls the Burma campaign one of the

subject to torrential rain. “The VC is rarely awarded,” adds Tully. “And this can be gauged by the fact that Umrao Singh was taken to Britain to receive his medal.”

Looking back, Yadav says, “Better than my army training, my training at home served me well in those crucial moments. I learnt to wield a baton at the age of five. And that’s why I insist that all the boys who aspire to join the forces should be put on a strict fitness regime.”

Havaladar Rajesh Kumar couldn’t agree more. “We have watched *Daddu* on TV with pride on



Yadav is the richest man in Palra, Jhajjar; he gets a pension of about Rs 18,000 per month and owns a seven-room *haveli* in the village



Photos courtesy: UMRAO SINGH YADAV

Clockwise: Portrait of a young Umrao Singh Yadav painted by a British colleague in the Royal Regiment of Indian Artillery, Mumbai; the emblem on a saucer is part of the dinner set Yadav got as a gift from the British Raj after he won the Victoria Cross; Yadav with Maj Gen (Retd) Manjit Singh at a defence reunion function in 1990

Republic Day for 54 years," he adds. For the past four years, however, Yadav has stopped accepting invitations to attend the ceremonies. "At 85, they expect me to go for rehearsals on Rajpath at 4 am in the freezing winter," he reasons. "My ageing body doesn't allow it anymore."

The trips to the UK every alternate year, though, to attend the biannual reunion of winners of the Victoria and George Cross

Prakash, 45, who is a head constable in a local police station, often accompanies his father.

At the 1995 World War II victory commemoration, then British prime minister John Major had met Yadav. Major realised Yadav was getting a paltry pension of £100 per year. Soon after, Major told the British media he was raising the pension for Victoria Cross winners to a tax-free sum of £1,300 per year

Yadav refused, saying, "To sell it would mean tainting my honour and the memory of the men who fell beside me." Impressed, the Haryana government raised his pension from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 every month.

With his pension raised—Rs 9,000 a month from the Centre and another Rs 1,000 from the Haryana government—Singh became the wealthiest man in his village. He put his money to good use—his mud hut with cracked walls was replaced with a *haveli*, which has become a meeting place for off-duty soldiers, who regularly come to Yadav for a pep talk.

In September, Yadav will attend the reunion of Victoria Cross winners

are more comfortable—he is flown in on a Royal Air Force plane and booked in some of the best hotels, like the Union Jack Club of Waterloo, "*jahan nalke se thanda aur garam paani aave*" (where you get hot and cold water from the tap).

This September, he'll be taken on a yacht across the Thames and invited to a dinner hosted by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace. Yadav's younger son Ved

(about Rs 1.03 lakh), and that he was inspired to do so after meeting "an elderly gentleman in a turban".

Another incident back home earned Yadav more praise. In 1982, a Bristol-based British antique dealer offered to buy his Victoria Cross, made from the barrel of the cannons used by the Duke of Wellington to defeat Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo, for Rs 30,000. A furious

Today, Yadav is examining the bullet wounds of 24-year-old soldier Surender Singh, who recently killed three militants in Poonch in Jammu. Yadav is full of appreciation for the young man. He compliments him and says to those present, "Even after being hit the second time, he didn't feel any pain till he shot the last terrorist." When Surender Singh gets up to limp back home, he is smiling ear-to-ear. ■



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My father, my hero

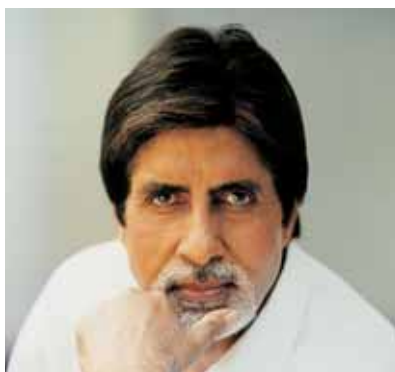
FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, MY BROTHER AND I knew that our father—Harivansh Rai Bachchan—was very special and that he needed his space. The kind of adulation he received was an indicator of who he was. Today, I too have many fans but my place in show business is nothing compared to the popularity he commanded.

He made sure he answered each and every fan letter personally, even posted them. I wish I could emulate that but I don't have his perseverance. I want to compile some of these letters into a book. Some of his friends have already published volumes of his letters, but there must be hundreds of them still out there. I want to do this, even if it is just something for the family to remember him by.

He wrote us countless letters when we were at boarding school or working away from home. They did not just have the regular information like 'I am well and your mother's well too' but also contained small stories, a little anecdote or a proverb that moulded our thought process. When we were at home, he always found time to converse with us during dinner. The conversations and the priceless letters he wrote to us were rich with teachings and stories about life and how to live it. On occasions when we needed his physical presence, he would be there by our side.

My father had immense will power and determination. I have seen him work 22 hours non-stop to meet a deadline, being 120 per cent committed to the job at hand. Even when he was unwell, he maintained a strict schedule that was set around his meal hours, medication time and physiotherapy. That is another quality I try to follow as much as I can.

He was almost immobile in his last years. He used to sit in his wheelchair at one particular space in the living room. One day, I came to him exasperated with life and said, "*Kya sangarsh karna padta hai*" (Life is such a struggle). He looked at me and said, "*Jab tak jeevan hai tab tak sangarsh hai*" (Till there is life, there is struggle). It was an eye-opener. Here I was thinking that all my responsibilities were over and that I didn't have to think any more but, in reality, as long as I am alive, there will be struggle. How we face and overcome these struggles is what makes a human being out of us—a superior human being if we succeed, or an inferior one if we succumb to them.



DABOO RATNANI

I still follow one thing he taught us: every morning I tell myself, I am getting better and better

Now when I feel like talking to him, I read his books. If I still don't find what I am looking for, I imagine what he would have told me if he were alive. The most complex problems will have the simplest of solutions if we look at them correctly and with the right attitude. That's what my father did and he answered all our doubts.

We discovered that in his poetry too, he put simple words together to provide profound insight:

*Jo beet gayee so baat gayee.
Jeevan mein ek sitara tha,
Mana woh behad pyara tha,
Woh dub gaya to dub gaya.*

Things will go wrong but you don't need to fret over them. Life will go on.

I still follow one of the things he taught us—each morning when I wake up I tell myself, 'Everyday, in every way, I am getting better and better.' I genuinely feel good. Today, I tell my family to say these words with conviction and see the effect it has on them. That is my father's legacy. ■

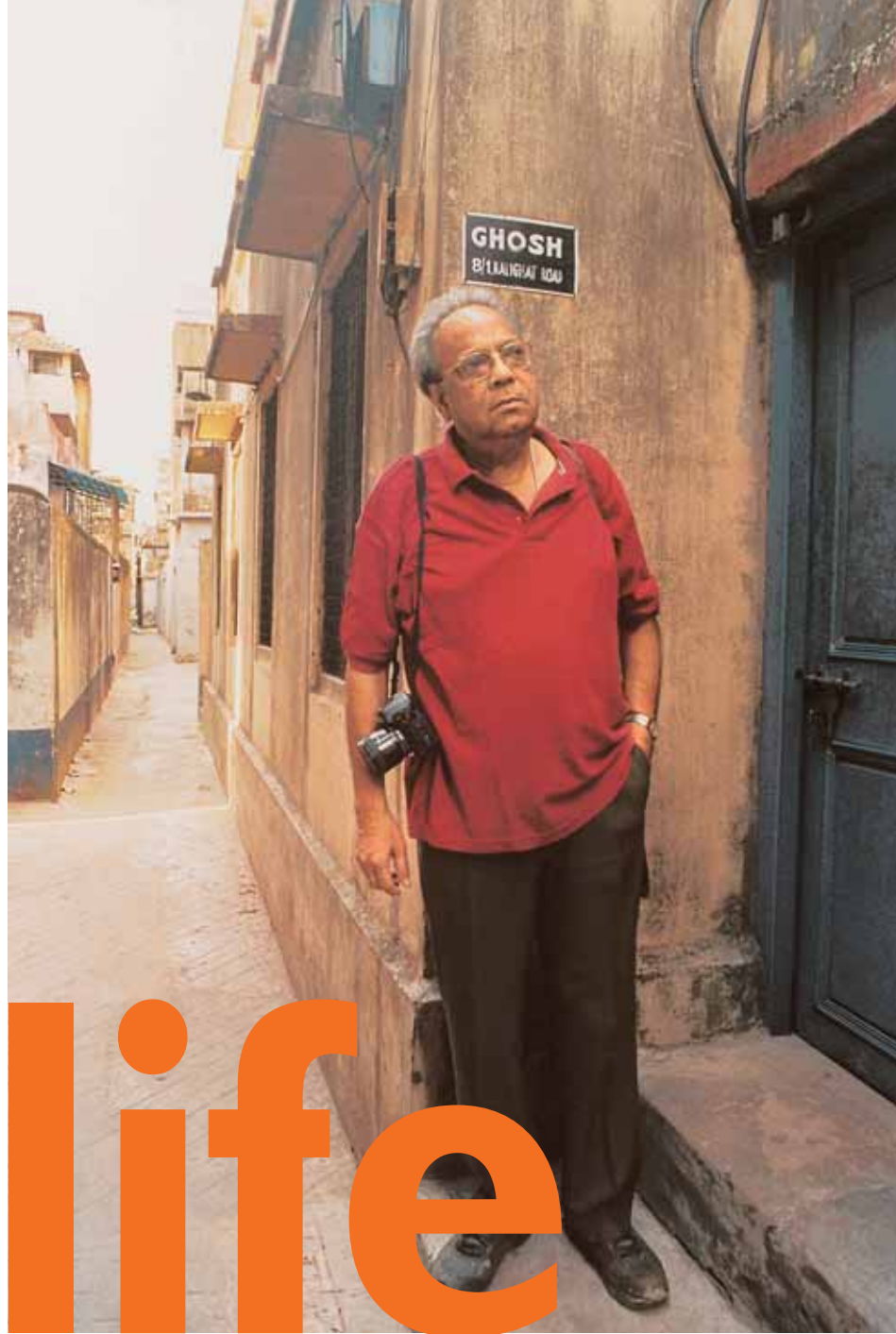
Amitabh Bachchan, 62, is an actor and goodwill ambassador for UNICEF

The time of his

Since 1968, Nemai Ghosh, best known as Satyajit Ray's photographer, has chronicled the best of Bengali film and theatre, discovers **Anjana Basu**
Photos: **Nemai Ghosh**

Of all the people who knew Satyajit Ray, one man still considered the last word on the filmmaker is photographer Nemai Ghosh. Some images from his extraordinary body of work will soon be seen in a book titled *Satyajit Ray: A Vision of Cinema*.

For 25 years, Nemai recorded almost every moment of Ray's cinematic life—his expressions, his movements, his moods. He is still called 'Ray's photographer'.



SHILBHADRA DATTA

"I found him more interesting than his actors," says the 71-year-old, who has over 90,000 photographs of the filmmaker. There are also photographs of actors of Bengali theatre, politicians, artists and tribals. They cover the shelves of a narrow whitewashed room in his house behind Purna theatre, in Bhowanipore, Kolkata. A room so narrow that besides an old television set, a table and desk, there's nothing else but the shelves that rise to the ceiling.

Nemai Ghosh outside his house in Bhowanipore, Kolkata

"I found him [Ray] more interesting than his actors"

Nemai's interest in photography developed quite by accident. He was 34 and his passion was theatre. He had loved to act since his college days—Bengali and Hindi film actor Utpal Dutt saw his performance in one of his college plays and inducted him in his Little Theatre Group. Later, Nemai and his actor-friend Robi Ghosh broke away to form a splinter group, Chalachol.

In those days, his circle of actor-cinematographer-filmmaker friends like Robi Ghosh, and Banshi Chandragupta would congregate at his home to play cards. Never a card player, Nemai would sit and watch, and listen to their conversation. One day in 1968, a friend brought over a fixed-lens QL 17 Canonette camera and gifted it to him. He was fascinated. That's the time that his actor-friend Robi Ghosh was shooting for *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*, a children's film directed by Ray. On a visit to the sets, Nemai took his new camera along and took some photographs of the actors rehearsing. "Banshi saw the photographs and introduced me to Manik Da [as Ray was fondly called]," he recalls. "He asked me to go ahead and take some more."

It was the beginning of a long relationship. The photographer and the filmmaker rarely spoke to each other, yet understood each other perfectly. In fact, Nemai had access to Ray's home and sets in a way few others did. "I visited him whenever I liked, even as early as 6 am or as late as 10 pm," he says. "He would throw me a new book of photography and his wife Bijoya would bring me a cup of tea, and I would sit there for long."

Nemai recorded the filmmaker's life on his sets, setting it down in the subtle interplay of black and white. He captured him briefing actors like Sharmila Tagore and Sir Richard Attenborough. Nemai was also moved to occasional experiments in colour, the first being a portrait of Ray biting his tongue. The filmmaker wrote in a foreword to Nemai's first book, *Satyajit Ray at 70*, in 1991: "For close to 25 years, Nemai Ghosh

"I visited his home whenever I liked, as early as 6 am or as late as 10 pm"

Satyajit Ray in a pensive mood





has been assiduously photographing me in action and repose—a sort of [James] Boswell working with a camera rather than a pen. Insofar as these pictures rise above mere records and assume a value as examples of a photographer's art, they are likely to be of interest to a discerning viewer."

Before the book came out, Nemaï compiled an album of his photographs in 1986 and wrote to Henri Cartier-Bresson, the famous French photographer, for his seal of approval. Cartier-Bresson invited him to Paris. A year later, he scraped together enough money to buy a ticket and

presented himself at the photographer's home. "Here is Ray's photographer," was Cartier-Bresson's greeting. Seated in the huge drawing room at a low table piled with books, Nemaï found himself, despite his protests, sipping his first glass of wine. Cartier-Bresson persuaded him to stay a few more days, putting him up at the guesthouse in his apartment building, and introduced his work to Serge Tubiana, editor of *Cahiers du Cinema*, an influential French film magazine. Tubiana agreed to publish some of his photographs and Nemaï flew to London where he met Ray's son Sandip. Sandip

Ray looks up at Binode Behari's fresco on the ceiling of the Kala Bhavana hostel, Santiniketan, 1971

"Through his visual gift, Nemaï allows us to be intimate with filmmaking," wrote French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson

telephoned his father with the news and Ray instantly rang up Nemai's wife Shibani.

He returned to India triumphant. Cartier-Bresson also wrote the foreword to *Satyajit Ray at 70*, which was sponsored by Kodak, the photo company. It went: "Through his visual gift, Nemai Ghosh allows us to be intimate with filmmaking, and to feel with great fidelity the drive, the alertness and the profundity of this giant of cinema in all his majestic stature." A string of international exhibitions followed between the years 1991 and 2002.

Only once was Nemai without his camera when around Ray. On April 23, 1992, the filmmaker died, nine days before his 73rd birthday. Nemai was among the hordes of people who came to pay their last respects. Filmmaker Mrinal Sen says it was the first time he saw the photographer without his camera. "I went up to him, gently put my hand on his shoulder, and asked, 'How is it you are not with your camera?'," recalls Sen. "Is it of any use now, Mrinal Da?" replied Nemai.

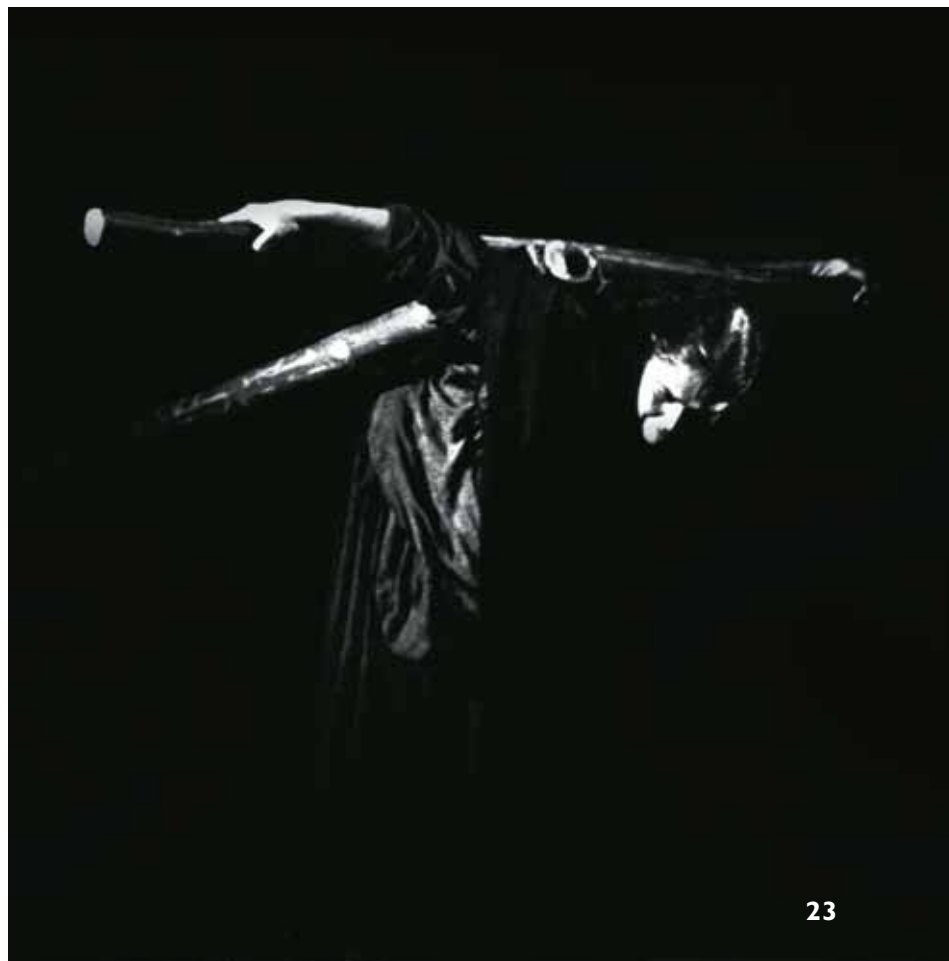
Ray wasn't the only filmmaker Nemai captured through his lens. He also visited filmmakers Ritwik Ghatak, Gautam Ghosh and M S Sathyu on their sets, and captured their passion and eccentricities. And he never forgot his first love—theatre—regularly photographing experimental theatre groups in Kolkata. "At no point did I lose touch with theatre and its progress," says Nemai. "I was no longer a part of it, but I watched from a distance through the lens

of my camera. It was as if the camera was an extension of myself that built an invisible bridge between me and the stage." Actors Utpal Dutt and Sombhu Mitra and Tapas Sen, the master of theatrical lighting, inspired the techniques and staging of his photographs.

Nemai has taken over 12,000 photographs of the theatre, some of which are part of his book *Dramatic Moments*, which is a record of theatre in Kolkata since the 1960s. It captures directors and actors like Sombhu Mitra, Utpal Dutt, Tripti Mitra, Badal Sircar, Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, Manoj Mitra and Bibhas Chakraborty. "Shooting with no flash and at slow-shutter speeds to capture those dramatic moments has always been thrilling," he says. Theatre historian Samik Bandyopadhyay

Theatre historian
Bandyopadhyay says
Nemai captures the
intense passions and
pains that agitate
the complete artist

Usha Ganguly plays *Himmat Bai*, an Hindi adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* in a Rangakarmee production in Kolkata, 1998





“At no point did I lose touch with theatre and its progress. I watched it from a distance through the lens of my camera”

Anasuya Majumdar during a performance in Kolkata, 1992



Amar Ganguly as and in *Galileo*, in Bohurupee production in Kolkata, 1980

observed in a foreword to Nemai's exhibition *Faces in and Out of Time*, "The creative exercise, as recorded by Nemai Ghosh, captures the intense passions and pains that agitate the complete artist."

Human documentary has always been an area of interest for Nemai, whether it was the interplay of actors on Satyajit Ray's sets, or on stage. In the late 1990s, he embarked on another kind of documentary, a series of portraits of the tribals of Bastar and Kutch, setting them against walls, architecture and other human landscapes. He has enough photographs to put two books together but the project is waiting for a corporate sponsor. "I thought I should freeze-frame them because it won't be long before they are all 'civilised', and no longer look ethnic," says Nemai, who has published four books after *Satyajit Ray at 70*. The latest is *Satyajit Ray: A Vision of Cinema*, for publisher I B Tauris, with text and captions by Andrew Robinson.

Nemai also plans to capture the artists and sculptors of India in the act of creation. Most of the major artists of Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai have given him

time, except for Ganesh Pyne and M F Husain. "I have yet to see another photographer working with such single-minded dedication and total passion," says artist Paritosh Sen. "Both his works in black and white and colour are of an extremely high standard and it is difficult to say which is better. I look forward to many more exhibitions of Nemai Babu's work in the days to come."

Meanwhile, Nemai is taking up only those projects that really excite him—at 71, he feels he has the right to take life at his own pace. He goes for a morning walk and sips cups of tea while watching television in his narrow study. He has no other hobbies or pastimes, though he confesses to listening to music while he sorts out his professional and personal "negative thoughts". Of his three children, his son Satyaki, a fashion photographer, is the only one who shares his father's passion. "If Satyajit Ray was my oxygen," says Nemai, "my son Satyaki is now my emotional support." That support is enough for a man who works with a Nikon by available light, immersed in recording the decisive moment in a medium under threat by digital photography. ■

"If Satyajit Ray was my oxygen, my son Satyaki, who is a fashion photographer, is my emotional support"

Home affairs



On March 2, K Lal turned 90. But there were no candles. None of his children were present. For the government-run old-age home in Narela in New Delhi, where Lal has spent the past nine years, it was just another day, for just another resident. **Teena Baruah** spent his birthday with him.

A Day in the Life of K Lal

Harmony May 2005



When *Harmony* published an exposé of life in Narela Old Age Home in New Delhi in May 2005, Dr G Narendra Kumar, director and secretary of the Department of Social Welfare, wrote back to us,

announcing the opening

of a new 'model' home in Delhi. The jury's still

out, though, on whether it will fulfil its promise, says **Teena Baruah**

In May 2005, *Harmony* published "A Day in the Life of K Lal", the story of a 90-year-old resident of Narela Old Age Home in Delhi—a tale of corrupt and callous staff, and lonely and discontent residents, who even referred to themselves as 'society's forgettables'. This harrowing expose of real life in an old-age home struck a deep chord among our readers.

It also evoked a response from Dr G Narendra Kumar, director and secretary of the Department of Social Welfare. He wrote to *Harmony*, and while defending the

Narela home—"I agree there have been service deficiencies, but we haven't received any complaints from the Narela home about the staff taking cuts"—he announced the opening of a new old-age home in Vikas Puri, designed as "a model home". Now, the Department of Social Welfare plans to move the residents of the Narela home and Delhi's second government-run old-age home in Kalkaji to the new home, a vindication of our article.

Built on two acres of land, the home in Vikas Puri, which has an initial budget of Rs 72 lakh, will

be able to accommodate over a 100 silvers. It will be open to seniors living in Delhi without the support of their families and no means to sustain themselves. Interested candidates will need to submit an application in any of the 10 district offices of the department, along with proof of income, and possibly a recommendation by an MLA or MP. Ad-hoc committees will then go through these applications and make the selection.

Kumar claims the new home—with 40 rooms, doctor on call, library, recreational hall and a



ASHWANI CHOPRA

The 40-room 'model home' for silvers in Vikas Puri, Delhi, is spread over two acres

proposed landscaped garden—will be disabled-friendly, fitted with low-gradient ramps and grab rails. The home, according to Kumar, is also equipped to deal with Delhi's chronic water shortage with an underground boring pump, a 35,000-litre water tank and an in-house water purifier. And each of the 40 rooms, with either two or

Residents and staff at the two existing homes, though, are not as excited about the move. Calling the new home "just a beautiful building", Prem Kaur Bedi, 56, the new superintendent of the Narela home, says it still needs a lot of things to become a home, like beds, cooking ranges, medicines and coolers. She has drawn up a list of requirements

frequently. And good hospitals like Safdarjung Hospital and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences are also located nearby." Saksena has suggested that the move to the new old-age home be deferred till the end of the year.

At the Narela home too, Bedi says it is a difficult decision for the residents to shift. "Some of them have lived in this home for 15 or more years," she says. "We are giving them some time to think it over. We want them to be totally satisfied. When they visited the home recently they were pleased with it but now they are having second thoughts. They want to visit the place again and check if there is adequate ventilation and light."

Living arrangements are also a concern. "Some, like K Lal, have asked for separate rooms like the one he has now," adds Bedi. "He has also requested that the male and female wards should be distanced from each another. A few others wanted to know if they could have their meals in their rooms." K Lal has other

Silvers aren't too happy about the new neighbourhood of 1984 riot victims

three beds each, will have an attached bathroom. The department aims to group residents according to common interests and provide them with a resource person, who will encourage them to take up a vocation. It plans to invite people from the neighbouring Vikas Puri area to adopt seniors so that the residents have a family to go to on weekends. In addition, Katha, a prominent NGO, has offered to organise regular storytelling sessions at the home, says Kumar.

and sent it to the Department of Social Welfare, and is still waiting for a response.

"Our residents are happy here so I don't see the reason for them to move to a new home," says Rajeev Saksena, 40, superintendent of the Kalkaji home. "Kalkaji is in a relatively prosperous South Delhi neighbourhood, so we get a lot of contributions, like clothes, food and furniture from the community. The neighbours also organise *bhajan* and other interactions with residents



(Left) Another view of the building; Residents of Kalkaji and Narela old-age home at the new home

apprehensions about moving to Vikas Puri. “One thing that’s giving us cold feet is the rough neighbourhood,” he admits. “It is a settlement for displaced 1984 riot victims. And they have their own problems to consider, so we can hardly expect to get help and company from them. Moreover, I am afraid we might get robbed or assaulted when we go for a stroll after sunset, or go to the market to buy our personal supplies. Also, though the new

homes—as addressed by K Lal and his fellow residents in *Harmony’s* May 2005 story—will be rectified in this new home. For starters, the staff-resident ratio in the Vikas Puri home has still not been decided. “We will begin with the existing staff from the Narela old-age home, including two social welfare officers, one superintendent and four caregivers,” Kumar informs us. “We also plan to outsource cleaners, cooks and some more

The National Institute of Social Defence, which is funded by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, trains caregivers for the elderly but the Department of Social Welfare is not going this route, preferring to enter into an agreement with an NGO—Kumar claims around 30 organisations have already approached them to help run the home. Until then, he says, they will work with existing staff. “Our priority is to start the home immediately,” he insists. “After all, it takes some time to create an ideal home.”

Caretakers at the home will be assessed for zeal and commitment periodically

home has ramps and rails, its toilets are fitted with Indian-style commodes. For senior citizens like us, especially those suffering from arthritis and other joint-related problems, that is difficult to use.”

That apart, it remains unclear whether the problems faced by residents in existing old-age

caregivers who will take care of unwell seniors. We have already placed an advertisement in national newspapers, seeking efficient and committed caregivers. When hired, we will assess their zeal and commitment periodically. There will be no permanent positions in the home, so the scope for corruption will be completely eliminated.”

With the Social Welfare Department in a rush to commission the new home, and Kumar dismissive about the charges of corruption made against some of the same ‘existing staff’ by residents of the Narela home in *Harmony’s* story, the real fear is that the new ‘model’ home may just turn out to be a case of old wine in a new bottle, landscaped gardens and recreational halls aside. ■



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Anu Aga relaxes at her home
on Boat Club Road, Pune

HEMANT PATIL

Silk & steel

After 19 years of hectic activity, businesswoman and former chairperson of Thermax India, Anu Aga is making time for the things she loves most—reading, writing, travelling, social causes and, above all, her grandchildren, says **Nilanjana Sengupta**

Arnavaz Aga's house on the banks of the Mutha River on Pune's Boat Club Road is like its owner—simple yet elegant. Plain wooden furniture upholstered in warm colours lends a cosy touch to the living room. Books on Indian tradition and culture, management and travel are stacked neatly on shelves along with business magazines that feature her on the cover and in major stories inside. A few books are strewn around on a wooden coffee table in the centre.

With minimal effort, 62-year-old Anu Aga, as she is popularly known, pours steaming black coffee from a bone china teapot into two cups. She ignores the sugar and cream. Though she had a late flight from Mumbai the previous night, there is no sign of fatigue this morning. Running a quick hand over the pleats of the thick-bordered cotton sari, Aga is a picture of composure and poise. "People call this Anu Aga's uniform," she says with a chuckle.

Aga is always in her trademark cotton or silk saris, whether it's for a talk on women achievers at a convention organised by the Indian Institute of Management (Kolkata), for the pages of the November issue in *Business Today* as part of the top 25 most powerful women in business, or while accepting the lifetime achievement award at the *Financial Express*-Electrolux Women in Business Awards, as she did last year. Just like the sari, the no-nonsense expression on her face, reflecting steely determination, is an intrinsic part of her.

This calm determination has helped her family and company Thermax India tide over trying times. The death of her husband Rohinton in 1996 from a heart attack thrust her into the chairperson's role of Thermax, an engineering company that was begun by her father A S Bathena three decades ago and later managed by Rohinton. Just as Aga, till then director of human resources, was finding her feet as the head of Thermax, she

suffered another deep loss—the death of her 25-year-old son Kurush in a road accident.

At the time, Thermax's growth curve dipped and share prices plummeted from Rs 400 to Rs 36. An anonymous letter from a shareholder accusing her of letting him down forced her to take stock of the situation. "I realised I wasn't capable but was only pretending to run the business," she says. Losing no time, she detached herself from day-to-day operations and brought in a foreign consultant to restructure the company—the move revived its fortunes.

Since its turnaround, Thermax, with its presence in 14 countries, has emerged as a leading manufacturer of engineering products and systems for industries. "Despite stiff challenges at work and crises at home, she succeeded in separating her ownership and professional responsibilities, so crucial in the leadership of a closely held family enterprise,"



“I know many people who have held on to their posts, with the organisation waiting for the old lady or man to step down. I didn’t want that for myself”

recalls P M Kumar, former head of human resources, under whom Aga had trained in the 1980s.

With the company firmly back on track, Aga felt the need to focus on other interests. “I know many people who have held on to their posts, with the company waiting for them to step down,” she says. “I didn’t want that for myself.” In October last year, after 19 years with Thermax, Aga handed over the charge to daughter Meher Pudumjee. “She was hesitant and felt I could have carried on,” says Aga. “But I told her this was her moment. If she was not keen, I would find another chairperson.”

A staunch believer in succession planning, Aga wanted to guide her daughter while she could. “I don’t want her to take over when I die,” she wrote in her column “Reaching Out” in *Fireside*, the Thermax newsletter. Her confidence in Pudumjee wasn’t misplaced. Pudumjee was named one of India’s top 30 achievers in April 2005 by *India Today*. “She has an uncanny business sense,” says Pudumjee. “Sometimes what works for me as a chemical engineer may not actually work; she has the means to point that out.”

Meanwhile, six months into her retirement, Aga’s light brown diary of engagements is still full. In it, she diligently marks

her appointments—as trustee in charitable organisation Akanksha Foundation, as board member in Mumbai-based Women’s India Trust and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in Delhi, a director at Thermax, and one of the directors at weekly newspaper *Tehelka*. “She is a rare breed, an elite Indian who is unafraid to speak out and take up cudgels for the public’s interest,” says Tarun Tejpal, CEO of *Tehelka*. The admiration is mutual. “There is a price to pay for being silent in a democracy,” declares Aga, her brow creased faintly. “*Tehelka* is brave for fighting corruption and standing its ground in the face of odds.”

Aga was one of the few people who signed a cheque for *Tehelka* when its website was fighting a legal battle against the government over the exposé of high-level corruption in the defence ministry in 2001. Later, Tejpal heard Aga give a series of talks against the communal riots in Gujarat in 2002. Her uncensored outrage spurred him to invite her as a director when he started the newspaper in 2003. After the riots, hers was one of the few voices that spoke out against the establishment without worrying about the consequences to her company or family. “Nothing suffered, and I am glad I spoke out,” she says.

Aga has other passions. A social worker by training—she did her Masters in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai—Aga spends lots of time discussing projects with Akanksha, an organisation that educates poor children in Mumbai and Pune. She was instrumental in the opening of its Pune branch, six years ago. Aga funded and gave the organisation free space in Thermax's premises. In July, she will train welfare workers for 10 municipal schools in Pune.

Aga's son Kurush, who urged her to spend more time and money on social causes, boosted her sense of social responsibility. "I feel the real purpose of business is human well being," says Aga, who claims she is hopeless with numbers but more interested in human capital, recognising it as the most important stakeholder in a corporate set-up. Since 2003, Thermax has put aside 1 per cent of its annual profits for the social sector.

Even as Aga's commitment to society takes up most of her energy, her time with grandchildren Zahaan, 9, and Lea, 6, is non-negotiable. "I was a 'hi and bye' granny. But now I am going to change all that," she announces. Aga has just spent the summer with them at a rented apartment in Vancouver, Canada. "On some days, we did the waking-up-late and breakfast-in-bed routine."

At home in Pune, Aga prefers the 'early to bed and early to rise' routine. Her day starts with exercise, usually a mix of cycling, yoga and walking. She doesn't watch too much TV, preferring to



Aga with her grandchildren Zahaan and Lea; with daughter Meher and son-in-law Phero

person, she likes loosening up at parties by dancing a bit. "And my favourite water sport is snorkelling," she reveals. "It is a whole new world under the sea."

Being open to challenges and taking them on confidently is second nature to Aga. "Full of dynamism, she is unafraid to take tough decisions when needed," says Lalita Gupte, joint managing director, ICICI Bank, who worked closely with Aga on various committees of the Confederation of Indian Industry. "I reckon the events in my life have taken the fear out of me and made me bold," says Aga. Earlier, she would touch wood whenever anything unpleasant was said. "Now even a log of wood can't change my destiny," she shrugs.



Courtesy: ANU AGA

"I was a 'hi and bye' granny to my grandkids, but now I am working towards changing that"

catch up with the news through papers. She also likes to watch movies at the local cinema hall. "I admire Aamir Khan for his commitment to role playing and the dignified manner in which he handles his personal life," she says. Sometimes she watches films on the home theatre at her daughter's house. A sociable

It is a lesson she has learnt well. After her husband passed away, Aga read up extensively on death. Though reading gave her understanding, attending courses in Vipassana—a Buddhist meditation technique—near Nashik helped her accept death. "Even now, an hour of meditation every day gives me strength," she says.

On a television interview telecast in May, Aga compared life and death to the rising and setting of the sun. "When the sun sets, it is accepted as a natural process," she said. "Similarly death is not a tragedy; when one has to go, one will go. I don't want to sound like a saint, but at least I am aware that I am on this earth for a short time." She plans to make good use of every moment. ■

Season's greeting

Extreme weather doesn't affect those who practise yoga daily, says **Shameem Akthar**

SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS, WHETHER IT IS THE heavy monsoon or any other extreme season, do not cause health problems. Rather, it is our weak health that makes us succumb to these changes. Yoga urges you to actively contribute towards maintaining your body, which is a marvellous example of biomechanical engineering.

Those with robust health can withstand the rigours of seasonal vagaries. Such robust health calls for strong immunity, where immune cells are on alert to protect you. It calls for a smooth blood circulation. It calls for a healthy skeletal frame. And it calls for a super-efficient metabolism that keeps you invigorated.

Regular practise of yoga provides you with all these benefits, and more. Your practise does not have to be rigorous. Even a simple cluster of a few gentle poses can armour you against health disasters induced by seasonal ups and downs. These poses include the *parvatasana*, lying locked angle pose (*supta baddhakonasana*—see box), thunderbolt pose (*vajrasana*), butterfly pose (*titali*), tiptoe pose (*padangushtasana*), boat pose (*navkasana*), etc.



Beginners are intimidated by the flexibility demanded of most yogic poses. On the contrary, flexibility of the mind is more important. Most poses have gentle variations. And most poses can also be attempted with wall support, or props. These help to ease beginners deeper into practise, after which they can jettison such external aids. One example is the tough shoulder stand, or its gentler variation, called *viparita karani*. This is an anti-ageing pose that stems age-related problems, since it works against the drag of gravity. In fact, ancient yoga texts promise that dedicated practise of *viparita karani* can even halt death.

Regular practise of sitting meditative poses (like *vajrasana*) can re-infuse your body with youthful flexibility, making your legs more supple, and your hips looser. Your metabolism is boosted because the blood supply is redirected from the legs towards the digestive system, thus helping to control blood sugar fluctuations. By relaxing the mind, these

poses key into our bodies the programming of healing. This positive programme overwrites the viruses of ill-health that keep sneaking in, especially during the change of seasons. 🌸

Yogic moves

Lying locked angle pose (*supta baddhakonasana*)

Lie down on your back. You can use a bolster to support the upper back and neck region. Bring the soles of your feet together. Try to bring up the feet as close to the groin area as possible. Rest the back of your palms either on your thighs or on the floor beside them. Shut your eyes, relaxing completely, and breathe normally. Start with just a few minutes. Later, extend the *asana* time to five to 10 minutes. The gentleness of this pose is deceptive since it is extremely powerful. It revs up blood circulation by

relaxing the blood vessels. It improves the efficiency of the heart and is therapeutic in all cardiac problems. It opens up the chest, offering relief in all respiratory ailments. And it massages the thyroid gland, helping to balance its hormones. The thymus gland is also balanced, enhancing our immunity to respiratory ailments. Because it tones the abdominal region, it aids in digestive problems, boosting metabolism. Other benefits from the *supta baddhakonasana* include lowering blood pressure, relieving flatulence (gas), improving kidney problems and menopausal woes, and preventing hernia.

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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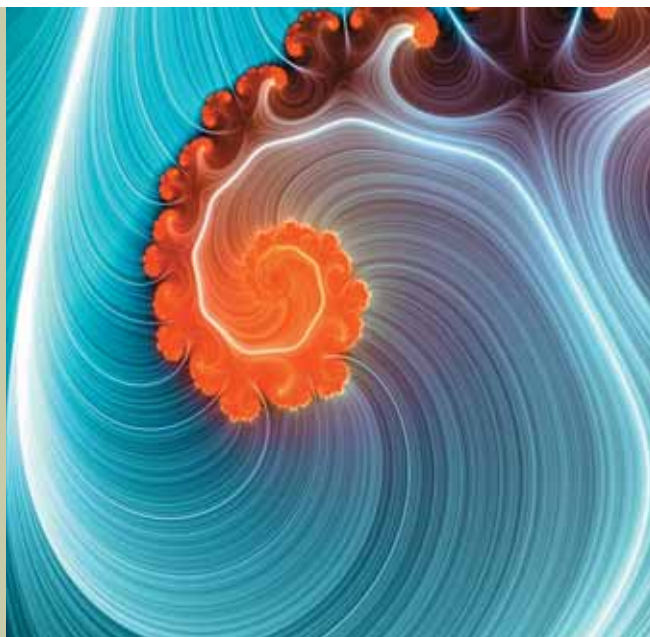
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HEALTH BYTES

SOOTHING MELODY

Music may not cure cancer. But it can help you endure the pain and give you a reason to live on. Delhi-based Society for Gerontological Research tried music therapy on five cancer patients aged 50 and above, suffering from sleeplessness, loss of appetite and severe pain, at Shanti Avedana Ashram hospice in the city. For a fortnight, devotional music was played for them for 15 minutes every day. Within 10 days, the participants were sleeping and eating well. They even complained less about their pain and were more friendly and sympathetic to those around them. The research was conducted by gerontologists Sunder Gujral, Kalyan Bagchi and nutritionist Seema Puri from the Society for Gerontological Research.



DANCE OF HEALTH

You can waltz your way to good health. Really. A medical study of 469 people over the age of 75 conducted by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York concludes that ballroom dance lowers the risk of dementia. Following complex dance steps and moving with the rhythm of music work the brain out, keeping senior citizens happier, and Alzheimer's disease at bay. The study was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in May. Studies on the fitness benefits of ballroom dance have also been conducted by California State University at Long Beach, showing that even beginners can get their heart rates up with a five-minute warm-up and 20 minutes of cha cha, polka or swing. Moderate ballroom dance burns 250-300 calories per hour, and vigorous dancing as



much as 400 calories per hour. If that's stirred your interest, pick up the June issue of *Harmony* and leaf through the 'Orbit' section for the addresses of some dance schools in India.



KING OF HEARTS

Dr Kevin Channer, a leading cardiologist based in Sheffield in the UK, doesn't just believe that male menopause is a reality – he believes men develop heart disease because of it. Dr Channer led an eight-year-long study of male cardiovascular illness at Sheffield's Royal Hallamshire Hospital in a bid to understand why men die of heart disease more than women; statistics show that one in five men and one in six women die every year of coronary heart disease. His research points to the existence of male menopause, otherwise known as 'andropause'. "Testosterone levels drop with age in men, which in turn leads to an increase in cholesterol, insulin resistance and blood pressure, all of which can lead to heart problems," he told *Yorkshire Post Today*.



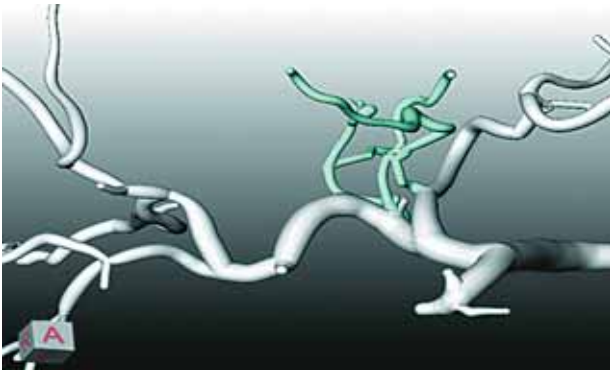
BLACK MAGIC

A few cups of black tea everyday can keep debilitating arthritis away. That's what Dr Tuhinadri Sen and his research team from the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, Jadavpur University, discovered recently. "Black tea can alleviate the chronic inflammation of auto-immune disorders like rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and gout," said Dr Sen to *The Telegraph*.

"Tests on rats show that it reduces swelling and pain, two cardinal signs of inflammation. It also protects the body from harmful free radicals, which, if produced in excess, can lead to severe tissue injury."

CELL ATTACK

Despite low-fat diet, some people suffer from heart disease. A study conducted on mice at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis, Missouri, reveals that inside each cell in the walls of our blood vessels is a tiny compartment called the mitochondrion. It churns out compounds that carry stored energy. With age, these leak an extremely reactive form of oxygen that later escapes and lets out an electrical charge. Scientists found that although normal mice rarely acquire heart disease caused by clogged arteries, the mutant mice developed the disease, even when fed on a low-fat diet.



THE HOME FRONT

Dr A M Khan of the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare is currently developing a healthcare plan for old-age homes in Delhi. He studied eight private and public old-age homes in the city. Dr Khan says, "In free-stay homes, unwell residents were sent back to their relatives. In the expensive homes, seniors are asked to foot exorbitant medical bills." None of the homes Dr Khan studied was prepared for medical emergencies. (Also see "Home Affairs", page 26).

SWEET SURPRISE



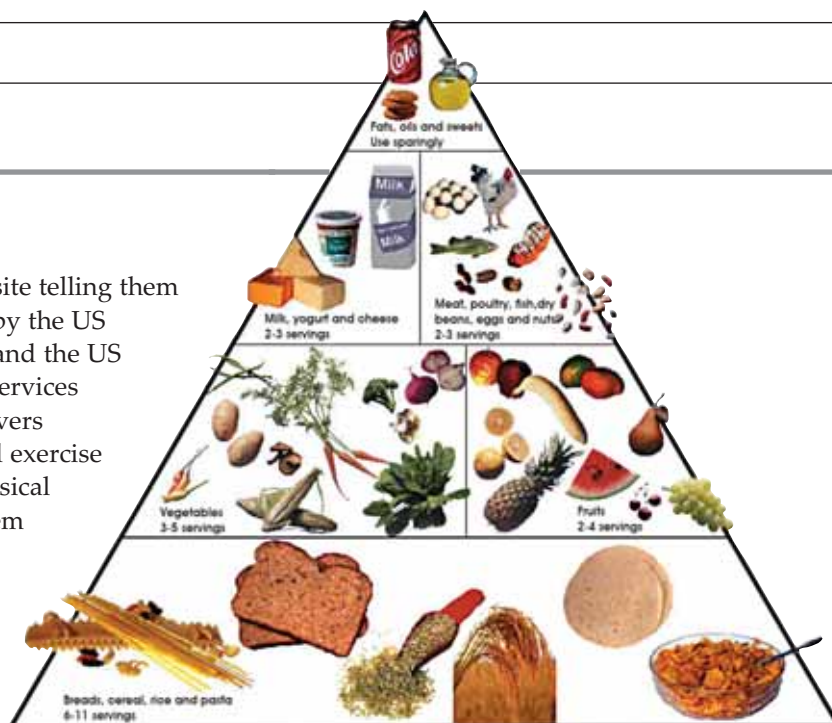
Bet you didn't see this one coming. A German confectioner claims to have come up with the world's first anti-ageing chocolates. Adolf Andersen from Hamburg developed the 'Felice' range of chocolates made with dark chocolate, mango and soya milk with Dr Michael Kentze from the Munich-based Kentze Institute for Age-Prevention Medicine. "Dark chocolate contains three times as much cocoa as milk chocolate and so the concentration of phenylethylamine and polyphenol is high," says Dr Kentze. "These increase the heartbeat and release feelings of well-being. The distribution of serotonin, dopamine and noradrenaline are also increased, which makes you feel more cheerful. And polyphenol protects the cells from free radicals." He adds that soya milk tightens the skin and protects men from prostate problems while mango contains enzymes that activate the metabolism and reduce inflammation. Chocolates wouldn't do much good for those with an unhealthy lifestyle, they admitted.

HEALTH BYTES

ENCAPSULATED

FOOD PYRAMID

Seniors in America now have a website telling them how to eat right and stay fit. Set up by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), www.mypyramid.gov helps silvers develop a personalised nutrition and exercise plan. And an online dietary and physical activity assessment tool provides them information on their diet quality, physical activity status and links to nutrient and physical activity information. Time the Health Ministry set up a similar site for silvers in India.



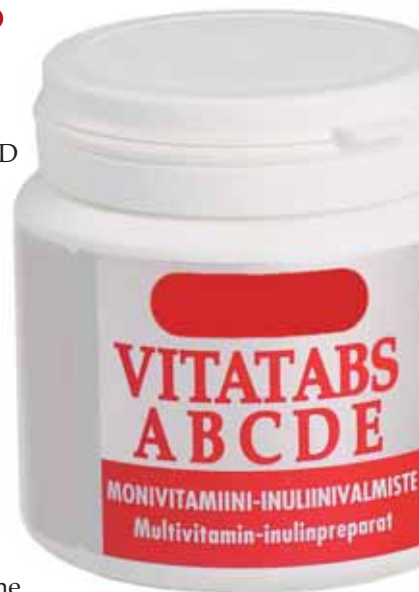
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH



US researchers plan to study the effects of the neighbourhood on the health and quality of life of older adults. The research group will comprise 500 Seattle residents, aged 66 and above. The aim is to help city planners and agencies for the elderly identify elements that help – and hinder – the ability of seniors to stay independent and healthy.

POP SOME VITAMIN D

A new study of elderly women in the US shows that those taking Vitamin D and calcium supplements had much better leg strength and fewer falls than those taking just calcium. The Food and Nutrition Board of the US Institute of Medicine recommends 400 IU of Vitamin D daily for 50 to 71-year-olds, and 600 IU for those over 70, in order to prevent severe bone disease. But the study suggests that the best dosage for overall health may be even higher, perhaps in the range of 800 to 1,000 IU a day.



ALZHEIMER'S AT BAY

One of the latest medicines to hit the market overseas is a new once-a-day extended-release capsule for Alzheimer's. Known as Razadyne ER and marketed by the US-based pharmaceutical company, Ortho-McNeil Neurologics Inc, it treats mild to moderate Alzheimer's. The capsules, priced at \$143 (about Rs 6,000), are not yet available in India.

Harmony does not take responsibility for the validity of the research published in this section. Please consult your doctor before following any advice offered here

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The spiritual dozen

Dr Wayne Dyer presents 12 beliefs that will help manifest miracles in our lives

BECOMING A SPIRITUAL BEING IS

synonymous with becoming a miracle worker and knowing the bliss of real magic. A spiritual being has a conscious awareness of both the physical and the invisible dimension, while the non-spiritual being is only aware of the physical domain. Here are a dozen beliefs for you to cultivate in order to manifest miracles in your life.

- The non-spiritual being believes that if you cannot see, touch, smell, hear, or taste something, then it simply doesn't exist. The spiritual being knows that beyond the physical senses, there are other senses available to us. He knows that the soul is beyond limits and defies birth and death.

- The non-spiritual being accepts the existence of a God, not as a force within us but as a separate power. The spiritual being uses his own divine guidance to become a miracle maker.

- The non-spiritual being is focused on external power. The spiritual being is focused on personal empowerment and helping others live in harmony. A mind at peace and centred, is stronger than any physical force in the universe.

- The non-spiritual being feels separated and distinct from all others, a being unto himself. The spiritual being knows that he is connected to all others. Then, the need for conflict and confrontation is eliminated.

- The non-spiritual being believes in a cause/effect interpretation of life. The spiritual being knows that there is a higher power working in the universe.

- The non-spiritual being is motivated by acquisitions. The spiritual being believes the measure of a life is in what is given to others.

- The non-spiritual being has no room for meditation. The spiritual being knows in deep meditation one can leave the body and enter a sphere of magic.

- For the non-spiritual being, the concept of intuition can be reduced to a hunch. For the spiritual being, intuition is guidance and is never taken lightly.



The spiritual being knows that the measure of life is in what is given to others

- The non-spiritual being knows what he hates but, in order to manifest miracles, the spiritual being works on what he is, rather than fighting what he is against. Real magic occurs when you have eliminated the hatred in your life, even the hatred that you have against hatred.

- The non-spiritual person feels no sense of responsibility to the universe. The spiritual being has a reverence for life that goes to the essence of all beings.

- The non-spiritual being is laden with grudges and the need for revenge. The spiritual being has no room for these impediments to miracle making. All religions preach forgiveness. One cannot profess to be a member of a

particular faith, and then behave in ways inconsistent with its teachings.

- The non-spiritual being views miracles as random happenings but the spiritual being believes in them, and in his ability to experience a world of magic. He believes the forces that have created miracles are still present in the universe and can be tapped into. ■

Excerpt from Real Magic (William Morrow & Company Inc) by Dr Wayne Dyer. Dr Dyer, based in the US, has a doctorate in counselling psychology, and is a well-known speaker and author.

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A new connection

After becoming experts on computers and the Internet, the Purohits learn how to make the most of their mobile phone from **Dinesh C Sharma**, a new friend

A friend of mine, Sachin Kalbag, recently introduced me to the Purohits, a most lively couple. "You must meet them whenever you are in Mumbai," he had said. "They love learning about computers, and Mrs Purohit is a fabulous cook." He was right on both counts and my friendship was blossoming with frequent visits to their apartment. Having learnt the basics about computers and the Internet from Sachin, they were keen to expand their horizons. With Sachin moving home, they began to call me over on a regular basis for a chat on all things 'tech' whenever I was in town, all the while plying me with delicious food.

On one such evening visit, I was relaxing on their terrace with a glass of *sherbet* when my mobile phone rang. The tune was the old Hindi film song, *Tu pyaar ka sagar hai*. It's my father, I told them. As I spoke to him, the Purohits stared at my phone, fascinated.

As soon as I disconnected, Mrs Purohit asked me, "How did you get that song? Is it a special phone?" Not at all, I replied, I merely set different tunes or ring tones for specific callers. You can set a musical note, animal calls or even a pre-recorded message that people can hear when they call.



"But the ring tones list on my phone does not have Hindi film songs," said Mr Purohit. I explained to him that I downloaded them from my mobile service provider for a small price. "Keep an eye on all the SMS (short-messaging service) or text messages your service provider sends you as they often contain numbers to download ring tones of all sorts from other operators, companies and even websites."

Mrs Purohit was intrigued. "Let's telephone our service provider at once," she told her husband. "Why call?" I said. "Go through the mobile phone menu in detail and send them an SMS." The Purohits had a simple phone that they had bought for Rs 3,000 a couple of years ago—prices for mobile phones begin at Rs 1,800 and go up to Rs 30,000 or even more for models with advanced

FARZANA COOPER

features. "A mobile phone has so many uses," I told them. "Why don't you tell us about them?" Mrs Purohit shot right back.

"Well, first of all you should use text messaging. It is more convenient," I said. Mr Purohit said that though he used SMS occasionally, his fingers ached at the thought of keying in a proper text message! "Come on," I chided him, "you must learn SMS lingo such as 'l8r' for 'later' and 'c u' for 'see you'." I told them I'd compile a list of crunched words for them (*see box*).

"I would love to send an SMS to the man at my bank and tell him to get his act together," chimed in Mr Purohit. "My computer is away being repaired and I can't use Internet banking. Imagine walking all the way to the bank

balance. Then, you get an SMS that gives you the information."

"That's almost as good as Internet banking," admitted Mr Purohit, looking at his mobile phone with newfound respect. "What else can it do for me?" I told him he could book a railway ticket or check the status of one—www.irctc.co.in explains how to go about booking tickets from your mobile—get an SMS alert from any airline if his flight is delayed or rescheduled, complain to some utility services, like the water supplies department, listen to the radio, and get information like news headlines and daily horoscopes. While simple games come loaded with every phone, special games can be had on payment. You can also set reminders on your mobile phone to ensure you never forget a task.

Keep an eye on SMS you get as they may contain numbers to download ringtones

and then waiting for hours." I suggested he try mobile banking. I added that they could check their balance, get alerts on credit card and enquire about the status of cheques and fixed deposits. "How can you do all that from your phone?" asked Mr Purohit, still a little sceptical.

"Well, you have to send an SMS to a pre-designated number of your bank," I explained. "After your phone number and customer identity have been checked, your request, which will have a predefined keyword for that particular service, will be processed in a few seconds. For example, <bankname>BAL would mean checking your account

Then Mr Purohit told me all about the new phone that his daughter had bought for them in the US—"she is just waiting for someone to come to India so she can send it across". Apparently, the phone had a built-in camera, net surfing option, voice recording and video recording option. "You must tell me more about taking photos and making videos when the phone arrives," urged Mrs Purohit. I told her to give me a call the moment the phone arrived but assured her that the phone they had was good enough to fulfil all their requirements for now.

GET UP TO SPEED ON YOUR SMS LINGO

ASAP: as soon as possible

ATB: all the best

BTW: by the way

CID: consider it done

CU: see you

DK: don't know

FOC: free of charge

GR8: great!

OIC: oh, I see

IOW: in other words

KC: keep cool

L8R: later

OMG: oh, my God

TTUL: talk to you later

T +: think positive

W2G: way to go!

W4U: waiting for you

YBS: you'll be sorry

:) smiling

: o : surprised

; & : tongue-tied

8 -) : smiling with glasses

:- @ : shouting

:-o : oh, no

Mobile companies and operators like Nokia and Hutch also offer SMS options in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and other Indian languages. You can key in your message in roman script using the phonetics of that particular language, specify the language with the pre-specified code and send it to a pre-designated number of the company. It will be replaced with the alphabet of the language in use and the receiver can read the message in that language.

"So what if I can't make videos yet! My mobile phone is a diary, phone book, alarm clock, and gaming gizmo all rolled into one," said Mr Purohit. "Don't say 'my phone'," said Mrs Purohit. "It is 'our phone'." ■

Dinesh C Sharma is a science and technology columnist based in New Delhi. He is a regular contributor to Cnet News.com (US) and The Lancet (UK)

Guardian angel

R B Jaiswal highlights the legal provisions for grandparents on guardianship of grandchild

Q Are there any legal provisions for grandparents wanting to bring up their grandchild after their daughter or son's demise?

A Grandparents can file a petition in the High Court under the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, or the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, for being appointed as the legal guardian of the child or his property, or both. For Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh applicants, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act is applicable, while Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews come under the Guardians and Wards Act. There is no difference in the two except for the names. The petition must disclose the relationship and reasons why the court must consider appointing the applicant the guardian of the minor. It must be accompanied by a declaration signed by the applicant expressing his or her willingness to act as the guardian, further stating that he or she has no adverse interest against the minor. Grandparents can be appointed guardians of the child and the property of the minor. It is up to the court to decide whether the guardian's interest is for or against the minor's welfare. However, these Acts are not only meant for grandparents. Any relative or family friend can make an application seeking guardianship of a minor in the event of death of one or both parents.

Q If the surviving parent is mentally or financially unfit to raise the child, on what grounds can grandparents stake guardianship claim to their grandchild?

A If the surviving parent is not able to take care of the child and if the grandparents desire to take custody of the child and bring him or her up,

their petition must disclose the reasons why the welfare of the child is at stake. The father may be financially unfit or busy, or the mother may be mentally ill or disinterested—the reasons have to be clearly outlined. Only if the court is satisfied with the facts will it remove the minor from the custody of the natural guardian.

Q Is the court more favourable to maternal grandparents?

A In a custody case between estranged parents of minors, custody is normally given to the mother. However, there is no such preference or inclination on the part of the High Court to decide a guardianship case between paternal and maternal grandparents. The court's decision depends on which applicant it thinks is suitable to safeguard the welfare of the child. Any party that bases the petition for guardianship on merit and gives concrete reasons and proof to show how they can take better care of the minor will get preference from the High Court.

Q Since custody of children is a family matter, shouldn't the case be filed in the Family Court and not High Court?

A Custody matters are primarily taken up in the Family Court only if matrimonial proceedings like divorce, restitution of conjugal rights or judicial separation are pending between parents. Grandparents, or any other party besides the parents, can file a petition only in the High Court or in the Court of Senior Division at the district level, which has jurisdiction in the place where the minor resides or owns property. ■



R B Jaiswal is a Mumbai-based High Court advocate



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A 60-year-old man based in Mumbai would like to chat and share thoughts on various aspects of life with like-minded silver women.
Contact Nitin Laxmichand Shah at 9869485274

I am a 76-year-old man interested in collecting stamps, coins, currency notes and photographs. I also like to travel and read. I would like to know more on investments as well. People with similar interests and hobbies can call me.
Contact Probhat Kumar Mukherjee at 02632-242373;
Email: probhatmukherjee@yahoo.co.uk

I am 78 years old, and my field of interest is mainly social work. I would like to do some part-time job in this field. I live in Kolkata. I would also like to make new friends on e-mail and exchange information on yoga, health and spiritual matters.
Contact Nirmal C Mishra at 033-24662108;
Email: mishrakolkata@yahoo.co.in

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I am 56, and hail from Jind, Haryana. I am a quiz enthusiast and have collected over 1,500 clippings from various magazines and newspapers. I would like to exchange views with like-minded people.
Contact M R Seth at 01681-256230; mobile: 09416090275; Email: profsethi@rediffmail.com

I am a senior philatelist from Srirangam, Tiruchy, interested in buying or exchanging stamps. I also have a huge collection of American and British stamps, First Day Covers, new and old coins available for sale.
Contact MV Maruthachalam at 0431-2432661, 2433661; E-mail: madanmv@rediffmail.com

Help needed to take care of a 75-year-old lady. Please mail stating conditions, charges etc.
Contact Rashid at rash_sg@yahoo.com.sg



SMRITI CHAKRAVARTY

Wrong number

Senior citizens should be exempted from acquiring a Unique Identification Number to trade in the stock market, insists **Kirit Somaiya**

First came the Voters' Identification Card in 1993-94, and then, in 1996, the directive introducing compulsory trading of certain shares through a dematerialisation or 'demat' account. Since January 2005, the Income Tax Department has made it mandatory for all tax payers and return filers to have a Permanent Account Number. Meanwhile, in November 2003, the Securities and Exchange Board

of India (SEBI) initiated the creation of a central database of market participants and investors and named it MAPIN. Agencies through whom individuals trade in stocks—like bankers, custodians, trustees, investor associations, fund managers, brokers—and their clients are all required to have their details recorded on MAPIN. This would make them eligible to use the Unique Identification Number, or

the UIN, to dabble in stock market and mutual fund transactions of over Rs 1 lakh.

From the beginning, the Investors' Grievances Forum, an organisation dedicated to protect the rights of small investors since 1994, has been demanding to know whether there really is a need for a UIN for investors already possessing a PAN card, a demat account number and a

voter's identification card? The answer is 'no'. As president of the forum, I have outlined various arguments in several presentations and letters addressed to the Ministry of Company Affairs and even written to the Department of Economic Affairs under the Ministry of Finance to scrap MAPIN. I am summarising these points for *Harmony* readers.

A part from other personal information like signature and proof of address—already recorded on the voter's card, demat account and PAN card, MAPIN also captures fingerprints. It is a huge task considering the small investor base (individuals who apply for up to 1,000 equity shares in a public issue) in India is tagged at 1.5 lakh. Earlier this year, the last date for procuring the mandatory UIN was extended from March 31, 2005 to December 31, 2005, because the authorities have not been able to register most of the investors yet.

tion is Rs 300 per individual, which is 10 times that being charged by the Unit Trust of India to issue the PAN card. It is an improbable jump in rate when the only additional information in the UIN is the fingerprints. Further, homebound senior citizens have to shell out an exorbitant Rs 4,000 for agents to come to their residence and collect information. But for the fingerprints, the information could have been gathered through post, and agents need not charge for making house visits. Moreover, since creating the database is the requirement of SEBI, why is it making the investors pay?

Things are made more difficult with the task of acquiring the information delegated to only five agencies covering Delhi, Jaipur, Goa, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Cochin and Chennai. Investors from any other city have to travel personally to the nearest agency to register. This has led to a black

address, photograph with signatures and photocopy of the PAN card.

In a charter of demands presented to the Minister of Company Affairs in March this year, the Investors' Grievances Forum, with other small investor associations from different parts of the country, asked for special exemption for seniors who consider shares held by them over a long period of time as assets. It is not fair to debar them from selling the shares only because they have not been able to acquire a UIN. Seniors must be exempted from such regulations.

I agree that the regulator's job is to regulate the market and ensure the safety and protection of investors by setting up systems and procedures covering market intermediaries. However, before coming out with any such measures, the infrastructure feasibility must be ensured through detailed study and research. So far, this has not been done. And even before the regulations could take effect, their implementation has been engulfed in controversy. Instead of creating different databases every now and then, a centralised database that can be used by government and private authorities for all future references makes more sense.

I welcomed the setting up of a committee by SEBI to look at our demands and come back within two months with suitable solutions. However, the two months are long up and the matter is still under review. For now, the interest of the small investor continues to be at stake. ■

There should be one centralised database that all authorities can make use of

This is not the only chink in the process. There are other doubts about the need for the UIN. The database generated by PAN card issuers can be centralised so that different authorities can have access to it. There is no need to create yet another.

Facing the biggest brunt of this unnecessary exercise are senior citizens. The hardship is dual—both physical and financial. First, the fee being charged for registra-

market-like situation where physically challenged individuals are charged cutthroat fees. The number of companies assigned the task is too small to cover the large number of investors. The SEBI could have easily entrusted the task to the depository participants—agencies designated to aid investors with the opening of demat accounts. They already maintain a database with proof of identity,

Second shift

Experts at www.naukri.com answer queries on jobs after retirement



Q I am a 60-year-old retired telephone operator. Apart from this experience, I also have a fair amount of knowledge about computer operations and data-entry related work for front-office jobs, such as a receptionist's. But I would not like to take up a full-time job right now as I am living with my son after my husband's death. I would prefer to work only after two in the afternoon. Are there any avenues for me in the job market where I can apply for part-time jobs as a data-entry person or telephone operator? I can put in three to five hours of work everyday.

Today, there are ample part-time opportunities available in the job market. The best way to start is to apply directly to jobs advertised in newspapers, print magazines and e-portals like www.naukri.com. You can even register yourself with various Indian job sites for better reach. Post your detailed resume on these sites and keep an eye on job alert emails. Start looking at it in a positive way and you will be sure to succeed. Once you have decided on a few prospective employers, you could even talk to them about performing data-entry jobs from home. Have hope. Your knowledge of computers will surely get you a job.

Q I hold a doctorate in agriculture from a reputed university in Uttar Pradesh, with seed technology as my area of specialisation. After teaching for the past 27 years, I retired in 2004. On the home front, I have taken care of all my responsibilities with the marriage of both my daughters. But with a sizeable amount of my savings spent on their weddings, I am now financially drained. I would like to join a private agricultural institute or a private seed business. Though I taught all my working life, I feel I can contribute to research in this field. Do you have any suggestions on how to go about it?

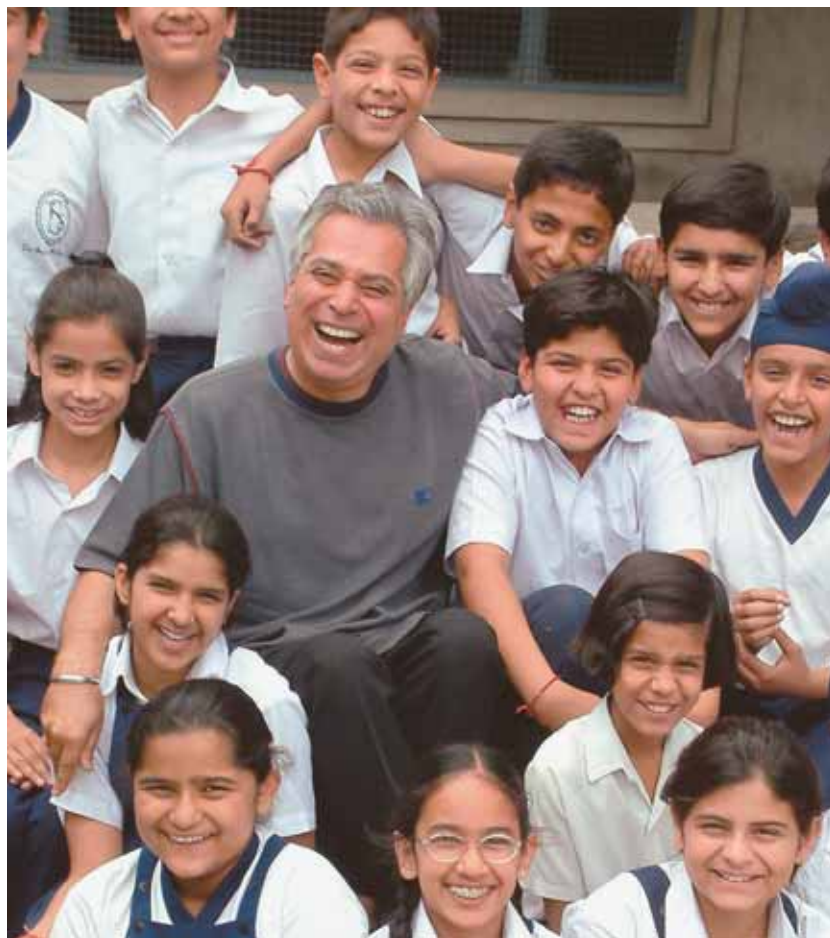
There are career options for agriculture graduates in the private and social sector, as well as in the banking industry. But age may be a factor in the banking sector. The best thing would be to apply for jobs directly to multinational and Indian seed companies that produce and market a range of quality seeds developed with the latest scientific advances in biotechnology, plant breeding and crop production in India. Companies like this may offer you the role of a consultant, which will make optimum use of your experience.

Q I am a 55-year-old reservation and ticketing supervisor currently employed in a private travel agency in Mumbai. The working hours here are quite erratic and I find young colleagues treating me with disrespect. Despite possessing diplomas and certificates in basic and advanced fares, ticketing and computerised reservation systems, and being regular in my work, I have been sidelined by my employers who prefer youngsters. I would like to set up my own travel agency with my retired friends. Do you think this would be a risky venture at my age? Please advise me.

Based on your experience and skills, starting your own travel agency looks like a good option. You obviously know enough about the travel trade to make it a success. However, the key question you need to ask yourself is whether you have the required level of energy and will power to run a business because it will also involve erratic and long hours. Working for yourself needs more discipline than working for another employer. Besides, the risk is higher. If you and your friends are positive about the investment of time and money and sure about starting an enterprise, work out a commercial plan. Conduct a market research and hire or buy a prime property. Take it from there. Good luck!

LEARNING CURVE

Vijay Mehra gave up a successful business to run a school, says **Payal Khurana**



RANJIT SINGH

Mehra has set high standards for the students of Senior Study School

Fifty-three-year-old **Vijay Mehra** got the best possible start to his second career. When he became principal of the Senior Study School in 1997, all 40 of his first batch of students passed the Secondary Certificate exams with over 60 per cent marks. Now, Mehra's school—clean as a whistle with not a single piece of paper lying around and no smudgy fingerprints marring the white walls—has 1,600 students.

They are Mehra's greatest source of pride. "Maybe running a school is more suited to my temperament," says the former businessman from Amritsar.

Mehra left his family textile firm, Shahzadanand and Sons, to expand his sister-in-law Rita Singh's school, the Junior Study School in Amritsar. "Our business was one of the biggest in Amritsar," he says, adding that he was the only one in

family who didn't enjoy working for it. Instead, he liked music, drama and painting. But bowing to family pressure that ensured all members were part of the venture, irrespective of their ability or interest, he too joined the firm.

After managing a major section of the business for 25 years, Mehra didn't want to do it any more. But he didn't want to take too many risks, hence the decision to be part of an already existing setup. Mehra, being involved with his own children's education, was familiar with the education pattern. However, before he took the plunge, he upgraded his own skills and got a Masters in Education, with the support of his wife Renu and mother Kamla.

Today, the Senior Study School is an established name in Amritsar, well-known for its high standard of education. It has no branches. Mehra says starting a chain of schools would dilute the quality of education and take him away from his students, with whom he shares a fantastic rapport. "His biggest quality is his ability to move with the times," says his sister-in-law Rita, principal of the Junior Study. For his part, Mehra is satisfied. "No more tensions of stock, sales or payment," he says, with a chuckle. He's more concerned about human capital now.

Readers are requested to send in their queries to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Joining hands

Centre members are using their newfound skills to cut across generation barriers



HIREN MEHTA

MAKING FRIENDS WITH THEIR PEERS—AS WELL as coming to terms with the younger generation—means a lot to the members of the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai. “A centre for seniors is just a roof with walls till you organise events that will take the initiative forward,” says Jaikumar Kapoor, 62. “Here, the activities attract silvers who want to interact and connect.”

Kapoor is learning computers at the centre. Pesi Pestonji, 69, too signed up to correspond with his relatives overseas. He can now surf the Net, check out sites on business investment and finance and send email to his cousins. Yashwant Ghugre, 77, is learning how to keep accounts on Microsoft Excel to help his son run the family jewellery business. “My eight-year-old grandson waits for his turn to play games on the PC. I will definitely teach him computers once he is old enough,” says Ghugre.

Meanwhile, attending cookery classes, talks by experts and educative programmes has made Subhangi Vaidya, 62, confident. Now she is ready to teach her 30-plus daughter and daughter-in-law a thing or two. Members like her thrive at the atmosphere of the centre. At the common birthday celebration held every month, she had reason to celebrate. “My *channa dal* and mango *panna* were appreciated by all, including Mrs Tina Ambani,” she says with a glimmer of pride in her eyes.

—Trina Mukherjee

To know more about the centre and its activities, call us at (022) 30976440/6441 or email centre.thakurdwar@harmonyindia.org

IN JULY

COMPUTERS

Monday to Saturday; 10.30-11.30 am and 3-4.30 pm

YOGA

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays; 10.30-11.30 am (men); 4-5 pm (women). Classes by instructors from Kaivalyadham Centre, Marine Drive

GROUP THERAPY

Wednesdays; 5.15-6.15 pm. Conducted by Dr Anjali Chabbria, Dr Sharita Shah and Aruna Prakash

MUSIC

Thursdays; Marathi *sugam sangeet* from 5-6 pm

HEALTH

July 4. 5.30-6.30 pm. Session on how to develop a positive attitude by Chandrakant Pathak, author of books on astrology, vastu shastra and others

July 14. 5 pm. Tips from hair and skin care expert Colleen Khan

July 23. 4.30 pm. Queries on eye problems will be answered by Dr Atul Adaniya, ophthalmologist from Harkisondas Hospital

INTERACTION

July 12. 5 pm. *Mujhe Kuch Kehana Hai* is an interaction session where members share jokes, read out poems and discuss issues

HOBBIES

July 19. 4.30-5.30 pm. Recipes of healthy soups by nutritionist Vibha Kapadia

COMMON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

July 30

Annual dinner for members to celebrate the centre's first anniversary will be held in July. Members will be notified at the centre

Programmes are subject to last-minute changes

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Since Inception	30.69	8.50

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Performance as on May 31, 2005. Dividends are assumed to be reinvested. While calculating returns dividend distribution tax is excluded. Compounded annualised returns of Growth Option. Inception Date October 8, 1995. Wherever the returns are unrealistically high it is due to market conditions.

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*NAV as on May 31, 2005 Compounded Annualised Returns

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Mutual Fund Investments are subject to market risks. Please read the Offer Document carefully before investing.

Dusk on the Indus

Hugh and Colleen Gantzer discover the soul-soothing enchantment of Leh



We did it the long and exciting way, journeying for two days and a night from Srinagar, winding through the high mountains, spectacular scenery, and high passes like Fotu-la where, at 4,094 m, we groaned between hulking embankments of snow, more than twice the height of our cottage in the oak woods of the Himalaya. And then, in just 32 km, we spiralled down 1,219 m to meet the turbulent, young Indus at Khalatse. From there we sped along the course of the river to the beautiful valley of Leh. We had covered an exciting 434 km from the capital of Kashmir to the capital of Ladakh.

That, in our opinion, is really the best way of getting to Leh. But it might not be

the best way for everyone because it is a little rugged. A more comfortable way would be to fly, offering you superb views of the high, snow-clad ranges and the Zaskar River winding through them. But whatever route you choose make absolutely sure that you spend your first day in Leh resting. You've got to give your heart and lungs time to adjust to the altitude. So, if you already have problems with either of these essential organs, it is safer not to take the risk. Having said that, however, we have never had any problems in the serene, high, valley of Leh.

And it really is serene. The valley spreads carpeted in a green patchwork rug of gently rising terraces of barley, willow, apricot and poplar, dotted with little white houses. Occasionally, a monastery rises atop a hillock as if it had grown organically out of the rocks. The air is so crystal clear that everything seems deceptively close. Even the encircling mountains, starkly bare and unclothed, look like an unfinished Hollywood set for a *Star Wars* epic. Absorb this view, take your time, amble around the lanes and by-lanes of Leh. Stop and peer at the wares offered by the Tibetan traders: fossil coral, lapis lazuli, yak horn trinkets, bangles and beads. They are, generally, a cheerful people and welcome good-natured haggling. Raise your eyes from a pretty woman in her turquoise-studded headdress and gaze at the Leh Palace which, reputedly, inspired the Potala in Lhasa. And, if you're lucky, you might see a dust-

churning polo match on the field at the foot of the palace hill. It is probably the truly rural, no-holds-barred ancestor of the *pucca-pucca* version played by the blue-blooded blokes at Windsor!

We left Leh behind us and drove 16 km out to the Shey Palace, built in 1633. All the kings of Ladakh had to be born in Shey. The two-storey high gilt-bronze statue of Buddha inside the palace was created by artisans brought from Nepal by the Muslim mother of a Buddhist Namgyal king in the 17th century — an excellent example of cultural integration. We paused at the bottom of Shey hill to look at a large rock. The five Buddhas carved on it are the figures that devotees hold in their minds when meditating on the message of Lord Buddha. The palaces and monasteries of Ladakh are treasure-troves of their arts, crafts and traditions.

Nineteen kilometres along the flat river valley from Leh rise the buildings of the monastery of Thiksey, stark and impressive in their austere beauty. It's well worth going up but before you do so, find out where your vehicle has to be parked and how far you have to walk. If you can make it, do visit the shrine of the Maitreya Buddha at the far end of the courtyard. It is a towering, powerful, golden statue. The Enlightened One's third eye, in the centre of his forehead, has been sculpted as an ammonite. These ancient shells, evidence of the sea that was once here, are found in slate 130 million years old. In that distant age, the sub-continent of India had nudged under the continent of Eurasia and, like the blade of a gigantic

The buildings of Thiksey monastery 19 km from Leh, are impressive and definitely worth a look

Photos: ASHOK DILWALI



HUGH AND COLLEEN GANTZER

bulldozer, had pushed up the bottom of the prehistoric Tethys Sea and created the Himalaya. Thiksey stands in old Eurasia. The dark, young mountains ahead of us were in India. And the line where the two landmasses met became the valley of the Indus.

Across the old, flat, plains of the Indus we drove to rising, and bare, mountains that hide the famous monastery of Hemis. Here, a spectacular festival is held in late June or early July, every year. It celebrates the birthday of the Indian missionary seer Padmasambhava, who is credited with bringing Buddhism to Ladakh. The great courtyard in which the festival is staged was empty but before we could absorb its atmosphere in silence, Hemis was invaded by three groups of tourists speaking German, French and Spanish. Hurriedly we drove on to the

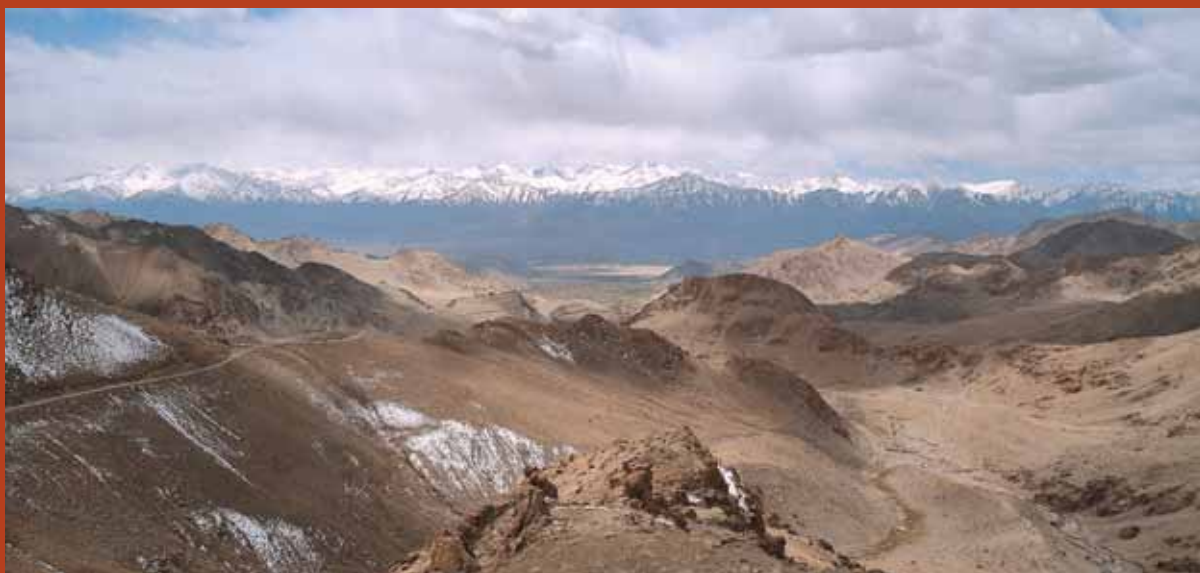
The Hemis monastery celebrates the birthday of the seer Padmasambhava in a spectacular festival every year during June end or early July; Ladakhi warriors engage in their popular sport of archery, at the base of Stok hill

Stok Palace, home of the former princely family. The palace's museum holds endlessly fascinating exhibits of the regal and spiritual heritage of Ladakh. There we saw the authentic, black-and-white dzi-stones whose 'eyes' are said to protect the wearer. Artificial 'duplicates' of them are sold in Leh's bazaar but their patterns are far too regular to pass muster.

At the base of Stok hill is a grove of old willow trees. Here, one evening, we met Ladakhi warriors, in their courtly robes, engaged in their popular sport of archery. And while men, women and children looked on in wonder, an orchestra played, and others danced in graceful, measured steps. It was as if we had stepped through a time warp into another, more unhurried, age

and the hassling world had been left far, far, behind.

Of such things are magical memories made. Of such settings are the tales of travellers spun. Of such evenings, when dusk touches the Indus and the dark mountains of our land look on broodingly ... of such wondrous evenings are fashioned the soul-soothing enchantment of Leh. ■



FACT FILE

When to go

The best time is from May to October

How to get there

By air: Indian Airlines and Jet Airways operate regular flights from Delhi and this is the most convenient way to get there

By road: It takes 434 km from Srinagar to Leh on the highway, which is open from May/June to October, with an overnight halt at Kargil. While Jammu & Kashmir State Transport buses ply this route, it is advisable to take a taxi. The route passes through the Zojia-la Pass at 3,529 m

Where to stay:

Nirvana Hotel, Tukcha Road, Leh Town; rooms begin at Rs 900 per night; Tel: 01982-252834

Nurbuling Hotel, Skara, Lower Leh Town; rooms begin at Rs 1,200 per night; Tel: 01982-253128

Omasila Hotel, Changspa, Leh Town; rooms begin at Rs 1,800 per night; Tel: 01982-252119

Padma Hotel, Leh Town Middle; rooms begin at Rs 1,200 per night; Tel: 01982-252630

Silver Cloud Hotel, Sankar, Upper Leh Town; rooms begin at Rs 1,200 per night; Tel: 01982-253128

Shambhala, Skara (Lower Leh Town); Double room Rs 2,700; Tel: 01982-252067

Other information

Sightseeing: Taxis are available at Rs 1,200 for 100 km and a duration of eight hours

Clothing: You need an anorak, light woollens and walking shoes

Acclimatisation: It is very important to rest the first day on reaching Leh even if you have travelled by road

For contact details, see page 79



Courtesy: RAKESH SHARMA

Rocket man

The first Indian in space Rakesh Sharma talks to **Allen Mendonca** about a life of excitement, adventure and discovery

HIGH FLIER

When I joined the Indian Air Force in 1970, I didn't want to be a helicopter pilot or a transport pilot but a jet fighter pilot. It meant I had to be physically and mentally strong. I was barely 23 when the Indo-Pakistan War broke out in 1971 and I flew 21 air defence and interception missions in a MiG 21. A decade later, when I was a squadron leader, I was selected for training at the Yuri Gagarin Centre near Moscow for the joint manned flight to space planned by India and the Soviet Union. I went to Moscow in September 1982 with my wife Madhu and two children. It was cold but the

cosmonauts and their families were warm and friendly. My wife and I learnt enough Russian to venture out on our own for sightseeing and shopping expeditions and brought back delightful memories.

NEW HIGHS

I have now retired from my first love, flying, and am comfortable in my new role as director (operations) of Automated Workflow, a business process management company in Bangalore. For those who love

From a MiG 21, Sharma donned the astronaut's suit before his mission to space in Soyuz T-11 in 1984



life, who have their faculties and health intact, it is best to continue pursuing some kind of work. Life is a never-ending learning process. I work these days because the money comes in handy and I think at 56 I have quite a few more good years left.

Once a month, Madhu and I attend a gathering of the Bangalore Music Group, which comprises amateur musicians and music lovers from various professions. I join in the singing. We sing classics by Eric Clapton, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Frank Sinatra and Hindi songs by Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi. I used to play cricket in my college days. Now I prefer golf, squash, tennis and billiards. One must put the past behind, but the memories do come flooding back.

TRAILBLAZING

On April 3, 1984, I blasted off in a Soyuz T-11 from Baikonur under the command of Colonel Yuri Malyshev and flight engineer Gennady Sterkalov. The vessel docked with the Salyut 7 orbital station and we received a rousing welcome from the researchers aboard. I had undergone a rigorous yoga course before the flight and spent the first few days studying the effects of yoga on the body in the weightlessness of space. I also undertook multi-spectral photography of North India, especially the Himalayas and their surroundings.

I spent a total of 7 days, 21 hours, 40 minutes and 6 seconds in space before returning to Earth. People still recall watching me on television via a satellite video link-up with then prime minister Indira Gandhi. She asked me how India looked from way up

there, and I replied: “*Saare jahan se achcha.*” The letters poured in on my return people across the country. Even today, every year on April 3, Kailasinh Hirasim Chauhan, a *paan wallah* from Ahmedabad sends me a card commemorating the flight. He also never forgets to send me a birthday card on January 13. I wonder how he kept track of my address!

After the flight, I was conferred the Ashoka Chakra and posted to Delhi to a Jaguar Operation Squadron as a flight commander

THE HOME FRONT

In 1987, after 17 years in the Air Force, I was sent to the Nasik division of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) as chief test pilot. I tested three variants of the MiG 21 and MiG 27. In 1992, I succeeded the legendary P Ashoka as chief test pilot of HAL in Bangalore. I tested Canberras, Jaguars, Kirans and, later on, Mirages. The city then became home.

We love our one-storied villa in the suburb of Whitefield. When we heard about this gated

At 56, I work as money comes handy, and I feel I have quite a few good years ahead

but I hardly flew after that. The Air Force didn't want a Gagarin-like tragedy visiting me. [Yuri Gagarin, the first man to orbit Earth, in 1961, was killed in a crash in 1968 before he could travel in space a second time.]

community, Palm Meadows, I sold my inherited property in Hyderabad and invested here. The house has a red-tiled roof and green lawns on both sides. The trees that bloom through the year ensure that there's always a



Sharma relaxes with a book on astronomy at his Bangalore residence

splash of colour. My wife, who is an interior designer, and I enjoy our morning cup of coffee on the deck chairs on the lawn before starting the workday.

LIFE ON THE EDGE

Life is idyllic now but I have had several brushes with danger. In October 1988, I was testing a MiG 21 at low altitude when the engine packed up. I tried desperately to 'relight' [restart] it twice. When there was no hope, I bailed out. But the parachute's canopy got entangled in high-tension wires and I had to jump out or face the possibility of being electrocuted.

I bust my ankle in four places. I thought it would be the end of my flying career. The surgeon who was supposed to treat me got caught in a traffic jam—it was Ganesh Chaturthi. Two days later, I was flown to Pune where the surgeon Dr K H Sancheti spent five hours operating on my ankle. As I underwent physiotherapy, I said to myself, 'I want to play tennis again and I want to fly.' During my



ABHIJIT GHOSH

Sharma doesn't miss a game of tennis, he believes in exercising regularly

experienced a 'flameout' [engine failure] at 70,000 ft. 'Oh no, not again,' I thought as the plane plunged. I stayed calm and I managed to restart at 30,000 ft.

MY FAVOURITE PEOPLE

Madhu and I cherish every single moment we have had in our life—the happy, the sad, the traumatic and the joyous. We met while I was a cadet at the

been working as an assistant director for a few years now. And Krittika, who is studying art, should graduate smoothly into the world of multimedia. I always advise my friends to pay attention to their children so that they need not worry about them when they retire. Retirement should not turn into a tragedy. It should be the crowning moment of a life well lived.

By keeping away from the media, I have shielded my kids from celebrity pitfalls

convalescence, I read and reread Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and dozens of other books on human triumph in the face of adversity. I exercised my mind and body for the challenges that lay ahead.

By February 1989, I was all set to be airborne again having passed all the tests. There I was, high above the clouds in my very first sortie when I

National Defence Academy and got married soon after I was inducted into the Air Force.

I have shielded my children from the pitfalls of celebrity by making a deliberate decision to keep away from the media spotlight and corporate sponsors during my tenure with HAL. My son Kapil, who lives in Mumbai, is well on the way to becoming a full-fledged filmmaker. He has

We still keep in touch with our old friends through email. We've had some terrific times travelling to each other's homes in far corners of the world.

DREAM ON

Last September, I was invited to the GSLV test site and launch pad in Sriharikota. All the memories of the past came flooding back. I would love to be on the trip to the moon planned by the Indian Space Research Organisation in 2012. And if space tourism does become affordable, I would like to take my family into space. ■



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Triumph of the spirit

At 87, Rani Shullai exudes warmth and cheer, much like a glass of her sparkling homemade wine, says

Nilanjana Sengupta

Even before Indage, Grover and Sula hit big time selling their wine in India in the 1990s, Evelyn Norah Shullai, 87, popularly known as Rani, had spent over 25 years preparing the beverage in her sprawling home, under the shade of cherry blossom trees in Shillong, Meghalaya. Serving wines made from

various local fruits to friends and relatives at dinner parties and family gatherings, Shullai says, lifts her spirit.

Not taking part in the Shillong Wine Festival, which began last year to showcase the state's winemaking capacity, does not bother her. It was a conscious decision. "For me, winemaking is a personal pursuit," says Shullai. "I am not looking for commercial opportunities." As former principal of the Shullai Progressive School for poor children, run from a two-storied building next to her home, she is careful not to send encouraging signals to the youth —especially the "young impressionable Khasi boys"—by participating in the festival.

The sense of social responsibility also stems from being one of Shillong's highly respected citizens, an educationist and a Girl Guide. Over the years, the local *Shillong Sentinel* has dedicated ample newspaper space to her and the north-east edition of *The Telegraph* carried an article on her on its front page in October last year after she turned 86.

Shullai served as deputy director, public instruction, for the National Cadet Corps of undivided Assam in 1969. She was appointed as



DINODIA



Photos: B R Blah

Shullai makes wine for family and friends; she prefers brandy and whisky

honorary state secretary of Meghalaya, Bharat Scouts and Guides at the age of 55 and was also the hill state's first ever inspector of schools, and the second from Meghalaya to receive the Padmashri in 1977 for all-round contribution. Her job as school inspector often required her to travel across the heavily forested Garo hills of the state, often coming face-to-face with rogue elephants, to reach tribal schools in the interiors—she did it dressed in brightly coloured *jansem*, the traditional Khasi dress pinned up on both shoulders with ornamental brooches, but worn till mid-calf to wade through waters.

She had an easier time learning to make wine. A social drinker who favours brandy and whisky, Shullai's interest in wine culture stemmed from an age-old practice of the Khasi and Garo tribes of brewing their own drink for pleasure and to combat winter in the hills. "They use a crude process to ferment white rice, which they drink up almost immediately," she explains. Much to the disappointment of her daughter Judy and her nieces, Shullai returned from a trip to London in 1973 with only a winemaking kit, comprising glass jars, airlocks, wine corks and Campden tablets to prevent germination, and a how-to book in tow. "They expected clothes, cosmetics and other goodies," she remembers, her eyes crinkling with amusement. But now Judy, who is married and

Shullai makes wine made from local fruits like Khasi pear, peach, plum and mulberry

settled in Shillong, enjoys serving the finest wine from Shullai's home brewery on her table. "Ma used to stain her fingers purple while mashing fruits and extracting the pulp," she recalls fondly. "And after she finished making the wine, she would wear a satisfied look on her face."

Meghalaya's abundant horticulture produce, complete with wine-friendly fruits, came in handy. Earlier, Shullai picked fruit from the 20 trees growing in her own backyard. Now, her rheumatism, diagnosed some six years ago, has forced her to buy fruits from the local market. "Otherwise, I don't let my walking stick stop me from doing anything," she says.

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Shullai buys indigenous fruits like the Khasi pear, peach, mulberry, plum, the 'so hiong' peach and the 'so mon'—a fleshy and seedy fruit like the *chikoo*, which, if eaten raw and in large quantity, packs the same punch as a peg of brandy. She makes both dry and fruity wines, and the golden yellow 'so mon' wine is her favourite.

There was no trial and error period in her wine-making, she says, she got the process down pat right from the beginning. Well, except for the time that mulberry wine from a bottle shot to the ceiling as soon as the bottle was uncorked, and splashed all over her expensive upholstery. "I must have got a step or two wrong that time, but I'm still don't know what it was," she chuckles.

Her wines are generally consumed even before they get a chance to mature. "All those who know me just can't wait to have it," says Shullai, who, in the past 32 years has never bought wine from the market. "My friends and relatives empty all my

FOR BEGINNERS:

Winemaking is a hobby that requires quite a bit of investment. Shullai's kit from London, with thick jars, dark bottles, airlocks, filters, yeast and corks, would now cost between \$60 and \$70 (about Rs 3,000). You can buy such a kit off the Internet on www.ebay.com. Alternately, you can locally buy thick ceramic jars (like the ones used to store pickles), thick dark bottles with narrow necks or simply use 2-litre aerated drink bottles.

Buy 5-10 kg of fresh fruits. De-stemming, de-skinning and crushing fruits take two to four hours, depending on what kind of fruit is being used. Use your fingers or a potato masher to squeeze the pulp out. Then, use a filter to strain and separate the juice from all the skin. After sterilising the jars, pour in the fruit concentrate with a funnel so that there is no spillage. Add cold water measuring 1/3rd the jar's capacity. The next step is to add sugar syrup. Shullai uses up to four tablespoons of sugar. If the fruit is overripe, add only about two. Top off the jar with some more water. Empty a 25 gm packet of yeast in the jar. Mumbai-based SAF Yeast Company (*for contact details, see page 79*) and Pune's National Chemical Laboratory (*for contact details, see page 79*) manufacture wine yeast. It costs Rs 100 for a 500 gm packet.

Leave the juice to ferment for about two weeks, and then siphon the dead yeast and other sediments using a fine filter. Now, transfer the wine into a stainless steel or wooden container so that the impurities settle and can be drained off. After one to three months, pour the wine into thick dark bottles and lock it with cork so that no air gets in, otherwise it will turn into vinegar. Store it in a cool, dark place. After at least a year, it's ready to sip and serve.

Whether the wine is dry, sweet or semi-sweet depends on the amount of sugar that remains in the bottle after fermentation. In a fully dry wine, all the sugar has been



converted to alcohol. A medium-dry wine has a small amount of residual sugar. Using overripe fruit that is sugar-laden will give the wine a sweet taste. You can measure the sugar content with the help of an instrument called a refractometer—place a drop of juice between its prisms and read the angle at which the light bends. It will vary depending on the sugar content. For more information on winemaking, get in touch with local wines clubs (*for contact details, see page 79*).

There is no law that prevents, restricts or controls winemaking at home. But to sell it, one requires a license from the State Excise Department.

stock when they visit me, prompting me to replenish it once again. Some even express their desire to take a bottle or two home." She normally makes about 12 bottles at a time, and two attendants assist her get the ingredients for the wine ready.

Shullai doesn't like being dependent on anyone. But her second granddaughter, who lives with the twice-married-and-widowed Shullai and helps her

run the Shullai Progressive School as headmistress, refuses to have it any other way. Even when Shullai goes to the school to teach English composition and grammar from 9 am to 12.30 pm everyday, a servant accompanies her on the granddaughter's insistence. "All three of my granddaughters—the elder one lives in Guwahati—think I exert myself," she says. "But I assure them that I am still going strong." That's worth a toast. ■

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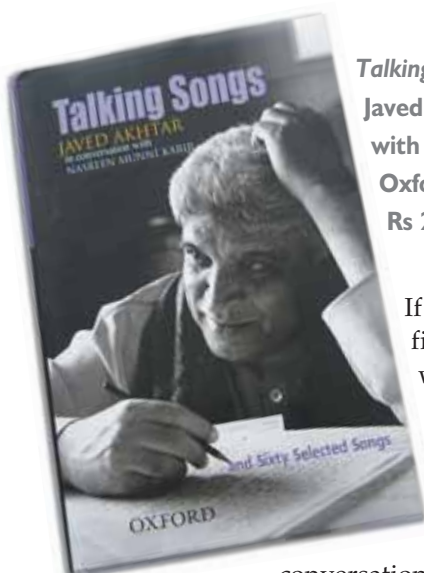
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Music notes



Talking Songs

Javed Akhtar in conversation
with Nasreen Munni Kabir

Oxford University Press;
Rs 295; 252 pages

If you are an avid Hindi film and music buff, you would be comfortable with the format of *Talking Songs*, UK-based Channel Four journalist Nasreen Munni Kabir's

conversation with poet-scriptwriter-lyricist Javed Akhtar, that takes the form of a dialogue. This is more than just the tale of a man who writes words to music. The book evolves into a lively interaction that covers aspects of film song-writing and poetry.

Kabir, a seasoned chronicler of Hindi cinema with her documentaries on Indian film stars, asks Akhtar many questions, some predictable, others probing. He answers in detail and prefers to skip a few. Akhtar's take on the perfect song; "It should have good words, composition, orchestration and good rendering." He goes on to talk about the "cleverness" involved in his art. He says the impact of film songs on the Indian psyche could be because they give vent to repressed emotions and thoughts.

Akhtar also pays tribute to all those who influenced his craft, from poets Sahir, Shailendra, Majrooh Sultanpuri and Kaifi Azmi and the singers he admires the most—Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle and Kishore Kumar—to music directors over the past

three decades (Shiv-Hari, R D Burman and A R Rahman, to name a few). He bemoans the paucity of fresh phrases in today's lyrics, making songs appear repetitive, and vulgar lyrics with double entendre—that he stays well clear of. At this point, he weakly defends his banal lyrics to *Ek do teen*, the song from the film *Tezaab*, saying the song merits proper recitation to justify "its complete structure".

He effortlessly replies to queries on poetic excellence, personal integrity and aesthetics. And, being a man of many interests, he links the personal with the accepted—"songs that depict a particular mood or frame of mind become popular"; knowledge with street smartness; and reinvention with the need to connect to the present.

In the second section, Kabir lists 60 songs by Akhtar, to showcase his versatility. There are songs of love and sorrow, numbers with a distinctive folk

element in songs from *Lagaan*, *Swades* and *Kisna*. The moon makes its appearance in many songs—in *Sapney*, it is a friend you sit and chat with; and in *Refugee*, it shimmers on the palm of the night.

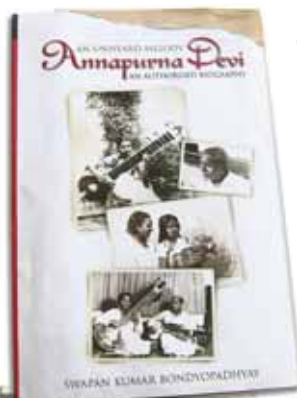
Kabir's fascination with Akhtar is evident in this book—this is, in fact, her second book on him. The first one, *Talking Films*, focused on his successful turn as scriptwriter in the 1970s and '80s as part of the Salim-Javed duo.

Perhaps that's why she allows him to be a tad self-indulgent—Akhtar proclaims he has managed to "inculcate a sense of aesthetic values ...and evolved enough to acquire a certain relaxed quality", which he hopes would not result in complacency. Kabir would surely forgive that. One can hum to the original lyrics written in Roman script but merely get a whiff of the latter in translations. But as Kabir explains they are aimed to provide a guide and atmosphere to the world of lyrics. She could have just added a few of them in her chat and got away with it.

—Trina Mukherjee



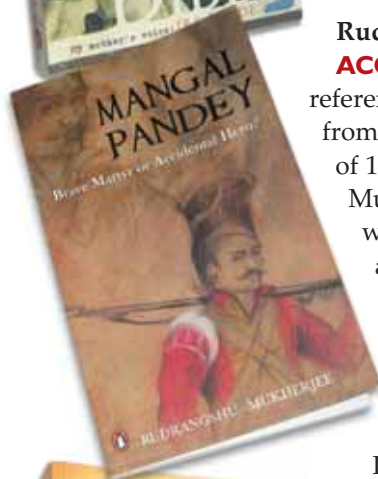
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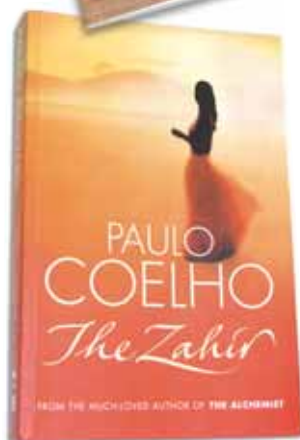
The ill-fated marriage of the only female Surbahar player Annapurna Devi and sitar maestro Ravi Shankar inspired filmmaker Hrishikesh Mukherjee to create the classic *Abhimaan*, where Jaya Bhaduri scores over Amitabh Bachchan in musical talent, souring their marriage. Three decades later, in **AN UNHEARD MELODY—ANNAPURNA DEVI** (Roli Books; Rs 295; 190 pages), musician and writer **Swapan Kumar Bondyopadhyay** tells Annapurna Devi's story through the eyes of her disciples, flautist Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia and Nityanand Haldipur, and sitar players Nikhil Banerjee and Basant Kabra. You get to read – more than you would wish to, perhaps – about Ravi Shankar's numerous love affairs, before, during and after his marriage to Annapurna Devi. Surprisingly, his lovechild and jazz singer Norah Jones is nowhere to be found.



Everyday characters, pale and uninteresting, became luminous in writer Gaura Pant's novels and stories in Hindi. Popularly known as Shivani, she used Kumaon and Bengal as the setting for her stories, blending memory with fiction. In **DIDDI—MY MOTHER'S VOICE** (Penguin; Rs 250; 216 pages), Shivani's writer-daughter **Ira Pande** follows her mother's footsteps. A biography-novel, *Diddi*, as Shivani's children called her, is all about Pande's memories as a child in Almora. Taking the narrative forward are translations of her mother's stories. Amid Almora's social dynamics, you discover the rich legacy of a family that hosted names like Rabindranath Tagore and Madan Mohan Malviya.



Rudrangshu Mukherjee's **MANGAL PANDEY—BRAVE MARTYR OR ACCIDENTAL HERO?** (Penguin; Rs 150; 109 pages) draws on historical references and documents from the trial of Mangal Pandey, the Brahmin sepoy from Barrackpore in Bengal who is largely credited with triggering the uprising of 1857 against the British administration. Adopting a scholarly approach, Mukherjee attempts to focus on the real Pandey. Was he truly a fiery patriot who attacked British officers on a mission to protect his country's honour? Or, as Pandey constantly reiterated at his subsequent trial, was he an ordinary man under the influence of *bhang* and opium who had no clue what he was doing? Either way, you can't fault Mukherjee's timing—Ketan Mehta's *The Rising*, with Aamir Khan playing Mangal Pandey, will release soon, and this is a timely prologue. Pity about the textbook feel.

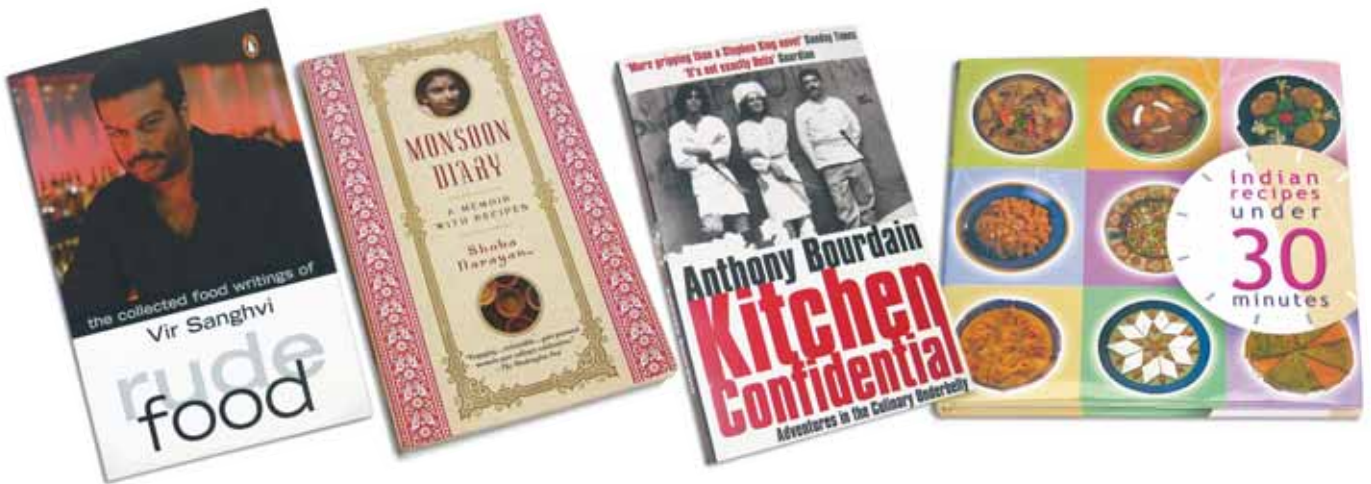


In **THE ZAHIR** (HarperCollins India; Rs 295; 342 pages), **Paulo Coelho** narrates the quest of a famous author—a thinly disguised Coelho—who travels across countries in search of his missing wife, Esther, a war correspondent who leaves her home and husband without any explanation. In the process, he discovers many things—the true nature of their marriage, their love for each other and the truth of his own life. For those who were enthralled by the magical simplicity of *The Alchemist*, perhaps Coelho's best known book, *The Zahir*, which means an all pervasive obsession or fascination with someone or something, might seem repetitive, and anti-climactic at the end. But there's no denying the beauty of Coelho's deceptively simple prose and seamless transition from dream to reality.

All titles available at Oxford Bookstore, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kolkata, and on www.oxfordbookstore.com

Food for thought

A good food writer can capture the very essence of a meal and allow the reader the liberty of a very safe, gentle indulgence. Here are some examples



Vir Sanghvi's **RUDE FOOD** is the other side of this talk show host and journalist. It's a collection of his columns on food which used to appear in *Hindustan Times*. He tells us his intention was to launch a column that "cut through all the crap, treated the snob nonsense with the contempt it deserved and did not take sides". The book travels effortlessly from breakfast rituals to sinful desserts, airlines *khana* to what our favourite film stars love to eat. *Rude Food* is full of inside gossip and useful trivia like the three kinds of bad service you absolutely should not put up with. This one is for gastronomes, gossip lovers, and the merely curious. Penguin India; Rs 375; 333 pages

Food and family—that's what **MONSOON DIARY: A MEMOIR WITH RECIPES** is about. Shoba Narayan serves up vegetarian recipes with accounts of her childhood in southern India, her sophomore days in America, and visits from her parents and in-laws to her home in New York City. The book details rituals surrounding food that are central to every aspect of Indian life, like the *choru-unnaal* that North Indians know better as the *annaprashan* (the first time a child eats rice). In between stories about characters like Raju, the *gwalla* who named his cows after his wives, are recipes for potato masala and coconut chutney, among others. Penguin India; Rs 295; 223 pages

Most diners like to believe that the sliver of seared foie gras, served with an ethereal buckwheat blini and a drizzle of piquant sauce was created by a refined chef, a gentle aesthete of cuisine. According to Anthony Bourdain in **KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL: ADVENTURES IN THE CULINARY UNDERBELLY**, that elegant Michelin crowned confection is very likely the joint effort of a team of "whacked-out moral degenerates, refugees, a thuggish assortment of drunks, sluts, and psychopaths". CIA-trained Bourdain, currently the executive chef of Les Halles in New York, wrote two culinary thrillers before this exposé of the seamy lives of restaurateurs. Bloomsbury Publishing; Rs 630; 307 pages

Dishing up a meal in half an hour sounds like a dream. **INDIAN RECIPES UNDER 30 MINUTES**, with 70 recipes compiled by source of India's finest chefs—Bina Parasramka, Prima Kurien, Sujit Bose, and Vijaylakshmi Baig—aims to make it reality. The range of recipes is wide, from North to South India, and some are rare enough to earn you a reputation for gourmet cooking. However, these are not dishes that you can whip up on the spur of the moment. The 30-minute chef has to ensure the pantry is amply stocked with condiments like aniseed, asafoetida, raisins and saffron. Roli Books; Rs 295; 96 pages

Break down the walls

Work towards narrowing the generation gap with youngsters, urges **Amita Malik**

WHAT I AM ABOUT TO NARRATE MAY BE rather immodest. But I hope I will be forgiven, because it makes an important point.

A few weeks ago, I was sitting near the porch of India International Centre in Delhi, waiting for a car, which was to take me for a medical test. I was feeling a little apprehensive, not knowing at the time that the test would be fine. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I found a young man kneeling at my feet. "Madam," he said, "Do you realise you are an inspiration to us?" "How old are you?" I asked in amazement. "Twenty," he replied. "Then you are one quarter my age. How can I be an inspiration?" I asked. "Because you write what we young people think and feel," he said with great sincerity. "Young man," I said with tears in my eyes, "You have made my day, my week, my year, my entire writing career." I gave him a hug; he gave me a lovely smile and vanished.

There are two points I would like to make. First, senior citizens have got into a habit of dismissing the younger generation as irresponsible, disrespectful, loud and uncaring. And here was a young person who had gone out of his way to say something wonderful to me. He had, in the process, left me in a much better mood. Second, I felt proud that I had reached out to the younger generation without making any special effort. Keeping in touch, through my writings, with various things—from cinema to sports, politics to social problems—was enough. Because one must, whatever your age, keep in touch with contemporary life and participate wholeheartedly.

That's one reason why I am against old people's homes, however luxurious, because they herd seniors together to spend the rest of their lives airing grievances about the children who deserted them, about illnesses and their devalued pensions. There are very few homes where young volunteers drop in to chat with the residents or do little chores for them. The children of those residing in the old age homes come visiting about once a month with the grandchildren in tow, and some fruits and nuts. A dreary life, made good with creature comforts.



It is necessary to keep in touch with contemporary life and participate wholeheartedly, whatever your age

In the same breath, I must add that I am against the patronising attitude older people adopt with the younger generation. It starts with baby talk to four-year-olds who are perfectly capable of understanding adult talk. Then we talk to teenagers as if their only purpose in life is to harass us elders. Often our interaction with them involves sentences like "you young people don't think before you act", and so on and so forth. It immediately creates a barrier. This, in turn, only facilitates in making youngsters hostile.

The only way out, I have found, is to talk to all age groups as if they are equals. From four-year-olds to teenagers, from grandmothers to uncles, they all respond in kind. One can never demand respect; one has to earn it. After all, if the young man I met on the porch of India International Centre could accept the fact that someone four times his age thinks just like him, doesn't it prove that it is we seniors who create age barriers and generation gaps more than the youngsters? ■

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



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Crossing 50

Age brings greater discrimination, and a new sense of fulfilment, writes **Pavan K Varma**

I CELEBRATED MY 50th BIRTHDAY IN NOVEMBER 2003 in Cyprus where I was posted as the Indian high commissioner. My wife had arranged a surprise party at a friend's house. I had got wind of it but feigned practiced surprise when, out of the darkness, some 50 people lurched forward to wish me and champagne bottles popped. A belly dancer had been arranged, and there was much revelry as she did her routine.

The age factor crept in when, after this first round of partying, my teenage son and daughter wanted my wife and me to accompany them to a nightclub. There was a time, not so long ago, when I would have accepted without a thought. But I had had my drink or two, and my dinner, and wanted nothing more than to turn in and wake up fresh in the morning for my walk.

As I see it, it is about knowing what one wants and what one can do, and not do, with much greater clarity than ever before. For some years now, when the whole world seems to be partying till dawn on December 31, I have stuck to my Cinderella hour. At midnight, I wish my friends and family the best for the year to come, and retire to bed. In my younger days, I partied till the wee hours. But now I want to start the year without a hangover.

Have I become awfully boring, woefully predictable and unforgivably inflexible? Perhaps. Or maybe age brings greater discrimination, a more resolute will to say no to what we don't want to do or will regret later, and a better appreciation, borne out of sheer experience, of what really gives us pleasure. I know this sounds like making a virtue of necessity, but I

speak the truth. In many ways, crossing the Rubicon line of 50 has actually been for me a benediction.

On the deficit side of 50, I was often mesmerised by over choice. Perhaps mesmerised is not the best word, for it connotes paralysis, a stillness, which is not really what I want to convey. The truth is that I was a prisoner of ceaseless activity borne out of ambition and want and opportunity. Some of this activity was worthwhile, some unavoidable, some inevitable and some downright stupid. But when one is in the midstream of a fast flowing river, it is difficult to pause and choose direction. Now, having come so far downstream, I want to increasingly enjoy the luxury to occasionally watch from the bank the waters flowing by.

So many tasks remain unfinished, and some dreams are still unfulfilled. But when one has only a third of one's life left (if that), each day becomes that much more precious. My father did not make it to 50. He died when he was 49. In fact, for me crossing 49 was a much bigger milestone. When I did, I realised with a sense of revelation how important the gift of life is. At 30, we take life for granted; at 40 we begin to wonder: should we? At 50 we ask: can we? After 50, the wise learn acceptance. There is a new sense of fulfilment in the smaller pleasures of life.

I walk in Hyde Park every morning. Spring is here and the trees are green and the flowers in bloom. I walk longer than before. I feel just a little less young. But that is all right. Oscar Wilde once said so insightfully: 'The tragedy of old age is not that you are old, but that you are still young.' ■



**In my younger days
I partied a lot, but
now I stick to my
Cinderella hour even
when the whole
world parties**

Author-diplomat Pavan K Varma is currently director of the Nehru Centre in London

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

HARMONY, OBVIOUSLY.

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UNMASKED

The last secret of the Watergate scandal, which rocked the American presidency in the 1970s and made Richard Nixon resign from office, is out. The informer who helped *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein has finally been revealed as former FBI deputy director **W Mark Felt**. "I'm the guy.... I am the guy they used to call Deep Throat," Felt, 91, told *Vanity Fair* magazine in May. The scandal that led to Nixon's resignation began with a burglary and attempted tapping of phones in the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate office building in Washington during the Republican president's 1972 re-election campaign. The financing of the burglars was traced to the same source as the financing of the re-election campaign. Felt, whom Nixon had bypassed for the post of FBI director, had kept the secret from his family for almost three decades before his declaration.

HELPING HAND

Bill Clinton's fourth visit to India, dedicated to the victims of AIDS and the tsunami, began with a slight hitch. When the former US president's flight touched down at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on May 26, he was kept waiting inside the aircraft while diplomats from the Ministry of External Affairs and the US Embassy squabbled about which car should go on the tarmac to receive him. The rest of the visit went more smoothly, with the 58-year-old, here as a special envoy of the United Nations, going on to praise India's campaign against AIDS. "India has gone from being the world's No. 1 worry to being the world's No. 1 marvel," he said, while launching an initiative under the aegis of the Clinton Foundation with the assistance of the Delhi-based National Aids Control Organisation to train 1.5 lakh private-sector doctors in HIV care and treatment over the year. He also interacted with AIDS patients and staffers at the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in the capital, before touring tsunami-hit villages in Tamil Nadu.



YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

After Mark Knopfler, 54, and Joe Satriani, 50, another yesteryear pop sensation made a stopover in India this year. Throwing autographed hankies from the stage, **Englebert Humperdinck**, 70, wowed select audiences in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore last month. Unfortunately, with tickets to the British singer's three-city gig priced as high as Rs 7,000, many fans were left high and dry. The crooner, born in Chennai as Arnold George Dorsey, and his band of 13 musicians were on a belated tsunami benefit tour called *Let There Be Love*. Fondly referred to as 'humps' or 'the humpster', Englebert sang a number of his evergreen love songs, including the 1967 single *Release Me* that stayed on the UK charts for 56 consecutive weeks.

H PEOPLE

DREAM TEAM

There are no finish lines for the world's oldest marathoner **Fauja Singh**, 94. The former Adidas poster boy—and part of “Harmony’s Hotlist” in January 2005—is in the news again, this time for leading a five-member relay team of seniors at the Edinburgh Marathon in Scotland on June 13. Calling itself ‘Sikhs in the City’, the team, with a combined age of 397, is the oldest ever marathon relay team in the world—the youngest



member of the team was aged 70. The team finished 730th out of a field of 912 teams but that didn’t stop the crowds coming out and cheering them on. “By running as the oldest ever marathon relay team I hope we will inspire young people to keep going and older people to never give up,” said the one-time farmer from Punjab, who took up running at the age of 81 after he moved to England to live with his children.

IN PASSING

Mumbai-bred producer **Ismail Merchant**’s partnership with American director James Ivory and German-born screenwriter Ruth Praver Jhabvala was one of the most enduring in the world of cinema. The team made 40 films together and received three Academy nominations for best picture for *Room with a View* (1985), *Howard’s End* (1992) and *Remains of the Day* (1993). At the time of his death in London on May 25, after a surgery for abdominal ulcers, the three were reportedly working on *The Goddess*, a musical about a Hindu goddess starring Tina Turner, as well as *The White Countess*, a period drama set in China with Ralph Fiennes and Vanessa Redgrave. Merchant was 68.



Legendary cricket all-rounder **Syed Mushtaq Ali**, 90 passed away in his sleep on June 18, at his home in Indore. The stylish opener was part of the photo essay on senior sportspeople in *Harmony*’s October issue last year. He was the first Indian to score a century away from home. In 1964, the nation honoured him with the Padmashri, while Wisden recognised his contribution to the game by conferring a special award to him.



In the 1960s, a **Subodh Mukherjee** release meant audiences were in for a lot of fun. The director of super hits like *Paying Guest*, *Shagird* and *Junglee*, which he also wrote and produced, was known for making films that made you laugh—and had a remarkable music score. Inactive in his later years—his last film *Teesri Ankh* was in 1982—Mukherjee was under treatment for blood cancer since 2004. The 84-year-old passed away on May 21 in Mumbai.



The post of Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs was his first cabinet posting, and his last. **Sunil Dutt**, the undefeated Congress candidate from Mumbai northwest, passed away in his sleep on May 25. During his lifetime, the former actor, who would have turned 76 on June 6, campaigned tirelessly for peace and communal harmony and better care for cancer and HIV patients and against drug abuse.

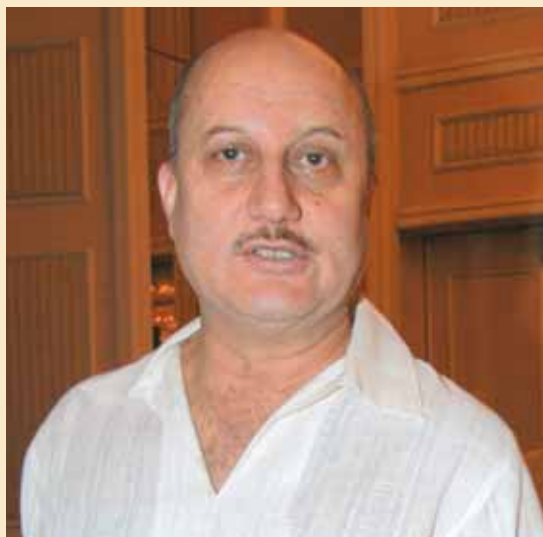
MILESTONES

Awarded. Stage and film artiste **Rohini Hattangadi**, 54, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for her contribution to Indian theatre. President Abdul Kalam Azad handed over the award on May 13 at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.



Voted. **Steven Spielberg**, 58, the director of blockbusters such as *Jurassic Park*, *ET* and *Schindler's List*, as the greatest director of all time by 10,000 readers of *Empire*, a UK-based movie magazine. "Steven Spielberg is the closest thing in movies to resemble the impact of The Beatles," said the magazine's associate editor Ian Freer. Alfred Hitchcock came a close second.

Senior actor Anupam Kher received an award for his contribution to the society in June 2, 2005 at Mcleodganj, Dharamshala. The award was presented to Kher by the Dalai Lama at Mcleodganj and carries a citation and certificate. A local newspaper group, *Divya Himachal*, sponsored the award.



Appointed. **Dominique de Villepin**, 51, as prime minister of France, the first un-elected politician to hold the post. A loyalist of President Jacques Chirac, the former foreign minister is best known for his tirade against the American invasion of Iraq. He was also the French diplomat to India in the early 1990s. He steps into the office vacated by Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who quit after France voted 'no' in a referendum on the new constitution of the European Union.

THINK LATERAL

1. Anthony and Cleopatra are both lying dead on the floor of a villa in Egypt. Near their bodies is a broken bowl. There is no mark on either of their bodies and they were not poisoned. How did they die?

2. A man pushed his car for a really long time. He had to stop when he reached a hotel. But exactly at that point, he realised that he was bankrupt. Why?

3. One day a man received a parcel in the post. Carefully packed inside was a human arm. He examined it, repacked it and then sent it on to another man. When the second man received the parcel, he too opened it to find an arm. He carefully examined the arm and then took it to the woods to bury it. Why did they do this?

4. A man died and went to heaven. There were thousands of other people there. They were all naked and all looked as they did at the age of 21. He looked around to see if there was anyone he recognised. He saw a couple and he knew immediately that they were Adam and Eve. How did he know?

5. A man went to a party and drank some of the punch. He then left early. Everyone else at the party who drank the punch subsequently died of poisoning. Why did the man not die?

6. A man was walking downstairs in a building when he suddenly realized that his wife had just died. How?

For solutions, see page 79

SAY IT OUT LOUD

We all have big changes in our lives that are more or less a second chance.

—Actor Harrison Ford

Things do not change; we change.

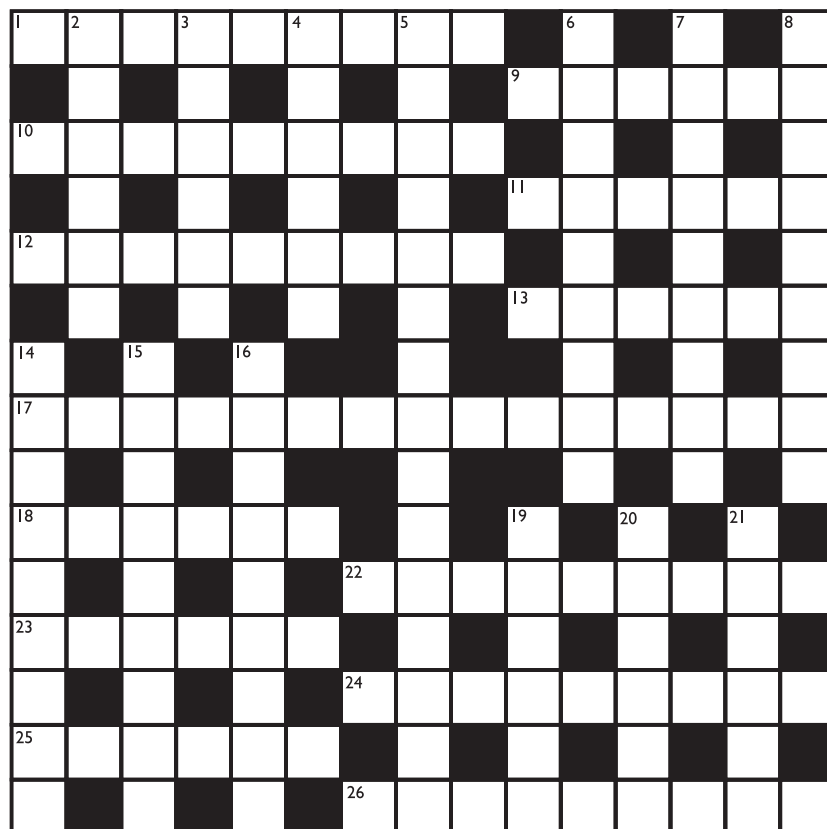
—Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

We did not change as we grew older; we just became more clearly ourselves.

—Children's author Lynn Hall

There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.

—Nelson Mandela



EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 10

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS

- 1** C Ramchandra forever in the case of Lata! (2, 3, 4)
9 Heady business of being Beauty Queen? (1,5)
10 Colanders thrown to the lions (9)
11 Laloo Yadav's spot retort to how to dispose of the irreparably damaged rail bogie? (4, 2)
12 How sickly Sourav is prone to look against the genuinely fast rising ball (3, 2, 4)

- 13** Uttar Pradesh clamour, Kalyan Singh style? (6)
17 Trust Brian Lara to, the moment Sachin T puts a foot wrong! (3, 3, 9)
18 Pale imitations of the crossword in the square above? (6)
22 The Anand Boy did overnight with Kalpana, rather than with Suraiya, as it transpired (9)
23 Advocate Railway going after a TV rewind about wheel (6)
24 *Ishwar*-intervening Assessment Year confronting a screen legend (9)

- 25** Mould electro-magnetic knob on centre of shield? (6)
26 Something even Waheeda (*Piya Tose Naina Laage Re*) Rehman, as Rosie, spent in front of the mirror before facing Fali Mistry's camera in *Guide* (1, 4, 4)

DOWN

- 2** Far from being the good old Phule's peer! (2, 4)
3 Cold comfort? (3-3)
4 Hanger-on holding secret to wad! (6)
5 Dissipated? Entreaty certain to observe ruler? (8-7)
6 An Aamir-Shah Rukh, Coca Cola-Pepsi confrontation showing which way the wind's blowing? (5, 4)
7 Call to Narain Karthikeyan to shape up or ship out? (4, 5)
8 State of *Poets And Poetry* being out of print? (3, 2, 4)
14 Writing off Sachin is (5, 4)
15 Just what the doctor ordered, Baby! (1, 4-4)
16 Not to be nipped in the bud so long as Geoffrey Boycott's around (5, 4)
19 Let's drink to his flair for the tipsy act (6)
20 All credit to you for being in such a position! (2, 4)
21 The blackbuck is out to, Tiger! (3, 3)

For answers, see page 79

Raju Bharatan is the originator of the Sunday Cryptic in *The Times Of India*

NEW 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.

LAUGH LINES



Three gentlemen were talking about what they would like their grandchildren to say about them fifty years from now. The first one, Mr Mehra, said, "I would like my grandkids to say I excelled in my business." Mr Choudhari, said, "I would want them to say that I was a loyal family man." When it was Mr Bhandari's turn, he said, "I want them to say, 'He certainly looks good for his age!'"

|||

Attending a wedding for the first time, seven-year-old Jane whispered to her mother, "Why is the bride dressed in white?" "Because white is the colour of happiness and today is the happiest day of her life," her mother explained, trying to keep it simple. The child thought about this for a moment, then said, "So, why is the groom wearing black?"

|||

One day, Mr Nair walked into a dentist's office to ask how much it would cost to extract a wisdom tooth. "Rs 500," the dentist said promptly. "That's a ridiculous amount," blurted out Mr Nair adding, "Isn't there a cheaper way?" "Hmm," mused the dentist, scratching his head. "If I let one of my students do it for the experience, I suppose I could charge you just Rs 50." "Marvellous," said Mr Nair, "book my wife for next Tuesday!"

|||

One evening, two old men—Ramesh and Sunil—from a retirement home were sitting on the front porch chatting. "You know, Ramesh, if you think about it, we are not that old. I mean, my memory is still good," said Sunil. Even as he said this, Ramesh knocked on the wooden chair beside him and murmured, "Touch wood." There was silence for a couple of minutes. Then Sunil said, "So, is anyone going to get the door, or do I have to do it?"

BACK TO SCHOOL

WHO IS HARRY POTTER?

Check your grandchild's diary for July 2005. Kids – and many adults – around the world have made a date with their bookstore on the 16th of that month. That's when Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince goes on sale.

Just who is Harry Potter? Well, he's the creation of British author J K Rowling. Harry is a small, skinny boy, who spends the first 10 years of his life sleeping under the stairs of a family who loathes him. In the non-magic human world—the world of 'Muggles'—Harry is treated like dirt by the aunt and uncle who inherited him when his parents were killed by the evil Voldemort. But in the world of wizards, Harry, with a lightning-bolt scar on his forehead, is famous as a survivor of the wizard who tried to kill him. On his 10th birthday, a mysterious letter by the friendly giant Hagrid informs Harry about his heritage and offers him an invite to attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. And Harry follows his destiny.

Rowling has already written five bestselling books about Harry – The Philosopher's Stone, The Chamber of Secrets, The Prisoner of Azkaban, The Goblet of Fire and The Order of the Phoenix – all transporting the reader to a magical world of wizards, owls, dragons, house-elves, a fantastic game called Quidditch, wands made of phoenix feathers and jellybeans that come in every flavour, including curry, grass, and sardine. Along for the ride are Harry's best friends Ron and Hermione, the lovable Hagrid, the venerable principle of Hogwart's Alfred Dumbledore, and a cast of villains eager to do Lord Voldemort's evil bidding.

All the books, with danger and delight stirred in, brim with wit, whimsy, and a touch of the macabre that appeal to both young and old. When Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix hit the shelves three years after its predecessor, it created a worldwide phenomenon. Hundreds of thousands of people queued outside bookstores on June 20th, 2003 until the clock struck midnight, so that they would be the first to buy it. Now that you're clued in, will you be at your nearest bookstore, grandkids in tow, on July 16, 2005?

WRONG NUMBER

PAGE 46

Investors' Grievances Forum, 9/C, Neelam Nagar,
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DUSK ON THE INDUS

PAGE 52

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TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT

PAGE 60

Bangalore Wine Club: Contact Alok Chandra at 102,
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HEADSTART SOLUTIONS

PAGE 76

SOLUTIONS TO THINK LATERAL:

1. Anthony and Cleopatra were actually goldfish whose bowl was knocked over by a clumsy dog.
2. He was playing Monopoly.
3. The three men had been stranded on a desert island. Desperate for food, they had agreed to amputate their left arms in order to eat them. They swore an oath that each would have his left arm cut off. One of them was a doctor and he cut the arms off his two companions. They were then rescued. But the doctor's oath was still binding so he later had to have his arm amputated and sent to his colleagues.
4. He recognised Adam and Eve as the only people without navels. Because they were not born of women, they had never had umbilical cords and therefore they never had navels.
5. The poison in the punch came from the ice cubes. When the man drank the punch, the ice was fully frozen. Gradually as it melted, the poison got mixed with the punch.
6. The man had just visited his wife in hospital. She was on a life-support machine. As he was walking down the staircase, all the lights went out. There had been a power cut and the emergency back-up systems had failed. He immediately knew that she had died.

EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 10

PAGE 77

ACROSS:

1 on her lips; 9 a tiara; 10 Androcles (the 9 letters of *colanders* rearranged); 11 cart it; 12 ill at ease; 13 UPROAR (UP-roar); 17 hit the headlines; 18 resets; 22 Developed—Dev/eloped; 23 VOTARY—V(O)T/A/R/Y (Railway going after A TV rewind (reversal) about O (*wheel*)); 24 AISHWARYA—A(Ishwar)Y/a—AY standing for Assessment Year—Ishwar between A & Y; 25 emboss (em/boss)—em for *electro-magnetic*, boss meaning knob on centre of shield, emboss is mould; 26 A good hour

DOWN:

2 no Nilu (Phule); 3 ear-cap; 4 lackey—lac/key; 5 pleasure-seeking—plea/sure/see/king (*entreaty certain to observe ruler*); 6 straw poll; 7 last round; 8 Lay to rest (a reference to Lay's *Poets And Poetry*); 14 short view; 15 a test-tube; 16 white rose (emblem of Yorkshire); 19 Keshto (Mukherjee); 20 no cash; 21 get you

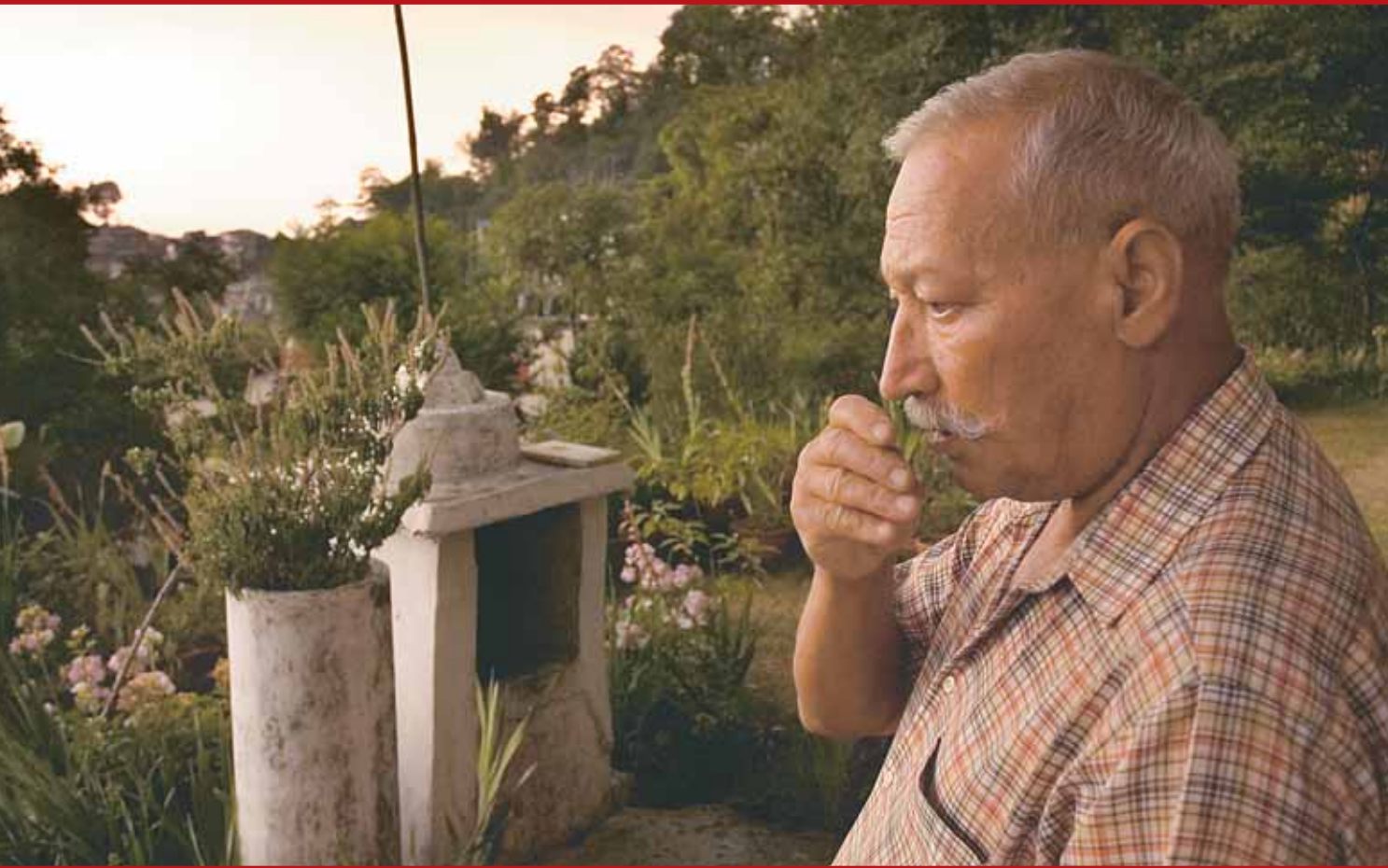


Photo: ASHWINI BHATIA; Text: SANGEETA J

“How many trees have you planted in your lifetime? It does not take money or noise to get back to nature. What do you do with the lemon seeds after you have squeezed a lemon? Why not dig up a little earth and throw them in? One of them may sprout. Nature is bounteous. Just give her the seeds back.”

Lt Col (retd) Balraj Katoch, 61, grows and distributes herbs—thyme, rosemary, celery, mint and strawberry, to name a few—to anyone who wishes to nurture them. His two daughters share his passion, educating farmers in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, about the commercial viability of these herbs. Having grown up in the Changar belt near Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, where few things grow, Katoch learned to respect plants. After retiring from the 1/4 Gorkha Regiment of the Indian Army eight years ago, Katoch has pursued his green drive. He goes around with a bag on his shoulder containing bottles of seeds, printed information about herbs, and two books of information he has gathered to instruct the farmers in the area. Known in the neighbourhood as the man with a stick—he injured his leg in an accident a few years before he retired—Katoch spends most of his day in his garden. He calls it a ‘take-away zone’ since anyone can take away plants from here for free. He stopped counting how many trees he has planted after the first 2 lakh saplings.



Doesn't it rather reflect the strength of deeper insight !

Age is truly a journey of accomplishments for you...
and for us.



SAHARA
INDIA PARTIWAR