

harmony

celebrate age

Taking Charge

Spirited seniors
reinvent themselves

Asha Bhosle
leads the way...14

Exclusive columns
**Amitabh Bachchan &
Shabana Azmi**



Hot
Deals
inside



Who decides
when you should stop
being young?

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you stop growing. Now is
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dreams that you had kept on hold.

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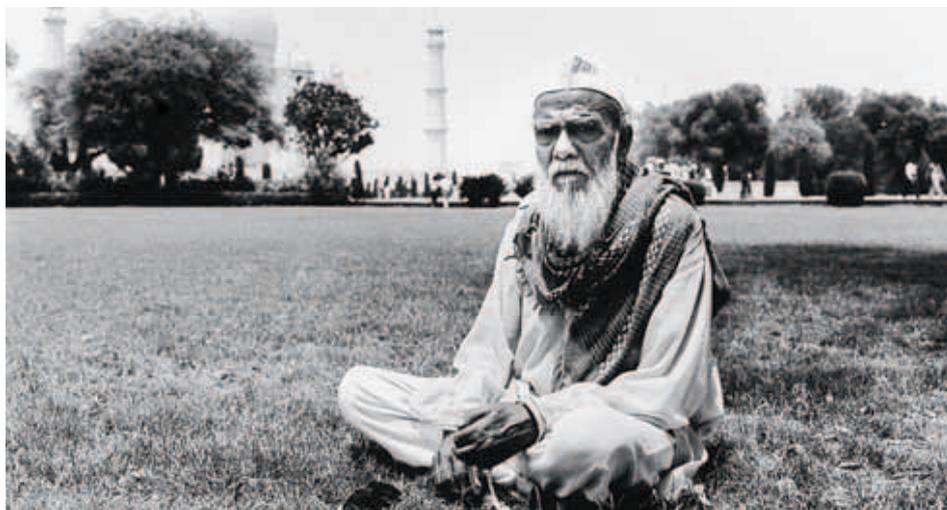
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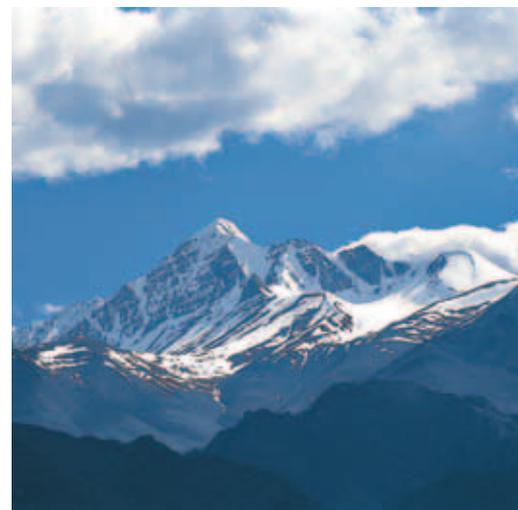
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Inspiration



Dhirubhai H Ambani
1932-2002

“Often people think opportunity is a matter of luck. I believe opportunities are all around us. Some seize it.

Others stand and let it pass by.”

bring back the sunshine

My dream is to initiate a movement that will touch the lives of silver citizens in their golden years. With their number estimated to jump from 77 million in 2001 to 137 million by 2021, the social intervention required across India is immense. I have made it my mission to address this need.

Why focus on the elderly? My response is largely instinctive, and stems from an incident that occurred years ago. I was on holiday in the West, staying with a family friend. Around then, his mother took seriously ill and passed away. When we spoke about it later, he said, "I have never spent much time with my mother. I probably never even told her I loved her. I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive myself." His words continue to haunt me.

Our elders make us who we are. Why then do we shy away from giving them our time and affection? When we think of

ageing, it's usually in negative light. Centuries of accumulated belief lead us to assume that, after retirement, the physical act of existence continues but the sheer joy of living reduces. We owe it to ourselves to live life to the fullest. To underscore a cliché, 'Age is a state of mind—we are only as old as we think'.

I am 45, and proud of the fact. With each passing year, I feel I have grown and blossomed, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. Along the way, the excitement of life has given way to more fundamental insights. The golden years are a period of introspection, growth and, yes, fun. There are different ambitions to chase; no day-to-day family responsibilities, no careers to be designed. One is at the peak of life, ready to share a wealth of experience with family, and society. It's the time to experience life anew. In keeping with this belief, Harmony Interactive Centres, created under the Dhirubhai

Ambani Memorial Trust, will celebrate age. These centres will provide support and services geared to meet the needs of the elderly. In turn, *Harmony*, the magazine, will be the equivalent of a national locomotive, the voice that will spread the word. It will address a gamut of concerns, from finance and health to recreation.

I am thankful for the guidance and encouragement I have received over the years from my father-in-law, the late Dhirubhai Ambani, and mother-in-law Kokilaben. As exemplified by them, the golden years can be full of vitality. *Harmony* aspires to bring back the sunshine. I invite you to participate in the experience. Share your thoughts, write to us, write for us. Come join a national movement!



Tina Ambani



Photo: Deepa Parekh

Managing trustee of the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust: **Tina Ambani**

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contributors



Nrupen Madhvani, a Mumbai-based professional photographer with 18 years of varied experience, executes *Harmony's* vibrant, colour-rich section covers with Zen-like simplicity. Madhvani's portfolio ranges from abstract compositions to interiors, products to portraits, and lifestyle to landscapes. He is especially proud of the international awards garnered by his fine art images *Shelter* (1994) and *Stairway to Heaven* (2003). On advancing years, Madhvani, 50, quotes Ingmar Bergman: "Old age is like climbing a mountain; the higher you get, the more tired and breathless you become, but your views become more extensive."



The Jodha brothers from New Delhi bring the issue of ageing into sharper focus in our photo essay. **Samar S Jodha** says, "I enjoy making pictures." From editorial work to social communication projects, and advertising and corporate photography, Samar continues to push the envelope of his craft.



"Samar set a high benchmark for me. But I'm not intimidated!" says brother **Vijay S Jodha**, filmmaker, researcher and writer. Evidently. Films for PBS and the Smithsonian, and multimedia projects for a variety of clients, form part of his work.



Management cartoonist and strategic thinker **Prriya Raj** has over 24 years of experience in advertising, marketing and PR. He has contributed regular columns to several newspapers. Prriya Raj was the first Indian cartoonist to host a daily column on the Internet, and the first to launch his own website and a cartoon channel. On creating 'Mr Bakshi's View' for *Harmony*, he says: "The editorial concept challenged me. The humour celebrates graceful ageing with due respect to our silvers." Cheers to that!

editor's note

Some of our favourite people have crossed 55. When we think of them, we think of spirit. And passion. *Harmony* is aimed at them. It's an attempt to reassemble life's little pieces, to arrive at a fresher, more integrated view of life when one is expected to hang up one's socks and pull down the monkey cap. Our baseline says it all: Celebrate Age!

This inaugural issue zooms in on men and women who have shed defeatist attitudes and reinvented to follow the call of the heart. Like cover diva Asha Bhosle who insisted on feeding us her succulent home-cooked signature *biryani*, even as she sizzled for Atul Kasbekar's camera. Attitude belying age. Or medico turned new age guru Deepak Chopra who shared his secrets for reversing age, drawing up a meal plan especially for our readers even as he jetted across continents. We also look at relationships that have endured: Sudha and Narayana Murthy being our vote for a couple that remains unassuming despite being perched at a virtual pinnacle of life. Our photo essay captures an array of heroes—we can take a leaf from them, and from our parents and grandparents, on how to bypass life's roadblocks. And surge past the finishing line.

People, food, finance, health, legal help, spirituality: *Harmony* provides food for body, mind and soul. Our goal is to rekindle lives, ignite the spark. So come embrace the Sun. Here comes a new way of seeing.

—Anupa Mehta
Executive Editor

cover



Cover picture: Atul Kasbekar exclusively for *Harmony*

Hair and makeup: Mickey Contractor

Props: guitar courtesy B X Furtado & Sons, Mumbai

Location: courtesy Negative Space Photography, Mumbai



उप-राष्ट्रपति, भारत
नई दिल्ली
VICE-PRESIDENT
INDIA
NEW DELHI

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust is publishing a monthly English Magazine "Harmony - Celebrate Age" which is going to be launched soon.

This Magazine could not have come a day soon. Today, in our country the elderly people, who constitute sizeable segment of our population, face innumerable problems. Steady decline in the traditional communitarian system, financial and social insecurity and old-age anxieties compound their problems and reduce many of our elderly to a pathetic, lonely existence.

It is gratifying to know that the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust is articulating the concerns of our senior citizens through the publication of this magazine, which I am sure, will contribute to larger and more emphatic national effort to find early solutions to problems of the elderly.

My best wishes to the Trust and the readers of this Magazine.

(BHAIRON SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

New Delhi
15th May 2004



Phones : 3793438
3019080

ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE

24, AKBAR ROAD, NEW DELHI - 110 011

Sonia Gandhi
President

May 12, 2004

Dear Shri Jesudasan,

Thank you for your letter of 5th May and its enclosures apprising me of the launch of the monthly "Harmony - Celebrate Age" by the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust

I convey my appreciation for the initiative taken by Ms Tina Ambani for addressing the needs of our senior citizens. Our country takes pride in the tradition of taking care of our elders, our gurus, who have brought so much value to our lives. I am sure that the launch of this magazine and the services rendered by the Harmony Interactive Day Centres will bring reassurance to our elders that they are still important to us all. I send my good wishes for the success of the Harmony initiative.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Write to Harmony at 4th Floor,
Maker Chamber IV, Nariman Point,
Mumbai-400021 or email us at
contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Save your soles

Do your feet make you go weak in the knees? Get help now. A quarter of all our bones lie in the feet, so ignoring that nagging foot ache can mean a lot of trouble. We went toe to toe, looking for the best foot products; here's our shopping list. The Loft, located in Hyderabad and Mumbai, stocks numerous branded products for feet.

Ortho Royal Inc's (ORI) cushioned, lace-up shoes, Rs 3,000, specially designed for diabetes patients, have a roomy toe-box that gives better balance to swollen feet. A narrow toehold crunches feet and is known to cause ulcers in diabetics.

Other products at the Loft are **Calzini health socks**, Rs 135 a pair, with non-elastic tops that free up blood circulation.



ORI's flat foot insoles, Rs 400, give extra support to fallen arches, providing relief from ankle, knee, hip and back pain.

Dr Scholl's heel cushion, Rs 99, relieves pressure on sore heels, and **Dr Scholl's air pillow insoles**, Rs 125, absorb perspiration and keep the feet fresh.

Dr Scholl's products are also available at reputed medical stores.

Sweet nothings

The latest blood sugar monitor in the market provides a continuous status on sugar level. An alarm goes off if the levels go lower or higher than normal. Priced at Rs 5,400, the glucometer is manufactured and distributed by Omron, and is available in reputed medical stores.



Before Botox

Nowadays, it's a fine line between the young and the old. And if you use L'Oreal's Revitalift, that line could disappear altogether. Well, at least for a while. The Revitalift range of three skincare creams—Moisturising Day Cream, Night Cream and Eyes (Rs 595 each)—promises to postpone the appearance of wrinkles. Ideal for women, and metrosexual men, above 40.





Just relax

Ideal for reading in the garden or balcony, or for just putting up your feet and relaxing, Planter's Chairs are back in vogue. You can find antique varieties in *chor bazaars* or buy a designer version at furniture stores. Hacienda in Mumbai has a terrific one for Rs 9,500. Another option? Just get your local carpenter to make one for you.



Grand opening



To pamper yourself, *Harmony* votes for a visit to the newly opened Grand Hyatt in Mumbai. Feast on a range of cuisine—French, Italian and Indian. Devour the expansive collection of art by 50-odd Mumbai-based artists. And immerse yourself at Club Oasis Fitness Centre and Spa, which offers natural and specialised treatments with exotic spa oil blends. Club Oasis is open to members, guests of members, and guest of in-house hotel residents.

Also, Park Hyatt Goa Resort & Spa, located in the heart of idyllic South Goa on Arossim Beach, has a special package for senior citizens: Rs 5,000 per night (room only basis) with a 25 per cent discount on food and beverages.



Lost in translation

Of late, Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Kalidasa's works have become a goal post for the students flooding Sanskrit language classes all over the country—most of them over 50. If you want to join the rush, contact:

Delhi

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
K G Marg: 011-23384139,
23389942. Courses throughout
the year; fees Rs 210 per
semester.

**Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya
Sanskrit Vidyapeeth,**
Katwariya Sarai: 011-26868274,
26960831, 26564003.
Diploma classes plus longer
courses; fees Rs 200 per course.

Sri Aurobindo Ashram,
Sri Aurobindo Marg:
011-26569225, 26567863.
Three-month course;
fees Rs 400 per course.

Mumbai

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Vashi: 022-27820162.
Three- to four-year courses;
fees Rs 500 per semester.

**KJ Somaiya Bharatiya
Sanskriti Peetham,**
Vidyavihar: 022-25147265.
Different courses held throughout
the year.

Hyderabad

Surabharati Samiti,
Osmania University Campus:
040-27682223, 27420939.
Courses at all levels; fees Rs 50
for a three-month course.

Road to learning

Silver citizens in a Mumbai suburb are putting their energies into a better future for street children, discovers *Harmony*

Daybreak in Mumbai. For some elders in the western suburb of Andheri, it's time to go back to school. Sitting cross-legged on tarpaulin sheets, these volunteers teach small groups of young students on the metro's pavements every weekday, under the aegis of the Asha Kiran Charitable Trust.

"My professor always used to ask me, 'What will you give back to society?'" says 70-year-old Krishnadev Sharma, a retired professor, who came up with the idea of 'Street Children School' five years ago. "It's payback time."

Having convinced the trust to include education in its programme, Sharma started with two children; today, there are 650. There are six centres, 15 senior volunteers and 22 others who are nominally paid.



Back to school: lessons in progress outside Glory Shop, Andheri (West), Mumbai

Photo: Lens Pic

Through the sound of traffic, you hear 60-year-old Ramesh Raut's gentle voice as he teaches 5th standard children how to spell. After retirement from his job as purser with Indian Airlines, he wanted to keep busy. "A common friend introduced me to this," he says. "For me, this is a way to do something for others." He teaches every morning from 8 am to 11 am, and then another batch from 3 pm to 6 pm everyday. His wife, Neena, also volunteers her time to the project. Street Children School is an integral part of their lives.

As it is for Subhashini Khosla, 77. She teaches students every morning from 7 am to 9 am. "I was always a housewife," she says. "But teaching these children makes me feel good. I introduced a friend who suffered from depression to this project. Now, she is fine."

Besides lessons, the trust provides stationery, clothes and daily meals. Except for one brick and mortar school at MHADA Telephone Exchange, Andheri, the rest of the branches of the school are on the roadside or outside storefronts.

The teachers also believe in rehabilitating dropouts into regular schools—as many as 30 dropouts were readmitted in 2003. And besides regular subjects, instruction is given on hygiene and civic responsibilities. Says Sharma, "Ego, politics and religion have no place in our project."

—with inputs by Purba Dutta

To know or do more, call R D Raut at 022-26355678
Harmony highlights inspirational initiatives across the country. Mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Living with Parkinson's

The Parkinson's Disease Foundation (PDF) helps patients and their families to deal with Parkinson's disease. It is the only lay society to be internationally recognised from India.

The foundation recently held a seminar in Mumbai



A Parkinson's patient at the seminar

on drug treatments for Parkinson's. In the past, it has held seminars on physiotherapy, occupational therapy and other such related topics. Invited to speak were Dr Paresh Doshi, neurosurgeon, Dr Percy Chibbar, urologist, Dr Uday Muthani, neurologist with NIMHANS, Bangalore and convenor Dr Mohit Bhatt (drbhatt@hotmail.com).

What causes Parkinson's remains unknown, but this debilitating affliction is associated with old age, and is accompanied by depression, dystonia (cramped legs, feet turned inwards), frozen shoulders, stiff muscles, loss of motor control and loneliness. Possible treatments are deep brain surgery (which comes at a prohibitive cost) or lesional surgery besides drug therapy.

Jumpstart justice

The Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority has set up the **Pension Lok Adalat** to hear pension-related disputes. While a regular court could take years, the Pension Adalat will expedite the matter and, in the absence of a court fee, save money.

To be organised in the premises of the High Court in Mumbai, Aurangabad and Nagpur once a month, the Adalat will fall under the Alternate Dispute Redressal Act (1987) and address pre-litigation matters as well as court cases. Employees of the state government, local self-government and state government corporations stand to greatly benefit. Watch out for dates and times—they will be announced on TV, radio and in newspapers.

Time share

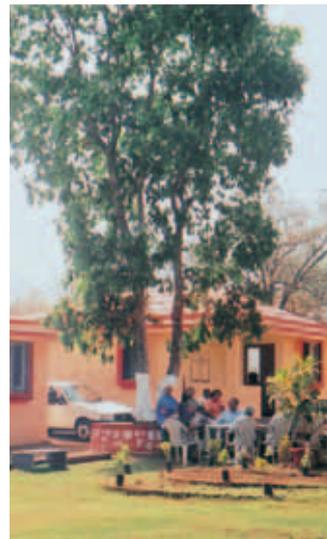
Pune's Volunteers' Bureau has the perfect cure for retirement blues. Launched by Community Aid and Sponsorship Programme (CASP), the bureau invites senior citizens to volunteer their services to organisations like hospitals and schools in Pune. What's more, the bureau also helps its volunteers to locate jobs. Currently, CASP has 50 elder volunteers.

One organisation that benefits from the programme is the Master Dinanath Hospital in Pune, where 15 such volunteers help patients and their relatives with administrative procedures, locating departments for check-ups, buying fruits and medicines, and waiting with the patient in the absence of relatives. "You are never too old to help others," says one such volunteer. Want to lend a hand? Contact CASP at 020-25862844-48 or email at caspindia@vsnl.com.

Silver homes

Two residential complexes made to order for silver citizens will open in June: Silver Line Park in Neral (East) on Mumbai's outskirts, and Riverdale Retirement Condominium, 12 km from Kochi.

At a price tag of Rs 5 lakh, Silver Line Park offers



Silver Line Park, Neral

cottages of 500 sq ft with a garden, available on ownership basis. Part of the package is security, medical service, caretakers, a yoga centre and a jogging track. With facilities like a library, tennis court, Internet and cable TV, Riverdale Retirement Condominium offers flats on rent as well as for outright ownership. It will have 64 units comprising 200 sq ft single rooms for Rs 1.5 lakh and 400 sq ft double rooms for Rs 3 lakh. One flat will be kept aside for the geriatric comatose and another for a resident doctor. Both projects aim to get the residents to run the complex themselves.

*Section compiled by Jasmine Shah Varma
—with inputs by Bina Bakshi*



35 years. Many happy faces. One fabric of India.



The chain of love

The age group of 55-65 years tends to get virtually overlooked by society at large. I say this not because I find myself at the tail end of the group, but because the signs are visible around us.

It disturbs me to see corporate houses proudly announce that they have brought down the managerial age of their employees from 55 to 42 years. Yes, it is wonderful to see younger people taking up the baton. But do we stop to consider what elders must feel at being divested of responsibility? Statistics tell us that the largest age group in this country is below 35 years. But do we stop focusing on those above that age?

Looking deep into my eyes, a soft smile lights up my mother's face. It's enough to make you want to go out and conquer the world.

Indians abide by tradition. We bring our elders into our homes, saying, 'You stay here and we shall do the rest—get your groceries, post your letters, drive you into town and take you to see a movie'. In contrast, elders in the West have to fend for themselves. The flip side, though, is that a 65-year-old widow or widower abroad may get the opportunity to find a companion. Are we inadvertently preventing our elders from leading a more fulfilling life?

Elders are, paradoxically, hugely independent. And they do feel

unsettled due to the turmoil that ageing brings about. My film *Baghbaan* threw up the question: 'Here is the father that helped you take your first step. Will you be there to hold his hand when he takes his last steps?'

However, by the time we can afford to give our parents everything, their needs are anything but materialistic. All they want is the presence of their children. They crave attention and participation.

My mother lives with me and is ill. Every morning and evening, I spend a little time with her. I don't know if she understands all that I tell her. But after looking deep into my eyes, she

gives a gentle nod of approval and a soft smile lights up her face. It is enough to make you want to go out and conquer the world. Reassurance that they are still part of the family is all that elders require.

Ageing, per se, is just a state of mind. I know people who, at 95, still make tea for their guests and drive their own car! But as age progresses, body and mind form a routine. My father followed his routine religiously, even when immobility set in. Try disturbing it through conversation or visits and you would be met with a cold snub.

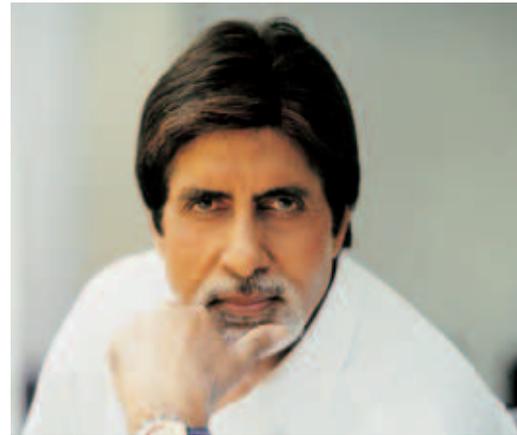


Photo: Daboo Ratnani

Words are of equal importance. They form the ephemeral ties that bind us to our elders. In 1958, at the age of 16, I learnt the greatest lesson from my father. I was heartbroken at not being allowed to perform in my School Founder's Day play due to a sudden illness, and deprived of the opportunity of winning the Best Actor Cup for the second successive year.

He sat by my hospital bed and said: "Agar tumhare man ka ho to achha. Agar tumhare man ka naa ho, to zyaada achha. Kyunki phir wo bhagwan ke man ka ho raha hai. Aur bhagwan ka kiya, insaan ke kiye se zyaada achha hota hai!" Forty-five years on, this remains with me; and I will make sure it remains with my children and their children too.

Our elders have brought value to our lives; if age has deprived them of their faculties, instead of reprimanding them, let us lend them ours. If their mind is disturbed, let us share our thoughts with them. If they are lonely, let us give them company. Let us cherish them, for they have made us who we are. ■

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



nly Asha!

Tina Ambani gets personal with Asha Bhosle

It's as if destiny singled out Asha Bhosle to transform her with a wave of life's magic wand. Nearly six decades after her foray into the world of music, Bhosle continues to rock. Reinventing consistently both musically, and through tangential career choices. At 70, she remains sharp as a pin. Her latest love is the guitar, which she strums with great panache when not dashing off to Dubai to oversee her signature restaurant, Asha's. At home, over vegetarian fare on a recent Monday, she conducted herself with amazing grace. Despite the volley of personal questions, she remained unruffled. A few days later, at Mumbai photographer Atul Kasbekar's studio, she gave us a glimpse of the *Monica, my darling* magic. "Lights, camera, action," said Kasbekar. Without missing a beat, the elegant septuagenarian, with her flying hair and sari blazing with rhinestones, morphed into a diva, sex appeal personified. At our spontaneous applause, she broke into *Ek hasina thi* from *Karz*, flashing the 1,000-watt smile that makes her the darling of several generations. "This is a new *Ashatai*," said stylist Mickey Contractor. "I have never seen her with her hair open, displaying so much attitude."

Her chutzpah is visible in our pictures, and her responses.



Sexy at 70: Asha Bhosle

Photos: Bajirao Pawar



*Photo: Atul Kasbekar
Props: speakers courtesy The Tannoy Kingdom 12
from Acoustic Arts, New Delhi; Princess chair from
ME - Furniture & Beyond, Mumbai*



Photos: (above) Gautam Rajadhyaksha;
(right) Atul Kasbekar

Tina: Six decades in music, and you also chose to start a restaurant in Dubai. It's been an exciting innings.

Asha: My life has been a struggle. My husband earned only Rs 100 a month. I used to walk everywhere, sometimes travel by train. But the abiding theme of my life has been my family; my children had to have the best. My husband was very orthodox. To live in such a household and still be a part of filmdom was a trapeze act. But I was determined to rise above it.

I have been cooking since 10—cooking is in my blood. But I could not devote much time to it. Later, as the children grew, I began cooking again. Whenever we ate outside, I would ask for recipes. The children told me to write a cookery book, but that never materialised. Then my son Anand came up with the idea of a restaurant. I used to cook for guests like Daboo (Randhir

Kapoor) and Chintu (Rishi Kapoor)—they love my food. There was always this *ghar ka khana* (home food) mood, and that's what we've achieved at the restaurant. I found a

Brahmin boy from Pune, taught him my style of cooking and then sent him to Dubai.

What's on the menu?

There is a distinct Maharashtrian influence in the vegetarian cooking. When I cook rice with brinjals, the *masala* is different. I make tomato chutney in the Bengali style. The *chana dal* is cooked exactly like my mother's. The *aloo sabzi* is in Haridwar style. And from Majrooh (Sultanpuri) *saab's begum*, I learnt *biryanis*, *kababs*, and the Lucknowi style of cooking.

Are there more outlets on the anvil?

After another outlet, in Kuwait, I want to open them across the Middle East and, hopefully, one in Mumbai.

Can someone really do anything they are passionate about, irrespective of age?

Yes! I have been learning the guitar for the past two years. During a show in the US, I picked up the guitar and everyone started clapping! At the age of 14, I started singing for films. My formal training was in Marathi. Once I got into filmdom, there was no need to learn English—till one fine day my son told me I had to go to London to sing an English number! I asked him how I would manage. He said, "The way you sing Tamil songs." So I picked up an English 'listen and learn' book with a cassette. I

If I sing a *tawaif* number, it doesn't mean I become one. The same people who criticised me in my earlier days now say I sing good numbers.

studied it for two months. When I reached London, my son and his wife left me with a bunch of English folks. Slowly, I began to speak and sing in English. If you are determined, you can do anything, at any age.

In your early days, did you feel uncomfortable doing oomph numbers?

Everyone was a hypocrite in those days; they liked those numbers but said they didn't. When the lyrics were not in good taste, I would feel uncomfortable. But I was never uncomfortable with new tunes.

Asha's
CONTEMPORARY INDIAN CUISINE

Main Course Curries

MACHLI MASALA Dhs.40
 Fillet of hammour cooked in an onion and tomato gravy. (Spicy)

PRAWN MASALA Dhs.65
 Prawns cooked in an onion and tomato gravy. (Spicy)

PRAWN MALAI CURRY Dhs.65
 Prawns cooked in a creamy gravy with coconut milk. (Mild)

MURG KEEMA Dhs.40
 Every mother's Dilemma-What to cook for the kids-Fortunately, my three children loved this light and easy preparation and now my grand children carry on their tradition. Home style chopped chicken cooked with coriander powder and chopped onions.

MUSCAT GOSHT Dhs.43
 "Sightseeing in the Sultanate of Oman, I stopped for lunch at a small 'dhaba' and had the most wonderful 'karahi gosht'. This is my presentation of that hot afternoon". Boneless lamb cooked in clarified butter in a rich tomato gravy. (Spicy)

CHANDNI CHOWK KA KEEMA Dhs.41
 "Chandni Chowk area in old Delhi has an array of old and traditional restaurants serving some of the best North Indian cuisine. The food reflects the attitude of the Purjabi people; who are extremely hospitable, affectionate and generous". Minced lamb cooked with fresh onions and Asha's secret spices.

MAI'S PRAWN CURRY Dhs.65
 "My mother Mai, was a pure vegetarian and refused to taste non-vegetarian food that she cooked for my father and her family. So, I became her chef taster and young apprentice". Prawns cooked in a coconut and whole turmeric gravy.

AWADHI DAHI MACHLI Dhs.40
 "This rare recipe was given to me by the late Chandbala, an actress from the black and white film era, who hailed from one of the old noble families of Lucknow". Hammour fillet cooked in a spicy yoghurt gravy. (Spicy)

DANO
 PRESENTS
 The Musical Show of The Year

ASHA BHOSLE
 THE LEGEND GOES ON

Thursday, December 13, at Elton Theatre
 Friday, December 14, at Elton Theatre

CAL SHOW OF THE YEAR
ASHA BHOSLE
 THE MUSICAL SHOW OF THE YEAR

ASHA BHOSLE
 In Concert
 From 13 December,
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BHOSLE

Dil Padosi Hai

1978 HMV RECORDS/EMI MUSIC INDIA

A song is a song. If I sing a *tawaif* (courtesan) number, it doesn't mean I become one. But the same people who criticised me in those days now say I sing good numbers. The people who liked my music were too young at the time to buy my records. Today, they've grown up and I am still singing for them.

You've always been forward-looking...

My mother used to say that a human being should not be like a frog in a well. The world is a vast place. This is what I remind myself.

You chose to move on from your first marriage.

I did not move on from that relationship. I was removed from it.

Your husband did not approve of you singing for films?

Singing in films was okay, but he was suspicious. He threw me out.

But that didn't stop you from carrying on singing.

I have not studied so I couldn't be a writer; I am not beautiful, so I couldn't be an actress. I only wanted to sing and raise my kids well. All my pain disappears when I'm in front of the mike. I can sing anything. I can't be choosy and say 'I won't sing a cabaret number'. Music is my favourite companion; it never lets me down.

Tell us about your relationship with Pancham (R D Burman).

My association with him went back a long way. We met during *Armaan*, for which *Dada* (S D

Burman) was scoring the music; Pancham was assisting him.

Gradually, he began composing himself. I saw Pancham as an assistant; there was no equality. But music was his life. His goal was to find the right singer. Initially, our relationship was only work-related. We would be

Pancham used to say, "Lataji is like Bradman, a good batsman, while you are like Sobers, an all-rounder who can do anything."

up till 5 am listening to world music. We cooked together. We watched films together and he would drag me to football matches. He used to say, "Lataji is like Bradman, a good batsman, while you are like Sobers, an all-rounder who can do anything." His favourite singers were me, Kishore *da* and Lata *didi*.

Tell us how you came to sing with Boy George. Did you use his makeup or did he use yours!

When I first met Boy George in London, I thought he was a pretty girl till I observed him closely! Later, at the Taboo Club, he hugged me and told me he was a great fan of mine. When he came down to India, I took him around Mumbai. Then, we sang *Bow down mister* together. Initially, I was a bit uncomfortable but later realised it was the same as working with any musician. Of course, he would take an hour to do his makeup. He did his eyebrows so well, he'd put any woman to shame! Anyway, western musicians are very clever. At a recording one day, someone said, "C'mon baby." I told them I wasn't a baby; "Call me aunty."

They didn't. So I told them to call me Asha!

And now you are remixing numbers.

I kept on changing with the times. There was a time when *ghazals* were very popular. But when the fad faded, the singers

were out of work. I thought, *baap re*, if I only sang in a certain style, I'd be gone too.

Are the reports of sibling rivalry between you and Lata didi exaggerated?

The rivalry is professional; I just see it as healthy competition. I am four years younger than *didi* and she is an introvert. I am always deeply appreciative of her in public while she is more held back, though she does acknowledge me privately. I have sung more than 13,000 songs, more than anyone else has.

"She's still 16 at heart," A R Rahman says about you. How do you retain your zest for life? Rahman makes me sing 'young' numbers, like *Rangeela re*. When I sing, I feel the body movement. Only when you play the character does the song emerge. For instance, when I sang for Helen, I would see her face and visualise her movements. In those days, the artists would meet up with the singers. Now if I sing for Kareena (Kapoor), I have to imagine what she would be doing. For *Umrao Jaan*, I really had to get into the character.

What do you feel about singers like Madonna?

Many years ago in London, I was referred to as Madonna in a sari! I like the way she constantly changes her persona. Artists must keep reinventing themselves. Whenever I go on stage, my hairstyle, *kadas* (bangles) and sari are appreciated. I also started the trend of wearing a coat over my sari.

How do you gear up for a show?

I plan my wardrobe depending on where the show is to be held. I prefer white saris, and pearls rather than diamonds. One day, I saw a magic show and thought of introducing it in my stage shows. I can make handkerchiefs disappear, make burnt cigarettes appear. I managed to learn some sleight of hand.

You have five grandchildren. What do you think about being a homemaker and a career woman?

I have always been house-proud. I go for recordings around 11 am and then I am on the phone drafting instructions. No one disturbs me when I am singing,

In London, I was referred to as Madonna in a sari! I like the way she constantly changes her persona. Artists must keep reinventing themselves.

but after that there are things to be done, planning the menu at home, everyday stuff.

How do you keep fit? Do you meditate?

I exercise; basically, hand and leg exercises. But there is no time, no solitude to meditate.

What else is new on your plate?

I do sing film songs but my

son helps me a lot in working on the music, especially for shows. I don't want to change the songs but only the music. The other day, I saw a remix of my song *Chod do aanchal zamana kya kahega*. There were these girls in pant shirts with no *aanchal* in sight!

Nowadays, people are changing songs too much. I am working on a pure classical album; there is also a *ghazal* album with old *ghazals* and modern treatment. I am leaving for the US soon where a group of classical musicians will be singing my songs.

Do you identify more with today's generation or your own?

I relate more to the younger generation. When I am at a party, the youngsters feel, 'Oh God, *abhi namaskar karna hoga!*' (We'll have to pay our respects to her now.) But when I am singing, it is for them. I am one with them.

What is your message for the Indian woman?

The woman makes the world go round; she is *shakti*. A woman must be aware of this inner strength; no man will be able to beat or dishonour her then. We women should stop making a *tamasha* of everything; we should stop bickering and backbiting. Only if we can keep our homes intact will others respect us. I know no one will listen to my *bhashan* (speech). But I still have to say it!



Blast from the past: Asha Bhosle (centre) with R D Burman (top left) and Boy George (bottom left)

Photo: Atul Kasbekar

Born Again

India's new breed of Silver Citizens have shed defeatist mindsets about age, choosing instead to take charge and follow the call of the heart. Life continues to be a journey of discovery for them, find **Juhi Saklani** and **Mamta Kapoor**. And *Harmony* profiles a few who dared

The evening is young and there's an alluring romance in the air. Locked in a special moment at their stately ancestral home, Vijay and Rani Lal cannot

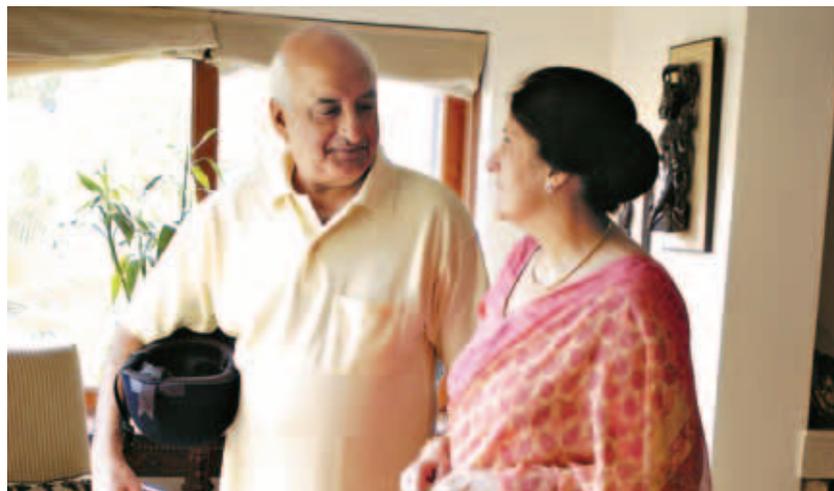
quite describe the feeling. An unobtrusive village musician plays bagpipes in the background while the couple look into each other's eyes. They raise a much-deserved toast to

themselves and all that they have made possible around them.

The achievement is by no means small. For one, the Lals had painstakingly restored their dilapidated home in Pragpur, a picturesque village in Himachal Pradesh. They turned it into Judge's Court in 1996, a magnificent heritage resort. Then, to preserve the village and its British cottage architecture, worked extremely hard to get Pragpur declared a heritage village in 1997. Today, as they actively involve themselves in

Entrepreneurs turned conservationists: Vijay and Rani Lal

Photo: Amit Pasricha



Popular astrologer Bejan Daruwalla is on a roll despite the pacemaker ticking silently inside his ample chest. Rated by HarperCollins as one of the top 100 astrologers of the century, Daruwalla is currently busy making predictions via SMS, on both Airtel and Hutch! At 72, he chooses to live and

You may call it destiny; a Parsi boy, a professor of English at that, becoming a renowned astrologer. The beauty is that even astrologers have their own *bhagya*.

—Bejan Daruwalla, 72

work out of a South Mumbai hotel. His predictions are a potpourri of astrology, numerology, Tarot cards, I Ching, palmistry and Naadi Shastra. A flamboyant dresser, the septuagenarian churns out colourful copy peppered with trademark ‘Ganeshisms,’ and thrives on detective fiction, murder mysteries and the Cartoon Network. “Cricket, cars and attachments with the fairer sex top the list, though,” he adds with a sly grin.

Reinvention raga: Till the age of 50, Daruwalla taught English at Ahmedabad’s H A College. At which point he decided that he just had to be with his first love—astrology. “I knew I had to answer my true calling.” But Daruwalla didn’t study astrology as a subject. “I learnt from books and astrologers of the ilk of Gayatri Devi, Vashish



Photo: Lens Pic

Take 1: Grammar’s high priest

Take 2: Ganesha’s voice in the wilderness

Mehta and Mohanbhai Patel. I also began praying. Intuition and the ability to foresee things have stood me in good stead. Revelation came as a lightning rod on the head.”

Driving force: “My father was the master of seven mills in Ahmedabad. He wanted me to join him. I wanted to be a poet or a professional astrologer. To which he said, ‘You are born a donkey. Donkeys cannot do

anything.’ To prove him wrong, this donkey became an English professor, and then one of the world’s most popular astrologers. Destiny, tremendous hard work, and my boss, Ganesha, are responsible for driving me.”

Success mantra: “I go by the Zen belief: ‘You must swing with the current.’ Success is about alignment.”

—Anupa Mehta

Take 1: Military strategist

Take 2: Maverick schoolmaster

A school commanded by a military man sounds like a student's nightmare come true. But when that man is Lt Gen (ret'd) Arjun Ray, the best of outdoor army life becomes part of the curriculum. Out-of-the-box thinking, mountaineering, kayaking and horse-riding are just some of the activities that empower children at the Indus International School, an educational experiment run by Ray in Bangalore. Sixty now, Ray is best known for Operation Sadbhavna, a unique initiative he began to win hearts in the Kashmir Valley in 2000. And though he is busy with the

school, he's not forgotten the valley. Recently, 37 girls, who'd been living near the LoC, were able to join colleges in Bangalore, courtesy Ray.

Reinvention raga: In 2000, when he was widely tipped to take over as Chief of Army Staff, Ray put in his papers. He started the school in 2001. "I was not a typical *fauji*," he concedes. "I've been described as a bit of a maverick." His book, *Kashmir Diary*, on the authoritarian methods used in Kashmir ruffled quite a few feathers. For him, the shift to education wasn't hard. "I have always been involved with

training soldiers," he says. "And I hope to apply some of the better ideas of the armed forces to my new role as educator."

Driving force: "Call it destiny," Ray says. "I'm not into cracking heads but winning hearts. I

Education is a natural extension of the task of nation-building.

—Arjun Ray, 60

want students for whom independent thinking and leadership is second nature."

Success mantra: "The one thing to hold on to, no matter how old you are, is the ability to learn," he believes. "Learn how to think, not what to think."

—Ajit Saldanha

Photo: Ashok Hallur



the running of the show, they find it hard to believe that they had managed so much in just a few years. "Our project rejuvenated us at a time when we thought we were walking into the sunset," says Vijay, 67.

Turning grey into silver

The Lals are not alone in their enthusiasm for new projects at an age when most people put their feet up. They are among a small but growing community that includes people like I P Bahl, a retired railway officer in Delhi who became a successful reflexology therapist at 65; Retd Admiral P D Sharma of Pune who plunged into the cause of first aid and life-saving at 60; and Veena Joshi, an erstwhile history lecturer who started a school for slum children in Dehradun at 55.

They are among India's Silver Citizens and their unusual lives exemplify a new trend that's gathering momentum across the country. Increasingly, people over 55, especially among the educated, urban middle class, are redefining retirement and, importantly, reinventing themselves. The Silver Citizens are people who raise cool eyebrows at wasted jargon like 'twilight years' and take up new vocations with an astonishing zest, turning their lives around dramatically in the process. The Silver Citizens retain the traditional role of grandparenting but throw out the gentle rocking chair. The

Silver Citizens use the maturity and wisdom of their years not to reflect, but to bring a new shine into their lives. The Silver Citizens are a recent tribe that's increasing perceptibly, everyday.

A fact that has not eluded psychotherapist Kaushik Gopal. "People over 50 are exhibiting a greater zest for life. It's very evident in the metros, particularly Mumbai. There's a huge sense of freedom within them and they are increasingly discarding conventional thinking." In fact, Gopal has encountered several older people who believe that there's no such thing as sitting back and relaxing. "Instead, there's a furious energy there," he says.

Psychiatrist Dr Ashit Sheth feels this energy is easily explained. "Life spans have leapt from 40 years to 75 years." And as

People over 50 are exhibiting a greater zest for life. There's a huge sense of freedom within them and they are increasingly discarding conventional thinking.

—Kaushik Gopal, psychotherapist

people at 50 realise that they still have a good 20-25 years to go, "these years turn into a time of high personal growth", he says. A trend that he describes as adding "life to years and not years to life".

Life is...in my pocket

This remarkable attitude—though stemming from a passion that dictates their work—extends beyond it, changing entire



From railways to reflexology: I P Bahl
Photo: Amit Pasricha

lifestyles. For example, in the recent Standard Chartered Mumbai International Marathon, some 2,000 people over 55 participated in the 7 km dream run. Says Arati Kakatkar of

event organiser Procram International: "None of these people let medical problems or age deter them from running."

And nothing, it seems, can stop them from travelling either. Special packages tailored for senior citizens are being introduced by the travel industry. The Taj Group has put together a package for "the empty nesters, as we call them",

No. of 50+ people in India who own a car: 2,022,000; who holiday across India each year: 3,000,000

Take 1: Homemaker

Take 2: Record-breaker

Ritu Nanda is proof that God has a sense of humour; for into a family of chronic filmmakers and risk-takers was born India's greatest insurance agent ever. Today the only visible inheritance of the famous Kapoor gene pool is her blue eyes that light up as she talks about the coming boom in insurance. And it's going to be an explosion kindled partly by her own success. Nanda, who holds the

Photo: Lens Pic

world record for selling the maximum number of policies in a day (17,000), is the Life Insurance Corporation's most successful agent with her premiums for LIC exceeding Rs 8 crore last year.

Reinvention raga: From a housewife of 11 years to the CEO of NickyTasha, a kitchen equipment company, and finally to India's foremost insurance agent, Nanda has

always reinvented herself. After NickyTasha closed down, she took up LIC unreservedly, shrugging off its downmarket tag. As an agent, her biggest contribution was the introduction of technology to explain the financial benefits of insurance which were often lost to customers due to a complicated, long-winding process. Nanda simply had software written that would roll out the benefits, and then, "Everybody but everybody bought it."

Driving force: There is only one. Her husband Rajan Nanda, the CEO of Escorts. "This is a confession—all my efforts, in any enterprise, have been to get my husband's attention. Work always comes first with him and I realised that the best way to get his attention was to excel at work myself."

Success mantra: "Faith is believing in what you can't see,

Some people go to Harvard and learn. Some people get hammered and learn. I am the hammered variety.

—Ritu Nanda, 55

and I have always had that faith. Be it the good husband I fasted for four times a week when I was 18 or the significance of an insurance agent. I believed in them and that's how they came true."

—Anuradha Kumar





Naval officer turned lifesaver:
Purshottam D Sharma
Photo: Yusuf Khan

says Sandhya Kunjur, general manager, leisure marketing. "These are people who have fulfilled their responsibilities and now have plenty of time to travel and enjoy themselves." Similarly, at Cox and Kings, sales people are being sent out to sell deals to local clubs and

that among his customers, "The segment over 55 is increasingly seen as one with higher discretionary expenditure. And companies intending to set up resorts or housing complexes want to tap into that."

With the senior citizens' population set to reach 137 million by 2021 from 77 million in 2001, this consumer segment can become a strong market force as the Indian Readership Survey of 2003 also confirms. From owning cars, cell phones and digital cameras to eating out and going to the movies, even using branded deodorants and lipstick, senior citizens are in sizeable numbers.

Freedom at 50

Age is no longer a bar to anything. If anything, it raises the bar. No longer constrained by the responsibilities of their

Noida. Surprisingly, five years later he was ready to pack his bags and move on once again. "I simply set out for Pune in my Sumo with my wife, two dogs and my favourite plants," he laughs. "We looked like a garden-cum-zoo on wheels." He didn't know it at the time, but he was finally going to discover his true calling. The friend whose place he landed at inspired him with his life-saving stories. At the same time, a road accident in which a busload of children fell into the Yamuna River in Delhi hit the headlines. At 58, Sharma found his life's mission. Shocked by the number of children who could have been saved if rescuers knew basic first-aid techniques, he set up the Rashtriya Life Saving Society of India. Today, the organisation boasts of a huge network across metros that provides quick first-aid during emergencies.

An Indian Readership Survey of 2003 shows that from owning cars, cell phones and digital cameras to using branded deodarants and lipstick, senior citizens are in a sizeable number

associations of senior citizens. "There is a definite trend of people over 55 travelling more and more, especially in groups," says Gopi Iengar, head, business development. "Since 2003, we have sold quite a few Europe and South East Asia packages to this segment."

Saranj Panchal, executive director of AC Nielsen ORG MARG, a market research company, says

earlier years, and no longer driven only by money, people of this generation have more freedom now to choose new callings and to follow their hearts. They are driven by what they can still do and not what they have already done.

Like 65-year-old Purshottam D Sharma of Pune, who quit the Indian Navy at 53 to set up an adventure sports company in

The senior citizens' second coming, so to speak, is all about being innovative. And it is never too late to begin. For instance, a grand idea struck I P Bahl, a railway officer in Delhi, seven years after his retirement. At 65, he happened to attend a camp on reflexology, a natural healing art that works by correcting body reflexes. It left him thoroughly impressed. Convinced that it was his calling, he went on to study the subject in detail using his wife as a guinea pig. Today, at 83, he is still going strong as a practitioner, teacher and founder

No. of 50+ people in India who own a digital camera: 149,000; who own a cell phone: 3,141,000

Satya Narayan Goenka looks exactly like a signpost to happiness should. All round and all white, he has just the sort of comforting presence you would need on your hard way to Nirvana. And a free and valid ticket to that final destination is available in some 68 countries where Goenka's assistants conduct Vipassana meditation courses today. Reaching there though depends

Even if extra-sensory or clairvoyant abilities arise, they have no relevance. The biggest miracle is a peaceful mind.

—S N Goenka, 80

entirely on how hard you work. For Vipassana is simply “a rigorous exercise in self-awareness that can end (*nir*) the burning (*vana*) that characterises all mental suffering.” Goenka calls it a scientific technique developed by the Buddha, “who was nothing but an amazing scientist”. Through this frugal ideology, he has influenced more than a million lives across the world till date. But before all this, he too burned.

Reinvention raga: As a young man, born and brought up in Burma, Goenka was so good at making money that he was an industrialist at 25. “Obviously, it all went to my head,” he recounts. With success came arrogance, raging desires, a propensity to beat up his



Photo: Lens Pic

Take 1: Trailblazing tycoon

Take 2: Buddha's lab assistant

children and dense migraines that only morphine could ease. Pain and fear of addiction finally led him to a Vipassana camp. The migraines went but, more important, the ego, the source of all suffering, was laid bare under a relentless process of self-observation. And caught so blatantly in action, it just whimpered and died.

Driving force: “Neither money nor God can lead to happiness.

Only self-knowledge can.” It is this absolute belief that gave Goenka the strength to move to India in 1969 when he was asked by his guru to reintroduce Vipassana in the country of its origin.

Success mantra: Today, at 80, Goenka continues working 20 hours a day, still driven by his firmest belief: “True happiness is within everyone's reach.”

—Anuradha Kumar

of an all-India association on reflexology, and has written several books on the field.

Attitude rules

The Silver Citizens are clearly raring to go. Their thinking is unabashedly positive and there is little room for complaint.

keep them down. Many like Bahl, and Vijay Lal who has suffered two heart attacks, make light of their ailments.

Similarly, former history teacher Veena Joshi in Dehradun was beset by health problems five years ago. But that didn't stop

snacks for her students, her talent for grinding fresh *masalas* came in handy. "You take the initiative and the doors open up," she says. A school principal agreed to buy her *masalas* for his mess while a local shopkeeper offered to stock her products. One day, the school principal wondered if she could also start delivering eggs for his mess. "I thought he'd gone mad!" But she looked up the price of wholesale eggs, took a deep breath and started supplying eggs as well.

None from this new generation ever talks of work as a heavy-handed vocation. In fact, as Sharma says, "At 40, I felt 40, but at 60, I felt much younger." That's the way to grow. 

The segment over 55 is seen as one with higher discretionary expenditure; companies intending to set up resorts or housing complexes want to tap into that.

—Saranj Panchal, executive director, AC Nielsen ORG MARG

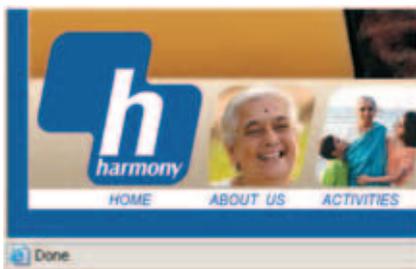
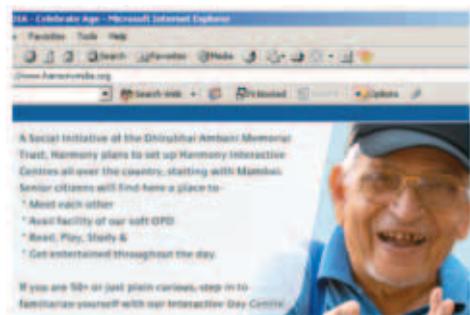
"Ageing, in a traditional sense, is now an option," says social activist Shhyam Singhania. "The elderly know that it is in their hands how happily and healthily they grow older." Nothing, especially not health issues, can

the 60-year-old from coming up with *Aao Padhein*, a school for neighbouring slum children. She began with a classroom in her own home by spreading out a few durries. When she needed money for warm clothes and

A BYTE OF HARMONY

www.harmonyindia.org occupies a unique space in the cyber world. It is the face of **Harmony**, an initiative of the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust for senior citizens.

Created by a team of dedicated professionals and volunteers under the inspiring guidance of Tina Ambani, www.harmonyindia.org is a portal that addresses the aspirations of the elderly. The young and the old alike have contributed to the initial content and the technical aspects of the portal. In time to come it is expected that elders will bring their wealth of valuable experience to the portal, enriching it further.



The portal will cover a broad spectrum of subjects – from health to wealth, yoga to *Siddha*, and spiritualism to recreation. It aims to create awareness about the needs of the elderly, as well as highlight the resources and opportunities at hand for seniors in India and their NRI friends and counterparts overseas.

Come to www.harmonyindia.org. It's your space on the World Wide Web, where you can enjoy a truly delightful online experience. And celebrate life with passion.

An uncommon man

Consumer activist, editor, photographer, and more, H D Shourie remains resolute at 92, writes **Vatsala Kaul**

Everything I see, hear and read inspires me to do something for others," says 92-year-old Hari Dev Shourie, one of India's foremost consumer activists. After all, "*Aur bhi gham hain zamaney mein mohabbat ke siwa* (there are other concerns in the world besides love)," he says, quoting Faiz.

His living room, which doubles as a home office, teems with papers, files and books. Piles and stacks and heaps of them. "There's a book on everything here," he says. *Great Religions* and *The Complete Stories of Flannery O' Connor* rub shoulders with *Kundalini* and *The World of Flowers*. The walls are dominated by masterful copies of Claude Monet, his favourite artist—an unfurling yellow rose, a stunning red tulip. And a youthful pink rose. "See, it's saying, 'Look at me! Look at me!'" says Shourie.

H D Shourie is a determined man, a crusader for the rights of everyman through Common Cause, his over two-decades-old organisation. A man who has made the PIL a potent weapon in the struggle for justice. Who has gained significant decisions for pensioners and widows, fought against corruption and lawyers' strikes, campaigned for

proper blood banks and consumer courts. "He deserves the Bharat Ratna," insists veteran author-columnist Khushwant Singh. "He has done more for this country than all the politicians and leaders put together." But Shourie wears his achievements lightly. "I just

H D Shourie deserves the Bharat Ratna. He has done more for this country than all the politicians and leaders put together.

—Khushwant Singh

learnt how to say 'My Lord' and went ahead with it," he says with a smile.

Not surprisingly, he has been named one of the 'People of the Year', selected by the *Limca Book of Records* for his dedication to a cause. "Common Cause has helped not just one section of people, but lakhs and lakhs of people across the board," says Vijaya Ghose, editor of the *Limca Book of Records*. "And the driving spirit behind it all has been the fearless H D Shourie."

No problem is too big or too small for him. Whether it is the spread of AIDS, road accidents, landlord-tenant disputes or a

child turned spastic with wrong medication, Shourie *saab*, as the hundreds of troubled people who seek his help call him, is involved. "India Shining has black spots, and we must remove them," he says.

Once he has identified a sore, he sets about collecting information to build his case. "Sometimes, when there is a problem, I call up Arun's office (his son, Arun Shourie, was a minister in the former NDA government). He doesn't know about it, though!" he says with a wink. Usha Rai, deputy director of the Press Institute of India, says, "He is a truly remarkable man fighting for issues which a lot of younger people have not even bothered to think about."

It has been a rich innings. And 92 years of history make for memories. Sad ones of fleeing Lahore, where he was City Magistrate; unforgettable ones of working in Japan and Turkey; cheerful ones of his wife and three children—Arun Shourie, former Minister for Communications, IT and Disinvestment; Deepak Shourie, managing director, Discovery Communications India; and Nalini Singh, TV journalist-anchor and managing director, TV Live India Pvt Ltd.



There are photographs, too—over 10,000 of them—of his travels to Holland, the US and Africa, but Shourie is a man who lives firmly in the present. And keeps the faith. “In my

personal interactions, I have never found honesty and respect for others devalued. Because I uphold these values, I get the same in return,” he says. Delays, red tape and circumlocution

never derail his determination or sap his energy. “I have no time for losing my temper,” he declares.

Indeed, there is only room for laughter in Shourie’s room. And conversation, punctuated with gems of Urdu *shairi* from his 30-year-old pocket diary, stories about the flowers featured in his book on flowers, and joke upon hilarious joke, many to be found in Penguin’s *The Funniest Jokes in the World*, which he edited.

H D Shourie is an example to each of us of what a single individual armed with a ballpoint pen and a piece of paper can achieve

—Arun Shourie

“A private asked his senior for 24 hours’ leave,” Shourie begins with a chuckle, “but he returned after 48 hours. The senior officer asked him, ‘Why are you 24 hours late?’ The private replied, ‘Sir, when I reached home my wife was in the bathtub.’ ‘So?’ the officer asked sarcastically, ‘It took so long for her to take a bath?’ ‘No sir,’ the private replied. ‘It took that long for my uniform to dry!’”

Just as the joke is winding down, his son walks in to say goodbye; he is on his way to Mumbai. He is hugged by both parents and has his forehead kissed. As he turns to leave, the father looks at me, eyes bright with pride, and says, “You know, that’s Arun.” Another special moment in a very special life.



A world of words: Shourie at home

All photos: Amit Pasricha



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Time to heal

The indifference and lack of awareness responsible for the inadequate geriatric facilities in India need to change urgently, asserts **Svati Bhatkal**

At 82, Leela could barely walk. Age, her four doting daughters had resigned themselves to believe, had taken its inevitable toll. So they made sure her every need was taken care of while she rested all day in bed. The Bangalore-based octogenarian didn't complain either. Rather, she felt privileged that unlike many of her contemporaries, she was in such good care. But four months ago, Leela realised that she couldn't make it even to the washroom on her own. That's when she and her daughters decided to see a doctor.

A neighbour's reference led the family to the local Gunasheela Centre of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. The centre's head Dr Madhavi Gunasheela examined Leela and concluded that it was prolonged inactivity that had landed her in such a state. Exposed to similar cases in the US, Gunasheela embarked on a tested turnaround plan. Leela was taught a new mantra: "Just move, don't stop." She was fitted with a pair of sturdy sneakers and put on a gentle but firm aerobic schedule so that her tight joints could loosen up. She was simultaneously trained for weight reduction and better breathing. Within two months, Leela was not only on her feet

again, but ready to ride pillion on her grandson's motorcycle.

Price of longevity

"It is amazing just how much the elderly can do if only they let themselves," says Gunasheela, whose specialisation in physical medicine and rehabilitation extensively covers geriatrics or

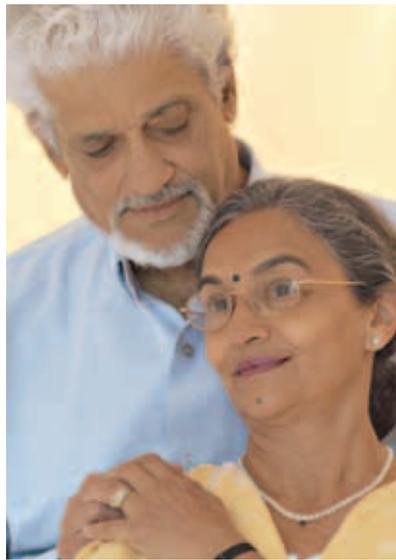


Photo: Lens Pic

treatment of disorders peculiar to old age. Unlike the West, the merits of this practice had long eluded India. But finally geriatrics has begun to pick up, in keeping perhaps with the upturn in the greying population of the country.

That more people are living longer is undoubtedly good news. Dr H L Dhar, geriatrician

and director of the Bombay Hospital's Medical Research Centre, among the handful of geriatric care facilities in India, says 10 per cent of all Indians will be above 65 in 30 years as against the present 7 per cent. But it is not just a question of numbers. The quality of life is what eventually matters. And that's what can spell bad news if it isn't promptly addressed.

Over the years, senior citizens get reduced to being a redundant lot. With no active roles to play in society and marginalised in their own homes, it is a matter of biding time for many. Health is a major concern, but inconvenience, lack of money and a general sense of fatalism ensure that visits to the doctor are kept to a minimum. The result is a rapid, and often irreversible, debility that engulfs both body and mind.

Geriatrics as cure

It is to redress this downward spiral that geriatrics evolved as a separate branch of study and practice, based on the premise that the problems of the aged are unique (*see box*), and are best dealt with by a multidisciplinary team of specialists and nurses trained to be sensitive to the needs of elders. The focus is essentially on healthy living,

prevention and treatment of chronic disease and disability in later life. Comprehensive programmes are chalked out, the emphasis being on physical medicine, remedial exercise, counselling, occupational therapy and recreation with typical ailments like Alzheimer's, arthritis, Parkinson's and heart disease being factored in.

Gerontology or research on these aspects of the elderly in countries like the US is extensive with the result that geriatrics as a practice has advanced considerably. According to a Pittsburgh-based publishing company, there are some 20,000 geriatric-related professionals, including 9,000 super specialists, practising in the US alone.

India lagging

India may still not match up but, as Gunasheela points out, the need for geriatrics is being increasingly felt. Most



What India needs: Customised care at Heritage Hospital, Hyderabad

How is geriatric care different?

Dr Kala Chawla of K J Somaiya Hospital, Mumbai, says:

- With a geriatric patient, the cells of the body are worn out and have limited capacity to regenerate. Thus, the body's capacity to recoup and fight disease is lower and slower, and response to management is sharply different from that of a younger person.
- The dosage of drugs required can vary sharply from that of younger adults.
- The entire sensory system of the body often changes with old age; this is called 'altered sensorium'. Thus, reactions to pain and discomfort may be delayed or even experienced in an organ unrelated to the disease.
- A chain reaction often sets in with an ailment in one organ affecting another and then another, leading to multiple complications.
- The aged often suffer from illnesses peculiar to neglect. In any socio-economic class, they are more susceptible to economic and social disabilities than younger, 'productive' people.
- Treatment of the aged is further complicated by psychological factors such as depression and negativity. A positive attitude on the part of the medical practitioner plays a very important role.
- A medical practitioner who has a thorough knowledge of all these aspects, has had sufficient exposure to such cases and has access to the special facilities (intensive care, physiotherapists, psychologists and counsellors, medical social workers, specially trained nursing staff) often essential to the treatment of geriatrics, is more likely to treat geriatric cases successfully.

Facilities offered by prominent players

- **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)**, New Delhi (011-26588500, 26588700, 26589900): geriatric clinic every Friday at 2 pm
- **Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS)**, Kochi (0484-2801234, 2804321): consultative care on non-internal medicine services; comprehensive care to a patient with multiple problems
- **Heritage Hospital, Hyderabad** (040-23379999, 23379201-205, 23736468, 23379207): therapeutic rehabilitation; home care services; old age psychiatry; rural healthcare
- **KEM Hospital**, Mumbai (022-24136051, 24135189): a geriatric functional assessment team working for the OPD geriatric service
- **Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General (LTMG) Hospital**, Mumbai (022-24076381, 24095099): referral geriatric service; tests done free for patients above 60 years

Other geriatric wards as listed by HelpAge India

- **Government Hospital**, Chennai (044-25363131)
- **Government General Hospital**, Madurai (0452-443870)
- **Lion's Club Clinic**, Coimbatore (0422-33257, 342483)
- **Government Hospital**, Thiruvananthapuram (0471-51688955-59, 26966641)
- **Medical College Hospital**, Thiruvananthapuram (0471-2444270)

Contact

Geriatric Society of India: K-49, Green Park Main, New Delhi-110016. Telefax: 011-26865916. Email: opsharma@geriatricindia.com / drmohit@vsnl.com Website: www.geriatricindia.com

Indian Gerontological Association: C-207, Manu Marg, Tillak Nagar, Jaipur-302004. Tel: 0141-621693, 621531. Email: klsvik@datainfosys.net / indjogerontology@hotmail.com Website: www.gerontologyindia.com

government hospitals in the country have separate facilities for senior citizens today, although they are confined to holding weekly clinics with OPD check-ups and medicines rather than providing comprehensive care. Their expansion is crucial but it is not an easy process. Dr Kala Chawla, Department of Medicine (OPD), K J Somaiya Hospital, Mumbai, recalls the difficulties she faced when she started one of the first geriatric

units at the King Edward Memorial (KEM) Hospital in Mumbai in 1986. "There was a lot of resistance and our own colleagues used to scoff at the thought," she says, adding that it was a while before referrals came in and they made their mark. In the private sector too, there are several facilities like the Heritage Hospital, Hyderabad, the Kochi-based Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), and the

Research and Age Care India in the Capital that are giving geriatric care a much-needed boost despite the obstacles.

Topping the list are fatalistic and negative mindsets. Dr C A K Yesudian, head of Health Services Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, talks of two other aspects: the capital-intensive nature of geriatric ventures and their non-profitability. Unarguably, a large section of the 65-plus population

Getting adequate manpower to deal with elderly patients, especially those who are bedridden or non-ambulatory, is an urgent need

is dependent on the next generation for its upkeep. With no sources of income and no social security benefits as in the West, bearing the costs of hospital, post-hospital and hospice care can be forbidding for most. Low returns, then, are a foregone conclusion. So, few in the medicare business are willing to pump in the huge funds necessary for state-of-the-art geriatric facilities.

Get a move on

Dependency can act as a constraint in yet another way. K R Gangadharan, the brain behind the popular Heritage Hospital, understands this best. He says getting adequate manpower to deal with elderly patients, especially those who are bedridden or non-ambulatory, is an issue. The

physical limitations of the aged coupled with psychological conditions like depression or dementia can prove to be trying for their caregivers. With the entire sensory system of the body altered, such patients tend to react to symptoms like pain and discomfort in a different way. It may be a delayed response, an exaggerated one or may even be experienced in an organ that is not related to the actual source. So, not many are able to cope with these cases.

The result is that aged patients are neglected, not taken seriously, even dismissed at times. "Buddhe (old man), that's what the ward boys used to call me," says an offended M V Singh, a 74-year-old who has recently been discharged after a hernia operation from a private nursing home in Delhi.

The neglect of the elderly can take on other abusive forms as well. Typical instances in

Basic courses in geriatric medicine and nursing are now being offered and databanks are being built

hospitals include not responding to their call bell, allowing them to remain soiled and not observing or reporting significant changes in their physical or mental status. More than anything else, as Dr K S Sunil of AIMS explains, the patients are an isolated lot and want to be loved and heard. To deprive them of just that

Long road ahead: much needs to be done to improve geriatric facilities in India

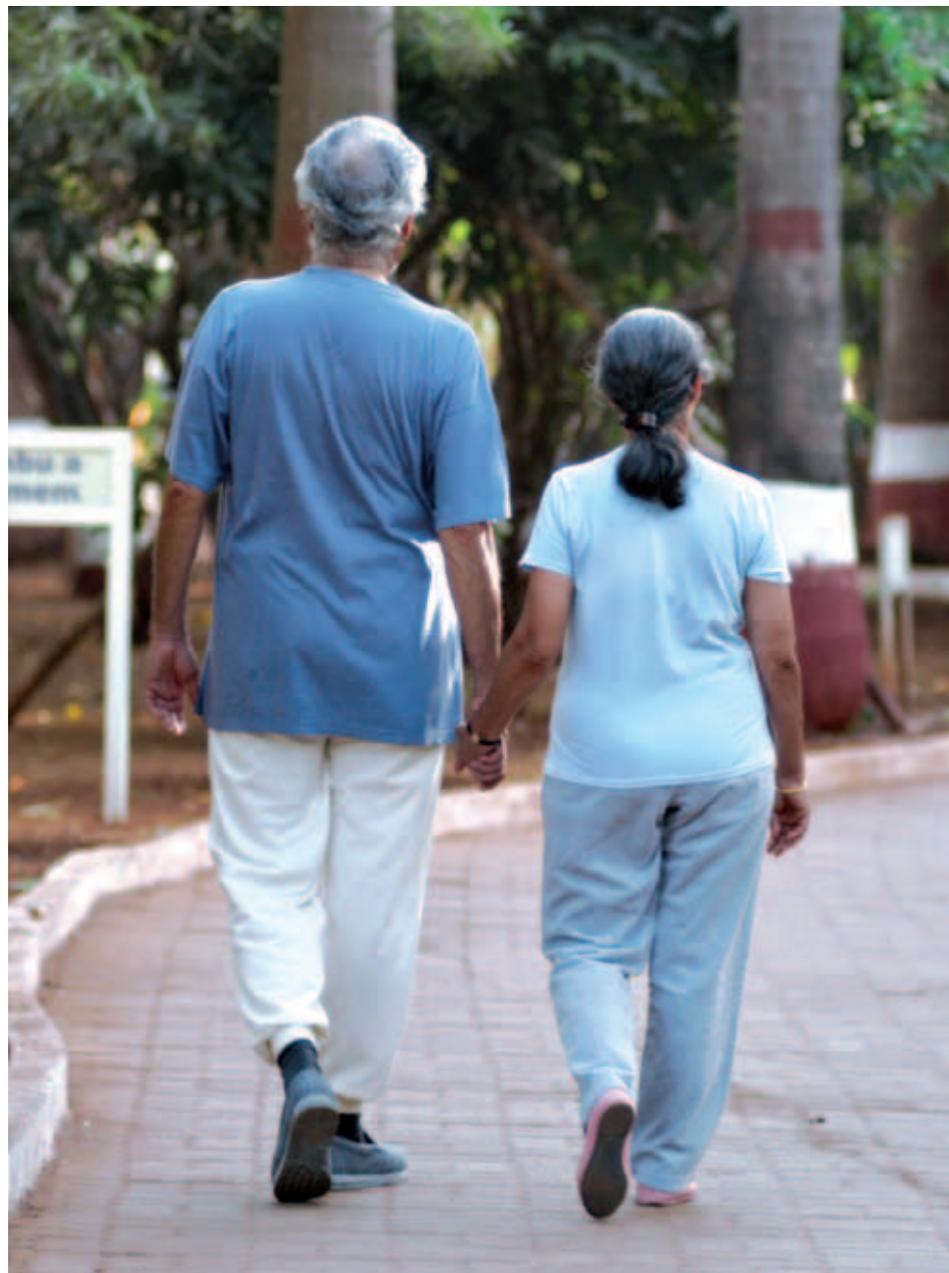
Photo: Lens Pic

would defeat the very purpose of treating them.

At the core of geriatric education, therefore, is this understanding of the needs of later life. As in the West, courses to adequately train human resources in geriatric medicine and nursing are now being offered at several institutions, including the Madras Medical College, Chennai, IGNOU in Delhi and the Kochi-based Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India.

Databanks on the aged are also being built. Playing an active role in this effort is the Geriatric Society of India, New Delhi, which has been creating pools of geriatric talent and holding regular seminars, workshops and conferences. All of this may have had a delayed start but, as the cliché goes, it's better late than never.

If you have a concern you would like to share, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Unstable equilibrium

Sudha Murty doesn't mince her words while husband N R Narayana Murthy reserves his aggression for the boardroom, but the IT industry's first couple connect on many levels, finds **Himal Ruparel**

Unlike husband N R Narayana Murthy, the founder chairman of Infosys, Sudha Murty, 54, spells her surname without the letter 'h'. She also bubbles with enthusiasm, while Narayana, 58, is more reserved, especially in public and with those he does not know intimately. Sudha is forthright and outspoken to the point of bluntness, while Narayana reserves his aggression for the boardroom. But for over 25 years, these two very different people have shared life's journey. "If someone had told me that my life would be like this, I would have been scared!" exclaims Sudha.

Agreeing to disagree

The Murthys are two individuals, united

by destiny. Sudha is the idealist, Narayana more circumspect and tolerant of others. "She expects everybody to be perfect," he says. "I tell her the world is imperfect but she doesn't agree." The couple may often argue about this, but neither expects the other to change.

"I am brutally honest. Murthy is more diplomatic, but I am a very blunt person. Of course, people may say it's because I can afford to be frank, but..." Sudha trails off. Is there any instance where she has been economical with the truth? "Yes, once I was visiting an Adivasi family and they insisted I have some tea or coffee. I knew it would be a burden on them, so I said I don't take tea or coffee. But they insisted. I was about to ask for a glass of water when I spotted the *nallah* outside their hut and I thought to myself, 'What if I contract dysentery or typhoid?' Then I was

about to ask for milk instead, when I realised that would be something they could ill afford. So I simply said, 'I don't take tea or coffee and I am allergic to milk'."

Usually, though, Sudha is crystal clear in matters of communication, especially now that the Murthys are much sought after to add badge value to weddings and housewarming ceremonies. "Take wedding invitations for instance," she says. "I believe in being straightforward. 'I will attend if I am in town' is what I tell people. Murthy, for professional reasons, will always be more careful and guarded."

"I wouldn't put it quite that way," Narayana demurs. "Let's say I can disagree with people without being disagreeable." So is he the consummate diplomat? "I am a totally transaction-based person," he candidly admits.



“Data and facts are all that matter to me; I don’t carry any ideological baggage about people.”

How do they resolve their differences? “Some things are difficult to resolve, so we always operate in a state of unstable equilibrium,” Narayana says. “But there are so many ‘touch points,’ so many occasions when you come so close, that distance brought about by differences of opinion and the pressures of work does not matter.”

Getting connected

The Murthy’s journey began in 1970, when a common friend introduced them in Pune. Narayana had moved there to start a systems research institute, while Sudha, an alumna of the Indian Institute of Science, worked with Telco, now Tata Motors. “She was brilliant, and pretty,” Narayana recalls. “I wonder what she saw in me.” Sudha was already a trailblazer, having challenged the Tata Group’s policy of male-only engineers by writing to J R D Tata himself.

Compatible programme: The Murthys over the years

Photos: album pictures courtesy the Murthys; (right) Ashok Hallur



The couple began to date—but Sudha wouldn't quite describe it that way. "In those days, there was no such thing as a 'date'," she emphatically clarifies. "We spent time together, but always with common friends. It is difficult to ascertain when our feelings for each other began to change." But the chemistry was undeniable. "We would paint the town red," says Narayana. On their nights out, he'd often borrow money from Sudha. "She'd be surprised at how shameless a fellow could be!"

The duo spent much of their free time together watching movies. "He likes Neetu Singh and Dharmendra, while I am a big fan of Sanjeev Kumar. Our favourite movie is *Abhimaan* with Amitabh and Jaya. We

watched it twice in one day; from 12 to 3, and then again from 3 to 6," she

confesses with a chuckle. Besides movies and listening to music—he likes Mozart, Strauss and Beethoven, while she prefers Hindustani classical vocalist Bhimsen Joshi—the couple enjoyed dining out, and still do.

We watched our favourite movie *Abhimaan* twice in one day; from 12 to 3 and then again from 3 to 6

—Sudha Murty

"But not so much in five-star hotels," Sudha clarifies. "MTR, the famous Mavalli Tiffin Rooms near Lalbagh, is a favourite. Murthy always says this five-star food all tastes the same; there is nothing to beat *anna-saar* (rice and *rasam*) at home."

Starting up

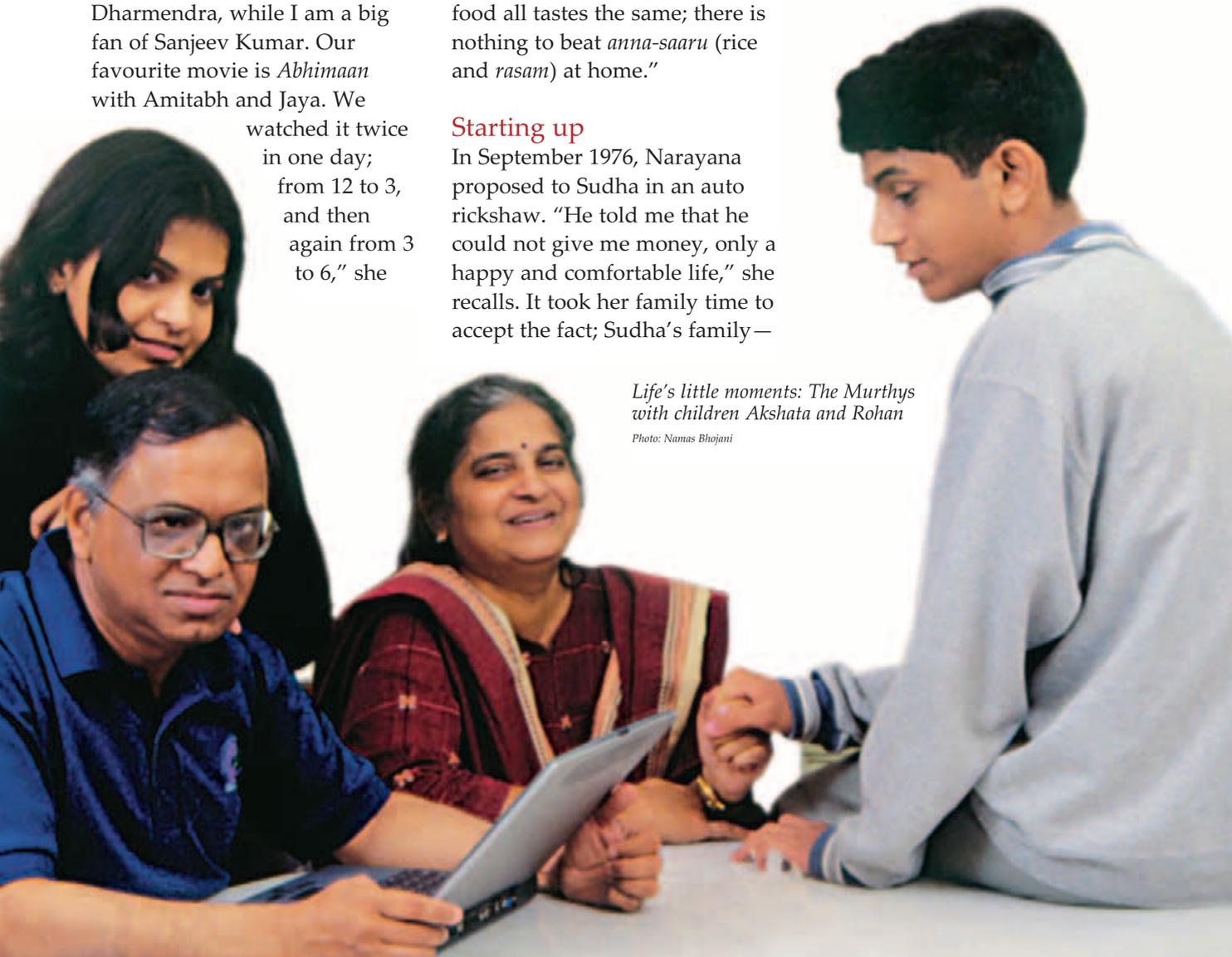
In September 1976, Narayana proposed to Sudha in an auto rickshaw. "He told me that he could not give me money, only a happy and comfortable life," she recalls. It took her family time to accept the fact; Sudha's family—

her father was a university professor, her brother an MTech from IIT Delhi and her sister an MSc in Physics from IIT Chennai —were worried about Narayana's prospects. However, the couple were eventually married in February 1978 at his house in Bangalore. The wedding was a simple affair, costing Rs 800, with the couple pooling in Rs 400 each.

After several brief stints in the US, where they shuttled between Boston and New York struggling to make inroads in the complex world of IT, the couple moved to

Life's little moments: The Murthys with children Akshata and Rohan

Photo: Namas Bhojani



Mumbai, set for an ordinary, middle-class life. "A two-bedroom apartment and a scooter was all I wanted," Sudha remembers. "After all, we were a couple steeped in our work and our books."

But life had other plans. Narayana started Infosys in 1981, with the Indian equivalent of a \$250 investment (Rs 10,000 at the time) and a vision to change the way the world viewed Indian software. Initially, things didn't come easy and Sudha was the breadwinner. After a series of jobs and making do with what was available, she eventually shifted base to Bangalore with her husband.

No regrets

Although both were hands on at Infosys in the start-up phase, Narayana decided that only one person in the family should work there—the other had to look after the home and children. Sudha elected to become homemaker, a decision that was tough at the time.

Today, she has no regrets. "His dreams were larger than any success I could have had in a career," she generously admits. "She has no grouses," acknowledges Narayana. "I am a little unfair; I always want to be in the driver's seat." Sudha agrees, saying, "Making sacrifices comes more easily to me. But we are not bound by archaic rules of marriage."

"Sudha can relate to a broad spectrum of people," says Narayana with pride. And she has continued living life on her

terms, as teacher at Bangalore's Christ College, writer, philanthropist and chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, a charitable body. "I love teaching," she says. "I have lots of patience and I cherish the moments I spend with my students."

The downside to success has been less time for each other and their children—daughter Akshata, 24, and son Rohan, 20. "Not going out much together has been one of the lows of our lives," Narayana rues. Sudha does miss the man who had time for music and *Abhimaan*. But she

"I am a little unfair; I always want to be in the driver's seat," says Narayana. "Making sacrifices comes more easily to me," shoots back Sudha. "But, we are not bound by the archaic rules of marriage."

says, "We have never made him choose between his work and us. To build an empire like Infosys, a grand passion is necessary."

Feet on the ground

Along with passion comes simplicity, which helps the couple retain their balance. Narayana's office at the sprawling Infosys campus may be the last word in gadgets and gizmos, but computers and music systems are the only indulgences in their modest home.

Narayana admits to owning a Bose system on which he listens to his favourite symphonies. And he uses a Nokia cell phone, a Sony VAIO notebook and a Hewlett Packard I-Pac. Pressed to identify what make of computer she uses, Sudha

artlessly asks her assistant for the details in Kannada—"Lakshmi, *aathu yavadu* model?"—before saying, "Dell. And I only use a desktop; no laptops for me." Her music system? "A simple Sony I have owned for the past 10 years; it works well." She adds, "Murthy and I are very comfortable with our lifestyle. And we don't see the need to change it now that we have money."

This extends to their children as well. "Murthy is an extraordinary father," says Sudha. He ensured there was no television in the house when the

children were younger. "We only bought a TV at the end of Rohan's board exam in March 2001," Narayana says.

Instead of austerity, they expect accountability from their kids. And the common goal of bringing up their children is another "touch point" that sustains their marriage.

"I'm still inspired by the simple things in life," says Sudha. "Spending time with my family, my teaching, flowers, a walk in the park. I wake up every day with a sense of excitement." For the Murthys, their life together is a dream. And Sudha's excitement and Narayana's commitment keep it alive. 

—with inputs by
Ajit Saldanha in Bangalore

Album of heroes

New Delhi-based photographer Samar S Jodha, along with brother Vijay, spent eight years researching and photographing 400 spirited elderly persons across India. We present a selection of images curated by the brothers. Vijay revisits the journey that resulted in the publication, *Ageless Mind and Spirit—Faces and Voices from the World of India's Elderly*

The issue of ageing is crying out for attention in India, with its youth-centric society, steady erosion of the joint family system and negative stereotypes labelling elders as a burden. We wanted to highlight these concerns through a series of human-interest stories—told in words and pictures.

We aimed to create a body of work that would stand apart in terms of photography, research and design. Its tangible manifestation is a book that gave us the chance to celebrate inspirations, such as Maulana Sadiq Ali, the Shahi Imam of Taj Mahal, who has resolutely continued with his duties for five decades at a paltry salary of Rs 15.

On the way, we ran out of money and had to wait for over a year before doing the Eastern India leg. We wanted to shoot a veteran journalist, tortured during the Emergency. By the time we were ready, he had passed away. Our project could have paid tribute to this unsung hero.

The project also made us laugh. A former zamindar in Kolkata told us that the only thing that upsets him is how people are forgetting their traditions: “Instead of calling parents

Amma and *Baba*, children are calling them ‘Mummy’ and ‘Daddy’, and people in Punjabi suits come and say ‘Happy Valentine’s Day’ to you!”

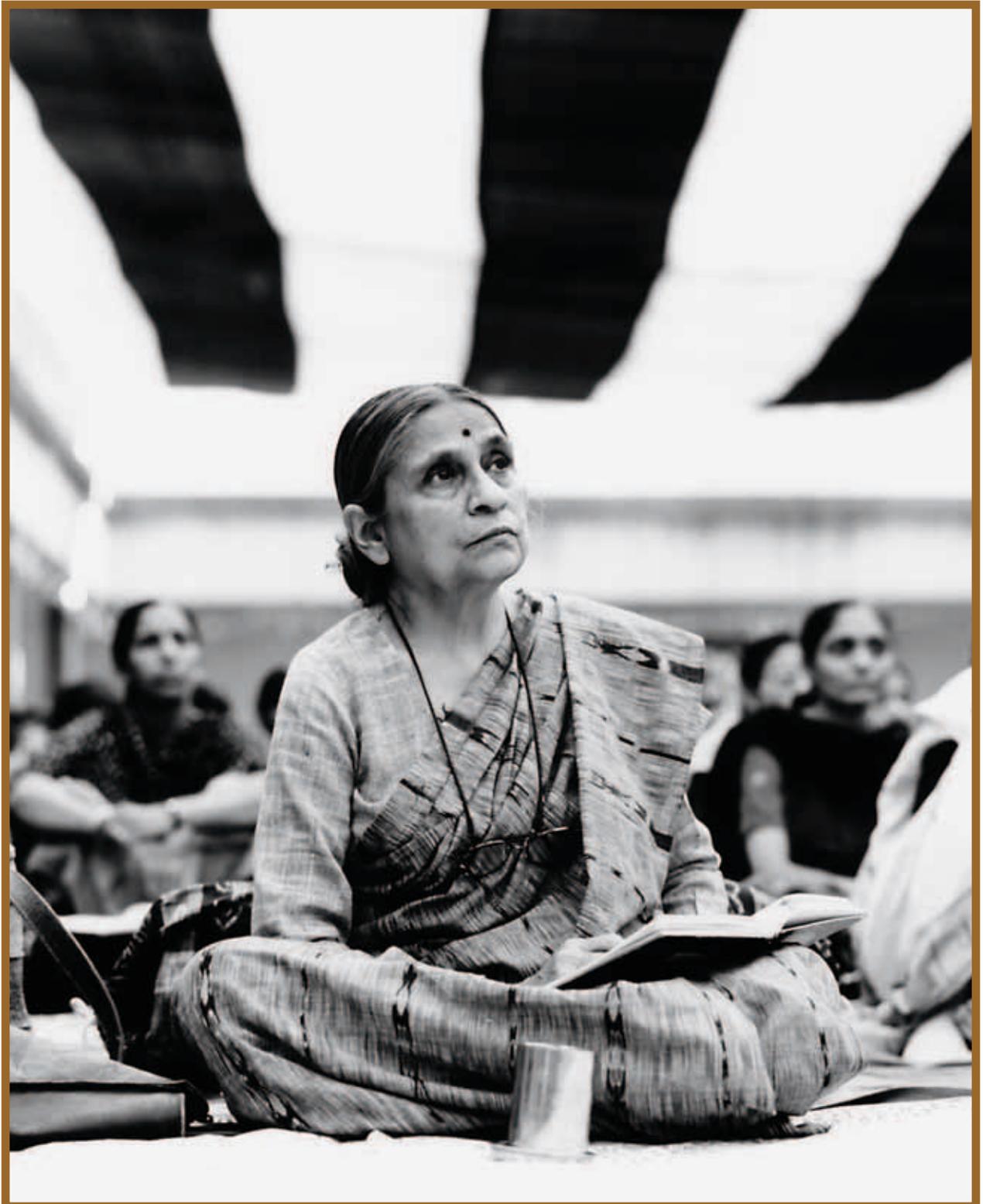
—Vijay S Jodha



“When Hindi film music was at its zenith, it was banned from All India Radio.”

Ameen Sayani

Pioneer of radio programming in South Asia, born in Mumbai, 1932

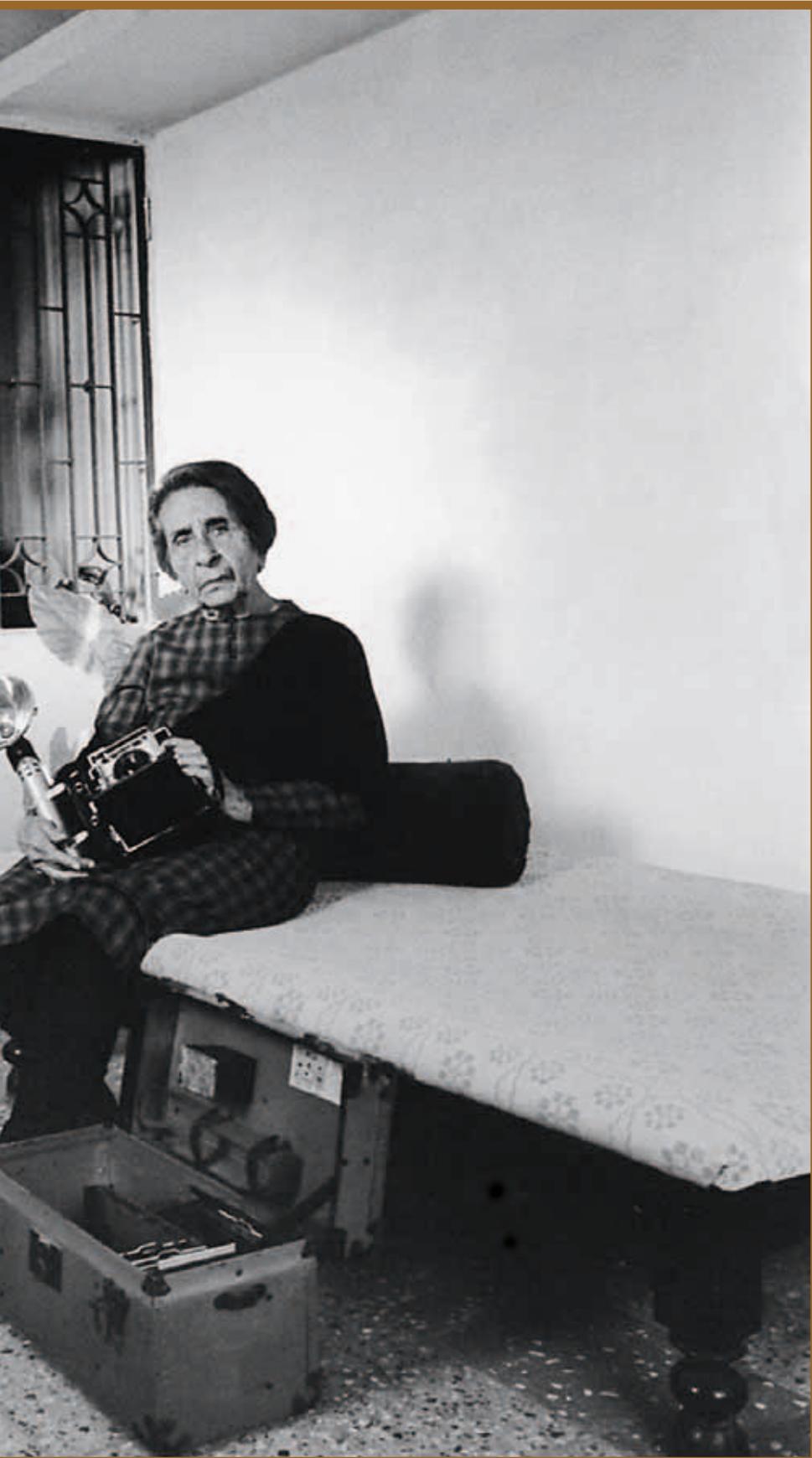


“Gandhian thinking has been my continuous source of guidance.”

Elaben Bhatt

Unorganised labour and women's movement pioneer, born in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, 1933





“Will somebody
kick these bloody
photographers out?”

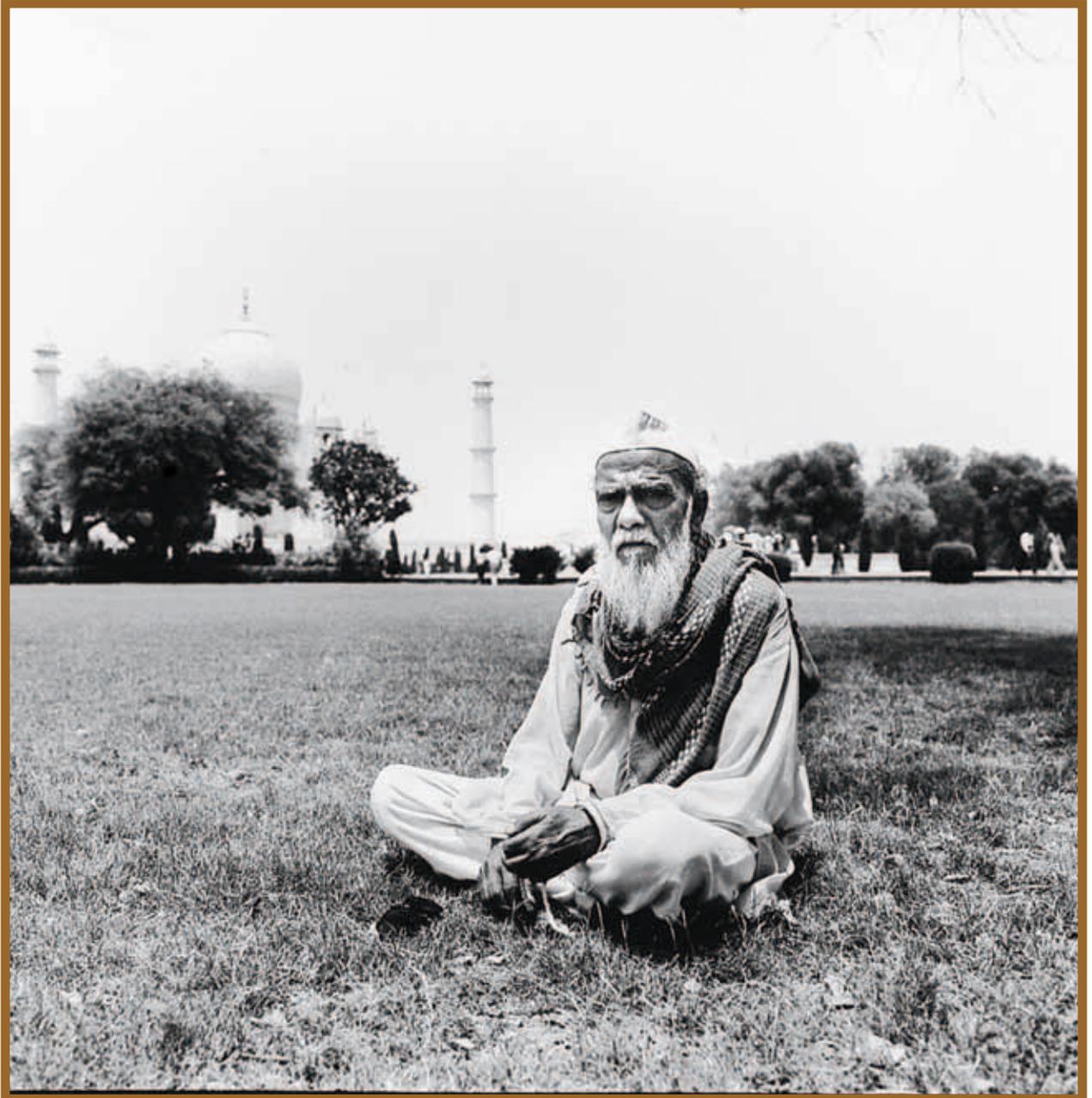
Homai Vyarawala

*South Asia's first woman
photojournalist, born in Navsari,
Gujarat, 1913*

“Even after 50 years, my monthly salary is Rs 15.”

▼ *Maulana Sadiq Ali*

▼ *Shahi Iman of Taj Mahal, born in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, 1919*



“They compared my coming to power with Ramachandraji’s return to Ayodhya after his 14-year exile.”

Maharani Gayatri Devi

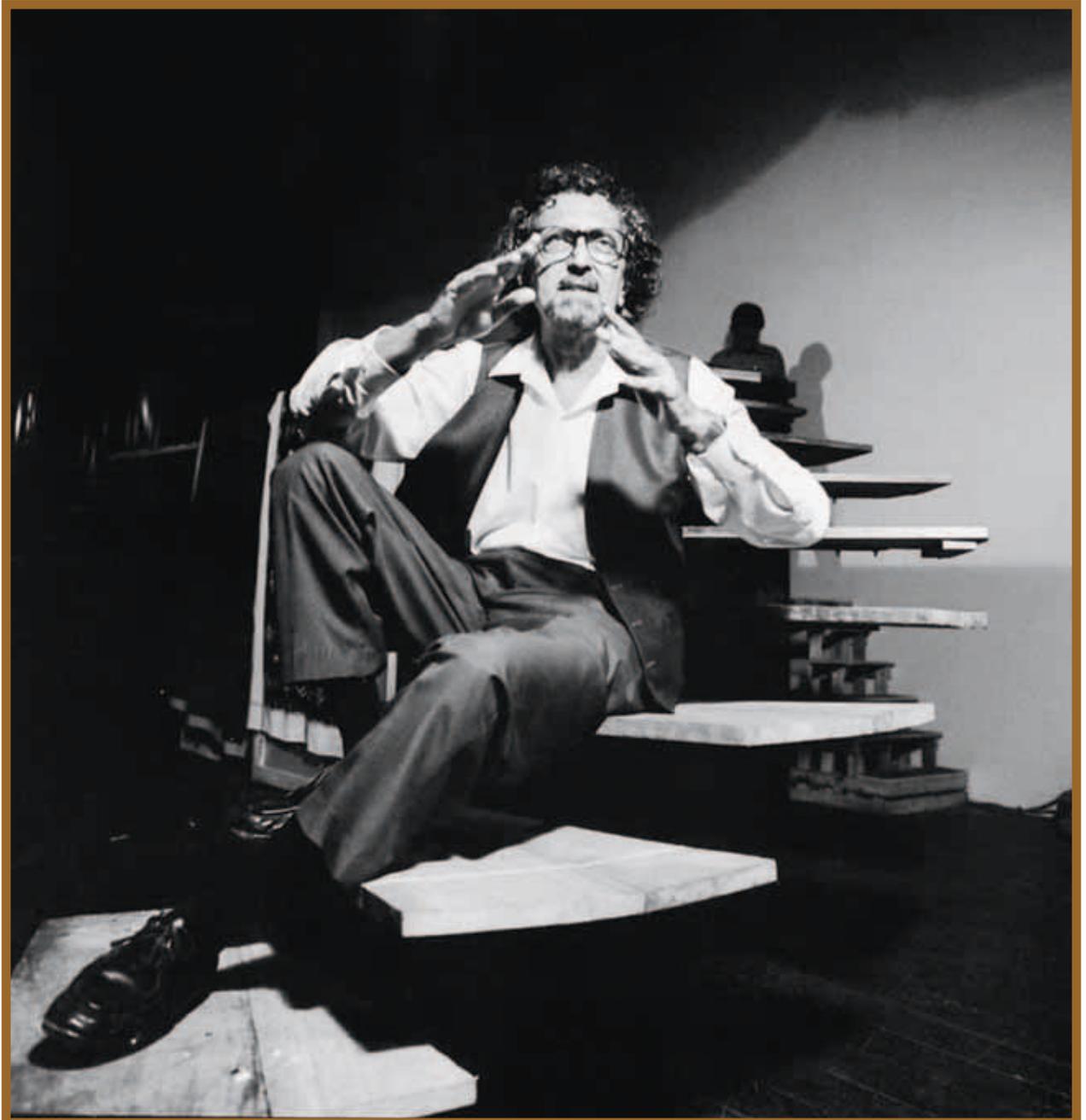
Rajmata of Jaipur, born in London, 1919, with a portrait of her mother ►►





“The only thing that troubles me a little bit is people wearing Punjabi dresses and saying ‘Happy Valentine’s Day’ to you!”

◀ *Kumar Alope Krishna Deb Bahadur*
Former zamindar, born in Kolkata, 1935



“If you feel old, then you will be old.”

▲ *Alyque Padamsee*
Theatre and advertising guru, born in Mumbai, 1931

After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

The first time your eyes met.
The first time you mustered up the courage.
The first time you bared your heart.
The first time you heard "Yes".
The first date.
The first time you held hands.
The first fight.
The first time you made up.
Shouldn't you be celebrating, that first rush of love
before life
and the babies and the bills intruded?
Because for the first time
you're at an age when
you can fall in love with each other
all over again.



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If you're above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the magazine for you. Filled with human interest stories, exciting features and columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.

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The windfall years...52

Try some will power...57

No more pension tension...58

Live off the land...60

Photo: Nrupen Madhvani

Turn silver into gold!

Maximise your money in seven ways.

Aarti Dua shows you how

So you thought bowling was only for Generation X. Think again. Being 60 plus no longer stops you from tumbling those skittles. And you can do it for free if you live in Mumbai. You can also get a higher interest rate on your fixed deposits, travel cheaper and get discounted medical check-ups. *Harmony* shows you how to get the most out of your money.



Illustrations: Farzana Cooper

Max your INTEREST

If you are 60 and above, you can get more bang for your buck.

Under a Reserve Bank of India directive, banks offer senior citizens a half per cent higher interest rate than the prevailing rate on fixed deposits.

For instance, ICICI Bank offers an interest rate of 5.75 per cent on a fixed deposit of one to three years (Rs 10,000 to Rs 15 lakh) to senior citizens (60 years and above) as against a general rate of 5.25 per cent. Of course, the deposit holder must show proof of age and have an account with the bank.

Some banks, like Bank of Maharashtra and Bank of Baroda, have taken the initiative and gone even further, giving senior citizens over 60 a 1 per cent higher rate of interest.

1

2

Pension PAYOUT

Chase away retirement blues with the new wave of pension plans.

Life Insurance Corporation's Varishta Pension Bima Yojana for senior citizens offers an assured return of 9 per cent per annum for life on a one-time premium.

However, the pension is capped at Rs 2,000 a month—the minimum pension is Rs 250. You can choose between a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual payout.

The maximum premium amount for a monthly payout of Rs 2,000 is Rs 2,66,665, while it is Rs 2,55,845 for a yearly payout of Rs 24,000.

Eligibility for the plan is 55 plus, and the principal is returned to the nominee on the death of the policy holder. And there is also an exit option after 15 years.

Travel PLUS

Expand your horizons through travel. Concessions are available for rail, road and air travel. Indian Railways offers 30 per cent off on all classes to those over 60.

Jet Airways, Indian Airlines and Air Sahara offer 50 per cent off on the basic fare within India. Eligibility is 63 for women and 65 for men in the case of Indian Airlines and Jet Airways, while it is 62 years for both men and women on Air Sahara. International airlines offer discounts, but excursion fares may work out cheaper.

Inter-state bus fares in India are also slashed for seniors. For instance, tickets on the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation's buses are 33 per cent cheaper. Delhi Transport Corporation also provides concessional travel passes. For both, the eligibility is 65 plus.



3

4

5

Tax BREAK

Being a silver citizen can help you save tax.

Under Section 88 B of the Indian Income Tax Act, a senior citizen is eligible for a rebate of Rs 20,000 on the total tax payable. But one has to be 65 years and above to benefit from this.

Also, the government has promised to launch Dada-Dadi bonds, which will offer a higher interest rate than regular bonds. Wait and watch out for those.

In New Delhi, the House Tax Department of the Municipal Corporation has recently announced that senior citizens will get a 15 per cent rebate in property tax on self-occupied residential property up to 100 sq m. And there's also a 10 per cent rebate on timely payment of the tax in the first three months of the financial year.

Holiday HUNGAMA

Your holidays can now be made to order. Travel Corporation India (TCI) is planning pilgrimage packages while Anubhav Tours in Mumbai has tours to coastal Karnataka. Paras Holidays in Delhi offers a 25 per cent discount on international and domestic tours for those over 55 while Sai Voyages, also in Delhi, gives 10 per cent off to people over 60.

Hotels are not far behind. In Delhi, Hotel Ashok and Hotel Samrat give a 50 per cent discount on the room tariff to those over 60. Hotel Samrat also throws in a 30 per cent discount on food. The Hyatt Regency in Delhi gives 40 per cent off the room tariff to people over 65. Jungle Lodges & Resorts Ltd offers seniors 15 per cent off at its properties near Bangalore, like Kali Wilderness and Adventure Camp at Dandeli, Devbagh Beach Resort at Karwar and Bandipur Safari Lodge.

Health HIGH

Stay well, at a discount. In Delhi, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital has 15 per cent off on health check-ups and 10 per cent on diagnosis for out-patients. In-patients in the general ward or semi-private rooms get 5 per cent off per treatment.

Also in Delhi, Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre gives a 10 per cent discount to out-patients and 5 per cent to in-patients while the National Heart Institute gives a 20 per cent discount. Eligibility is 65 plus. And Vasant Lok Hospital has 15 per cent off on out-patients' consultations and in-patient hospitalisation (excluding medicines and consumables) for those over 60.

Government hospitals in New Delhi have separate registration counters for seniors. Also on the anvil in the capital are Sunday clinics for senior citizens. All India Institute

of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi conducts a geriatric clinic every Thursday from 2-5 pm (*see Concern - Geriatric Care*).

In Mumbai, Jaslok Hospital offers a 25 per cent discount to out-patients (65 plus) and a 20 per cent discount on economy class in-patient beds. Lilavati Hospital gives a 42-45 per cent discount on its health check-up package for the 60 plus—Rs 3,770 for men and Rs 5,130 for women. And Wockhardt Eye Hospital conducts a free eye check-up for seniors.

The Kairali Ayurvedic Health Resort in Mehrauli, New Delhi offers 10-15 per cent off on some of its packages for those over 60 and Rs 2,000 off on its rejuvenation package—10 massages for Rs 5,000.

In Bangalore, Talwalkars Fitness Planet offers a 25 per cent discount on all packages for seniors. And VLCC Bangalore Centre gives 50 per cent off on all beauty packages for those above 50.

6

7

Play to WIN

In Mumbai, The Bowling Company's Andheri (W) branch offers a free game to senior citizens with no cover charge. And

Essel World and Water Kingdom offer discounted entry tickets of Rs 100 (as against Rs 270 and Rs 290 respectively) for those over 60.

Joining a club has never been easier. In Mumbai, The Club at Andheri (W) offers those over 60 a 10-year membership for Rs 3.5 lakh against the regular 25-year, Rs 7.5 lakh fee. At the Executive Club in Delhi, membership for seniors is Rs 30,000 as against the normal fee of Rs 50,000.

The Bangalore Club provides Honorary Life Membership—with no monthly subscription—to those above the age of 65 with a membership of 25 years. Also in Bangalore, Country Club (I) Ltd offers seniors membership at Rs 15,000 as against the normal rate of Rs 20,000, and The Library Cafe provides a 50 per cent discount on registration for those over 60.

—with inputs by Rupam Khara in New Delhi and Jananie Kalyanaraman in Bangalore





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Will power



Drawing up a proper, enforceable will is essential. **Legalpundits** define the rules

Every individual, as he grows older, wants to ensure that his property will be transferred in a suitable and unbiased manner to his rightful heirs. Although every law of succession defines the rules of delegation of property in case a person dies without a will, it is definitely preferable to make a will. This ensures that your wishes are carried out.

Q. Who can make a will?

A. Every person of sound mind, as long as he is not a minor, can make a will. A will obtained by force, coercion or undue influence is void, as is a will made under influence of intoxication or in such a state of body or mind sufficient to take away the free agency (free will) of a testator (owner).

Q. How do you make a will legally enforceable?

A. It has to be executed by the testator, by signing or affixing his marks to the will. Moreover, two or more witnesses shall attest the will, each of whom should have witnessed the actual signing. If a dispute is anticipated, a will may be videographed to show the testator's state of health and the

soundness of his mind. A will can be made as many times as required. However, only the last will made before death is enforceable.

Q. Can an executor receive a legacy or inheritance under a will?

A. Yes, an inheritance can be made in favour of an executor of a will. However, Section 141 of the Indian Succession Act provides that if a legacy is inherited by a person named as executor, he shall not take the legacy unless he proves the will or otherwise manifests an intention to act as executor.

Q. Should a person in whose favour an inheritance is made be an attesting witness?

A. No, if a beneficiary is also made an attesting witness to the will, the legacy or inheritance will be void.

Q. What is a codicil?

A. If a testator intends to make only a few changes without changing the whole will, he can do so with a codicil. This can be executed in the same way as a will. A codicil is a supplement that can be altered or revoked at any time.

Q. Is registration necessary?

A. Though it is not compulsory, a will can be registered with the sub-registrar. If, at any time, the testator wishes to withdraw the will, he can do so. A will can also be sealed and kept in safe custody. This will be released only to the testator himself or to an authorised person who produces the death certificate.

Q. What is the difference between a will and a nomination?

A. A nomination is not a will. The nominee merely acts as the trustee. Sometimes, the nominee and the beneficiary of the will are the same person. However, the provisions of the will always prevail over the nomination. It is advisable to have the same person as nominee and beneficiary to prevent disputes.

Q. How does a will finally come into effect?

A. A probate is a copy of a will, certified by the court. It is to be treated as conclusive evidence of the genuineness of a will. On the death of the testator, the executor of the will or an heir of the deceased can apply for probate. If the other heirs have no objections to the will, the court will grant probate. If objections are raised, a citation has to be served, calling upon them to consent. This has to be displayed prominently in the court. Thereafter, if no objection is received, the probate will be granted. And then, the will comes into effect.

Contact: www.legalpundits.com
(Harmony takes no responsibility for the advice offered at this site)

Rain check

Prepare for a trouble-free life post retirement with a new range of pension products offered by life insurance companies, urges **Deepak Satwalekar**

Picture yourself when retired. Tranquil, walking hand-in-hand with your granddaughter, not a care in the world. But you have to make it happen.

Planning is the key. You could live for 20 years or more after you retire. Even if you have set aside a fair amount of savings for retirement, you have to factor in inflation, and your own changing needs. To

Tax benefits up to Rs 10,000 are applicable under Section 80 CCC of the Income Tax Act for selected pension plans offered by insurance companies

ensure an adequate post-retirement income, the answer may be the new wave of pension plans offered by insurance companies.

Why pension products?

Investment options available are limited at an advanced age,

but you have a choice of life insurance, pension/annuity, mutual funds and bank



Photo: Nrupen Madhomi

deposits. There are some compelling reasons to choose pension products.

Today's decreasing mortality rates mean increased life expectancy. Inflation will have a considerable impact on future cost of living; you are likely to spend more on medical treatment as the years go by.

Tax benefits up to Rs 10,000 are applicable under Section 80 CCC of the Income Tax Act for selected pension plans. For early starters, the power of compounding will ensure that you end up with a higher sum of money at retirement than those that start later and save more.

Investment options

You can either invest in pension plans through regular premium

contributions, or through a single premium, which is advisable if you start saving at a later age. If making regular premium contributions, the period in which you make them is known as the deferment period, which can be anywhere between five years and 40 years. The sum accumulated at the end of this period, together with your bonuses, is the notional cash value.

How much money will you need when you retire?

Personal Inflation Index (PII)	Present annual income (Rs)	Annual income (in Rs) needed after		
		10 yrs	20 yrs	30 yrs
8%	2,40,000	5,18,142	11,18,630	24,15,038
10%	3,60,000	9,33,747	24,21,900	62,81,785

Note: PII is calculated adding the long-term general inflation rate with expected rate of growth in lifestyle cost

A cost-benefit analysis of LIC policies

Plan	Joining Age	Contribution (Single)	Pension from age (Premium in Rs)	Notional Cash Option (Rs)	Pension per month for life with return of corpus on death (Rs)
Jeevan Dhara I/ Jeevan Suraksha	50	1,00,000	60	1,66,963	650
Jeevan Dhara I/ Jeevan Suraksha	55	1,00,000	60	1,27,449	479
Jeevan Dhara I/ Jeevan Suraksha	60	1,00,000	70	1,66,963	669
Jeevan Akshay II	60	1,00,000	60	1,00,000	365
Varishta Pension Bima Yojana	60	1,00,000	60	1,00,000	750

Annuity plans

At the end of the deferment period, you can invest your notional cash value in an annuity plan. The start of the annuity payment period is known as the vesting period. From the date of vesting, the insurer will pay out a sum of money every month, quarter or year—known as an annuity.

Annuities differ from all other forms of life insurance in one fundamental way: an annuity does not provide any life insurance cover but, instead, offers a guaranteed income either for life or a certain period as specified by you. There are various options available among annuities. You can choose an annuity to be provided for your whole life; for your and your spouse's life; for a definite fixed period and for life thereafter; for your life with return of principal on your death; or for an increasing annuity, each year or every few years, etc.

You can buy an immediate annuity with as little as Rs 25,000 and opt for a regular income for a fixed number of years; a

regular income for a certain number of years and thereafter until your death; the choice of pension for life for you and your spouse; or the choice of pension for life with return of capital. Options will differ with each insurer and the pension amount will depend on your choice of income. It is important to get the rate of

annuity before deciding on the insurer and choices. Here, the cautious could opt for LIC's Varishta Pension Bima Yojana, where the government guarantees a return of 9 per cent. The minimum investment is Rs 33,335 for the plan while the maximum is Rs 2,66,665.

For the sophisticated investor, ICICI Prudential's LifeLink Plan may be appealing. It gives you the option of three investment choices of 'maximiser', 'balancer' or 'protector'—growth, balance and income, if you are familiar with mutual fund schemes.

When choosing a retirement income plan, take the advice of a financial consultant to make the best possible decision that suits your specific needs. Retirement can be tackled with ease, with the right financial plan.

Deepak Satwalekar is MD and CEO of HDFC Standard Life Insurance Company Ltd

—with inputs by Madhu T and Debapriya Ray

Other product options in India include:

ICICI Prudential: LifeLink Pension, Forever Life, Life Time Pension, Secure Plus Pension

HDFC Standard Life: Personal Pension Plan, Unit Linked Pension Plan

Om Kotak Mahindra: Kotak Retirement Income Plan

Tata AIG Life: Nirvana, Nirvana Plus

SBI Life: Lifelong Pensions

Birla Sun Life: Flexi SecureLife Retirement Plan

Aviva Life: Pensionplus

AMP Sanmar Life: Bhagya Shree

Max NewYork Life: Easy Life Retirement Plan

Allianz Bajaj Life: Swarna Vishranti

Room for cash

Paying-guest arrangements can be good sources of income, companionship and emotional security, says **Smriti Gupta**

As he looks around his three-room duplex apartment in Vasant Kunj, Delhi, 56-year-old businessman Mahesh Chakravarty smiles in contentment. Being the head of a family of five grown-up boys is not easy, but he treasures every moment of it.

Only three years ago, he was a wreck when his wife walked out on him with son Rahul—Chakravarty's only son. As the silence in the house reached a deafening pitch, he asked a friend who had lost his wife in a tragedy to move in with him. Rahul, a class XII student, also returned soon after. Two years on, the family grew when the boy's maths tutor from Bihar was offered accommodation in return for his services. The experience proved to be pleasant. So when one of Chakravarty's friends suggested a paying-guest arrangement for a nephew, he gladly agreed. The flat is now home to five happy youngsters who in turn have lent new meaning to the owner's life.

Unusual as the case may seem, it reflects a marked trend among the elderly in the country. Turning adversity into opportunity, lonely senior citizens are increasingly realising the merits of going in for paying-

break-up of family structures. In the middle classes, many people manage to have their own homes by retirement. Years of toil and repayment of loans result in a deep emotional investment in the property. So

Considering the deep emotional investment in property, selling it or renting it can be difficult. Keeping paying guests is a more convenient option.

guest arrangements. They are good sources of income. And they provide companionship and emotional security.

under trying circumstances, selling it or renting it can be too drastic and painful. Keeping paying guests, on the other hand, is a more convenient option.

Indeed, Chakravarty's television repair business does well enough to support him and Rahul. The Rs 3,000 that he charges each of his paying guests every month is also welcome and takes care of the salaries of the domestic help and other expenses. But what eventually matters to him is the company.

Where finances are not an issue, there are other compulsions. Many senior citizens find themselves physically and emotionally distanced from their children. Often, the second generation is abroad or in another city. Even if they are within the same city, constant contact proves difficult owing to busy schedules, which leads to a social and emotional void.

From a sociological perspective, many adults have been left to fend for themselves with the



“We cannot read the newspaper or watch TV all the time,” reasons Raman Sharma, a retired professor who lives alone in a one-bedroom flat in a Mumbai suburb. The idea of keeping a paying guest appeals to him, but the 60-year-old says he has not yet found the “right candidate”. Sharma has a point. Not all guests are compatible, or safe. A paying guest whose credentials are not adequately verified can be a threat to life and property.

Senior citizens also easily lend themselves to exploitation. Kshama Srinivas, a well-to-do 73-year-old who lives alone in a bungalow in Basavangudi, Bangalore, invited Shashi, a young social worker, to move in with her four years ago. There was no talk of money as Srinivas only wanted company. In the course of time, a law student also shifted in and helped with the chores. A year later, the two guests walked out—along with some of Srinivas’ belongings.

Despite the bitter experience, however, Srinivas cherishes the times they spent together. And she has taken in another guest on the same generous terms.

While one can only hope she has better luck this time, such



Property as nest egg

Earn returns from your real estate without taking speculative risks, says Devangshu Dutta

- Owning the roof over one’s head is the first big step on the road to financial security. Many people own homes by the time they retire. Middle-class people sweat for years to pay off the debts they incur in order to finance their homes. As a result, there is always a lot of emotional investment in property, and this can interfere with rational thinking. But the bottom line is that real estate is an asset. And like any other asset, it should fetch returns.
- A low-risk method of earning income is the option of renting property. But make sure that all is legally correct, and that you will be able to evict the tenant if required. You should also be able to raise the rent periodically; make that clear in the lease document. Vet prospective tenants carefully.
- You can also take in paying guests. There are always students and young, single people looking for accommodation. There are also fewer legal risks involved in handling paying guests than tenants. But it does mean more in the way of day-to-day interaction and the hassles of providing services such as cooking and laundry facilities. Keeping your PGs happy without letting them run wild is indeed an art.
- Also, if your property is situated in a potentially useful location, you could consider becoming a franchisee. A franchisee provides space and a certain amount of capital and staffing while the franchiser provides the expertise and the brand name. Franchised businesses can range from healthcare services to educational institutes. If your property fits the bill, scout around. It may even make sense to take a loan if you’ve got the basics for a start-up.

— Devangshu Dutta is a New Delhi-based investment consultant and financial columnist

instances call for a serious look at paying-guest arrangements made by the elderly.

As Bali Ram Bisht, 62, a retired executive from a public-sector company who has six paying-guest girls living in his South Delhi flat, points out, there is a genuine need for hygienic and secure hostel facilities for students and young professionals. With senior

citizens coming forward to meet that demand, it is a mutually beneficial situation. Provided, of course, it is a smooth and safe option for both sides.

—with inputs by
Rupam Khera in New Delhi

Have any tips or experiences you’d like to share? Mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

One-stop space

Unique for its holistic approach, the Harmony Interactive Centre is open to silver citizens in Mumbai

Three years ago, Tina Ambani was invited by the Bombay Chamber of Commerce & Industries to be the chief guest at a seminar on 'Needs, Resources and Opportunities for Senior Citizens', organised at Nana Nani Park, Chowpatty, Mumbai. Her informal interaction with senior citizens revealed the need for 'room of their own', a place where they could meet and interact with their peers in a relaxed, informal environment. Visits to various homes for the aged followed, and underlined this need further. As a result, **Harmony**, an initiative under the parent body of the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust, was set up with the objective of enriching the lives of Generation A.

The **Harmony** organisation studied the data available on senior citizens from NGOs and academic institutions. To gain in-depth knowledge, it also conducted a research study with the help of students from the Mudra Institute of Communication, Ahmedabad (MICA). This study threw light on the need for a platform where senior citizens could spend their time productively with their peers, interact with younger generations and contribute to society.

The model centre

As a result, the **Harmony** team conceptualised the first model 'Harmony Interactive Centre for Senior Citizens'. Its vision: to reach out to a larger population nationwide through the

replication of such models. Eventually, **Harmony** plans to take up advocacy with the government and become a catalyst for change—a platform to express views and air grievances.

Such a movement is possible only with the support of government and semi-government organisations. For the first centre, **Harmony** approached the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for one of its under-utilised premises, and made a presentation to BMC officials. Once convinced about the viability of the project, BMC offered **Harmony** space in Ward C at Zaobawadi, Girgaum, in South Mumbai. To make the project relevant and viable, the Bajaj Institute of Management Studies conducted a need assessment survey of the locality. The findings of this survey helped the team—led by social worker Zankhana Patel—develop the facilities, services and activities at the Centre. The Centre kicked off its test run on May 10.

A unique approach

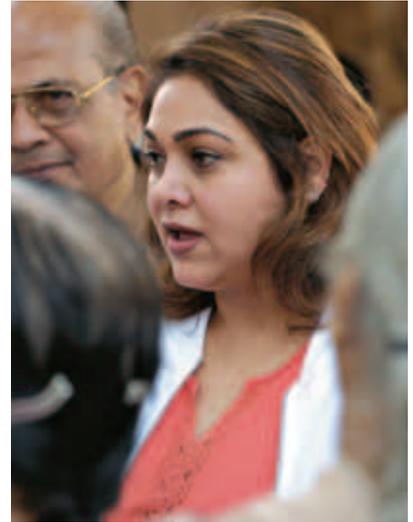
The Harmony Interactive Centre will be unique among day centres in view of its holistic



Tina Ambani with silver citizens in Mumbai

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On the web

Rahat, a counselling centre, run by the Indian Gerontological Association

Log on to:

www.gerontologyindia.com/sendproblem.htm

approach, bringing all issues related to senior citizens under one roof.

Its participatory approach is designed to make seniors citizens feel like active stakeholders rather than mere recipients. In fact, senior citizens from various parts of Mumbai have been actively involved in the creation of the first centre right from the planning stage.

"There is a definite need for a centre of this kind," says Mahendra Bhatt, a resident of the Girgaum area, where the centre is situated. "Seniors require a helping hand, especially in times of illness. Most of us live alone. If the centre can provide volunteers

who can help by way of paying bills or giving us support in times of illness, it would be most useful." Seventy-year-old Suresh Samel, a fellow resident of Girgaum, echoes this sentiment. "The centre will work well if it provides us facilities and support."

By replicating this model across India, **Harmony** hopes to create an active body of silver citizens who can become a force to reckon with, a united voice for change and advocacy, playing a vanguard role for elders across the country.

To know more about the Harmony Centre and its activities, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Coping with change

The passage of time brings with it a unique set of concerns. **Dr Anjali Chhabria** answers some frequently asked questions

Q. I have four sons who live separately but near our home. They insist that we should get rid of our cook and have our meals at their houses. This means that we go for lunch to one son's house and for dinner to the other son's. I am a little sceptical. Please help.

A. Never give up your independence. It is nice that your children care but you can't commute for every meal. Thank your children for their concern but continue with your cook. Go to their houses occasionally or invite them all over on the weekend. You can spend happy times together and still be independent.

Q. I am 58 years old. I have just retired from my company where I was CEO. I miss the lifestyle and routine benefits like secretarial help. Now, I have to pay all the bills myself. Earlier, I never had time to pursue any hobbies; now there's only time, and no hobbies.

A. It's natural to feel depressed, especially with so much time and nothing to do. You are missing your old lifestyle—a lot

of people go through these post-retirement blues. Think positive. This is actually the best phase of your life where you can choose how to spend your time. You could consult on a part-time basis, start a business or just spend time on yourself, learning something new—computers, a musical instrument, gardening, yoga, even a social cause. You choose!

Q. My son, who lives abroad, invited me for a holiday—and at the end of it gave me a bill of \$ 500. I am so hurt that I cannot talk about it to anybody, and now I don't feel like talking to him.

A. This must have been painful for you, and you are justified in feeling angry and hurt. Take your time to get over it, ignore him if you must. Once you're feeling better, discuss this issue with him. Tell him how hurt you feel but give him a chance to explain. Maybe he needed the money for a crisis, or maybe living abroad has changed his value systems. Forgive him, move on, but the next time he invites you over, be smart and ask him what the bill is going to be!

Q. My mother-in-law is 72 years old. She is physically fit but lately, she is becoming forgetful. Soon after having her tea, she complains I didn't give her any. But she remembers the events of the past. She gets up in the middle of the night, puts on the lights, turns on the TV and asks us why we are still asleep. And she complains to our relatives that we are not treating her well.

A. A lot of elderly people become forgetful, but some experience more memory impairment than others. This may worsen with weak eyesight or a hearing impairment that makes them more insecure and suspicious. They lose track of time, eat at odd hours and become completely disoriented, especially if taken to new places.

All this worsens with age and time if not treated. Remember, she is going through dementia and not doing this on purpose. See that she eats well and drinks enough water as water and salt depletion can worsen confusion. Don't send her out alone as she may get lost—keep an identity card with her. Most important, take her regularly for her medical check-ups. There is medication available for dementia.

Dr Anjali Chhabria is a Mumbai-based consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

For advice, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org or fax at (022) 22852217





body & soul

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Photo: Nrupen Madhvani

Shared truths

New age sage Deepak Chopra tells **Anupa Mehta** the key to wellness lies in your mind

As the first rays of morning permeate a new day's static, one man on the West Coast of America embraces his daily routine with intensity akin to prayer. Messiah of 'feel good' Deepak Chopra, 57, tops this 90-minute communion with the Universe with 15 minutes of suryanamaskar. Next, in keeping with the Mind, Body, Spirit theory he propagates, he revs up the day with a 90-minute workout. The rest of his routine displays equal effortlessness. Work is indeed worship for Chopra. Chopra, a grandfather, is a

midnight's child of Punjabi origin—he was born in April 1947 in New Delhi. A trained endocrinologist, he migrated to America in 1970. Subsisting on ambition, coffee and cigarettes, with a thriving practice in Boston, he went on to earn the sobriquet of 'pioneer' in integrated medicine, tapping scientific observation to substantiate radical theories. Listed among 100 US heroes by Time magazine, Chopra is considered to be a master of repackaging the 'feel good' mantra: an eclectic mix of two parts Hindu scripture, one part Ayurveda,

stirred with the logic of quantum physics served to the tune of celebrity brand endorsement. The growing sales of 30 odd publications reprinted in 25 languages is proof of prowess—Ageless Body, Timeless Mind and Grow Younger, Live Longer being two recent best-sellers. Add a canny ability to convert seekers into friends and vice versa. Take Madonna, Demi Moore and Goldie Hawn, who recently helped create Chopra's new CD, A Gift of Love: Music Inspired by the Love Poems of Rumi. Harmony presents food for mind, body and soul from Deepak Chopra.

Dressed in jeans and a bush-shirt, and sporting a pair of pink and blue painted spectacles, Deepak Chopra announces: **"You only have to remind people of what they already know in order to reverse the ageing process."**

On ageing

When I speak of ageing, I am referring to biological age, a concrete thing measured by

biomarkers. You can take people between the ages of 75 to 93, or even older, and introduce intervention by which you can actually reverse the biomarkers.

The demographics of ageing are changing. We also know that people don't die of old age, but of diseases associated with old age. Anyone who pays attention to the few things required to live a full life can approach old age without infirmity, feeling physically fit and emotionally stable. We must also accept that

ultimately we all have to die. Death renews the universe. The quantum level holds the mysteries of the mind-body connection; Ayurveda, the key.

On altering perceptions

We need to alter negative perceptions of ageing. Ageing implies wisdom, maturity, and a fit biology. To arrive at this perception, you need to examine data and then convince yourself.

If I want to learn how to play the sitar, I go to somebody who can



teach me. Similarly, if I want to know how to age gracefully, I learn from examples. My wife's uncle in New Delhi, now 85, and who played Wimbledon in 1979, still plays three sets of tennis a day. People in certain societies are healthy because ageing has a different connotation there. To become old is to be valorised and respected.

In India, too, this is partly true—we respect the elderly, give them preferential seating, say *pranam*, etc. So if we help our elders and assist them in re-examining certain physical aspects, we would arrive at a more positive perception of ageing. We also need to alter the perception of time. If you believe you are running out of time, your biological clock will automatically speed up.

On ageing and sex

We need to get better sleep, meditate, exercise, get rid of emotional toxins, exercise your emotional

freedom, pay attention to relationships, and use our creativity to solve problems.

We also need to pay more attention to sexuality, as it is an important component of ageing well. Try your best not to get involved in too many toxic relationships. Toxicity of emotions causes havoc in people's physicality. Utilising your time to help others may help you remain healthier than those who are socially inactive.



Wellness quotient: Deepak Chopra

Photo: courtesy The Chopra Centre, La Jolla

On setting an example

Soul food consisting of extended moments of silence and contemplation. Meal mantra: no carbohydrates, fish, or chicken salad for protein. Leisure: sports that require mind-body

coordination. Big break: a week of silence in the wilderness. Preferred destinations: California desert, Costa Rican rainforest, Island of Bali. Laredo, Mexico is a perennial even as India remains a territory of the heart.

On spirituality

Spirituality is the study of consciousness; the point from where everything originates, from where your inspirations and intuition emerge. True spirituality is freedom from the fear of mortality. There is a domain of existence that physicists call Quantum Non-Locality, where everything is inseparably connected to everything else at a pace faster than the speed of light.

We are all part of the same primordial soup. If we remove our social masks, we discover the same essence that we call spirit. Somewhere, somehow, people intuitively respond to shared truth.



Photo: Bajirao Pawar

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11/24



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शाम में ताज़ा...

17/24



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दिनभर के हर काम में ताज़ा...

शुबह से लेकर शाम में ताज़ा!



Live longer, deliciously

Eating healthy food based on the tenets of Ayurveda can help you stay young, advises **Deepak Chopra**

Your body is a field of energy, transformation, and intelligence made out of the food you eat. A sugar molecule in the apple you ate at lunch yesterday may be a part of your stomach lining today. And an iron molecule from your spinach salad may already be part of the haemoglobin in one of your red blood cells. You become what you eat.

There are foods that accelerate ageing and entropy, and others that renew and revitalise the body. The key to a diet that

Some foods accelerate ageing and entropy, while others renew the body. The key to reversing ageing is to eat foods that are both healthy and delicious.

reverses the ageing process is to eat foods that are both healthy and delicious. You need to ensure that you consume foods from all six taste groups throughout the day. According to Ayurveda, these are:

Sweet

It is important to consume sweet foods that are balancing and

nutritious. Grains, cereals, breads, pastas, nuts, milk, dairy, fish, fowl, red meat, and oils are all classified as sweet foods. Sweet fruits include bananas, papayas, mangoes, peaches, pears and raisins. Examples of sweet vegetables are carrots, cauliflower, okra and sweet potatoes. All food from animal sources is considered sweet.

Favour foods rich in complex carbohydrates, particularly whole grains, breads, cereals, rice, and pasta. Aim for eight helpings a day. Consume at least three to

five servings of fresh fruit and five servings of vegetables each day. Although nuts are high in fat, they have been shown to lower cholesterol levels. Favour non-fat and low-fat milk and dairy products. And minimise your intake of red meat.

Cooking oils should be either monounsaturated, such as olive

oil, or polyunsaturated, such as sunflower. Fibre-rich foods are helpful in normalising elimination, lowering cholesterol levels, and reducing the risk of digestive tract cancers.

Sour

All acids are perceived as sour including citric acid, ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) and acetic acid (vinegar). A regular dose awakens appetite and enhances digestion, and slows the emptying of your stomach, reducing the insulin-stimulating effect of carbohydrates. The best sources are fresh fruits, including apples, apricots, berries, cherries, grapefruit, grapes, lemons, oranges, pineapples and tomatoes. Low- and non-fat yoghurt is also a good source. Fresh yoghurt provides acidophilus bacteria, helpful in balancing your digestive tract.

Sour foods are usually excellent sources of vitamin C and flavonoids, which protect against heart disease and cancer. They also provide soluble fibre, which may reduce the chances of both



*Ensure that you consume
foods from all taste groups
through the day*

Photo: Bajirao Patwar
Styling: Deepti Sunderji Mongia



coronary heart disease and diabetes.

Fermented sour condiments, such as pickles, green olives, and chutneys, are helpful in stimulating digestion, but are best taken in small amounts.

Salty

The salty taste promotes digestion, is mildly laxative, and has a mildly relaxing effect. Too much salt is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure and may play a minor role in the development of osteoporosis. In addition to table salt, the salty taste is carried in fish, soy sauce and most sauces. Be aware of your salt intake and recognise that it must be in moderation.

Pungent

The pungent or spicy taste usually results from essential oils rich in antioxidant properties that can neutralise decay-causing free radicals. The natural chemicals in hot spices are also anti-bacterial.

Natural compounds contained within onions, leeks, chives, and garlic may help lower your cholesterol level and blood pressure. They can also protect you from cancer-causing agents in the environment. Chillies, ginger, horseradish, mustard, black and red pepper, radishes,

and spices like basil, cinnamon,

cloves, cumin, oregano, peppermint, rosemary and thyme can be used liberally for their flavour and age-reversing benefits.

Bitter

Green and yellow vegetables, such as bell peppers, celery, eggplant and spinach, are the primary source of the bitter taste. Bitterness reflects the natural chemicals with a wide range of age-reversing and health-enhancing effects – they help detoxify carcinogens, lower serum cholesterol levels and, most important, enhance your immunity.

Five food rules

How you eat is as important as what you eat

- Listen to your body. Eat when you are hungry; stop when you are satiated.
- Eat in a relaxing environment and chew your food until it is liquid or semi-liquid before swallowing.
- Don't put the next bite of food into your mouth until you've swallowed the previous one.
- Don't put the next meal in your stomach until you've digested the previous one (usually at least three hours).
- Eat food with all six tastes during the day—eat more at lunch and less at dinner since your digestive power is strongest at noontime.

Green vegetables are good sources of B vitamins and folate, which protect against heart disease. Vegetables are an important source of both soluble and insoluble fibre. Soluble fibre is good for your heart while insoluble fibre improves the movement of food through your digestive tract. High-fibre diets are associated with a lower risk of breast and digestive tract cancers. Small quantities of bitter herbs, like coriander, cumin, dill, fenugreek and turmeric, enhance the taste of food and contribute to your well-being.

Astringent

Astringent foods produce a puckering effect on the mucous membranes, and include apples, beans, bell peppers, buttermilk, celery, cherries, cucumbers, figs, lemons, lentils, mung beans, mushrooms, pomegranates,

potatoes, spinach, green and black tea, tofu, whole wheat and rye grain products. They help in the regulation of digestive function and wound healing.

Green and black tea may protect you against many illnesses, from cancer to heart disease. Beans, legumes, and peas provide soluble and insoluble fibre, and also supply us with folic acid, calcium, and magnesium.

Regardless of the type of food you enjoy, you can make your meals healthy by ensuring a wide variety of tastes. A dietary plan that is sustainable, balanced and delicious can help you grow younger and live longer.

*Information courtesy:
Grow Younger, Live Longer
by Deepak Chopra*

Life-enhancing chemicals

Fruits and vegetables contain plant chemicals that can reverse age

PHYTO CHEMICAL	ACTIONS	SOURCES
Flavonoids	Antioxidant, anti-carcinogenic, protect against heart disease	Onions, red grapes, apples, cherries, citrus fruits, tomatoes
Phenolic compounds	Antioxidant, inhibit cancerous changes	Nuts, green tea
Sulphides	Anti-carcinogenic, inhibit blood clotting	Garlic, onions, chives
Lycopene	Anti-carcinogenic	Tomatoes
Isothiocyanates	Inhibit cancer growth	Cabbage, cauliflower
Isoflavones	Block hormonally stimulated cancers, lower cholesterol levels	Soya beans and soy-derived foods
Anthocyanins	Antioxidant, lower cholesterol, stimulate immunity	Cherries, grapes, currants
Terpenoids	Antioxidant, antibacterial, prevent stomach ulcers	Peppers, cinnamon, thyme, turmeric

Perfect plan

Balance your life with a supportive daily routine and the six tastes, says **Deepak Chopra**



Breakfast

Kick off the day with a simple, nourishing breakfast.

- **Rolled oats (rough *lapsi*)**, hot cereal cooked with water and a pinch of salt: sweet and salty
- **Sautéed apples, with apple juice, lemon juice, cinnamon and maple syrup (or jaggery syrup or honey)**: sweet, sour and pungent
- **Almonds**: bitter
- **Vanilla soya milk (or cashew milk or coconut milk with vanilla essence)**: astringent and sweet
- **Tea or coffee**: astringent

Lunch

Have your largest meal of the day between 10 am and 2 pm.

- **Vegetable stir-fry with rice (made with carrots, spinach, broccoli or cauliflower, onions, ginger and soy sauce)**: sweet, salty, pungent, bitter and astringent
- **Marinated tofu (or *paneer*) or chicken strips**: sweet and sour
- **Cabbage salad**: Sweet, sour and astringent
- **Cookie**: sweet
- **Jasmine tea**: bitter

Dinner

Eat a light dinner at least three hours before you go to bed.

- **Stuffed summer squash (red or white pumpkin) with quinoa (or tapioca or sweet potato or *shalgum*) and vegetables**: sweet, salty, bitter and astringent
- **Roasted red pepper (or green capsicum and red onions) sauce**: pungent and bitter
- **Sautéed Swiss chard (or spinach or leafy greens)**: bitter
- **Yoghurt and strawberries**: sour

Track record

Prem Popli tells **Pooja Mehrotra** how he refused to let bypass surgery slow him down with the help of his RMA—Right Mental Attitude

When 67-year-old Prem Popli, a Mumbai-based businessman, ran the Mumbai International Marathon's 7 km 'dream run' this February, the only thing that gave away the fact that he'd undergone a bypass surgery was the red heart badge on his T-shirt. One among 30-odd cardiac patients from Mumbai's Asian Heart Institute Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre who participated in the event, Popli completed the 7 km leg in 62 minutes. "I could

have even run 11 km," he says exuberantly.

A year ago, he had almost run himself to death. "In January 2003, when I was in Ankleshwar in Gujarat with a Japanese friend, our car came to a standstill due to a traffic jam on the bridge across the Narmada River. We had no choice but to walk." After barely having covered 100 m, he began to pant excessively, and realised

something was amiss. "Even earlier, I used to experience breathlessness

when I ran up a flight of stairs. And I felt pressure on my arms but I'd ignored the symptoms." After Ankleshwar, he couldn't ignore it any more.

On his return to Mumbai, Popli immediately visited cardiologist Dr Nitin Gokhale. A week later, an angiography revealed three blockages, including a 90 per cent blockage in one of the main arteries. Popli needed bypass surgery.

In March 2003, Dr Ramakanta Panda of the Asian Heart Institute & Research Centre



'Beating heart' surgery

A superior alternative to bypass surgery?

Increasingly, 'beating heart' or off-pump surgery is catching on —surgeons say recovery is faster, and blood loss and side effects are minimised.

Traditionally, bypass surgery is conducted by stopping the heart while the body functions

with the help of an artificial heart. The patient's heart is actually 'off-line' and not beating for several hours, causing a great deal of trauma, besides adding risk to the lung, brain and kidney. In off-pump surgery, the grafting is done without stopping the heartbeat.

'Beating heart' surgery is still fairly new in India. "The success depends on the technical skills

and experience of the surgeon," says Dr Aashish Contractor, head, Department of Preventive Cardiology and Rehabilitation, Asian Heart Foundation. In a report in US medical journal *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*, researchers say off-pump surgery may prove superior to conventional (bypass) surgery in select patients, operated on in experienced centres.

operated on him. Post surgery, Popli was asked to do light breathing exercises and start taking walks. Three weeks later, he was at the office, working part-time. Two weeks later, he was working regular hours.

Popli attributes his quick recovery to what he calls his 'RMA': right mental attitude. A

month after his bypass, Popli enrolled in the the Asian Heart Institute's rehabilitation programme, taking part in exercises like rowing, cycling, light weights and walking on the treadmill. He frequents a gym three to four times a week for a cardiovascular workout, and swears by yoga.

"There is a misconception that those who have undergone a bypass surgery or angioplasty cannot lead an active life," says Popli. "Patients do undergo psychological changes like depression. But it is possible to lead a normal life after bypass."

Today, Popli follows few dietary restrictions save avoiding fatty foods. He rarely indulges in non-

vegetarian fare—breakfast is typically fruits, toast, cornflakes, milk, porridge, and egg white once a week. Lunch is two *chapattis*, vegetables and, sometimes, *dal*; the evening snack consists of biscuits or banana chips with a cup of coffee; while dinner is salad, *dal*, vegetables, sweetened curd with fruits, and an occasional dessert like pudding or ice-cream.

Popli acknowledges that he has won the battle with his positive attitude, balanced diet and regular exercise. "I feel stronger than most people half my age," he says. It's all about RMA.

Ever triumphed over adversity? Tell us about it. Mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Arresting signs

The onset of cardiac problems:

- Chest pain or change in intensity and severity of pain
- Breathlessness on accustomed exertion
- Post-meal pain in chest or upper abdomen
- Giddiness/light-headedness
- Pain increasing with exertion to the arms, neck and back
- Acidity or heartburn

You are at coronary risk if you...

- Have a family history of heart disease below the age of 50
- Have diabetes—fasting blood sugar over 110; post-meal over 130
- Have high blood pressure (over 130/80)
- Have increased level of cholesterol (over 200)
- Have a sedentary lifestyle
- Are obese (waist circumference over 100 cm)
- Smoke

Heart toppers

India's premier cardiac treatment centres include:

- **Escorts Heart Institute & Research Centre, New Delhi:** 011-26825001/0, 26825004/5
- **Apollo Hospital, Chennai:** 044-28293333, 28290200
- **Narayana Hridalaya, Bangalore:** 080-27835000-18
- **Asian Heart Institute & Research Centre, Mumbai:** 022-56986666, 26542088
- **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi:** 011-26569461, 26561123, 26864865
- **Madras Medical Mission Hospital, Chennai:** 044-26259801/9810
- **Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai:** 022-23667788, 23685406, 23633651
- **Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences & Research Centre, Kochi:** 0484-2339080, 2340801

Hold your heart!



According to a recent WHO study, Indians need to improve their eating habits and reduce stress levels right away. Else, the study says, 60 per cent of the world's heart patients will be in India by the year 2010.

Nature cure for Alzheimer's

Scientific researchers are turning to centuries-old herbs in search for a cure for Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia. Sage oil is being investigated after earlier research by the Medicinal Plant Research Centre (MPRC), UK, found that it inhibits an enzyme called acetylcholinesterase (AChE) which breaks down the chemical messenger acetylcholine—Alzheimer's is accompanied by a drop in acetylcholine. British scientists recently carried out the

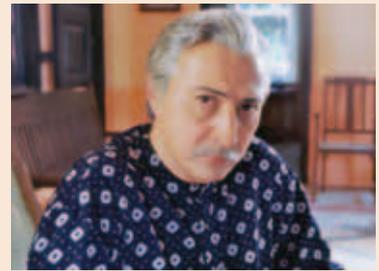
Sleep less, live more

If you thought you need eight hours of sleep to stay healthy, think again. Now, a six-year-long study of over a million adults (aged 30 to 102) has revealed that those who sleep six or seven hours a day have higher life expectancy. The study was reported in US journal *Sleep* by Dr Daniel Kripke, professor of psychiatry, University of California, San Diego.



first clinical trials with healthy, young adults, and those who had taken sage oil capsules performed significantly better in a word recall test.

Another possible cure is Ginkgo Biloba, a herbal extract used for its healing powers for over 4,000 years. According to a study by researchers at the University of Southern Mississippi, it increases circulation in the brain and reduces the plaque build-up that leads to Alzheimer's.



Fit for life

Anang Desai, who plays Dadaji in TV serial *Khichdi*, shares his health secrets

Anang Desai believes in exercise and a balanced diet. At 50, he puts in an average 12 hours of work for 22 days of the month. His erratic hours do take their toll, but he says with pride, "I have no health problems, not even minor ones. Exercise, a balanced diet and zest for my work keep me going."

Eat smart: "I don't follow a diet plan but avoid oily and fatty food. I start my day with egg preparations or south Indian snacks. My meals include green vegetables, protein-rich *dals* or pulses. And curd is a must. I eat either rice or *roti* every meal. For dinner, I sometimes go in for light food, like stir-fried vegetables and soup."

Exercise: "I have been exercising since the age of 22 for 30 minutes, at least five times a week. I do light exercises, including seven or eight yoga *asanas* like *suryanamaskar* and *sarvangasana*. Of late, I have started using the treadmill and do a bit of cycling at home."

Share your health tips with us.
Mail us or email at
contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Exercise the memory

Yoga helps to keep your mind distortion-free and focused, says **Shameem Akhtar**

Yoga understands memory as a series of conditionings that trap us. While there are several yogic practices to clear the cobwebs of our *samskaras* (conditionings), yoga's purpose lies in keeping memory lucid and free of distortions. As a bonus, we reap brain longevity.

Indian spiritual texts emphasise that to remain undistracted from our goal, we must keep sweeping away the clutter on this path. As we progress in our yoga, consciousness, in its freshly transformed state, clears the distinctions between memory (*smriti*) and intellect (*buddhi*). Memory then becomes luminous. And consciousness shines in us 'unblemished', 'without reflection'.

Power of emotion

Biologically, our primitive brain or limbic system functions by stoking emotions. Emotions brand this information as memory, storing it. Originally, this was meant to protect us. Suppose you burnt your finger on a candle in childhood, this fear is retained to save you from

future fire accidents. Similarly, if someone abuses us, we remember this as simmering resentment to escape future humiliation. But such memories bind us with fear and resentment, stressing and sickening us.

Yogic moves

Exercise of the month

Lie on your back in *shavasana* or the corpse pose, with feet splayed, hands 45 degrees away from the body, eyes shut. Breathe deeply a few times. Focus mentally on your *ajna chakra* (the intellectual centre, corresponding to Shiva's third eye, the spot where women wear *bindis*). Visualise your goal.

Take your mind to different parts of your body, starting with your hand. Mentally repeat, 'I sense my thumb, my thumb relaxes completely.' Now move through each individual body part in a systematic fashion. Finish with the entire body thus; conclude by reverting to the *ajna chakra*, repeating your resolution.

The case of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Nunnery, Mankato, Minnesota reaffirms how intellectual pursuits impact longevity and mental alertness. Many lived to over 90 and 100 years because they challenged themselves with quizzes, puzzles, debates and journal writing, while continuing with their formal chores. Negative emotions accelerate ageing through shrinkage and death of brain cells needed for memory, while blocking the brain's attempt to compensate for such damage.

Focusing the mind

Yoga nidra (sleep), part of *smriti* (memory) yoga is simple yet powerfully healing; Swami Radha of the Himalayan Yoga Institute narrates how he learnt English in a few weeks through this practice. The practice produces a trance-like state by activating the rejuvenating parasympathetic nervous system. Electroencephalogram (EEG) studies of practitioners show that the brain's electrical pattern slows to alpha waves (the restful alert state) as against the faster beta waves state at which we normally function. This allows the brain to undo the damage wrought by our hectic thoughts.

Shameem Akhtar is a Mumbai-based yoga practitioner. If you have any queries, mail us or email at

contact.mag@harmonyindia.org
(Please consult your physician before following advice given here)



Pearls of wisdom

Dental problems can be overcome with savvy technology and innovative self-help products, writes **Dr Shalini Pradhan**

Tooth loss, like wrinkles, was an inevitable part of ageing. No more. Dentistry can not only enhance a smile but also help maintain a youthful and healthy appearance.

No more dentures

To replace lost teeth, elders traditionally had to make do with the inconvenience and embarrassment of dentures. Today, implants, more comfortable and secure, have emerged as a viable alternative. Tooth root substitutes for missing teeth, implants are surgically placed below the gum margin, and then exposed three to six months later. Thereafter, a tooth made of porcelain is placed over the implant. Pioneering implant technology also allows front teeth to be replaced instantly and painlessly with immediate implants.

New you

Over time, worn out and discoloured teeth alter a person's appearance. The height between the nose and chin decreases, causing the muscles of the face to collapse. The chin starts to recede, wrinkles start to form around the lips, and the fold below the lower lip starts to become more

prominent. Commonly called 'puckering', this adds to the ageing effect.

Cosmetic dentistry can rejuvenate the ageing smile, and creased, wrinkled face by restoring teeth to their full shape, size and colour. Thin layers of individually crafted porcelain are used to fashion a new, younger appearance and simultaneously recreate and enhance the original contours of the face. Digital imaging allows a sneak preview even before treatment begins.

Dazzle again

Age thins the enamel (the outer layer of the tooth) and teeth turn darker. In addition, they become stained through substances such as food and nicotine. Bleaching, a tooth-whitening technology, has eliminated the need to live with dark teeth. A number of do-it-yourself teeth whitening toothpastes and gels are available over the counter today. Dental clinics can also dramatically lighten colour using bleaching systems. A combination of both gives the optimal result.

Great gums

Sticky bacteria in the form of plaque, a thin film, cover the teeth and gums. Left unchecked,

they stick to teeth, especially around existing fillings and roots that are exposed as the

Dental dos and don'ts

- Brush teeth twice a day with a medium to soft, small head toothbrush. If there is loss of manual dexterity, an electronic toothbrush is recommended. In case of visual impairment, a magnifying mirror improves brushing efficiency. Inter-dental brushes help remove food stuck between teeth.
- Floss every night.
- Use a mouthwash or rinse your mouth after every meal.
- Take nutritional supplements of calcium and vitamins.
- Cut down foods with refined sugar.
- A dental check-up twice a year is mandatory, and dental problems should be attended to immediately.
- Choose your toothpaste and mouthwash carefully; fluoride protects teeth against cavities but is toxic to teeth in excess. If you live in an area where ground water levels of fluorides are high, like Rajasthan and New Delhi, opt for non-fluoridated products.

gum line recedes. The bacteria can lead to cavity formation, gum disease and inevitable tooth loss. Oral bacteria also cause periodontal (gum) disease, common among the elderly. In the initial stages, gums are irritated and tend to get inflamed. Progressively, the disease destroys the supporting tissues around the teeth.

The most common signs are swollen, tender gums that bleed while brushing and persistent bad breath. Gum diseases have been linked to a number of illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Good oral hygiene combined with regular visits to the dentist can nip such problems in the bud. Laser technology enables dentists to treat diseased gums with minimum discomfort. And lost bone can also be replaced with a variety of artificial bone substitutes.

Magic fillings

Say goodbye to silver. Today, a variety in tooth material is available to treat teeth

Hi-tech help

- Dental lasers that painlessly cut into gums and teeth are now commercially available.
- CAD/CAM technology allows the fabrication of ceramic crowns and bridges in a matter of hours, eliminating the need for laboratories.
- X-rays have gone digital, allowing for digitised images of patients' teeth.



Illustration: Priya Raj

with cavities. Further, filling materials can be used for worn and misshapen teeth, even to close gaps between teeth. Such aesthetic materials are virtually undetectable.

Moist mouth

With advancing age and increased intake of medicines, the saliva in the mouth can become thick and viscous. This causes difficulty in speech, swallowing and taste, and results in bad breath. It can also complicate existing gum problems and tooth decay, and lead to cavities.

To get rid of a dry mouth, the solution is an increased intake of fluids; chewing sugar-free gum or sucking on sugar-free lozenges; using oral rehydration products; and maintaining good oral hygiene.

Shock therapy

Life's simple pleasures such as a hot cup of tea, a cold drink or an ice cream can cause pain, akin to

an electric shock, to worn down, sensitive teeth. A variety of desensitising toothpastes and mouthwashes are available in the market. Desensitising treatments can also be carried out in a dentists' clinic.

Oral cancer alert

India has a high incidence of mouth cancer as a result of heavy consumption of tobacco, *paan*, *supari* and *gutka*. Annual dental check-ups ensure automatic cancer detection. Clinics are now equipped with cancer screening kits, making it much easier to catch the growth early.

Visiting a dentist regularly, following good oral hygiene and staying aware will keep you smiling, for a lifetime.

Dr Shalini Pradhan is a Mumbai-based dentist practicing for over two decades

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Photo: Nrupen Madhvani

'Treks are nutrition'

Harmony invited four trek enthusiasts to list their hot spots and discovered that age is never a barrier for the avid trekker

You are never too old to walk," says Franco Linhares, 53, who treks every weekend along the outskirts of Mumbai.

He is among a growing tribe of seniors who trek regularly; people who step out in trekking boots for a spiritually and physically uplifting time-out. Unlike mountaineering or high altitude expeditions, all it takes to trek is a fit body and the will to embrace nature, regardless of age and the discomforts of the outdoors. It's all about experiencing the thrill of a steep uphill or downhill walk at heights above 10,000 ft. Or to stand in the shadow of snow-capped mountains amidst breathtaking flora, far away from the urban grind.

"Trekking is being one with nature, the group and yourself," says Tanil Kilachand, a 67-year-old Mumbai-based businessman who has been a regular trekker for the past 17 years. "It is an exercise in interaction."

New Delhi-based Asha Narayan, 68, has been trekking for almost

15 years. Her first trek was to Amarnath and since then, she has trekked all over the Himalayan region. "At 55, I found the unforgiving, bone-chilling desert land and the windy, desolate open spaces of Ladakh, Kargil and Batalik stunningly mystical," she says. "At 58, I trekked the *char dham*



On cloud nine: Himalayan splendour
Photo: Porpoise Photostock

Kedarnath Temple

"The vision enthralled me. But the other pilgrims believed they were face to face with their God. Exhausted but in raptures, they prostrated. I envied them."
— Asha Narayan

Kedarnath temple is situated amid the Garhwal Himalayan region at a height of 3,500 m. The steep ascent begins at Gauri Kund, where Parvati is said to have meditated for 1,000 years

to win over Shiva. From the top, one gets a panoramic view of the Mandakini valley. Behind the temple is the Maha Panth cliff.

How to get there: By bus from Rishikesh, Uttarkashi or Joshimath to Gauri Kund

Best season: The temple is only open between May and October

Estimated duration: 1 day

Estimated cost: Rs 10,000 for *char dham* trek, including Kedarnath



Asha Narayan, 68

Khatling Glacier

"We slept one night in a natural cave at 3,650 m; the next morning, we awoke to the golden rays of the sun falling on a snow capped mountain."

—*Tanil Kilachand*

This trek falls in the Garhwal Himalayan region in Uttaranchal. The glacier is the source of the Bhilangana River. En route are Reeh and Gangi, where rest houses are available.

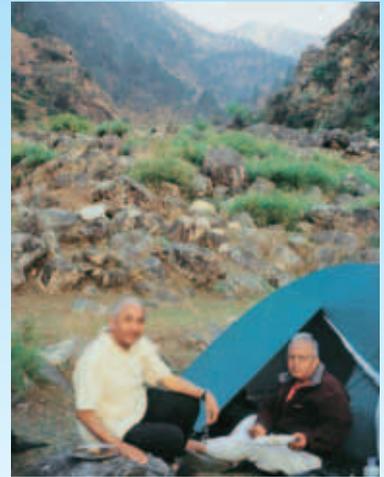
The Bhilangana Valley affords a panoramic view of the snow-capped peaks and hanging glaciers. The Jogin group, Kiristambha and Meru are sublime and magnificent.

How to get there: This trek can be started at Rishikesh, Ghuttu and Silla

Best season: April and September

Estimated duration: 20 days

Estimated cost: Rs 30,000



Tanil Kilachand (left), 67

Kuari Pass

"Every march here is beautiful. This is a virgin land that offers beautiful views."

—*Dr Asha Adatia*

This trek is also known as Curzon's Trail—Lord Curzon is supposed to have done it in 1905. It is part of the Garhwal Himalayas, offering breathtaking views of peaks such as Nanda Devi, Trishul and Nanda Kot. The trail is

surrounded by virgin forests. Also on the route is Auli, a popular winter ski resort, and Badrinath, one of the *char dham* Himalayan pilgrimage destinations. Kuari Pass has an elevation of 4,265 m.

How to get there: The trek starts from Rishikesh

Best season: May to early October

Estimated duration: 15 days

Estimated cost: Rs 15,000



Dr Asha Adatia, 62

Tapovan

"This is not a trek for beginners but it was my first. Tapovan is a plateau at 14,640 ft amid mountain peaks. The sun's rays turn the Shivling peak to gold."

—*Usha Soman*

Tapovan in the Kumaon Garhwal region of Uttaranchal offers views of peaks such as Chaukhamba, Bhagirathi, Shivling and the glaciers of Meru, Chaturangi and

Raktavan. The trail starts from Gangotri village; 18 km on is Gaumukh, the Ganga's source. The trail leads you to the Gangotri glacier before you reach your destination.

How to get there: From Haridwar to Gangotri, where the trek starts

Best season: May-June and August-September

Estimated duration: 15 days

Estimated cost: Rs 15,000



Usha Soman, 64

of Yamnotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath. A year later, it was the king of all treks, Kailash Mansarovar." Ask her what inspires her to go on treks, and she replies, "They are my nutrition. Ultimately, nature is what heals the human soul."

Usha Soman, 64, a retired lecturer from Wilson College, Mumbai, turned to trekking at

the age of 61. Four years ago, she went on her first trek to Tapovan, Uttarakhand. Since then, she has been to the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, and the Everest Base Camp. Next, she plans to head off to the Annapurna Base Camp. "If you feel young at heart, you can take up anything," says the spirited lady.

Sixty-two-year-old Dr Asha Adatia, from Tithal near Valsad, gave up trekking in her mid 20s; being a busy gynaecologist, she didn't find the time. She started again in 1994, and has made up for lost time with a vengeance. The Everest and Annapurna base camps in Nepal, Kashmir—she's done it all. "I've been to so many places that I can't even recall all of them," she smiles.



*Salvation beckons:
Kailash Mansarovar*
Photo: Anup Mehta

The **h** pick Kailash Mansarovar

Mount Kailash is one of the most revered places in the Himalayan region. Spread out on the Tibetan plateau beside it is Mansarovar, the giant lake of shifting colours. A pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and a bath in the Mansarovar are believed to bring *moksha* (salvation). "It is so grand. People go on this trek with faith; the vibrations are beautiful and the vastness of Lake Mansarovar is amazing," says Dr Asha Adatia. In fact, apart from Hinduism this is also a spiritual centre for Tibetan Buddhism, Jainism and the pre-Buddhist animistic religion, Bonpo. Spirituality aside, the area is truly spectacular. "This trek is quite difficult and can't

be done unless you are fit," says Tanil Kilachand. "But the vegetation, fauna and snow-capped mountains are outstanding."

How to get there:

Air: Flying to Kathmandu and then going by road to Lake Mansarovar at the base of Mount Kailash is the most popular route. Helicopter tours are also available from Kathmandu

Road: The Indian Government organises tours to Lake Mansarovar—this is a 30-day trek, which has to be booked well in advance. For every 6,000 applicants per year, 400 are allowed to go

Best season: June to September

Estimated duration: 20 days

Estimated cost: Rs 70,000



Photo: Anup Mehta

"But trekking is fun only if one is mentally prepared for unexpected and, at times, unpleasant events. It is certainly not like holidaying in a resort."

Age and health are no deterrents for these determined people. "I walk regularly and I don't have altitude sickness so I don't have much of a problem. But I hire a porter to carry my rucksack," says Soman. "I am working out to strengthen my lungs for my next visit to Kedarnath," says Narayan.

For his part, Kilachand has lost his way on a trek and has had a stent (a tube inserted into a blood vessel or passage to keep the vessel open in the coronary artery) for the past two years. But none of this stops him from heading off to the mountains.

Trek without trauma

Milind Bhide from Countryside Outdoors, Mumbai, lists criteria for choosing your first trek

- **Duration:** The longer the days involved, the more endurance you need.
- **Walking time:** A three-to-four hour trek a day qualifies as easy; four to five hours is moderate; and six upwards is strenuous. This excludes resting hours.
- **Skills:** If the route requires mountaineering technical skills, it's not advisable for a first-time trek.
- **Km vs. height:** Don't measure difficulty in kilometres, especially in an uphill route. Elevation is a key factor.
- **Limited climb:** It is advisable to climb no more than 2,000 ft a day.
- **Shelter:** 'Tea House' treks, common in Nepal, have guesthouses along the way. In other treks, you need to pitch your tents and carry food.
- **Group leader:** On higher altitudes, an experienced guide can take a call on whether to move faster, rest or send you back upon reading your symptoms of altitude sickness. He also knows the 'emergency escape routes'.
- **Solo vs. group:** It is better to opt for an organised group with experienced guides the first time, rather than venture independently with porter-cum-guides.
- **Medical help:** Most routes have no hospitals. Check for the nearest medical help available beforehand.

"As long as your body can move, you should go," he says. "It's more fun experiencing it than just reading about it."

Experiencing it can be as easy as a call to the travel agent. For those willing to give it a try,

India, with its wide range of options, is trekker heaven.

—with inputs from Mahesh Tharani

Any travel tales to tell?

Mail us or email at

contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Fitness checklist

Are you ready to trek?

- Get a complete medical check-up before going on a trek. Those with a history of blood pressure, cardiac ailments, epilepsy and diabetes must consult their doctor.
- The group leader, guide or some of the fellow trekkers should know about your health problems so they can help out in an emergency.
- Even if you don't normally need a walking stick, use one on a trek—it gives support to the knees.
- Descending puts pressure on the ankles; walk as slowly as possible with as many breaks as you need.
- Sipping on water throughout helps you get better acclimatised than gulping down a whole litre at one go.
- Nausea and loss of appetite are common symptoms of altitude sickness. But continue eating well for necessary calories.
- Start warming up a month before your trip with brisk walking, jogging, and climbing stairs for cardiac fitness.
- Your first-aid kit should include bandages; medicines for cuts and blisters, headache, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, sore throat and eye problems; and an oxygen bottle, can or pillow.

Avian ardour

Birds can become a magnificent passion, Ahmedabad-based interior designer Gautam Mukerjee tells **Bina Nair**

Sixty-year-old interior designer Gautam Mukerjee is better known to his neighbours as *pakshiwala bhai*—the birdman. His bungalow in Ahmedabad lies hidden amid lush greenery behind a rickety gate. Inside, Mukerjee's feathered friends rule the roost.

Birds are excellent companions if you accept them for what they are.

—Gautam Mukerjee

"Birds are excellent companions if you accept them for what they are," says Mukerjee. "You can't expect them to do things at your command, like dogs. I have neither trained my parrots to talk, nor to perform tricks.

The pleasure lies in watching them do it spontaneously; there are times when Solomon, my sulphur-crested cockatoo, sits on my shoulder and nibbles my ear fondly. Their company is the ultimate antidote to stress."

As you enter Mukerjee's home, you are greeted with cheerful squawks and whistles from Raja and Timon—two magnificent Moluccan cockatoos—and Jojo, an African grey parrot. Mukerjee also has three dogs, a pool full of fish, and 60-odd birds.

Before moving to Ahmedabad in the 80s, Mukerjee lived in London. He bought his first bird there in 1971: Silver, a scarlet macaw. "The day I bought Silver at a pet shop, he travelled with me in a cab, perched on my shoulder," he remembers. "Reaching home, I transferred him from my shoulder to a wooden chair. The next day, all that remained of the chair was a sorry piece of shredded wood. I got him a roomy cage immediately!"



Birdman: Gautam Mukerjee with Mac, his macaw

Photo: Sam Panthaky

Bird basics

Gautam Mukerjee shares bird-keeping tips

Choice and costs

- For first-timers, budgerigars, Bengalese finches and Java sparrows make good pets since they are small and easy to maintain.
- Among large birds, African grey parrots, cockatoos and macaws are popular.
- Scarlet macaws cost upward of Rs 25,000; Moluccan cockatoos, approximately Rs 30,000; sulphur crested cockatoos cost Rs 15,000-20,000; African grey, approximately Rs 20,000; diamond finches, Rs 200-250; Bengalese finches, Rs 125; and budgerigars and zebra finches, Rs 75-100.
- Crawford Market in Mumbai is a good place to buy birds. In Delhi, the best bets are Chidia Bazar near Jama Masjid, Pigeon Market in Seelampur and the Fatehpuri Masjid area, and in Chennai, Makkan Chavvady in Broadway on Sunday mornings. In Ahmedabad, The Pet Shop, opposite Vastrapur Lake, and Habitat in Sri Krishna Centre, Mithakali, have a fine variety.

The right cage

- For large birds, a cage of 5' x 4' is a must. For smaller ones, the size depends upon the number

of birds. For example, an 8' x 8' x 4' cage can hold 10 pairs of budgerigars.

- For large birds, a cage could cost Rs 25,000-30,000; for smaller birds, it would cost Rs 300.
- Never suspend a cage; the constant swinging makes birds feel uneasy. Also keep birds above eye level to make them feel more secure. A stand about 3' in height is best.
- Use galvanised wire for the cage and only paint it with lead-free paint. Inside, use wooden branches, not iron ones.
- Perches should be of various widths to give flexibility to the bird's foot muscles.

Diet rules

- Birds need a filling morning meal followed by tidbits through the day.
- For macaws, cockatoos and parrots, fruits, vegetables and seeds are staple fare. Slices of apple and bits of coriander are ideal for small birds. A good dietary supplement is cuttlebone, the internal shell of a cuttlefish, which is available at pet stores.
- Cabbage and avocado can cause indigestion and chocolates can prove toxic; avoid them.

Gradually, his family of birds increased as Mac, a blue and gold macaw, Solomon the cockatoo, and Koko and Lolo, African grey parrots, joined the party—not to mention the melange of pouter pigeons, diamond doves, Gouldian and long-tailed grass finches, zebra doves, cape doves, and domestic and Muscovy ducks. Apart from Silver, Solomon is the only bird that Mukerjee has bought. “The rest have been given to me by friends who couldn't take care of them,” he says.

Bird keeping can be tough. “If their screeches upset you, it's not for you,” warns Mukerjee. One also needs to factor in costs for cages, food and medicine, although he dismisses this, saying, “It's about as much you'd otherwise spend on something you loved.”

For him, birds are a passion, not a business. And he's a walking encyclopaedia on them. He'll tell you Moluccan cockatoos and macaws live up to a 100 years; “Churchill's macaw Charlie is alive at the enviable age of 104!”

Most of Mukerjee's knowledge comes through experience. “I've been brought up in the company of birds from the time I was five,” he smiles. “Still, books are a must for regular updates.”

As he bids you goodbye outside his house, a horde of neighbourhood children screaming, “*Ae rahya!*” (There he is.) An injured pariah kite needs his assistance, and Mukerjee, as ever, is there to help.

If you have an interesting hobby, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

between the lines

Fiction

The Last Song of Dusk
Siddharth Dhanvant Shanghvi
Penguin Viking; Rs 395; Pages: 298

This debut novel is a gallop about unbridled lust and unspoken longings. Shanghvi is blessed with a poetic turn of phrase: beautiful lines and exquisite phrases punctuate the book, raising it just when the tedium of a bare story stretched over 290 odd pages gets you between the eyes.

Divided into four sections, the first overture—“Violins and Frangipani”—recites the love story of Anuradha Gandharva and husband Vardhaman. The lush narrative is followed by fey child Nandini Hariharan’s wild exploits. The rest of the novel is peppered with characters that seemingly jump out of a hat. Shanghvi throws in a house that mutters, a mother-in-law etched in acid, a suitably debauched artist, a raunchy patroness, a token white skinned lover and even a hermaphrodite who has corresponded with Rilke (!). Trite as the flotsam of characters seems, they provide a welcome contrast to the surfeit of lyrical lines.

Undoubtedly, this young writer, all of 26, possesses both prowess and potential. Only, shorn of its jewel-like bits, the novel seems akin to a ‘me too’ Bollywood type romp that could well top the charts. Shanghvi’s eloquence could easily have allowed it to be raised to exceptional heights, with restraint and a spare usage of words. Pity.

—Anupa Mehta

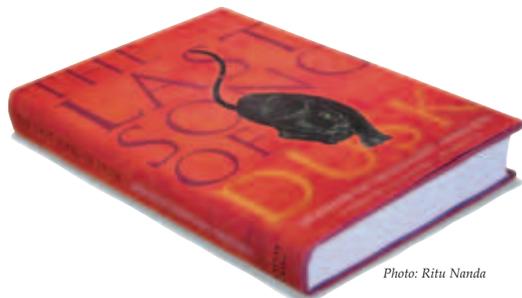


Photo: Ritu Nanda

Non-Fiction

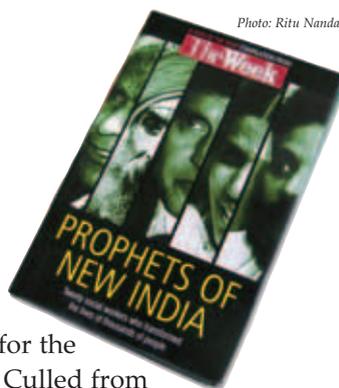
Prophets of New India
Compilation from
The Week
Penguin Enterprise;
Rs 395; Pages: 269

Prophets of New India could have also been called Chicken Soup for the Armchair Samaritan. Culled from two decades of *The Week*’s annual feature, Man of the Year, the book is an assembly of 20 stories of people who have spent their entire lives working for the disadvantaged. In India, such stories are also always read with a measure of relief—that at least somebody, somewhere is doing what must be done. *The Week*’s criterion of choice that all the people must also be relatively unknown further massages out social guilt. With 20 anonymous angels running around, plus the celebrity saints, am I really needed there? Nah.

Though some have become well known during the course of the years, like Baba Amte and Rajendra Singh, all the people in the book stun with their courage and sheer scale of achievement. But you have to get through the writing first. It’s bad, insincere and, at points, completely tasteless. S Ramakrishnan, who got paralysed from the neck down, and then started a school for the disabled in a Tamil Nadu village (he makes Christopher Reeves look lucky), is described as “The Wheelchair Wonder”. The writer continues with a shockingly intrusive physical description that ends with “The only organ intact on the wheelchair is a head bolstered high by an indomitable spirit.”

In a better world, the kind these 20 people have been working for, one also wouldn’t have to pay for such writing.

—Anuradha Kumar





on the shelves

Harmony scans the best buys of the month

Photo: Bajirao Patwar

■ *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* (Profile Books; Rs 195; 209 pages) by Lynn Truss urges us to look at our commas and semicolons and see them for the wonderful and necessary things they are. This tiny, bubbly book in defence of punctuation pedantry is witty, entertaining and seriously informative. Sticklers unite!

■ For enthusiasts of Indian literature come *The Oxford India Ramanujan* (OUP; Rs 875; 1133 pages) and *The Oxford India Premchand* (OUP; Rs 900; 1008 pages). The Ramanujan collection brings together his celebrated translations from classical Tamil and medieval Kannada and his prize-winning collection of poems for the first time in one volume, while the Premchand omnibus contains his award-winning short stories, two women-centric novels and a seminal essay on the aim of literature, translated especially for this volume.

■ Artist, musician and man of science, Upendrakishore Roychoudhury is best remembered for his children's writing. *Goopy Gyne, Bagha Byne* (Penguin; Rs 199; 176 pages) translated by Swagata Deb is a selection of the best of his stories and his most fascinating characters: Goopy and Bagha, dedicated but unsuccessful musicians cast out of their homes because their music drives everyone crazy. Perfect for the grandchildren, and even for you.

■ The essence of *The Wedding* (Warner Books; Rs 230; 276 pages), Nicholas Sparks' latest novel, is self-discovery and self-redemption. The protagonist is attorney Wilson Lewis, son-in-law of the Calhouns, the couple made famous in Sparks' debut novel *The Notebook*. This simple, yet rich, story is about Wilson's quest for the renewal of the lost emotion in his marriage; the catalyst is his daughter's wedding. Keep the tissues handy.

■ Music cannot be captured on paper. But Ashok Roy's *Music Makers - Living Legends of Indian Classical Music* (Rupa; Rs 995; 335 pages) captures its soul through words and stunning pictures. Brief bios of 21 Indian music maestros—from Ravi Shankar, Amjad Ali Khan, Bhimsen Joshi and M S Subbulakshmi to the less profiled Lalgudi Jayaraman, Ram Narayan, N Rajam and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer—are accompanied by a collage of photographs and interviews. A treat for music lovers.

■ To see business moguls like Narayana Murthy, Ratan Tata, L N Mittal, Kumaramangalam Birla and Azim Premji in a new light, flip through *Business Today's CEO Toons* (Books Today; Rs 495; 108 pages), a humorous look at Indian CEOs' feats and foibles. A compilation of *Business Today* cartoons from 1997 with the original text retained, categories include 'Achievers', 'Flak Catchers' and the self-explanatory 'Oops!' Funny.

h theme: rich lives

Memoirs, biographies, autobiographies

In *Sonia: A Biography*, journalist Rasheed Kidwai examines how tragedy and circumstance transformed an apolitical housewife into a political heavyweight. The book charts Sonia Gandhi's political growth, from her ascent to Congress leadership in 1998 and the revolt by Sharad Pawar and P A Sangma to her dealings with the old guard. Great insight into the machinations of Indian politics—but this being an unauthorised biography, Sonia's own voice is missing. **Penguin-Viking; Rs 399; 240 pages**

A Variety of Absences: The Collected Memoirs by writer Dom Moraes brings together three classic autobiographical books—*Gone Away*, *My Son's*

Father and *Never at Home*. They constitute a fascinating story of a young man's passage through the years, surviving early fame, alcohol, strange exiles and difficult loves. Here, the winner hands down is *My Son's Father*, Moraes' voyage towards maturity as poet and writer. **Penguin; Rs 599; 636 pages**

Nehru's Hero: Dilip Kumar in the Life of India by Lord Meghnad Desai revisits the Nehruvian era as reflected in the films of Dilip Kumar; it analyses politics through the prism of cinema, rather than the other way round, as is the norm. Lord Desai discusses issues as varied as censorship, the iconic 'values' of Indian machismo, identity and secularism. **Roli; Rs 295; 139 pages**

Straight from the Heart is cricket legend Kapil Dev's third shot at autobiography. This one covers his career post-1986, including breaking Richard Hadlee's record as the highest Test wicket-taker, the match-fixing affair and selection as Wisden Indian Cricketer of the Century. Peppered with dressing room anecdotes, this earthy, rambly read is strictly for die-hard fans. **Macmillan; Rs 395; 400 pages**

Hermit in Paris: Autobiographical Writings reacquaints fans of Italian fiction writer Italo Calvino (1923-1985) with his ideas, and entertains the uninitiated too. The centrepiece "American Diary" and 11 other 'essays'—letters, anecdotes, conversations—all exhibit his wit, charm and understatement. **Vintage; Rs 395; 272 pages**

Section compiled by Arati Menon
Read a good book lately? Mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

Books courtesy: Crossword



Photo: Bajirao Pawar



hit list

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt picks his fave biographies

- 1 *Hollywood Animal: A Memoir* by Joe Eszterhas
- 2 *Threads of Time* by Peter Brook
- 3 *Nehru: A Biography* by Shashi Tharoor
- 4 *Summing Up* by W Somerset Maugham
- 5 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* by Bertrand Russell

Mind over machismo

Anish Trivedi ruminates on life's transitions

I am going, I am told, through a midlife crisis. On occasion, seldom in my presence, the term male menopause is mentioned. It seems that having hit 40 a few years ago, every move I make and every mood I display is to be questioned. Usually by the women around me.

thing men turning menopausal say. I have tried pointing out that I am not losing my hair. Or my mind. As yet. That I am not about to become a manic-depressive. I am not going to burst into tears over the coffee and cognac. But again, my words fall on idle ears. My

I may not be menopausal yet but I am beginning to enjoy being treated like I am. And those hormone replacements may just keep my hair from falling.

Friends who have gone through this offer me advice. They tell me I should meditate. Try yoga. Anything to help me overcome the stress of accepting middle age. My wife has begun excusing my behaviour, putting it down to the anxiety I must feel. I have tried telling her, and anyone else who will listen, that I am fine. Not that anyone is listening. They're all too busy telling each other what's wrong with me.

People have begun to walk gingerly in my presence. I am told it's all right to feel the way I do. It's natural. And normal. And they're there to help me cope. My suggestion that they take a hike and go bother someone else has been ignored. It seems that is exactly the sort of

protests are not quite as exciting as the thought of me popping hormone replacements.

I have always figured that the only way to make it through a midlife crisis is to find something that makes you feel young. So for years I told my wife that once I turned 40, I would go out in search of my lost youth. I would either have an affair or buy a Harley. As long as the date was a distant dream, she either laughed or ignored me. Now that it is long past, she asks me if I'm still thinking about it. And if I need help in reaching a conclusion, she gently moves me in front of a mirror. And shows me why no one else will have me.

In her favour, she did, on my 40th birthday, present me with a Harley. A little one, admittedly, that now sits on my desk. Her way, I suspect, of pointing out that that little toy is as close as I am likely to get to living a fantasy.

But the humour she displayed then is being rapidly replaced. In recent months, she has begun to treat me less as the possibly philandering partner and more as the idiot child.

But there is in all of this a lining as silver as the hair at my temples. For the first time in a long, long time, I am actually getting to do some of the things I want to do, without complaint or censure. Listen to the Blues, without her asking why I'm listening to cats wailing. Shun the company of strangers at parties I do not wish to go to without being told that I will lose my few friends. Smoke a second cigar, perhaps a third. All the things men my age really fantasise about.

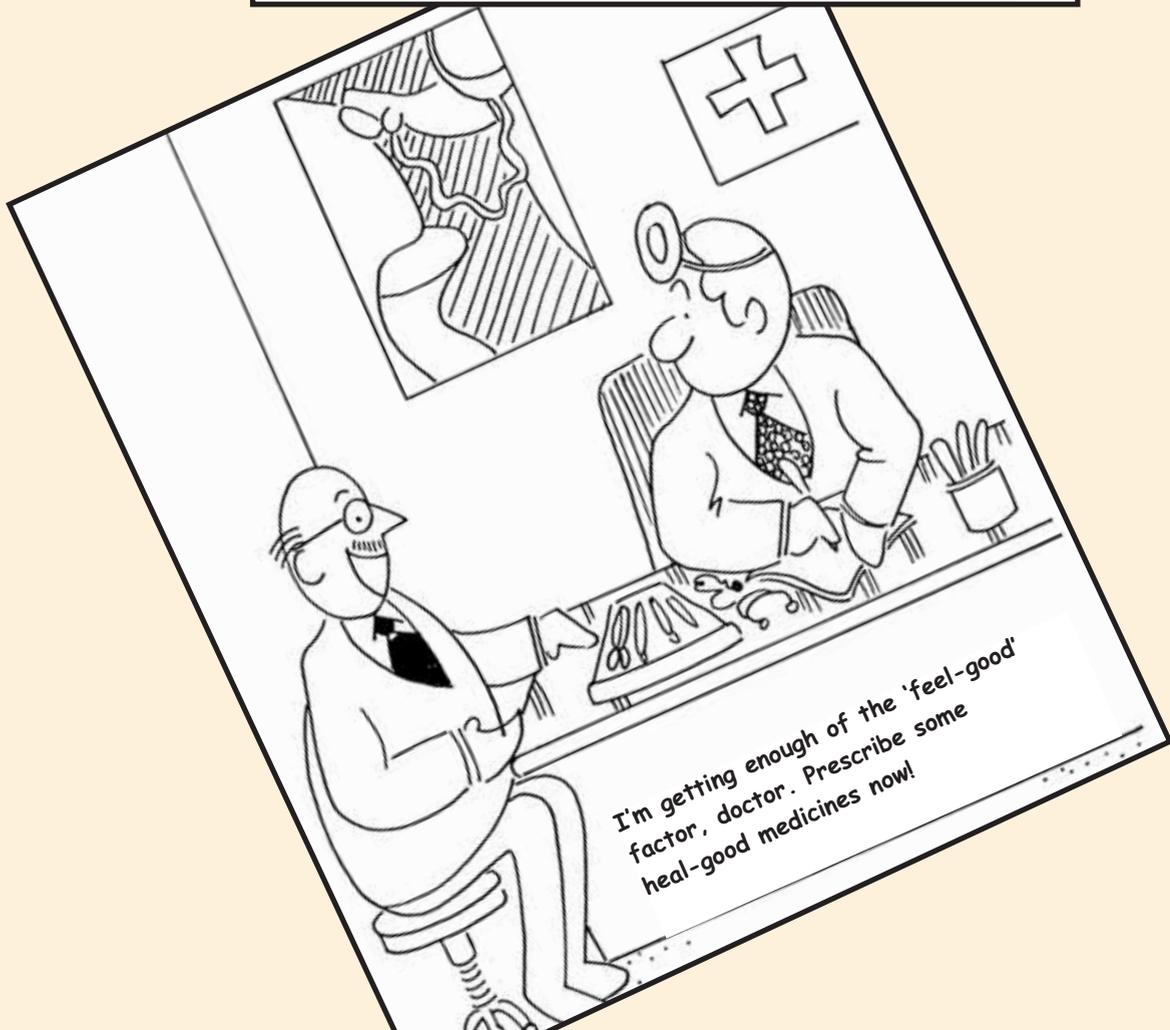
I may not be menopausal yet. But I am beginning to enjoy being treated like I am. And who knows. Those damned hormone replacements might just keep the hair on my head from falling.

Former investment banker Anish Trivedi now hosts radio and TV



shows, writes newspaper and magazine columns, and is MD of Banyan Tree Communications

Management cartoonist and strategic thinker Prriya Raj walked into the *Harmony* office one day and forced a brainstorm over cups of *masala chai*. What would tickle the palate of our readers? It had to be an unusual persona, and exclusive to *Harmony*, we felt. A few weeks later, after a tweak or two, emerged a sprightly 65-year-old. We christened him Mr Bakshi, in memory of the character immortalised by Peter Sellers in *The Party*. Here's his irreverent ringside perspective on life, post-retirement. ■



Banish their anxiety

What is old age; when does it sneak in; who falls victim to it? A retired person at 60 qualifies as a senior citizen. But does that make her or him old?

At 93, Zohra Sehgal is not old; neither is M F Husain at 87; nor was my father Kaifi Azmi at 82. Blessed with an active mind and undaunted spirit, they've carried on regardless.

I'm working with Zohra Sehgal in a play, *The Spirit of Anne Frank*. She is a trouper; reports for rehearsals on time, memorises her lines, and steals the thunder from everyone else. She cracks ribald jokes because her age frees her from the constraints of propriety. She is a shining example of how advancing years can become an advantage, rather than a handicap.

M F Husain is as curious as a child and as passionate as a teenager. Obsessive and reckless, he was adamant about making his debut film, *Gaja Gamini*. The film failed to find an audience, but his spirit was not broken. His second film, *Meenaxi*, is now released, and he is already planning his third. He has completed his *Kerala Series*, breathtaking in its passion. He is a man possessed.

Kaifi Azmi, my father, suffered a cerebral stroke in his early 50s. But he attended *mushairas* in remote cities, cocked a snook at physical discomfort, continued to write rousing poetry and led

protest marches in a wheelchair! He devoted the last years of his life to Mijwan, a tiny village in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, where he was born. He had neither the money nor the good health to uplift a village frozen in time. Only steely determination. When he passed away in 2002, Mijwan had become a place transformed.

But these are exceptional people, goes the argument. They have the gift of talent. What about ordinary people with ordinary lives? Who are often fragile, indecisive, vulnerable, and afraid of failing health.

These are issues that need to be addressed with seriousness, but why should they be looked upon as a unique problem? At age 53, I still seek comfort in my

Just asking our parents not to worry isn't enough. We have to equip them with the mechanism that frees them from worry.

mother's embrace and turn to her for advice when I have to make a serious decision.

I can be who I am and lead an unconventional life because of the support I receive from my family. That's what I want to give back to my mother. Unstinted support. To lead a life of autonomy. To understand that her well-being is as important as her safety.

As a society, we pat ourselves on the back because we do not send away our senior citizens to



Photo: Ram Bherwani

institutions. Because we absorb them into our lives. Do we really? Often, we are content if our parents are in good health.

It doesn't occur to us that their anxieties can be truly debilitating for them. It doesn't occur to us that just to ask them not to worry isn't enough. That we have to equip them with the mechanism that frees them from worry.

My mother starts getting anxious about an impending trip well in advance. I must

make sure that the tickets are in her hand one month before the trip. That's far more reassuring for her than casual "don't worry, it's not a big deal" advice.

Tiny little adjustments can go a long way in providing the support senior citizens need. If we can free them from their worries and create the support structure they require, they will rise to the level of their own potential. On their own terms. ■

Shabana Azmi, 53, is an actor, activist and former Rajya Sabha MP

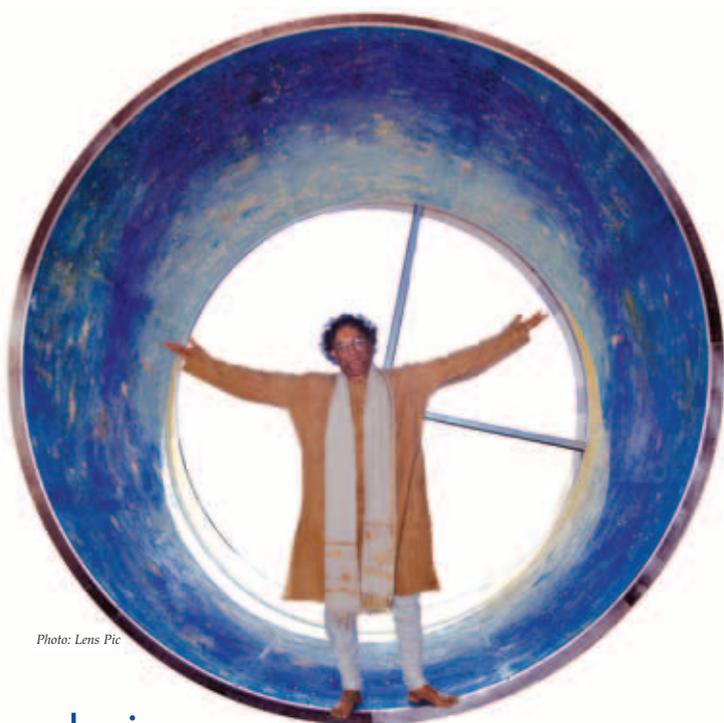


Photo: Lens Pic

Art by design

Billed as 'India's Renaissance Man' by *The New York Times*, **Rajeev Sethi**, designer, impresario and the original 'India abroad soiree' man, is currently in the news. Mostly for the fact that his grand curatorial vision for the newly opened Grand Hyatt, Mumbai, demanded a budget that ran into a couple of crores. At 55, Sethi's artistic vision is certainly more fertile, the Grand

Hyatt being proof. Sethi, who thinks far beyond the local, has trawled in contemporary artists and craftspeople to explore the idea of Shiva. At the Hyatt, the dark-skinned deity's presence, both mythic and contemporary, is seen in the interplay of opposites. Meanwhile, even as Mumbai takes in the art, Sethi is already wooing Barcelona with his artistic abilities.

City of Jyoti

"I can walk a bit, I can't stand for long... [but] I can talk a lot." This is **Jyoti Basu** on what it takes to campaign at the age of 91. One of the oldest politicians in the fray, with 64 years' experience, he was yet again the star campaigner for the CPI (M) in Kolkata during the general elections. During many speeches, Basu sat on his podium chair like a magnet, pulling in huge crowds who came for his charisma and sense of humour. His most famous joke though will always be the street on which the



Photo: courtesy Indian Express

American Consulate stands in Kolkata—during his tenure as the chief minister, it was renamed Ho Chi Minh Street.

Marathon Man



Photo: courtesy Indian Express

When **Fauja Singh** wanted to run away from the boredom of old age nobody thought he would go so far—a whole marathon. He has now replaced David Beckham as adidas' best salesman. On the shoe company's enormous billboards all across London is the picture of the 93-year-old sitting calmly beside a trademarked philosophy: "Impossible is Nothing." This man who moved to London from India 11 years ago to be with his son, now holds the World Marathon record in the 90 plus category. He can run the punishing 47 km in five hours and 40 minutes, an astounding achievement for someone who ran his first marathon when he was 89. Running through the cheering streets of London, New York and Toronto last year, he raised a lot of money for charities, one of them dedicated to the care of premature babies. He calls the effort, "oldest running for the youngest".

Joy *of* Staying in Touch



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Sweeping the streets is my hobby. I am no social reformer and don't expect people to follow in my footsteps. C Rajagopalachari (lawyer, statesman) once said about changing mindsets: 'If you try to teach others you will be wasting your time. If only half a dozen people followed Gandhiji's teachings and went about their jobs unmindful of others, they would be leading the way'.

— V Kalyanam



Photo: Sanjay Ghosh
Coordination: Jasmine Shah Varma

Chennai-based V Kalyanam, 82, has worked for Mahatma Gandhi, Lady Edwina Mountbatten, C Rajagopalachari and Jayaprakash Narayan, and currently lives a self-contained Gandhian lifestyle in his apartment, subsisting on Rs 1,000 a month, by choice.

बूंद बूंद में विश्वास



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Best wishes to
Harmony
and its readers.

*More years means more knowledge. More wisdom. More humility.
Rich experience. Greater vision. Being more humane
and closer to God. Old is indeed gold. Celebrate the age.*



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