

harmony celebrate age

DECEMBER 2018 ₹ 40

The magazine for silver citizens



Dharamshala, a
haven in the hills

An ode to exemplary
mountaineer
Tenzing Norgay

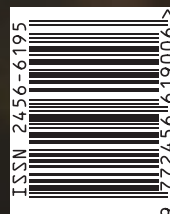
Foods to
fight cancer

MEMOIR

G L Bhardwaj, the
oldest practising short
filmmaker in India

ENCOUNTER

M K Raina on
theatre, and more



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THE SOULFUL STRAINS OF ARUNA SAIRAM

175TH
ISSUE

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Thank you

In close to 15 years of this column, this is the hardest one I've had to write.

Harmony-Celebrate Age was born of an idea—to motivate, inform and inspire silvers across India to live their best life. And over the past decade and a half, we have done just that, with profiles of celebrities and the unsung, and news and views covering the gamut of the elder experience.

It has been a wonderful experience to produce a publication of quality month after month, page after tangible page of rich content and vibrant images that, literally, 'celebrate age'. In the process, we have acted as a catalyst, starting a long overdue conversation about the needs and aspirations of silvers and helping to bring them from the fringes to centre-stage, even in mainstream media.

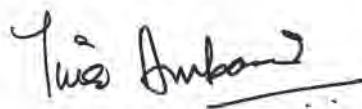
However, with the influence of print media gradually petering out in the country, we have been impelled to move on to the next stage of our evolution.

This is not goodbye, though. While it saddens me to move on from the magazine format, I want to reassure all our readers that we will continue to showcase the silver world and highlight your concerns and potential through our

website www.harmonyindia.org. I urge you to visit us—on your mobile phones and computers—and experience a new way of absorbing news and information and connecting with the world outside.

That said, I owe a debt of gratitude to all those who have walked this journey in print with us through the years (*see pics on pages 4 and 5*): our talented editors, writers and columnists; our creative designers and photographers; our committed marketing teams; and the supportive companies and partners who have rendered us advertising and logistic support.

Above all, I thank you, our readers, from the bottom of my heart. You have been the lifeblood of the magazine; your feedback has driven us to push the envelope, strive harder, and be better. We promise to do the same in our new avatar on www.harmonyindia.org. Please bless us, join us, walk with us—you are our reason to be.



A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Dabboo Ratnani

CONNECT

TEAM HARMONY

through the years

Photographs: Harmony Archives





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cover feature



Veteran vocalist Aruna Sairam's music has extended the realms of Carnatic repertoire

Cover photograph courtesy: Aruna Sairam

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THE TASTE OF KONKAN

Through her debut cookbook, author Anagha Desai endeavours to revive long-lost Konkani recipes

Total number of pages in this issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, including covers: 84

column one

Reinvention is the best way to survive—and thrive.

No one exemplifies this better than Aruna Sairam. While rooted in tradition, this trendsetting vocalist has always been focused and fearless, taking Carnatic music to uncharted territory. “Life is a never-ending process of learning, at different levels and aspects,” she says in our cover feature. “I need to ensure I am growing every day.” This month, Sairam is joined by a cast of silver luminaries, including 91 year-old G L Bhardwaj, the oldest practising short filmmaker in India; theatre stalwart, activist and man of multiple talents M K Raina; and percussionist T A S Mani and vocalist Vidushi Ramamani, both ambassadors of Carnatic and world music, no strangers to reinvention themselves!

Indeed, it’s a word that carries deep resonance for us as we bring you the last print edition of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, our 175th issue, and get ready for a new chapter on www.harmonyindia.org.

This is an emotional time. Having worked on each issue of *Harmony* from June 2004, I have seen it evolve as a publication of substance and style, empathy and advocacy that truly reflects the power and potential of our silver constituency. And along the way, I have had the privilege and pleasure to work with some of the most talented and committed people in media. In an age where media is increasingly viewed as a political or marketing tool, we have stood apart, our focus clear and unwavering: no agendas, only empowerment.

We will continue that focus on our website and hope to see you there. Till then, goodbye, and thank you for sharing our journey.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Harmony, I am going to miss you a lot and also seeing Tinaji—on the first page—with her charming personality and her wonderful articles on subjects that inspire us to lead better lives.

I have been a regular contributor to the magazine for over 10 years and it is overwhelming to know that this journey has now reached its culmination. When I first heard the news, my mind travelled back to October 2009 when Tinaji invited us for the Harmony Silver Awards, organised to honour 10 very special seniors from all walks of life for their contribution to society. Tinaji was gracious and looked beautiful as ever and I remember she took extra care of all of us.

I have contributed to *Harmony* diligently ever since. I hope the day comes soon when we are once again showered by Tinaji and *Harmony*’s hospitality. Thank you to the team for all your patience and hard work over the years in successfully bringing out such a beautiful and well-designed magazine.

Bansi Singh
Mumbai



Normally, I just rush through the pages of a magazine looking to find something interesting to read. After a long time, I read an entire article—about Aman Nath—which was beautifully written in the October 2018 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Having known him personally for several years, it captures his journey and issues wonderfully, and I feel that I perhaps know him better now.

Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar
Via email

HW Longfellow once said, “Old age is an opportunity no less than youth itself, though in another dress, and as evening light fades away, the sky is filled with stars invisible by day.” During adolescence, all our

efforts are directed towards studies and choosing a career. In the second stage, adulthood, we are trying our best to succeed in the chosen career. But what about retirement? At all costs, we must avoid a situation where you have no goal and no role to play. For a happy retirement, you need activity directed towards a particular goal, something that is well-defined and measurable.

It is imperative that we choose a goal, as the transition from working life to retired life can be vexing. You will have to cope with two big changes in your lifestyle; loss of routine structure and freedom from the corporate rat race. With all this free time, maybe you can revisit your passions that died down with the advent of responsibilities, or something you stumbled upon

Dear valued subscriber/reader,

Thanks for sharing this wonderful journey with us for over 14 years.

We regret to inform you that *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is ceasing its print edition with effect from January 2019.

The unserviced amount towards your subscription will be refunded on a pro rata basis in due course.

For more support, please contact **1800 1800 100** or email harmoniycare@intoday.com. We request you to submit your queries by 31 January 2019.

Thank you for your kind understanding.

We solicit your continued and wholehearted support for our website www.harmonyindia.org.

—Management
Harmony-Celebrate Age

in your course of life that seemed interesting.

Retirement is that time to turn all your dreams into reality. A few have been courageous enough to go that extra mile and accomplished their dreams, like Aruna Roy who gave up her IAS job in 1974 and became known as a prominent leader of the Right to Information (RTI) movement, which led to the enactment of the RTI Act, 2005. Or Kiran Bedi, who took voluntary retirement from service in 2007 but founded Navjyoti India Foundation for rehabilitating drug addicts and India Vision Foundation for police reforms, women empowerment and rural development. Among the lesser known is yours truly, Chandra S, with eight published books since retirement and an NGO, Varishtha Nagarik Sewa Samiti (Senior Citizens Service Society), founded in 1998, that serves older adults and destitute children.

I hope by quoting such examples I have alleviated at least some concerns of seniors who are about to retire. Retirement is not the end of an era but the start of a new one

where you have fewer responsibilities, less pressure and plenty of time to do what you love.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in his poem *Closed Path*:

*When old words die out on the tongue
New melodies break forth from
the heart,
And where the old tracks are lost,
New country is revealed with
its wonder.*

Suresh Chandra
Via email

I was elated when I read the article "The Lord of the Hills" on Tirumala-Tirupati in your magazine (August 2018, 'Destination'). I would like to add that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), a trust that manages the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, has made special arrangements for silvers to have a quick darshan of Lord Balaji. While it takes 15 to 20 hours for most, silvers can wrap up the darshan speedily, sometimes within half an hour.

The Devasthanams have allotted two time slots for silvers; the first at 10 am and second at 3 pm. One has to show photo ID for determination of age at the S-1 counter, near the bridge. The Devasthanams also provide seating arrangement, refreshments and food. Free battery car service is also provided to and from the temple.

I hope more silvers reap the benefits and I laud the TTD for taking this initiative for the welfare of seniors. And thank you, *Harmony*, for such a wonderful and insightful article.

M H Rao
Hyderabad

HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in
November 2018 on



www.harmonyindia.org

1. Hysterectomy after menopause (March 2018)
2. Frame & glory (October 2018)
3. Proving his mettle (November 2018)

“When I come here, it’s as if somebody has sprinkled some magic dust”



▶ MEDIA WATCH

Royal Exchange Theatre Elders / Joel Chesterfields

SPOTLIGHT

In Manchester, aspiring silver actors have found their place in the spotlight. The city’s **Royal Exchange Theatre hosts a group of about 25 elder theatre enthusiasts who come together to learn about theatre and develop their performance skills.** The aim: to hone creativity in the later years to keep silvers physically active and emotionally engaged and stable. “We are a growing and ageing population and need to think about how we can keep older people active and creative for as long as pos-

sible,” Andy Barry, who has been running the programme since 2014, tells London newspaper *The Guardian*. The members of the group attend weekly two-hour sessions with a distinct focus—for instance, in their autumn session they worked on voice and movement with trust exercises, physical and vocal warm-ups, and breathing tasks. What’s more, they are encouraged to audition for professional productions as and when the opportunity arises. For the participants, the group is a newfound window for creativity and self-expression. “When I come here, it’s as if somebody has sprinkled some magic dust,” 62 year-old retired train driver Joe Figueira tells the newspaper. “You’re not afraid of making a fool of yourself because no one is going to judge you.”

Manchester’s Royal Exchange Theatre hosts a group of about 25 elder theatre enthusiasts

BANKING ON TIME

A core group of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on disability and elderly persons has recommended that **India adopt the 'time bank' scheme designed and launched by Switzerland to provide care for silvers living alone and without any familial support.**

Here's how it works: People volunteer their time to take care of elders in need; in return, every hour spent is deposited into their personal account in the social security system. When they grow old, they can access this 'time bank' to get a volunteer to take care of them. Further, the core group has advised the Centre to increase its contribution to the monthly pension scheme for elders from ₹ 200 to ₹ 2,000; cover them under the Ayushman Bharat scheme; use CSR funds from corporate companies to build senior homes; and appoint a nodal police officer in every police station to tackle issues faced by elderly living alone, just as every police station has a designated child welfare officer. Over to the Government now!



COMING HOME In Nagpur, The Women's Trust has launched **Soham**, a peaceful yet vibrant retreat for silvers with the motto, 'Care for those who once cared for us'. Launched on 10 November, the sprawling 56,000 sq-ft retreat is located in the heart of the city and features 52 fully furnished studio apartments for short and long stays, as well as a garden and a gym. According to media reports, comfort and safety have been given priority throughout the facility with non-skid flooring, friendly doorways, toilets with grab bars, and panic buttons for emergency situations. The apartments also boast features like air-conditioners, fridges and televisions in addition to healthy and hygienic in-house catered meals with attendants, helpers and security and doctors and nurses on call. What's more, there is a physiotherapy unit operational daily at a nominal rate as well as plans for regular outings, shopping and picnics. As the facility is run by a trust, a fee is charged from interested residents. To know more, check out www.facebook.com/pg/WomensHomeTrustNagpur/posts/



WE CARE FOR YOU Elder Mumbaikars have a new friend in town! **Aegis4Seniors** is a social enterprise committed to provide psychosocial care to silvers over 60 in the city. Through interesting programs like *Haal Chaal* (telephonic conversations), *Ru-ba-ru* (home visits) and *Sath-Sangat* (outdoor companion), trained and experienced personnel ensure the overall well-being of silvers living alone. All programmes are curated to provide quality services to elders in the comfort of their home. "Our mission is to provide an environment that promotes and supports independence, dignity, access to services and information for senior citizens and their carers through engaging team members and our partners and making effective use of technology," says Manjushaa, director of Aegis4Seniors.

A MATURE BREW

In our November issue, we told you how American coffee giant Starbucks has been in hot water owing to accusations of discrimination against older employees (“Cold Coffee”). Now, the company’s trying to make good: **a Starbucks outlet in the Colonia del Valle neighbourhood of Mexico City has become the first with an all-silver staff.** As Reuters tells us, with this initiative, Starbucks Mexico aims to create more employment opportunities for elders—special benefits at the mobility-friendly outlet include two full days off every week, a maximum of six-and-a-half hour shifts and health insurance to cover medical expenses. What’s more, the location of the outlet was specifically chosen as the area is frequented by many young people and students to encourage age diversity in daily interactions. “It took us two years to land the best scheme to contribute to the elderly community in Mexico,” Christian Gurúa, CEO of Starbucks Mexico, tells the news agency. “Opening the doors of our stores to senior baristas was not a goal; it was an act of congruence with the inclusion philosophy of Starbucks.”



Courtesy: Starbucks Mexico

Travelling on Air(bnb)!

World over, this new business model has revolutionised the business of travel. And silvers appear to have embraced the Airbnb experience wholeheartedly—as hosts and guests. Here are some highlights from a report on the company’s website:

In the past year, the number of bookings by silvers on Airbnb has grown by 66 per cent, with a growth of over 64 per cent across the Asia-Pacific region (APAC)

Silvers are also ‘super hosts’ and the fastest-growing age group of hosts on Airbnb with over 400,000 senior hosts on Airbnb globally

As Airbnb homes offer many facilities and amenities for multigenerational family travel, silvers prefer booking homes with the company

In APAC, Airbnb has over 9,500 senior hosts, which increased by 29 per cent and led to about \$ 208 million revenue in the past year

Listings by silvers are most sought-after and over 85 per cent of reviews for senior hosts receive five stars

In 2017, silvers on the website hosted over 13.5 million guests from over 150 nations, generating revenue over \$ 2 billion

The senior host cohort is growing at a fast pace and is the most popular host and guest age group

“Airbnb is proud to be a platform that provides authentic, sustainable and diverse opportunities for travellers from all walks of life,” Siew Kum Hong, regional director,

APAC, Airbnb, tells media. “We are especially pleased to see dynamic travel trends for both senior hosts and guests in APAC, and look forward to continuing to embrace

this vibrant and much-loved community.” If you are gripped by wanderlust, or think you can monetise your property as a host, go to www.airbnb.co.in

SHARK TALE

The DNA of the Greenland shark may well hold the key to the fountain of youth. With a lifespan of 390 years, this 'elasmobranch' fish (with a skeleton made of cartilage, rather than bone) is the longest living vertebrate on the planet. As Professor Kim Praebel of Arctic University, Norway, tells www.express.co.uk, "Together with colleagues in Denmark, Greenland, the US and China, we are currently sequencing the Greenland shark's whole nuclear genome, which will help us discover why it not only lives longer than other shark species but other vertebrates." The team has been taking small clips from the breast of these 16-ft vertebrates to map their entire mitochondrial DNA; the next phase involves working on DNA from the cell nucleus. They are hoping that a better understanding of the genetics of the shark can be eventually used to modify human genes to have similar longevity.



Photographs by iStock



Cat concerns In April, we told you about the University of Liverpool's Cat Prospective Ageing and Welfare Study (CatPAWS), a five-year study of mature cats in conjunction with cat food company Royal Canin. This feline collaboration continues—on 16 October, the duo organised a webinar, titled 'Extending Healthy Life in Your Feline Patients', moderated by Nathalie Dowgray, lead researcher for the study and head of the Liverpool-based Feline Healthy Ageing Clinic. The webinar focussed on the fundamentals for senior cat consultations, the major alarm bells of age-related diseases and the challenges of getting cats to vets, while sharing initial findings from the long-term study.

Avian ageing

If you think it's raucous outdoors, have a care for the birds. According to a study by the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Starnberg, Germany, and North Dakota State University in Fargo, USA, **traffic noise can actually speed up avian ageing and reduce lifespan.** Their study of the telomere (the protective caps at the end of each strand of DNA) length of young zebra finches revealed that the birds exposed to traffic noise after they had left the nest had significantly shorter telomeres at 120 days of age than those who had not undergone such exposure, and even those exposed to noise before leaving the nest. "Our study suggests that urban noise alone, independent from the many other aspects of city life such as light pollution or chemical pollution, is associated with increased telomere loss and may contribute to ageing in zebra finches," Adriana Dorado-Correa, corresponding author of the study, tells *The Telegraph*. "Our study is a first step towards identifying the causal mechanisms that may account for differences in lifespan observed between birds living in urban or rural environments." The study has been published in journal *Frontiers in Zoology*.



NEW IDEAS TO RAISE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOME THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES SUCH AS DRONES

Rural relief

Life could get much easier for silver farmers in Japan. Start-up Nileworks Inc, in partnership with agricultural cooperative J A Miyagi Tome and trading house Sumitomo Corp, has developed **Nile-T18, a drone that hovers over paddy fields and can perform laborious and time-consuming tasks in minutes, providing relief to ageing rural communities.** For instance, it can apply pesticides

and fertiliser on the farmland in about 15 minutes; manually, this would take over an hour and be extremely demanding physically. What's more, it can even analyse a rice stalk and determine how much pesticide or fertiliser it needs, making it easier for farmers to judge input needs and estimate crop size, thus saving money. Nileworks is working to get permission to fly the drone, which is significantly cheaper than radio-controlled mini helicopters, without a license; it can be

controlled with an iPad and runs on easy-to-operate mapping software. "As we face a shortage of next-generation farmers, it's our mission to come up with new ideas to raise productivity and income through the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as drones," Isamu Sakakibara, a 69 year-old rice farmer and head of JA Miyagi Tome, tells Reuters. Nileworks plans to start a commercial rollout of the drone, which will cost Yen 4 million, in May 2019.



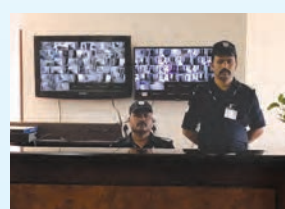
Science and sensitivity

Robots just got more real. Researchers at Örebro University in Sweden have designed the **world's first robot with cultural skills** in collaboration with scientists from Europe and Japan—it can hold simple conversations, remind users to take their medication, and encourage them

to stay active and stay connected with family and friends. "The idea is that robots should be capable of adapting to human culture in a broad sense, defined by a person's belonging to a particular ethnic group," Alessandro Saffiotti, professor of computer science at Örebro University, tells website *phys.org*.

"At the same time, they must be able to adapt to an individual's personal preferences; so in that sense, it doesn't matter if you're Italian or Indian." Next, these robots will be tested on silvers from a diverse cultural background living in retirement facilities in England and Japan to examine whether culturally aware robots improve quality of life. To know more, check out a short video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLTKhfVYrTw

RESORT-RESIDENCES FOR SENIORS



A large slice of the young generation is ambitious and therefore constantly travels across the country, if not overseas, thus leaving their loved ones, often elderly parents, alone at home. Keeping house in addition to taking care of their health and completing day-to-day chores is both tedious and stressful for elderly individuals.

Addressing this growing concern with a practical yet sensitive approach is Pune-based Gagan Properties, which has shaped its vision into reality. The result is Nulife, an ultra-modern, world-class resort-residence facility for senior citizens of our country.

A magnificent project sprawled across several acres of holistic goodness at Kamshet near Lonavala, this facility is a haven of comfort for senior living, owing to its adherence to international standards. Justifying its dynamic tagline that reads 'Grow Young', Nulife is that place where seniors can age gracefully while living in the midst of raw nature. Here, they can live a serene life while immersing themselves in pleasant weather and an unpolluted environment.

HEALTHCARE AND SECURITY – YOUR LIVES ARE PRECIOUS!

Nulife recognises that seniors are vulnerable and that they also worry about

their safety and security. Therefore, protecting senior lives is top priority. The residential facility has tied up with Oyster and Pearl hospitals, making it possible to have a hospital equipped with an ICU inside the residential complex with dedicated doctors, nurses and a resourceful pharmacy. This ensures that professionals are always available to take care of the medical needs of seniors, as and when required.

Other NuCare facilities included in the apartment price are a 24x7 ambulance service, periodical preventive medical check-ups, routine physiotherapy, daily housekeeping, weekly laundry services and round-the-clock security services including CCTV surveillance.

DESIGN AND DETAILS – THE SCULPTURE THAT INSPIRED MANY!

The design of Nulife premises reflects a profound understanding of the ageing process, which inspires the support it provides its residents. It is a true representation of what Nulife provides – nourishing the potential offerings of a rich and fulfilling life to all its residents.

From large doorways, no-step entries and wide corridors, to personalised panic alarm bands, grab bars in washrooms and anti-skid flooring, this project has been planned by globally renowned architect Perkins Eastman,

USA. These specifications are only a few of the many design details that have been incorporated to create a little piece of paradise just for you.

PERSEVERANCE AND SKILL – THE TEAM!

A vision of Gagan Properties, Nulife is the culmination of the best experiences of 21 years of work in real estate. It is a brand that is receptive to innovation and customer satisfaction on progressive levels within the real estate sector. Having delivered more than 6,000 apartments to satisfied clients, and with more than 6 million sq ft currently under construction, the credibility of this project couldn't be better. It offers authentic comfort and style to our beloved elders.

The first phase of the Nulife project has 342 apartments up for grabs, with 1 and 2 BHK apartments quoted at a starting price of just ₹ 48 lakh. Nulife introduces itself as a new way of aspirational living for senior citizens in India and is destined to change senior living on a nationwide scale. Hurry and contact Nulife to avail the best offer, now!

For more information
on Gagan Nulife, call 9371806262
or visit www.gagannulife.com

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Believing is being

As you believe, so you will be. A new study by Seoul National University in South Korea asserts that **feeling younger can slow down the rate of brain ageing**. The study, published in journal *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, shows that people who feel they are younger than their age are prone to score higher on a memory test, trust that they had better health, and aren't as likely to show depressive symptoms. What's more, they display increased grey matter volume in key regions of the brain. "We found that people who feel younger have the structural characteristics of a younger brain," Jeanyung Chey of Seoul National University tells media. "Importantly, this difference remains robust even when other possible factors, including personality, subjective health, depressive symptoms or cognitive functions, are accounted for." Feeling younger doesn't just aid brain health—a study in 2017 said it can also have a positive impact on the quality of your sex life. So think young—and you shall reap the rewards!

REVERSE GEAR What if you could just hit reverse mode when it comes to your skin and hair? That's exactly what the researchers at University of Alabama in Birmingham, US, have achieved—in mice—by turning off a gene mutation that leads to symptoms of ageing. As we age, mitochondrial function declines, which not only causes diseases and



neurological disorders but appearances of signs of ageing like wrinkling and hair loss. The team noticed that when they activated a mutation in the mice, they became lethargic and displayed other signs of ageing, like greying hair, within four weeks. In four to eight weeks, their skin began wrinkling, which was especially severe among the female mice. But when the mutation was turned off, the hair loss and wrinkled skin began to reverse to their original appearance, although aged organs did not. The study, published in journal *Cell Death & Diseases*, suggests that **mitochondrial function plays a substantial role in skin health**. "To our knowledge, this observation is unprecedented," Keshav Singh, professor of genetics at the University of Alabama, tells media.

Virus with value

Virus need not always be a bad word! Scientists at the University of Arizona have identified a **virus, known as cytomegalovirus (CMV), which actually appears to strengthen the immune system**. In a study of mice, the team of researchers were surprised to find that this virus strengthened body defences and incited T cells, the white blood cells that fight disease.

This discovery encourages the hope that older immune systems have the ability to generate good immune responses and, with the help of CMV, this ability can be harnessed. As for the way forward, Dr Janko Nikolich-Zugich, co-director at the University of Arizona Centre on Aging, tells *Newsweek*, "We would not seek to infect people with this virus.

Rather, we want to identify immune hormones that are made in our bodies in response to the virus. We would then add these immune hormones to vaccines to improve vaccine efficacy in older adults. We will also test such hormones for their ability to improve immunity in general, against any infection. That would have the potential to extend human lifespan and health span." The study was featured in journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (PNAS).



Photographs by iStock

SLIMMING WITH AVOCADO

Here's one of many myths that influence our health: consuming fats causes weight gain. Health experts are now saying not all fatty foods make you pile on the lard and that **choosing your fats wisely can, in fact, help you lose weight.** One of these healthy fats is the avocado, a fruit that comes with numerous health benefits, including weight loss. Just eat it as part of your healthy diet; one-third of an avocado, containing 7 gm of fibre, is packed with the best nutrients. The other option is to eat it in place of another food that is high in sugar or fat, which means you're reducing your intake of a harmful ingredient. Any which way, you lose (weight) and thus win!

MORE ON MENOPAUSE

A new study has found that there is **no link between physical activity and the age of onset of menopause.** While it was earlier believed that women engaged in physical activity such as frequent exercise and sports were less likely to experience early menopause—below the age of 45—this study suggests that it is a myth. The study was conducted at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, USA, where researchers analysed the data of 107,275 women between the ages of 25 to 42 and followed it up for 20 years. The team studied their recreational and physical activities such as walking, running, cycling, swimming, aerobics, yoga, weight training as well as high-intensity activities such as lawn mowing. They then collected information on other factors such as age, height, body weight, ethnicity, race, education, diet and use of dietary supplements. The findings, which were published in *Journal of Human Reproduction*, showed the absence of any significant link between physical activity and probability of early menopause.

TAKE MILK TO HEART

The spotlight is on milk; only this time, the health advice is for senior adults. It suggests that **drinking three glasses of milk a day can help you live longer and stay away from heart disease and stroke.** The advice was the result of a recent worldwide survey conducted by researchers from McMaster University, Canada, where 130,000 people in 21 countries were analysed and followed up for nine years. The findings suggested that consuming three servings of low-fat dairy greatly improved cardiovascular health. It explains that compounds such as amino acids, unsaturated fats, calcium, Vitamins K1 and K2 in dairy products are potentially beneficial and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.





CANCER ALERT

Cervical cancer has been the leading cause of death in women in the US but now early detection methods such as HPV tests are coming in as game-changers. A study done earlier this year found that **testing for cancer-related HPV tests outperformed the effectiveness of the Pap smear in women above 30 years of age.** Taking the research forward, new cancer screening guidelines have been issued by the American Cancer Society. Accordingly, women from 30 to 65 years of age can get the HPV test done every five years or a Pap smear after three years; women over 65 years who have had clear tests don't need more testing; and women under 21 years do not need any testing. The guidelines are a silver lining for women cancer patients; they reduce the discomfort of probing during a Pap smear test and will hopefully help to altogether phase out the test. The recommendations were published in *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Photographs by iStock



KICK THE BOTTLE

Those who love their *chhota peg* before mealtime are going to find this hard to swallow. A study conducted at the University of Washington in Seattle showed that **alcohol was the leading cause of premature death in men and women aged between 15 and 49, worldwide, in 2016.** This comprises 10 per cent of all deaths. Alcohol-related deaths—regardless of the amount consumed—included those arising from diseases typically related to the substance, such as cancer and cardiovascular disease, as well as deaths from violence and self-harm, traffic accidents and other accidents such as drowning and fires. So no amount of alcohol is 'safe' for consumption, not even 'milder' forms such as wine and beer; even moderate amounts can prove lethal. The study was published in *The Lancet*.

GUT FEELING

Staying healthy just got easier, thanks to your gut bacteria that plays a major role in your immune system, insists a new study. It further suggests that gut bacteria improves your weight and aids in weight loss. Scientists at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, conducted a study on mice who were fed for 30 days on a diet that restricted their calorie intake by 40 per cent. The researchers found that the mice started producing 'beige fat', a kind of fat tissue that easily converts into energy and leads to weight loss. **This indicates a link between consuming fewer calories and health. Even if the overall conclusion is a no-brainer, understanding the underlying process is useful in possible treatment of obesity. The study was published in *Cell Metabolism*.**



CLIP AND SAVE

The growing incidence of heart failure poses a huge health risk across the world. But here's some good news for heart patients. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania have come up with a **tiny device—a clip—that claims to treat heart failure**. In typical heart failure, the heart enlarges and tugs apart the mitral valve, leaving the two flaps swinging apart. As a result, the blood that is supposed to be pumped into the body backs up into the heart and lungs. The little device, called **MitraClip** and costing \$ 30,000, repairs the mitral valve by clipping the flaps together in the middle. As part of a clinical trial, 614 heart patients received MitraClip along with medical treatment. The results showed that the clip regulated the blood flow in and out of the heart, thus saving the patients' lives and improving quality of life. The findings were published in *New England Journal of Medicine*.

NO RED FLAGS

No exercise, not even sports, is insurance against cardiovascular disease (CVD) in middle-age adults. A new study conducted at the University of British Columbia, Canada, says that symptoms of **CVD may not show up in fit middle-aged people**, which is why regular check-ups with your doctor are a must. The study followed 798 master athletes aged 35 years and older who engaged in some form of physical activity three days a week. The results showed that despite any symptoms, 11 per cent of them had significant CVD and 10 of them suffered from severe coronary artery disease. So, stop waiting for symptoms like breathlessness and chest pain before you see a doctor, especially if you have a family history of CVD. The findings of the study were published in journal *BMJ Open Sport and Exercise Medicine*.





DON'T FORGET YOUR FRIENDS

While incontinence in itself is an age-related issue, it could also be the offshoot of health concerns such as dementia and Alzheimer's

DEALING WITH DEMENTIA

Today, 1.6 million Indians are affected by Alzheimer's disease, a number that is estimated to triple by 2050. Because there are so many care issues that surround a patient with dementia or Alzheimer's, it can be easy to overlook the symptoms of incontinence. However, this is a condition that progressively worsens and most people with dementia develop incontinence owing to the problems associated with brain disorders, especially in the later stages of the disease.

COGNITIVE COMPLICATIONS

For silvers afflicted with dementia or Alzheimer's, toileting mishaps are common, as they are often unable to make it to the washroom or warn their caregiver on time. As the disease

progresses, patients may experience increased difficulties with using the toilet because of overall cognitive decline and the subsequent loss of bodily functioning. In such patients, the nerve pathways that communicate with the brain and inform us that the bladder or bowel is full are damaged, interfering with the ability to recognise the need to go to the toilet, find the toilet, use the toilet properly, and coordinate toileting actions. Further, the change in spatial awareness and memory loss in dementia patients may prevent them from remembering where the toilet is or finding their way around furniture or clutter.

EMBRACE THE CHANGE

No matter what stage of dementia your loved one is in, there will come a day when they will be incontinent. Once you

accept the fact that the person you love is changing, and that their capabilities change as they go through the different stages of dementia, it's easier to embrace the change. And an intrinsic part of that is making the switch to adult diapers.

THE RIGHT REASON

Indeed, using adult diapers is the best way to manage and deal with incontinence issues in silvers suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. The decision to adopt adult diapers may not be an easy one, but once it's done it brings relief to all concerned—the patient, caregiver and family. Moreover, it's a cleaner and more hygienic way of taking care of the patient. Remember, it's simply a step in the right direction to safeguard the dignity of your loved ones, and allow them the peace of mind to live their best life.

*Make them a part
of your stories.*



**8 HOURS
PROTECTION**

Why should a small problem like urine leakage hold your parents back, from doing what they love? With Friends Adult Diapers you can now make sure they are a part of your stories without any fear.



Available in S, M, L & XL

TRIPLE ADVANTAGE



Specially designed
for Indian bodies



High
Absorbency



Wetness Indicator

FRIENDS
— ADULT DIAPERS —
Live Young

Super woman

On 9 September 2018, the grounds at the Pardada Pardadi Inter College in Anupshahr in Uttar Pradesh witnessed a flurry of activity. The venue of the 5th Pardada Pardadi Half Marathon saw over 3,000 people from different age groups participating in the run. Leading a group of over 100 children was 61 year-old **Madhu Singh**, a Delhi-based athlete. She is not just the mentor for these children, but co-founder of NGO Pardada Pardadi Educational Society—the organiser of the event—they are a part of.

Singh has been running with these children every year to motivate

them. “I want to make them aware of the benefits of fitness; I also want them to imbibe a culture that instils confidence and prepares them for competition on a bigger platform,” shares Singh. Her win at the CrossFit Open in the 60 age group in 2017 has only led her to strengthen her sports and fitness goals.

Born in Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh, Singh was inclined towards athletics from an early age. During her schooling at Gandhi Bal Niketan, she jogged every morning and participated in dance competitions at the inter-college level in Government Girl’s College. “I always led my school

at the morning assembly and physical exercise,” she shares. “I believe it was the combination of dance, exercise and jogging that provided natural grace in my movements.”

Her father’s belief in yoga introduced Singh to fitness and good eating habits very early on. “Good habits are formed early and we reap their benefits as we age,” she avers. Her father’s Army background led her to spend a major part of her life in cantonments and toughened her, physically and mentally. An MSc graduate from Agra University, Singh earned a scholarship to pursue research in entomology. She later married an Army officer herself and continued to spend most of her life in army cantonments across India.

Her athletic pursuits have been eclectic. At the age of 40, Singh dabbled in golf. “At the time, my younger son was taking up golf as a profession. I started practising with him and learnt the game in the process.” Golf was more than a pastime; Singh approached it as a competitive sport and went on to win the All India 7th Army Ladies’ Amateur Championship in 2013.

Another turning point in her life came in 2016, when Singh joined CrossFit at a gymnasium in Gurugram. An international fitness regime, it is a strength and conditioning programme comprising a mix of aerobic exercises, calisthenics, gymnastics and running, offered by gymnasiums across the world. “I was turning 60 but didn’t want age to deter my passion,” she says. “As I was regular with my fitness activities, my aches and pains had slowly eased and that reversed my belief that the effects of ageing are inevitable.”

In 2017, Singh participated in the CrossFit Open in the Masters



Photographs courtesy: Madhu Singh

“As I was regular with my fitness activities, my aches had eased and that reversed my belief that the effects of ageing are inevitable”

women's category and stood first in the 60 age group in India—this earned her an Asia ranking of 5 and world ranking of 331. “CrossFit gives me the chance to train and compete with women younger than my age. It is the best exercise for improving agility and strength. I strongly recommend exercise for all silver ladies.”

Singh follows a challenging fitness regime. “I train four days a week with a professional trainer and play golf twice a week. It helps me stay focused and be one with nature. My passion for jogging stays strong and helps me combat stress and keeps me in good form.” In her view, the best is yet to come. “I plan to participate in the CrossFit games at a higher level and spread awareness about its benefits. I believe it's never too late to regain your health and wellness.” She adds with a smile, “My husband and sons call me ‘superwoman’ as I am always keen to take on any task and my enthusiasm is always at its peak.”

Despite this daunting regimen, she finds the time to indulge her creative pursuits. She enjoys theatre and is a part of a drama group, Tamasha. “I would like to carry on with this magical balance as long as is possible,” says Singh, who also heads a hospitality company in Gurugram. “Life does not require that we be the best but we should try our best. Excellence comes when we are



in healthy competition with our own self and when we strive to outdo our former self. We only understand life backwards but it must be lived forward too.” Salute!

—Neha Kirpal



I've enjoyed greatly the second blooming that comes when you finish the life of emotions and of personal relations, and suddenly find—at the age of 50, say—that a whole new life has opened before you, filled with things you can think about, study, or read about... it is as if fresh sap of ideas and thoughts was rising in you.

—British novelist and playwright Agatha Christie (1890-1976)

BIRTHDAYS

Environmentalist and social activist **Medha Patkar** turns 64 on 1 December.

Former Congress president **Sonia Gandhi** turns 72 on 9 December.

Iconic film actor, producer and screenwriter **Dilip Kumar** turns 96 on 11 December.

Actor and superstar **Rajnikanth**, aka **Shivaji Rao Gaekwad**, turns 68 on 12 December.

Former president of India **Pratibha Devisingh Patil** turns 84 on 19 December.

Industrialist, philanthropist and former chairman of Tata Sons **Ratan N Tata** turns 81 on 28 December.

IN PASSING

Japanese marine biologist and Nobel prize winner **Osamu Shimomura** passed away on 19 October. He was 90.

Noted Marathi actor and theatre person **Lalan Sarang** died from age-related ailments on 9 November. She was 79.

Marvel Comics creator, publisher and writer **Stanley Martin Leiber**, aka **Stan Lee**, died on 12 November. He was 95.

Ad filmmaker, theatre guru, actor and storyteller **Alyque Padamsee** passed away from age-related ailments on 17 November. He was 90.

MILESTONES

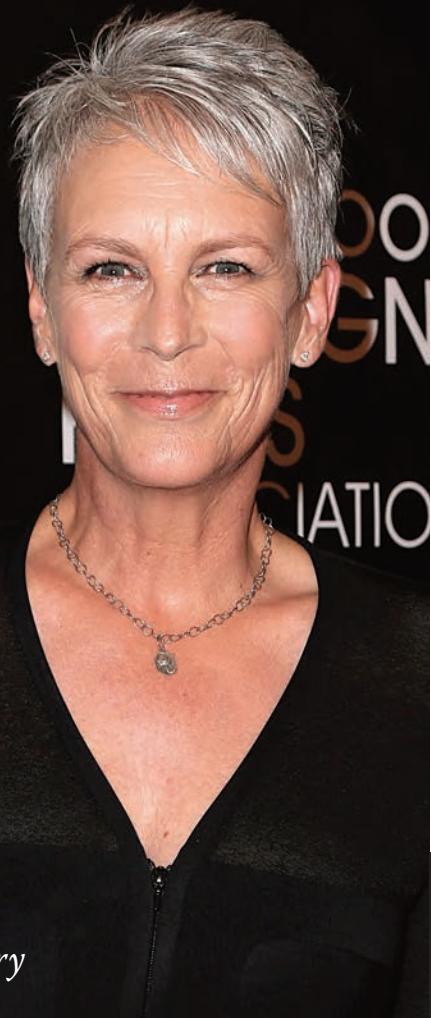
- Social activist and Gandhian **Dhoom Singh Negi**, 80, received the Jamnalal Bajaj Award in November in Mumbai, for his outstanding contribution to the field of constructive work.
- Broadcaster, journalist and author **Sir Mark Tully**, 83, received the Tata Literature Live! Lifetime Achievement award in November in Mumbai, for his outstanding contribution to speaking and writing about India.

- **Karthayayani Amma**, a native of Alappuzha district, is a perfect example of steely spirit and determination. The 96 year-old participated in the literacy examination conducted by the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority and aced it by scoring 98 per cent.
- Centenarian French cyclist **Robert Marchand** set a record by cycling around the Velodrome National in Saint Quentin, becoming the oldest person, at 106, to achieve this feat.

OVERHEARD

“The term ‘anti-ageing’ makes me crazy, the amount of marketing towards anti-ageing and making it a pejorative. Ageing cannot be the pejorative because it happens to everybody. It is like everything else; it is an evolution.”

—American actor **Jamie Lee Curtis**, 59, in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph* on why she refuses to dye her hair or go in for Botox or surgery



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Take the digital plunge. If you still haven't got online, make it your New Year's resolution for 2019. Using the Internet on a computer or mobile phone can aid mental health and delay cognitive decline by stimulating your mind and warding off depression through online videos and games, including Sudoku, chess and Scrabble; helping you learn new things; and communicating with other people via video or text messaging. It can also promote physical health as it enables you to access information about health, diet, fitness and lifestyle and lets you sign up to e-health apps and services. What's more, you can bank and shop online and, best of all, get news and views at the click of a mouse or a swipe of your mobile phone. Indeed, with your favourite magazine going fully digital, there's no better time to get connected: see you at www.harmonyindia.org!



iStock



Haresh Patel

Then: Old fabric Now: Potli bag

India has been struggling with its recently imposed and long-overdue plastic ban. And in this season of merry and gifts galore, procuring environment-friendly gift bags is an imperative. Fret not, you can make your own! You just need old fabric, thread, decorative drawstring, a pair of scissors and a measuring tape. Depending on how big you want the bag to be, cut two equal rectangular sheets of fabric. Sew the fabric from the edges on three sides, leaving one end open. Cut out the extra fabric beyond the stitch. To feed the drawstring, fold the open edge down by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch and sew around the entire hem. Turn the bag inside out and push the corners out. You may use golden lace and *zari* to add extra zing. Use a safety pin to feed the drawstring through the slit of the hem on top of the bag. Tie the ends of a drawstring in a knot and snip off extra part. Your gift bag is ready and is sure to be treasured by the receiver!



RECYCLING FACTS

- Although all textiles are recyclable, only about 15 per cent of textile waste actually gets recycled.
- Panipat, in northern India, is the world's largest textile recycling hub with annual revenue of ₹ 700 - 1,000 crore.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

- 1 SIMPLY CUT OLD CLOTHING/FABRIC INTO WHATEVER SHAPE YOU LIKE AND CLEAN YOUR APARTMENT WITH THESE NIFTY NEW RAGS.
- 2 OLD CLOTHES / FABRIC CAN ALSO BE USED TO MAKE PILLOW CASES, QUILTS, TABLE RUNNERS AND HANDBAGS.

Power to you!



India's first—and the biggest—lifestyle solutions show for silvers, Unmukt Festival, will be held at HITECH, Hyderabad, on 15 and 16 December 2018. Announcing this at a press conference in the city recently, Monimita Sarkar, founder of Unmukt Festival, said the unique festival is expected to draw participation from 10,000 visitors comprising silvers and their families.

"The fabric of our society is rapidly changing," said Sarkar. "Children are moving away from parents for greener pastures and more women have joined the workforce. Therefore, parents are often compelled to stay and live on their own. Unmukt Festival through its six key segments—Health & Wellness; Home Health Care; Senior Living; Lifestyle; Finance & Legal; Technology—aims

to help seniors and their families identify services and products to enhance their quality of life. It is not an event; we are spearheading a movement to enable our respected elderly to age gracefully and enjoy old age to the fullest."

Organised by KW Conferences, a pioneer in the professional conference organising industry in the country,



and Shomex LLC, the event is supported by HelpAge India and Heritage Foundation India. The launch event is partnered by Google, Apollo Hospitals, Nobel Hygiene and Guardian Capital Investments Advisors. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is the media partner for the event.

Some prominent exhibitors include Aditya Birla Capital, ICICI Bank,

Seniority.in, Himalaya, Saket Engineers, Bahri Estate, Covai Care, Ostrich Mobility, EmpowerJi, Blue Water Alkaline Solutions, Clustas, Dr Saxena, Forza Freedom and Zero-G Beds, among others. The festival also features workshops, panel discussions and demos. Entry is free. (Visit www.unmukt-festival.com.)

The festival series will be held in multiple cities in the next two years, informed Sarkar. The press conference was followed by a panel discussion on the topic, *173 Million Senior Population in 2025 - Are We Ready?*

Participating in the discussion, Sarkar shared that a Global Market Insights report estimates that the Indian geriatric care market is set to gain at 9 per cent CAGR up to 2023 from \$ 13.8 billion in revenue for 2015. According to a United Nations Population Fund report, one in five Indians will be above the age of 60 by 2050, a total of nearly 300 million people, comprising 19 per cent of the total population. In this scenario, more and more innovative products are being launched recognising the changing needs of senior citizens, she added.

Moderating the discussion, P S Srikumar, CEO, CovaiCare, said that the population of 80+ in India would be more than the population of Greece and Belgium by 2050. "Senior living is a sunrise industry," he pointed out. "With children settling in different countries away from parents, there is a huge potential for the real-estate sector to build care-assisted homes for seniors."

While Aseem Sen Gupta, CEO, Guardian Capital Investment Advisors, urged silvers to make investments across a mix of financial products, Dr Ratna Rao, Coordinator Geriatric Services, Apollo Group of Hospitals, said ageing has to be a celebration, but comes with its own challenges. "In healthcare, there is a one-stop facility called geriatric care,

which is still at a nascent stage in our country," she observed. "Home care is picking up in India though. At present, Apollo offers geriatric care in Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi, Bhubaneswar and Kolkata. We will soon expand to 10 new locations."

"As we age, having decreasing bladder control is as common as having wrinkles," said Bhavya Roy, Brand Manager, Noble Hygiene, a pioneer in adult diaper manufacturing in India. "Therefore, adopting solutions such as adult diapers enables people to have a better quality of life."

"Many silvers are as tech-savvy as the youth. They are Skyping; using Google Maps for their travel; communicating and socialising through social media apps such as WhatsApp. In fact, seniors from the age group 62-64 are the biggest spenders on our e-commerce portal," said Ameya Khullar, Manager - Brand Communications, *Seniority.in*, an online retail destination that offers over 5,000 products for seniors. Nearly 200,000 seniors visit the site every month, she added.

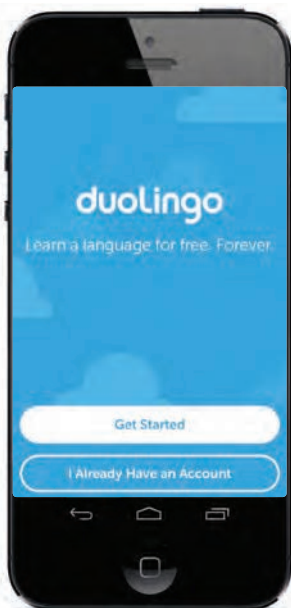
As a prelude to the festival, Unmukt has been organising the 'Unmukt Knowledge Series'; the first in the series, in association with Google, was held in Hyderabad on 9 October 2018 on the topic 'Online Safety for Senior Citizens' (*see page 24; November 2018 issue of Harmony-Celebrate Age*). In the second leg of the series, a cookfest was organised on 14 November in partnership with The Westin Hyderabad Mindspace, where silvers together with professional chefs (*in pic*) cooked up a storm for family and friends in a fully equipped restaurant kitchen.

"There is a cook hidden in each of us," said Sarkar. "While some are aware of this early on, others discover it when given a chance. The Unmukt-Westin Cookfest served as a unique opportunity for our senior citizens to try their hand at cooking in royal style."



Duolingo

Available for: iOS 10.0 or later; Android



What it does: Using advanced technology Duolingo helps people learn new languages. Practise reading, writing, speaking, listening and conversation via personalised lessons. Track your progress, earn rewards and join the largest community of language learners.

How it works: Silvers are now increasingly taking vacations and travelling across the world. Duolingo can help break language barriers and make communication a less

daunting task in a foreign land. The app prompts you to choose a language you would like to learn when you sign in and set how much time you would like to give your daily lesson. You can either choose to start from the basics or try the advanced course that adapts to your level based on your answers. Lessons become more and more personalised as you spend time on the app. You can also create a profile and start your own language club with people across the world or join one and interact with the world. And here's something to note for your grandkids planning to apply for studies abroad: Over 300 US universities now accept the Duolingo language proficiency test, including Yale, New York University, UCLA and Duke.

VMEDO

Available for: Android

What it does: VMEDO is an ecosystem for better healthcare that takes care of your medical needs. From managing your daily habits and suggesting healthy tips like a reminder to hydrate to weight management, activity tracker, booking the nearest ambulance for medical emergencies and first-aid help, it takes care of all your medical needs.

How it works: Your medical details (and those of your whole family) are now easily accessible through VMEDO. This no-fuss app may seem cluttered but navigation is seamless once you know what you are looking for. You can book the nearest ambulance with the 'Ambulance' tab, donate blood or find blood banks by clicking on the 'Find Blood' tab, click on the 'First Aid' tab to find solutions for various treatments and choose the 'Hospital' tab to find details of various hospitals in your area; these tabs appear on the top of the page. Secondary features include booking healthcare services to your doorstep, instant health insurance quotes for you and your family, a pedometer to count your steps; information on yoga classes and reminders for doctors' appointments.



The new 'on-demand economy', defined as *the economic activity created by technology companies that fulfil consumer demand via immediate provisioning of goods and services*, is revolutionising commercial behaviour world over. Papa, a mobile application developed in the US, is one such example of the on-demand economy, which works by connecting college students and adults over 60. The service will first be launched in Florida and hopes to add five additional American states by 2019. Here's how it works: silvers can request a 'Papa Pal' via the app; once a suitable 'pal' has been selected, users can choose an activity, play a game, or simply converse.



Foods to fight cancer

A plant-based diet can help you reverse, retard and prevent the risk of cancer



Photographs by iStock

Over the years, I have come across a number of cancer cases and seen a lot of silvers succumbing to the disease. My only advice is to manage cancer intelligently—the best way to do it is to ‘calm down’ and improve the quality of your daily diet. As a nutritionist, my primary aim is to help my clients convert scientific research on food into practical methods that can be used in their daily cooking. Eating right can help you reverse, retard and prevent cancer.

Let us look at the way the body works. Each and every function is conducted by the body’s cells and their condition defines your well-being. Body cells are constantly working in the way of breathing oxygen, digesting food or excreting waste and carbon dioxide. As you age, the functioning of your cells gradually slows down, thus lowering their immunity. This leaves some cells unprotected and they can eventually turn carcinogenic, which means they gather the potential to cause cancer. Also, as a by-product of breathing, free radicals get attached to healthy cells

and turn them carcinogenic. If your body is deficient in nutrients, it further generates cancer cells.

However, the good news is that you can counter this damage with help from Mother Nature, the best healer of all diseases. Eating a plate full of the plant kingdom is a simple and easy way to put you on the pathway of good health. I strongly believe the rainbow of colours present in the way of fruits, vegetables, greens and spices protects you against diseases.

Nature produces natural compounds in the plant kingdom called antioxidants. When you eat plants, antioxidants enter your bloodstream and protect your body cells from the attack of free radicals, thus leaving your cells and chromosomes alone. I advocate that all silvers, especially those undergoing chemotherapy or battling cancer at any stage, should add more natural produce in their diet. Natural, wholesome, organic, seasonal and regional foods are the key to protect your body cells and prevent cancer.

Antioxidants that battle cancer

- **Beta-carotene:** Beta-carotene is one of the most commonly known antioxidants. Foods that have yellowish-orange pigmentation contain beta-carotene; for example, pumpkin, carrots, yellow bell peppers, sweet potato, mango and apricot. I love adding these foods to my plate as they not only brighten up my dish but my day as well! Beta-carotene is not only found in yellow-orange coloured vegetables and fruits but is richly present in dark green vegetables like spinach. Beta-carotene is one of the best fighters of free radicals. Once it enters your body, it surrounds your cell membranes and patiently waits to fend off any free radicals that arrive. A high dose of beta-carotene inhibits the absorption of other nutrients, so I would advise silvers to include beta-carotene via whole foods instead of supplements.

- **Lycopene:** Oh, how I love to see the colour red on my plate! It just seems to make a dish more vibrant and appetising. Tomatoes, watermelon, red bell pepper, pink grapefruit and many other bright red pigmented foods are rich in lycopene. It is so easy to add tomatoes in your daily diet by way of soups, sandwiches, vegetables, salads, sambar, dal, pulses or rice. While pink grapefruit can be eaten in winter, summer is the time for a fresh, cooling slice of watermelon. Lycopene is part of the carotenoid family and, therefore, an extremely powerful antioxidant. It is known to considerably reduce prostate cancer in men. However, pay heed to the fact



that not all red-coloured foods contain lycopene; strawberries and cherries have anthocyanin, which are antioxidants in their own right too.

- **Vitamin E:** Like beta-carotene and lycopene, Vitamin E envelops your cell membrane to prevent free radical damage. Your dal, pulses, legumes, whole grains, plants, nuts and seeds are rich in natural oils, which contain Vitamin E. Research says too

JAV ROTI

Ingredients

- Jav (barley) flour: 100 gm
- Water: 100 ml
- Chilli paste: ½ tsp
- Coriander leaves: ½ cup; chopped
- Salt to taste

Method

Take water in a vessel and put it on medium flame. As it starts boiling, add jav flour, chilli paste and coriander and leave it for 2-3 minutes. Do not stir. Take it off the flame and stir with a wooden spoon so no lumps are formed. After it gets mixed well and cools down, transfer to a flat plate. Knead the flour well and roll it into rotis. Cook jav rotis on a heated griddle, applying ghee if desired.

BETROOT DIP

Ingredients

- Beetroot: 200 gm
- Lemon juice: ½ tsp
- Garlic paste: ½ tsp
- Walnuts: 5 tsp; coarsely ground
- Salt to taste

Method

Boil the beetroots and blend them into a paste. Put the paste in a vessel and add lemon juice, garlic paste, ground walnuts and salt. Mix it well. Chill and serve with vegetable crudité.



MOONG HUMMUS

Ingredients

- Moong dal (split): ½ cup
- Water: 1 cup; boiled
- Black pepper: ½ tsp; powdered
- Onion: ¼ cup, minced
- Garlic: 1 clove; minced
- Parsley: 2 tbsp; minced
- Lemon juice: 1 tsp



- Tahini: 1 tbsp
- Olive oil: 2 tsp
- A pinch of sea salt

Method

Wash the moong dal and add to the boiling water; cook it over medium heat for 8-10 minutes. Remove it from flame when cooked but still firm. Mash the dal in a bowl and add salt and black pepper. Heat olive oil in another pan and sauté onions in it for 3 minutes. Add garlic and parsley and sauté again for few minutes. Then combine the moong mixture, sautéed onion and parsley mixture and lemon juice, and grind to a fine paste. Add tahini and blend again. Serve the moong hummus with pita bread.

RADISH CHUTNEY

Ingredients

- Radish: 1; medium-sized
- Kashmiri red chillies: 1 or 2
- Coriander seeds: ¼ tsp
- Coconut: ¼ cup; grated
- Tamarind: ¼ inch piece
- Salt to taste

For the tempering

- Mustard seeds: ¼ tsp
- Curry leaves: 4-5
- Cooking oil: 1 tsp

Method

Wash and grate the radish and keep aside. Mix the grated coconut, red chillies, coriander seeds, tamarind and salt in a mixer. Add a little water and finely grind. Mix with the grated radish and grind again for a few seconds. Transfer to another bowl and add tempered mustard seeds and curry leaves. Serve with hot rice or idli.

much Vitamin E in the body can lead to breast cancer in women. So make sure you maintain moderate levels of the vitamin.

- **Selenium:** Selenium is a mineral and part of the antioxidant army. It is especially known for its role in maintaining healthy tissues in the ovary, as they succumb to ageing the fastest. As the tissues get older, follicle health gets weaker, affecting progesterone levels in the body. Selenium not only helps prevent ovarian cancer but protects the thyroid function from stress and helps convert hormone



T4 into T3, the active form of the thyroid hormone. Selenium is found in *ajwain* seeds, garlic, *jav* (barley flour) and brown rice.

- **Vitamin C:** This powerful antioxidant is found in abundance in many of our day-to-day foods. The most common source of Vitamin C is lemon and silvers should make it a point to include it daily in their diet. Squeeze it on salads, soups and vegetables or have it as a lemon shot. Other sources of Vitamin C include *amla*, the Indian gooseberry, and guava. Guavas contain five times more vitamins than lemons, so try and consume them whenever they are in season. Vegetables such as cabbage, peppers, French beans, cluster beans, cauliflower, eggplant (brinjal), drumsticks and its leaves, radish leaves and spinach; and roots such as sweet potato are also rich in Vitamin C. Sweet potato is a health-enhancing nutrient and a

must-have in your diet to help you fight cancer.

- **Phytochemicals:** Phytochemicals are natural chemicals found in cruciferous vegetables and the allium family of vegetables that are found in most regions of the world. Cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage and mustard greens inhibit the influence of hormone-dependent cancers. The allium group of vegetables, on the other hand, speeds up the elimination of carcinogens and inhibits the growth of cancer cells. The allium group includes garlic, onions and shallots.

Setalvad is an obesity and lifestyle disease consultant who offers diet counselling at Health for You, a wellness clinic in Mumbai, as well as online. Visit www.nainisetalvad.com for more details or write to contact. mag@harmonyindia.org if you have any queries for her



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Attend to your ankle

Yoga can control pain and prevent the condition from worsening in the long term



Photographs by Haresh Patel

Ankle pain is so common and prevalent across all age groups that most people suffer it silently. It has many lifestyle triggers and many sufferers are also aware of what sets it off.

Common causes include being overweight (which puts a lot of stress on the ankles, knees and spine); bad or uncomfortable footwear; work or lifestyle that includes standing for long hours, diets that cause inflammatory conditions such as inflamed joints; various types of arthritis; certain sports; gout; and even infections of the urinary tract or the gut. Water retention—from hormonal shifts, dietary triggers, wearing closed footwear or a sedentary lifestyle—can also cause swelling and pain.

Each of these causes needs to be addressed separately. That said, yoga helps in the long term and must be included to control pain and prevent the condition

from worsening. If the pain is chronic, dedicating some time for yogic *sadhana* daily is an absolute must. Unlike other chronic conditions, ankle pain can be debilitating and limiting.

In yoga, while treating extreme ankle pain, initially focus on poses that elevate the legs. These include leg raises such as the big toe touching pose (*supta padangushtasana*) and its variations; shoulderstand and all its variations; other inversions for intermediate level practitioners like the headstand (*sirsasana*) and the plough (*halasana*); and ankle rotation (*goolf ghoornan*) and all its variations. The last is particularly useful in encouraging gentle movement that relieves retention or swelling and encourages blood flow and removal of lymph accumulation. For pain management and to fast-forward healing, always include a short meditation—the best is the corpse pose (*shavasana*) or the sleep of yoga (yoga *nidra*)—and pranayamas like

In yoga, while treating extreme ankle pain, initially focus on poses that elevate the legs. For pain management and to fast-forward healing, always include a short meditation and pranayamas

alternate nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) and victory breath (*ujjayi*).

Lifestyle changes include wearing therapeutic footwear; sleeping with your feet elevated; doing regular, timed gentle ankle rotations if standing for long; losing weight if obese; and consulting a dietician to reduce inflammatory foot triggers in your diet.

YOGIC MOVES

Archer's pose / shooting the bow (*akarna dhanurasana*)

Sit on the floor with your legs extended. Reach your right hand to the right big toe and hold it with the index finger. Draw the foot towards the right ear by bending the right knee. Continue breathing normally throughout. Your other hand will rest lightly on the left thigh. Advanced practitioners may be able to reach over to hold the left foot (with the left hand). Draw the toes of the lifted right foot back to engage all the subtle muscles of the foot. Hold for a few seconds, as long as comfortable. Release the leg back to its original position; repeat with the other leg. **Benefits:** This pose helps regulate hormonal imbalances and tones the urogenital system. It tones the back, legs and arms vigorously. It improves mood, fights depression and is good for digestive issues.



KNOW YOUR KRIYA

Hand gesture for earth element (*kapha karaka mudra*)

Sit in any meditative posture. Touch the tip of your little finger and ring finger to the tip of the thumb. Do this for both hands. Extend other fingers. Practise for 15 to 45 minutes daily. This may be done while commuting or during other activities, such as watching TV. However, the effects of mudras are elevated when done meditatively or during pranayama. **Note:** Avoid if you are feeling excessively lethargic or have excessive water retention. **Benefits:** It controls and suppresses inflammation and triggers healing. This is a grounding practice that calms the mind. It is used to control psychosomatic triggers and body heat and is believed to increase the water and earth elements in the body, according to Ayurveda.

Shameem Akthar is a Mumbai-based yoga acharya. If you have any queries for her, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org. (Please consult your physician before following the advice given here)

Short takes

Documentaries do justice to our vibrant culture, veteran filmmaker G L Bhardwaj tells **Aditya Seth**

He is virtually a one-man army—ideating, scripting, producing, directing and editing short films, besides, of course, handling the camera. Nonagenarian filmmaker Gurcharan Lal Bhardwaj, who worked as a still photographer with Raj Kapoor and later went on to make award-winning documentaries including *Shocking Asia* and *Land of Krishna*, is the oldest practising short filmmaker in India currently.

A self-taught filmmaker, Bhardwaj has won several national and international awards, including the prestigious President's Award and lifetime achievement award from the Indian Cine Film Festival for his contribution to documentary and short cinema. Besides the Films Division of India, he has worked for several foreign film production houses including New York-based American Broadcasting Company and London-based Worldwide Television. The 91 year-old Mumbai-based filmmaker, who helms Bhardwaj Films, reveals how the words 'Lights, Camera, Action' still charge him up.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

As a child, I was good at sketching portraits. There were no images of my father at home, as he had passed away when I was only five. I drew a picture of him from memory. My mother approved of it, affirming that my father, indeed, looked like that.

It was very hard for my mother to bring us—my elder brother and I—up alone. My childhood was pretty unpleasant, though it pushed me to come up in life. I was in 12th grade when Partition was announced and we moved from Lahore to Simla. I had moved before Partition and established myself before I brought my mother. My brother came 15 days after Partition.

Struggler days

I visited Bombay a couple of times in search of a job. I had read that if you want to become a filmmaker, you

will need a producer, a cameraman and many technicians, but if you are a cameraman yourself, you are a full-fledged filmmaker. Somehow, that line stayed with me, and I decided to become a cinematographer.

In Bombay, I was a struggler, with no work and no place to stay. Director Prahlad Datt, who was working on a film called *Nazare*, hired me as an unpaid apprentice and assistant for a year at Ranjeet Studio. I was part of the camera department and my job was to check the footage to see if the shot was perfect. On the set, I observed and learnt a lot. I used to get about ₹ 75 from home every month. In Dadar, there was a small restaurant that would sell two square meals for about ₹ 38 per month. I used to live in Versova, which wasn't too expensive but travelling every day from Versova to Dadar wasn't convenient. So I used to sleep in the make-up room above the studio.

Learning the ropes

From taking meter readings to studying lighting, colour correction, etc, I went through the entire process. Though I never got to work with veteran cinematographer Raju Karmakar, he would appreciate my work whenever I would send him my stills. I even used to edit on my own. I would make my own sequences, go to the studio and record over there. I have made over a hundred films.

I am a self-taught professional. I took inspiration from those I worked with. They gave me work, appreciated my inputs, and corrected me when needed. I took their advice and guidance to help improve my work. I consider veteran director B S Thapa my guru. He gave me work and appreciated my contribution. I even made a short film on his journey from being the head officer of the cavalry in the military to chief producer at Films Division, called *Romance Behind The Camera*.

The Kapoor connection

After a while, I left Bombay for Mussoorie and opened a studio there. One day Raj Kapoor's assistant Prakash Arora came over and told me Kapoor wanted me to shoot some



Mehak Seth

“In India, documentary films work well as they help bring out the richness of our culture. It’s indeed sad that they don’t show documentaries in cinemas these days”

stills for his next film. Arora had a two-bedroom flat in Bandra. I took one of the rooms on rent and brought my mother along.

How I eventually landed the job is interesting. After looking at his stills that I had shot, Kapoor turned around and asked me if that was how all the stills had turned out? I told him I had shot, edited and printed them all myself. He was impressed and gave me the job. I was earning around ₹ 10,000 at that time, which was a lot in those days, so I decided to buy a high-end camera.

I shot stills for films such as *Aah*, *Boot Polish*, *Shree Chaar Sau Bees* and *Ab Dilli Door Nahi*. After *Ab Dilli Door Nahi*, Kapoor’s cinematographer Achrekar asked me if I worked outside Bombay. While not denying it, I asked him in return about his work outside Bombay. He said his was a different case. I told him that if he wants to send me a red letter, I will serve him one instead—and I was out.

Delving into documentaries

After a few days, my aunt told me about an opportunity to make a film on a sugar mill for ₹ 10,000. I got ₹ 2,000 as advance and bought myself a camera for ₹ 1,700. I even lent my voice to the film. Documentary filmmaking was the ‘in thing’ those days because of Films Division. I made about 100 films, both long and short, of which about 50 ran in cinemas. Once industrialist-politician G D Birla got a special request from late prime minister Indira Gandhi to have a film made on students. Gandhi loved the concept of my film, *Fifth Sense*, and asked me to give it to Films Division for screening.

In a country such as India, documentary films work well as they help bring out the richness of our culture. Earlier, cinemas used to pay Films Division for showing these films. It’s indeed sad that they don’t show documentaries in cinemas these days. Today, cinema tickets are expensive and what the audience gets in return is unrealistic and unbelievable fare.

Wildlife films

I’ve always enjoyed shooting wildlife films. I have never used stock shots in any of my films. Once I waited for four days to get the shot of a lion! I remember I was sleeping in the wild, when my son woke me up and said



there was a lion right next to my camera. I found it roaring at the camera. Though the sound was picked up, the lion moved away and I was unable to get a complete shot. Fortunately, I managed to get the shot when he came back to drink water.

Films are a hit or miss business; sometimes they set the box office on fire, sometimes they flop. On the other hand, documentaries promise a steady income and lifestyle. Moreover, the bravery of a documentary filmmaker to persist in difficult situations is remarkable.

Silver years

I am ageing, have joint pains and can’t run around sets with my camera. Earlier, I have wielded the camera for Hearst Metro news, EBC news and ITN, running around, shooting all day long. When it comes to health, I feel self-appreciation and simple living work best. I have always enjoyed eating home-cooked food.

Work all the way

Retirement is a personal choice. To date, I don’t say I am retired, and look to work as much as I can. As age is catching up, I’m looking for someone who can help me finish my pending films. I have never lost the willingness to work, and will retire only when I feel like I can’t do it anymore. Till then it’s *lage raho Munna bhai!* ✨

The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
The first board meeting you addressed
The first day after retirement

BUTTERFLIES never retire

The first click of the mouse.

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All the WORLD's his STAGE



Photographs courtesy: M K Raina

The multit talented, multifaceted M K Raina is impressive on every platform he graces and expressive over every cause he embraces, discovers **Irfan Syed**

With his twinkling eyes, silver beard and easy demeanour, Maharaj Krishna Raina comes across as the soft-spoken sort. But engage in deeper dialogue with him or talk about causes close to his heart (there are many) and he proves to be outspoken. Raina doesn't lose his cool—he seems too dignified for that—but ensures his viewpoint comes across resoundingly, using his theatre-cultivated cadence to precise effect.

He is also quite individualistic and a bit of a non-conformist. After passing out of the National School of Drama (NSD) in the early 1970s, with an award for acting no less, he was clear about being only a freelancer—and has remained so ever since. Where does this rebellious streak come from? “My Kashmiri arrogance,” he replies, with a mix of jest and candour.

From his family, MK—as friends and acquaintances call him—also seems to get his activist genes. His father Janki Nath Raina was a renowned political activist of his time. MK's thespian and creative talents, though, seem to be all his own. Born in a large brood of doctors and engineers, the stage called him early. He acted in a play in Class 5 and was immediately given in to the proscenium. It also helped that he had an encouraging principal, the illustrious poet Dinanath Nadim, or Nadim *sahib*, as he was popularly known.

Raina joined NSD after college, clear on pursuing direction. But the school and its then director, theatre doyen Ebrahim Alkazi, had other plans for the young man. He was urged to sign up for acting instead, as the direction classes had too many takers and the acting ones too few. He agreed, but resolved that he “would join direction classes when available”. At the hallowed school, Raina handled every aspect of the stage, from lighting to set design. He eventually graduated with a best actor award, but not without a head-versus-heart tussle during his final viva. He had an opportunity to go to Paris on a scholarship but his heart was keen on discovering India. “I hadn't even seen the Konark temple,” he recalls his frame of mind then. In the end, even after an intervention by Alkazi, he did neither—life again seemed to have other plans.

MK started his career, work and life as an independent artist, which brought him to then Bombay off and on for work. In the city of dreams, he met theatre pole stars P L Deshpande and Vijaya Mehta and luminaries of Hindi art cinema like Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul. The latter affiliation paved the way for his first film, *27 Down* (1974). The film is about a young man caught between the path his father foists on him and forging his own. Raina plays the protagonist, rather unrecognisable with a black beard and full head of hair. Starring Rakhee as his love interest, the film enjoys cult status even now among aficionados of '70s and '80s Hindi parallel cinema.

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Raina soon found himself being cast in other ‘art’ films, including Mani Kaul’s *Satah Se Uthata Aadmi* (1980), Kumar Shahani’s *Tarang* (1984) and *Kasba* (1991), Mrinal Sen’s *Genesis* (1986), Buddhadeb Dasgupta’s *Andhi Gali*, Govind Nihalani’s *Aghaat* (1985) and Basu Chatterjee’s *Ek Ruka Hua Faisla* (1986), based on Sidney Lumet’s classic courtroom drama *12 Angry Men*. The latter two also star K K Raina—here, this Raina answers an oft-wondered question: no, they are not brothers or even related, just contemporaries, although amicable ones; MKR is older to KKR by a few years.

Raina’s parallel cinema journey hit a roadblock soon after, during the filming of *Panchvati* (1986), where this theatre maven from Delhi was “made to feel like an outsider” in the Hindi film industry. He was next seen in Bollywood only over a decade later, in *Lakshya* (2004) and later as the school principal in *Taare Zameen Par* (2007). After that, as he says, smiling, he appears in a film whenever “they want a daddy”.

In theatre, the recently turned septuagenarian is more of a grand-daddy—and this is neither in reference or deference to his age. He has been the architect of over 200 plays, grand and small, mainstream and experimental, in various languages and locations, including one 12,000 ft above sea-level. His plays have drawn on works of legendary playwrights and writers, such as Bhasa, Brecht, Gorky, Manto, Dharamvir Bharati, Premchand, Bhisham Sahni, and many more.

Coming up, as a part of Mahatma Gandhi’s sesquicentennial celebrations that commenced this October, are four plays on the Mahatma. The first, *Stay Yet a While*, based on communications between Gandhi and Tagore, was staged on Gandhi Jayanti. The second, *Hatya Ek Aakar Ki*, debuted a few days later to appreciative reviews. Yes, he is a Gandhian, he declares, as also “the best child of India’s socialism”. He has studied on scholarships, gone to places on fellowships and “has a home in every state”. When travelling



for work or workshops, he puts up with friends, family and fraternity.

Gandhian values and principles will no doubt be invoked in a big way over the coming year. But it’s also compelling to ask Raina about *Manto*iyat. Both because the writer is being celebrated at present, with the release of his biopic, and owing to the attacks some artists have come under in the past few years, like Manto in his time. Raina is immensely familiar with the beleaguered writer’s work, having staged a play drawing on several of Manto’s stories, and has been his vocal self during the siege on artists. So, (how) is Manto relevant in today’s times? Raina responds with Manto’s famed aphorism: ‘Why do I write? I write on society’s blackboard with a white chalk so that the blackness of the board becomes even more evident.’

Another question about the artistic ethos, this time about Raina himself... if he loves theatre so much, having spent more than half his life here, why didn’t he set up his own theatre company—like so many theatre artists—since he was clear about being on his own? His response is candid: “I didn’t have any back-up.” He adds, though, that he is regularly approached by corporates to help

Raina (right) playing Openheimer in the play *Matter of Openheimer - Trail of a Nuclear Scientist*

Opposite page: Holding the hand of the great guru of bhand pather late Ustad Ali Mohammad Bhagat after a performance of *King Lear* in Kashmir

set up theatre companies. He turns down these offers because he knows they are looking for “a shop and not an institution”, which will need to begin showing profits soon; an actual theatre company would “only give dividends in its seventh year”.

This characteristic forthrightness and desire to do the right thing had two distinct triggers, Raina recalls, one coming on the back of the other in the early '90s.

In 1989, close friend and theatre activist Safdar Hashmi was attacked by political goons during the performance of a street play, succumbing to his injuries the very next day. Hashmi's death left Raina deeply shaken. Putting his anguish aside, he decided to respond affirmatively. He spearheaded several communal harmony campaigns and marches and also became a founding member of the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT), which works to engender creative and cultural expression.

In 1991, insurgency hit his home state Kashmir, forcing him to move his entire clan to Delhi, where he has been living since 1970, after graduating from NSD. The artist may have left his home, but home didn't seem to leave the artist. Raina was restless. He longed to go back to Kashmir and help in some way. But how?

One day, “without thinking”, he left for the valley state. On getting there, he was witness to heartbreaking sights, among people in general but especially among rural artists. The militants hadn't spared even art. Folk theatre venues had been attacked and their instruments broken. The artists were in deep mourning. But seeing Raina, a familiar face and fellow artist, they felt they had something to hold on to. Raina, too, saw how he

could help, through the only way he knew: theatre. Returning to Srinagar, he first started theatre workshops and then initiated collaborations between city actors and their rural counterparts. Eventually, he moved the theatre scene from the city back to the villages. He remembers that when he started the collaborations, a couple of actors from the villages let out painful howls. They had found their release.

Raina, in addition to other Kashmiri artists, has also helped sustain *bandh pather*, the local folk theatre where men enact storylines often satirical or farcical in nature, offering a comment on some aspect of social or cultural life.

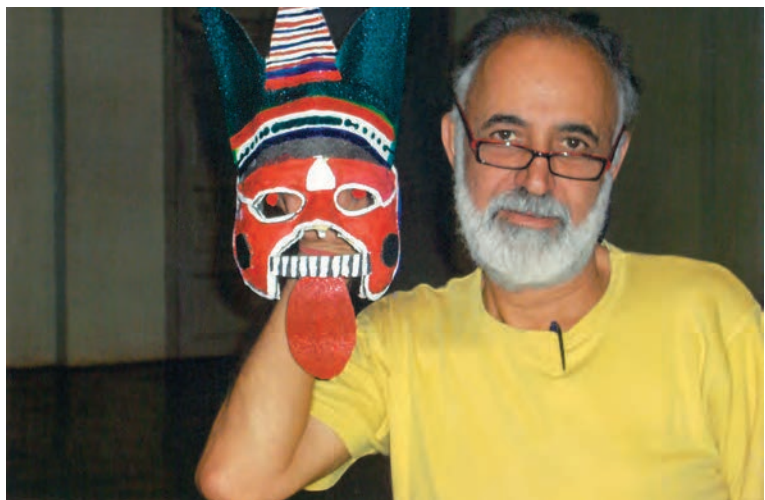
But Raina is also drawn to causes beyond theatre. Better still, and perhaps owing to his standing and outspokenness in the artistic sphere, the torchbearers of various causes are drawn to him. He is often called upon to speak on issues such as attacks on writers and other creative folk and the need to protect vernacular languages.

The artist-activist is especially close to the latter cause. He is a multi-linguist, knowing tongues as diverse as Bengali, Rajasthani, Dogri, Punjabi, Sanskrit and Urdu apart from Hindi, English and Kashmiri. This aptitude also comes from the fact that he's directed so many plays in so many different languages.

His love for Urdu is evinced—apart from his knowledge of Manto's works—from his WhatsApp profile picture, which is his speaker profile for *Jashn-e-Rekhta*, the annual festival held in Delhi to celebrate the language. And his familiarity with Bengali is evident in his voice, which bears a hint of the *rosogolla*-laced tongue. That, he says, is because, he's done some plays

Raina (left) during a performance of *Jasma Oden*, a folk play in *Bhavaye* format, at the University of Hawaii while teaching Indian theatre and directing; during a workshop

Opposite page: A site-specific production at Purana Qila in Delhi of *Andha Yug*, a modern classic in Hindi, starring Madhu Malati and directed by Raina



Raina is also drawn to causes beyond theatre. He is often called upon to speak on issues such as attacks on writers and other creative folk and the need to protect vernacular languages

in Bengali but also because his better half is half-Bengali.

There seems to be little in the public domain about his family but now that it comes up, Raina is obliging. His wife is a doctor; they have been married for 40 years, bringing up another personal milestone this year apart from turning 70. His son has followed somewhat in his footsteps. A photographer and filmmaker, he has made documentaries on, among other subjects, Sufi music and more notably Zohra Sehgal. Raina himself was acquainted with the feisty and zestful dancer, choreographer and actor, having directed her in a play and film. Raina also has a daughter, who is into public policy.

Personal milestones do not seem to mean much to him. His 70th birthday earlier in the year, he says, “was like any other day”. But on the work front, he seems to have moved toward new horizons.

Three and a Half / Teen aur Aadha is a bilingual (English / Hindi) film about love, longing and loss, told as an anthology of three stories across three time periods, each story filmed in one continuous shot. Due for theatrical release early next year, the story featuring Raina is perhaps the most intriguing. It’s about the relationship and reflections, not all happy, of an older couple, and includes a lovemaking scene or two, going by the trailer.

Was filming it uncomfortable, given that we live in a country and time where *dada-dadi* and *nana-nani* are meant to be seen more in a park than in a bedroom? Raina shares that on coming to know the hues of his story, he had put forth the name of his co-star Suhasini Mulay (a shining silver and artist in her own right), as he shared a good rapport with her, having known her for the longest time. It would be easier navigating those scenes with her, you decipher. It seems to have worked.

Raina will also be taking a step into the mainly millennial playground of web series, with Kabir Khan’s upcoming *The Forgotten Army*, based on Subash Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army.

In between, he regularly features in ads, as the affable senior. Most memorable is the Visa card ad from early

last year, which depicts him as a literature professor haplessly seeking change in a post-demonetisation world. He is eventually helped out by a student he took to be a drifter, but not before the actor delivers a few dozen brilliant micro-expressions aptly conveying the plight of the suddenly cashless citizen. Similar themed, but more cheery, are the Amazon Fire TV Stick spots, which present him first as a quizzical granddad learning the use of the device from his granddaughter and then as a savvy senior showing off the powers of the gadget to his grandkids.

How tech-savvy is he in real life? Well, he is on Facebook and uses an iPad to check and respond to emails. He has been learning technology and its benefits, slowly but surely. “How else would we be able to have this interview with you [in Mumbai] and me here, sitting on the footsteps of this room in Bhilai?” he exults.

Plays, films, ads, web series, workshops, tours, talks, causes.... how does he manage to stay fit and healthy for all this? “I lead a straight life. No late nights... helps me have a clear day.” He doesn’t smoke, but enjoys a drink from time to time. Like the elixir of many a silver, he practises yoga, thanks to which he was able to jump into a moving train with alacrity in a scene for *The Forgotten Army*.

While on matters physical, a trivial question pops up. What explains the bearded look, which he’s sported for over 40 years now and has gradually gone from pepper to salt? “Oh, that is just being too lazy to shave!” And then, “The few times I shaved, I noticed I have dimples... so I stopped!” ❀





In tune with the TIMES

She brought in a whiff of fresh air to concert presentation while maintaining the purity of classical music. Rooted in tradition, veteran vocalist **Aruna Sairam**'s music has extended the realms of Carnatic repertoire.

Chitra Ramaswamy speaks to one of the rare artists who has constantly reinvented herself and exemplifies the saying, 'It is never too late to reach the top'

I am 15 minutes early for the 10 am appointment with Aruna Sairam, a Bombay-born, Chennai-based globetrotting musician. Shri Sairam, her spouse, greets me with a warm smile and welcomes me at the reception area of their three-storey villa in Alwarpet, an elite residential area in Chennai. Ms Sairam, he informs me, will return any moment from her ritual morning visit to the nearby temple. He engages me in pleasant conversation and extends his hospitality by offering a hot cuppa, which I politely decline. He follows my gaze as it comes to rest on a divinely crafted portrait of Krishna that adorns the room. "Yes, that's Aruna's favourite deity, something she has imbibed from her mother," he shares. "Aruna had this specially made when we visited the Shrinathji temple at Nathdwara."

In a few minutes, Aruna Sairam walks in, elegantly attired in an orange-pink, silk-cotton sari. If you didn't know her, you could easily mistake her for a friendly neighbourhood *maami*. She is warm and friendly; a cherubic smile suffuses her face when I congratulate her on her most recent

'Sangeetha Kalanidhi' award, Madras Music Academy's most prestigious accolade. "It's all owing to the grace of the divine and the blessings of elders," she says, as she leads me to the living room. The aesthetic decor of the space speaks volumes about the artist and art lover.

With a string of prestigious national and international awards and honours to her credit, including the Padma Shri (2009) and the US Congress Proclamation of Excellence (2008), Sairam is a musical ambassador, playing a major role in spreading the reach of Carnatic vocal music to the world. In 2011, in the 116-year history of the BBC Proms, she was the first Carnatic vocalist to perform at London's Royal Albert Hall.

Indeed, Sairam is a musician who wears multiple hats. An astute thinker with a keen intellect, she is an articulate speaker who floors you with her fluency and felicity of expression. She is a mentor, musical guru, and teacher to several students, both within and outside the country. She travels widely across continents, addressing music forums, conducting workshops, lec-dems, and delivering lectures to students of music in

Harvard and several European universities. Sairam is also a trained Bharatanatyam dancer who gave up the art form at the age of 14 to pursue music. Today, she interacts with dancers of various genres, composing and providing music for their performances.

What's more, Sairam enjoys the privilege of having performed multiple times at Rashtrapati Bhavan before former presidents, prime ministers and other dignitaries. She has rendered concerts to packed halls at several prestigious venues, including New York's Carnegie Hall, Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, and Morocco's Fes Festival of World Sacred Music. She has collaborated with acclaimed international artistes and has released over 50 records that span classical repertoires and thematic presentations.

All this success sits lightly on the shoulders of the trend-setting vocalist who is endowed with a strong and vibrant voice, and is much appreciated for her rendition of *abhang* [devotional poetry]. Initiated into music at the tender age of three by her musician mother Rajalakshmi Sethuraman, Sairam entered the performing space as a youngster. She was privileged to begin formal training under the legendary T Brinda, the 'musicians' musician', at the age of 10. She later widened her musical horizon, training under several maestros in the field.

However, for all her talents, Sairam's rise to the top has been ridden with trials and struggles—she is one of those rare artists who had to constantly reinvent herself and beat the odds before finally making her mark on the firmament of Carnatic music when she was approaching middle age. Sheer grit, determination, a disposition to introspect, and humility to acknowledge mistakes and seek solutions, no matter from which quarter, are the qualities that have enabled her to prevail—and reach the enviable position she is in today.

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

How close is the Sangeetha Kalanidhi award to your heart, especially since you received the coveted Padma Shri several years ago, in 2009, besides a host of other honours?

I cherish every award for different reasons. The Padma Shri is a very special award because it comes from the country. To be an Indian citizen and receive this civil award is a completely beautiful experience and a matter of pride. The Sangeetha Kalanidhi Award, on the other hand, is awarded by the Carnatic fraternity and is on a different spectrum altogether. It is a recognition by the academicians of the field, thinkers, experts, pundits, writers, critics, connoisseurs and fans who come in large numbers to attend your concerts. It becomes an important validation within your community of scholars.

Carnatic and Western music critics have compared you to legends M S Subbulakshmi and jazz saxophonist John Coltrane. How does this feel?

There is an initial fizz of complete ecstasy because you never dreamt that you would be spoken of in the same breath as these great people. But once I go beyond that first moment and think what makes these legends great, they wore success lightly on their shoulders. *MS amma*, for instance, who was decorated with the Bharat Ratna, was a student of music till the end of her life. She had a sense of childlike wonderment before every concert. She was humble and knew her responsibility every time she went on stage and never took it for granted. So it becomes my responsibility too, to see every day as a new day. I need to ensure I am growing every day. As long as I keep that intact, I can keep having these momentary, absolutely wonderful moments of joy that come my way.

As a teen, while singing in front of MS, you burst into tears because you were unable to negotiate the higher reaches of a piece. What impact did this have on you?

This happened when *MS amma* came to Bombay. I was 15 then, and was having adolescence-related voice problems. As was the usual practice, my parents took me to visit her and offer my *namaskaram*. When she asked me to sing, I sang a piece that had won me a prize in a competition two days earlier. I began well but could not negotiate the higher octave. I choked and couldn't continue. I broke into tears before her. I thought the whole world had fallen apart; that I had lost a wonderful chance to impress this great lady and my future was gone. She came and sat next to me, put her hand on me in a mild hug and asked me if I was worried because of my big voice. To reassure me, she narrated her own experience of her younger days when she would be criticised for her powerful tonality. And then she said, "But see today how people from all over the world flock to hear me. Wait and see. One day, the whole world will hear your music... so shed your fears and anxiety." These were magical words for me! If a legend of her stature could say this of me, I felt I had something in me that merited that statement.

Meeting voice maestro Eugene Rabine was a turning point in your life. What prompted you to undergo training under him?

The desire to improve myself has always been a part of me. The incident that happened before *MS amma* remained deeply etched in my memory. Even though I was singing in my early 20s, I felt the output needed more polish. I was on a quest to discover voice masters who could help me. During one of my tours to Europe as a guest lecturer, I met Eugene Rabine and instinctively knew he was the right person. My training period with



Eleven year-old Sairam being appreciated by then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru after a performance in New Delhi on Children's Day; as a young adult

“My mother’s loss set me on an inward journey of what I was doing with the gift of music she had given me. Ten years elapsed before I realised that music was my true calling”

him lasted only a few days. But in those few days, he changed my perception of the voice. I came to realise that singing is not about the voice as an instrument sitting at the throat area—it is the entire body that is singing! Practises and exercises followed. Within two years, my voice started changing. My feelings when I sang, the way I was before a concert, and during a concert, changed. Mentally, physically, psychologically—just everything changed.

Had you always aspired to be a musician?

I was very good at academics and pursued my under graduation in chemistry and botany from SIES College in Bombay and subsequently did a B.Ed from St Xavier's College. I stood second in the university in both these courses. At one time, I cherished the desire to pursue a doctorate in organic chemistry. I had dreams, but nothing really concrete.

When did music take precedence over these dreams?

Following the demise of my mother, I think. I was 22, married, and with a daughter who was a year-and-a-half. I did not have an ordinary musical upbringing. My mother,

who was my first teacher, was an accomplished musician. I then had the privilege of learning under Brinda *amma*, who was a very exclusive teacher. From the age of three till my early 20s, I was learning classical music of a very high quality. I wondered at the sacrifices my parents must have made, not only to get Brinda *amma* to teach me, but all those constellation of musicians who would visit our humble 650-sq-ft home in Bombay. They would visit us for the sheer love of the art... my parents used to keep an open house because they loved music. And they did all this without any agenda; they didn't think I was going to become a musician. So when I realised the richness of all this formal and non-formal learning and the exposure I got in legacy, it set me thinking.

Once you realised this, how did your musical journey progress? How easy was it for you to juggle between being a musician and homemaker?

There is no easy path for anybody anywhere. Mine has been a very chequered professional life. Following the birth of my two daughters, I put my career on hold because I didn't want to uproot my family. But to be honest, I had not, until then, found my focus. I was not sure



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Singing is not about the voice as an instrument sitting at the throat area—it is the entire body that is singing!



Clockwise from top left: Receiving awards from legendary Carnatic musicians D K Pattammal; Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavata; and M S Subbulakshmi; receiving the Padma Shri from then president Pratibha Patil in 2009

what I wanted to do. My mother's loss set me on an inward journey. I wondered what I was doing with the gift of music she had given me. With each passing day, the question loomed larger. Ten years had elapsed before I realised that music was my true calling. But it is not that I had not been singing in those years. My dad, who didn't know music but was passionate about it, would come to my house twice a week and be my sole audience for three hours. I would sing for him as in a concert. I was also making a few concert appearances at various cities where I was invited. I was known as a talented singer, but I was not an obsessively passionate singer; that came a little later. But I am happy my children were raised in the process and I'm so proud of the way they are today.

So, it had been a balancing act all the while?

Totally. As my daughters started growing older, the moment they'd leave for school, I would start singing, practising, exploring, building my gravitas around several things. This was the period when I learnt various aspects of music with several gurus. I also began accepting invitations to

tour Europe. The huge cultural shock I experienced there made me rediscover my origins, made me realise and cherish what I had in my life. It was a whole process of alchemy that drove me to get more focus.

And you finally arrived....

It was not that easy. Through good and bad incidents and the pains of life, when I did find my focus and set out to make my mark musically, I had no clue about concert craft, which is another cup of tea altogether. There were no takers for my concerts. I realised that success in a field is not just about knowledge, talent and proficiency. While they are all integral parts, how you present them to the people is equally important. By the time I realised this, I was almost middle-aged and I still didn't know how to go about it.

But all the while, there was one thing of which I was certain: I knew that with my focus in place, I would be there. I never doubted this. It was this belief that carried me through despite the failures, delays and downsides.

But you have absolutely made it to the top! How did the change happen?

Unknowingly, I adopted a very modern concept: feedback! I formed a trio with two of my friends-cum-well-wishers to give me feedback on what I did. These two people are neither my gurus nor are they musicians. They are just people I trust; I trust their instincts. Every concert, every piece, every strategy and everything I did, I would put through this crucible. This involved hours of working, practising, rehearsing. We would scrutinise it from various angles, from the perspective of audience, connoisseurs, critics, before I would render a concert on stage. This exercise really helped me. It was about finding that bridge between what I was doing and what people are receiving. This was an essential link in my life that unfolded before me. Life is a never-ending process of learning, at differ-



ent levels and aspects. And in this journey, anybody can be your mentor—you don't know when and where that mentor will come up; but you have to have the wisdom to recognise them when you see them. What really helped me through these years of pain and struggle was the support I received from my family and in-laws. My husband never questioned my decisions. He trusted and supported me completely.

Creativity in any form of art blossoms when there is a lot of pain. Do you agree?

Absolutely. Creativity comes from life. I went through a lot of ups and downs in life, the pains and pleasures of a householder, a lot of confusion and uncertainty. I didn't even know what I was going to do in life. And once I embarked on performance with focus, I was not

a success. I had very few people attending my concerts in the early years. I had to start rethinking, reinventing myself. When you raise two children, there's pain and bits of pleasure thrown in now and then. All that is expressed in your music.

Do you allow your moods to dictate your concerts? After all, moods do influence creativity.

I don't have the luxury where my moods can dictate my performances. No matter what, once I'm on stage, music takes over and I am determined to give my best. Fortunately, because of my spiritual background and love for Lord Krishna, I view my performance as an offering to Him. So, everything else is eclipsed and it's only music all the way.

How did the album, *Aruna: Thousand Names of the Divine Mother*, come to be recorded in the crypt of a church in Germany?

This happened sometime between 1993 and 1995, when I was travelling by road with German musicians Christian Bollmann and Michael Reimann. We were doing a series of concerts at a few places in Germany. Suddenly, Christian asked me what prayer I say every day. In response, I started chanting the *Lalitha Sahasranamam* [1,000 names of the divine mother], with which I begin my day. He was spellbound. Whatever followed was like a dream. Christian drove us to this church in some small village, asked me to get into the crypt and begin reciting the *Lalitha Sahasranamam*. Michael accompanied me on the church organ while Christian himself played the didgeridoo, an Australian aboriginal instrument. The 70-minute album became a big hit.

Please tell us about your rendition in the French musical *Le Babe Bleu*.

This happened in 1997. Following my performance at the Theatre De La Vie and other venues, French theatre director Dominique Pompougnac approached me. He wanted to do the story of the birth of Krishna in French. The whole story was enacted as theatre with puppetry, narration, music and dance. I was the vocalist accompanied by flute and mridangam. The narration was in French. It did well with over 40 performances across France.

You have recorded over 50 albums, collaborating with musicians across the world. Which is your personal favourite?

I cherish each one of the albums and collaborations. That said, Dominique Vellard, a master of Gregorian and medieval songs, Nouredine Tahiri, the Moroccan Sufi vocalist, and I collaborated on *Trialogue*, a concert



“No matter what, once I’m on stage, music takes over. Because of my spiritual background and love for Lord Krishna, I view my performance as an offering to Him”

During a concert with veena exponent Jayanthi Kumaresh

Opposite page: Performing with musician T Mukta

album in 2012. This was a beautiful blend of my South Indian, Dominique’s medieval liturgical and Tahiri’s Moroccan devotional music. For me, this concert was a very spiritual experience because it was the coming together of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam—East, West and Middle East.

In 2012, you established the Nadhayogam Trust. What was the idea behind this?

The idea is to do a lot of sharing and caring. Once you attain a certain level, you want to give back. This is human nature. I’m not doing anything unusual. We help poor students buy instruments to pursue their music, give stipends to young students, create space for old and young musicians to come together, and create an osmotic symbiosis between senior and junior musicians.

You’ve been engaged in philanthropic work, particularly relating to cancer. Is there any particular reason for this?

I know what it is to have a near and dear one suffering from cancer. That is why I would like to give as much as possible towards the cause. Through my concerts, I have been able to raise substantial funds to chip in my bit for cancer hospices, setups where they offer treatment, succour and comfortable facilities to these patients.

Are your daughters also into music?

They love music but have taken up other professions. One is in the US and the other in the UK.

How has music affected you as a person and what does it mean to you?

I feel blessed to be in this field. It has taught me to live the moment without any expectations. You have to do your work with full faith; after having done so, you have to accept the fact that you have no part in its outcome. ✨

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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.

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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.





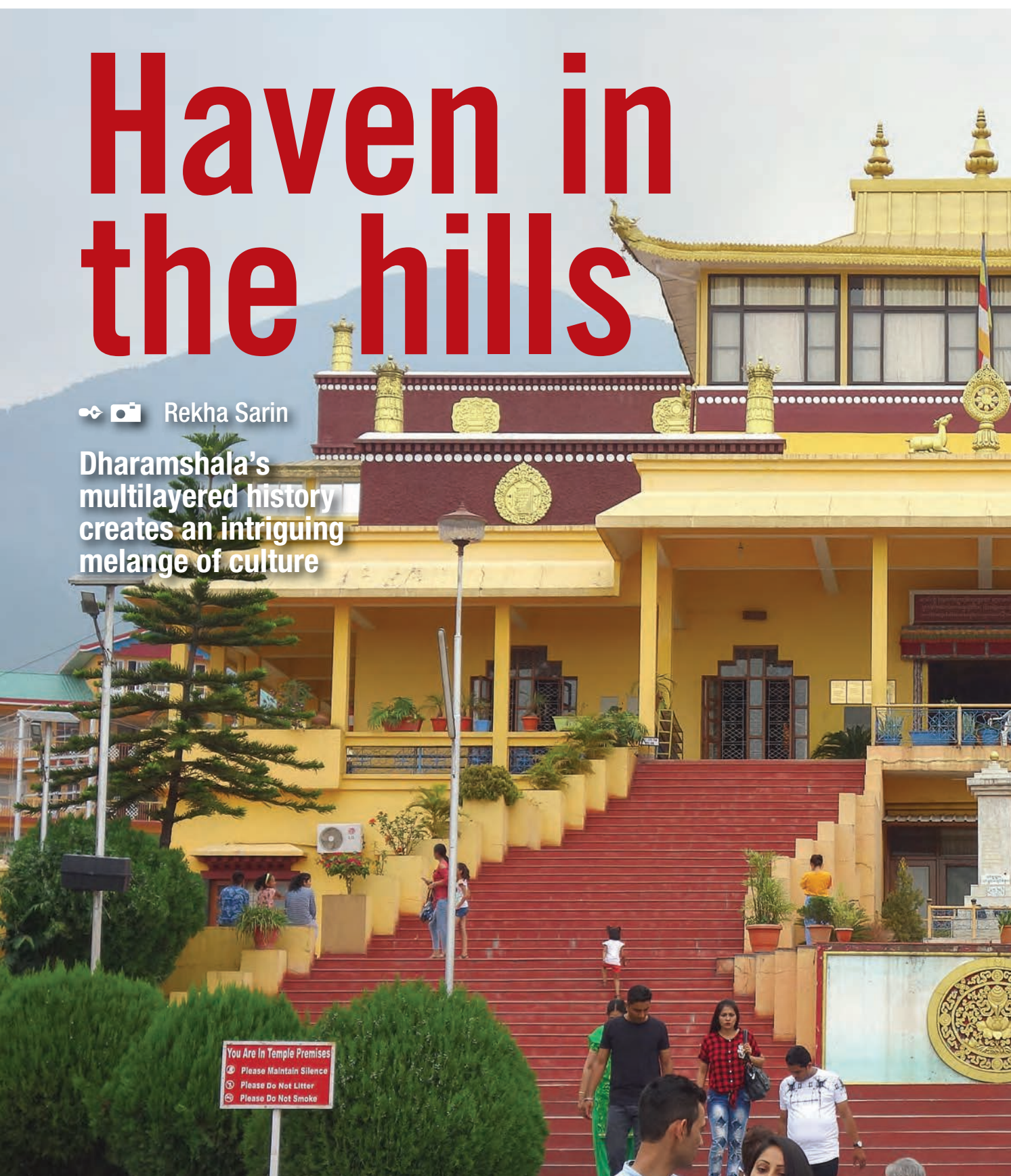
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Haven in the hills

📷 Rekha Sarin

Dharamshala's
multilayered history
creates an intriguing
melange of culture





There is a curious sense of peace that prevails in Dharamshala. Perhaps it has to do with its sheer provincial charm enhanced by the scenic hilly environs of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh.

The calm was palpable immediately upon touchdown at Gaggal, the airport that serves the town and all of Kangra Valley. The airstrip amid the Dhauladhars or 'milky mountains' is so small that there is a landing facility for only turboprop aircraft. The airport's limited passenger capacity and sleepy milieu were a far cry from the frenzied activity of the Delhi terminal, which was our point of departure.



At McLeod Ganj, the surge of humanity took us by surprise. We walked through the main bazaar, overwhelmed by a motley mix of honeymooners, tourists and backpackers. Monks in scarlet robes dotted the narrow lanes

We took in the fresh air, albeit surprisingly warm. Our friendly cab driver assured us in his *Pahari* accent, “This summer has been hotter than ever before, but 12 km more and we will be higher up in Dharamshala, which is cooler.”

I observed a sign to Palampur, a town best known for its tea gardens, which lies 38 km south of Gaggal. However, the largest gardens are in Dharamshala, owned by the Mann family, whose ancestors arrived in 1882 and set up Dharmasala Tea Company. Although, the region is traditionally known for green tea, its black tea is comparable to Darjeeling Kangra Tea, and is exported.

The road wound higher through hillsides clothed with pine trees. Taking the final turn before approaching our

hotel, we saw buildings with colourful roofs perched on a higher spur across the valley. “That is McLeod Ganj. They say the Dalai Lama was in residence yesterday,” our self-styled guide piped up. He had good reason to convey this piece of information. Besides being the district headquarters and second winter capital of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala has drawn international attention since 1959, when Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, was compelled to leave Tibet and establish his administration-in-exile here.

Dharamshala has another claim to fame: its unique cricket ground under the auspices of the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) is ringed by snow-spangled mountains and makes a spectacular venue for this much



Clockwise from top left: The McLlo restaurant at McLeod Ganj; the diorama at Losel Doll Museum, Norbulingka; a tourist sips *dhabha* chai at a local market; a visitor poses in a tribal Gaddi dress

Opposite page: Visitors walk through the tea gardens at Dharmshala Tea Company

loved sport. It caught the public imagination in 2005 when the India-Pakistan 'icebreaker' match was played here.

We chose to stay at The Pavilion, an atmospheric hotel owned by the HPCA, situated on a forested hilltop. It has a well-appointed spread of chalet-style guestrooms. Ours was the 'Wanderers' block, named after the Namibian cricket ground in Windhoek. From the hotel terrace, we could easily identify the stadium by its distinctive Tibetan style roofs over the pavilion end. In the distance, paragliders in colourful parachutes were floating down the sky. They were enjoying the sport at nearby Bir Billing that qualifies to hold the paragliding world championships with its perfect height, landing spots and just the right wind velocity.

The entire district, as we were to discover, has several offerings. Its multilayered history creates an intriguing melange of culture that makes for

some interesting sightseeing. The choices are so immense that we had to pick our preferences.

Kangra Valley's proximity to the Himalayan passes has attracted several invaders. Greek king Alexander the Great fought King Poros here, identified by historians as Paramanand Chandra of the Katoch family lineage that ruled for over two millennia. The kingdom was so wealthy that Kangra fort was looted several times. Some romantics believe that treasure from Mahmud Ghazni's attack (AD 1009) lies buried in one of the wells. In 1821, Sansar Chand Katoch was compelled to sign away much of his powers to Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab. Then came the British annexation in 1848; they set up a cantonment. It is believed that a pilgrims' rest house or *dharamshala* stood at the site, which is how the township got its name.

By 1860, Dharamshala had become a base for the 66th Light Infantry, later known as the 1st



**Evening lights at
the altar in Gyuto
Monastery**

Gurkha Rifles. The colonisers built an assembly house, a post office and church, besides bazaars in Forsythganj and McLeod Ganj. The area flourished and the tea gardens yielded green gold. Lord Elgin, governor-general and viceroy in 1861, even proposed that the summer capital be made here. However, in 1905, a deadly earthquake reduced this paradise to rubble and panic-stricken settlers abandoned the area. British history has, therefore, been virtually obliterated and what remains today are ancient Hindu influences, together with a living Buddhist culture.

We made a start with a visit to Norbulingka Institute, designed to train and educate displaced Tibetan youth in the arts and provide employment. Its classic Tibetan architecture is laid out along the concept of Avalokitesvara, goddess of compassion and Tibet's patron deity. The main temple hall represents the head of the goddess. It faces a charming Japanese-style bridge over a water body that symbolises the flow of kindness,

and the buildings fan out as the several arms of the goddess. Through meandering paths, with prayer flags fluttering in the shady trees, we toured the workshops where students learn *thangka* (Tibetan Buddhist) painting, statue making and metal craft, wood carving, screen printing and tailoring. Later, we entered the 'Seat of Happiness' temple hall to gaze at the 14-ft gilded statue of the Buddha. Next, the Losel Doll Museum took us through a journey into Tibetan life through a diorama using miniature doll displays. After browsing through the Norbulingka shop and a quick coffee at the idyllic cafe, we set out for McLeod Ganj.

On our drive uphill, we halted a few kilometres short of our destination to see the last vestiges of colonialism, the ancient Gothic church, St John in the Wilderness. Ironically, Lord Elgin met his end in the very region he loved, succumbing to a heart attack while touring Dharamshala in 1863. His cemetery looked rather forlorn, shrouded in silence amid tall deodar trees.

We ascended the steps to go up to the main chamber of the Gyuto Monastery. While we tiptoed in silence, the evening lights came on, casting multicoloured hues in the altar alcoves, leaving us spellbound

At McLeod Ganj, the surge of humanity took us by surprise. Extricating ourselves from a traffic jam, we walked through the main bazaar, overwhelmed by a motley mix of honeymooners, tourists and backpackers. Monks in scarlet robes dotted the narrow lanes. We traversed the Kalachakra temple with its beautiful tiered roofs and wove through streets lined with shops selling votive objects, thangka paintings, carpets and beaded jewellery, among others. While the colour and character of this microcosm of Tibet was fascinating, the milling crowds and confusion generated a mind change. We decided to forego attractions such as Tsuglagkhang monastery, the Tibetan library and museum, and Namgyal monastery, the Dalai Lama's personal sanctum.

We managed a quick lunch of unexpectedly good siz-zlers and cutlets at McLlo, a four-storey, multi-cuisine restaurant and beer bar at McLeod Ganj. The town has an amazing repertoire of bakeries and Italian, French and Japanese restaurants. If it weren't for the warm weather, I would have tried local Tibetan *thupka*, a typical bowl of soup with noodles that is a meal in itself. After lunch, our cabbie recommended we return to Dharamshala to see Gyuto Monastery before closing time.

En route, we took a stop at Dal Lake. As the name is evocative of Kashmir's Dal Lake, expectations were high. Sadly, its shrunken green waters were rather disappointing, save for the picturesque slopes at the far end, forested with coniferous trees. A small lakeside Shiva temple added some charm. Makeshift stalls selling trinkets and snacks lined the hillside. Two rosy-cheeked local girls did good business dressing women tourists up in tribal gowns with heavy silver ornaments and printing out instant photographs.

Gyuto Monastery, known for its study of Tantric meditation, was founded in Tibet in 1474, and later rebuilt in Dharamshala by the Japanese to honour the Dalai Lama. We ascended the wide sweep of polished red steps, arranged in perfect symmetry, to go up to the main chamber, which has a grand statue of the Buddha. While we tiptoed in silence, the evening lights came on, casting multicoloured hues in the altar alcoves, leaving us spellbound.

Over the next few days, we focused on visiting some temples filled with mythological lore. The quaint Aghajar Maha Dev Temple, ensconced in green foothills, is supposed to be the spot where Arjuna meditated on



WHEN TO GO

To enjoy the mountain nip, it is better to visit Dharamshala early summer, during late March/ April. This will also ensure you do not get trapped in the holiday rush. For those who like winter snow, December–February would be ideal as the Dhauladhars are spectacular.

GETTING THERE

By air: Flights to Gaggal are only from Delhi. From the rest of India, a connection has to be taken through Delhi.

By rail: Overnight trains go from Delhi to Pathankot, the nearest railhead, which is 87 km away.

By road: Buses or taxis can be taken from Amritsar, 188 km away, or Jalandhar, which is 192 km away.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel The Pavilion: Tel: 0189-2246006

The Quartz: Tel: (0) 9882340444



Lord Shiva, who granted him a boon of victory over the Kauravas. The largest Shiva temple, Baijnath, entailed a 50-km drive from our hotel, going downhill towards Palampur. As our car negotiated narrow bridges over pebbled rivulets, we passed by tea gardens and summer-time hibiscus flowers peeping over fences. This 13th-century temple, with its *shikhara* rising heavenwards, has a special aura.

Closer to Dharamshala, by the banks of the Ban Ganga River, we visited Chamunda Devi temple, where she is worshipped with her consort, Lord Shiva. The goddess is believed to have vanquished demon brothers Chanda and Munda at this spot.

Beyond temple bells and Buddhist chants, this region of tranquil charm has inspired a flourishing of art. Not



The 13th-century
Baijnath temple

The largest Shiva temple, Baijnath, entailed a 50-km drive from our hotel, going downhill towards Palampur. This 13th-century temple, with its *shikhara* rising heavenwards, has a special aura

far from Palampur is Andretta, a village that developed as an artists' haven under Norah Richards, an Irish actor who enriched Punjabi theatre. Padma Shri Sardar Sobha Singh, who had his residence-cum-studio here, created several masterpieces including signature paintings of Punjabi folklore lovers Sohni Mahiwal and Heer Ranjha. This bucolic hamlet has also attracted art in pottery, including Andretta Pottery and Craft Society, run by Mansimran Mini Singh, son of Gurucharan Singh of Delhi Blue Pottery.

The region's art history dates to the times of Katoch dynasty. Under King Sansar Chand, the Pahari or Kangra School of Art reached its prime. He encouraged artists to depict themes of celestial Radha-Krishna love. The paintings are set in nature landscapes inspired by the region.

Given this vast spectrum of art, culture and philosophy vying for attention, our brief holiday turned out to be packed with a schedule of scenic drives and destinations. Still, it did not subvert that sense of being in an unhurried land, a satiating getaway from the city humdrum. Of course, there is noise and flurry in local markets such as Kotwali bazaar, with its tangle of shops and knots of traffic near the bus station. Then again, modernisation is making rapid strides.

On my way back, I was left wondering whether this town would retain its character while ushering in development. Back in Delhi, in the midst of the cacophony, the answer came to me: those colourful imprints of history will never fade. The stately Dhauladhars will forever look on. Dharam-shala, like its name, will always remain a restful place. 🌸

FIGURE of HOPE

sculpture

K S Radhakrishnan is back with his lithe bronze characters, Musui and his female counterpart Maiya, who are up to their usual antics around everyday objects. They are joined by a swarm of tiny, twig-like figures that have inhabited the spaces around, under and in between the objects. “Musui and Maiya are part alter-egos of the sculptor and part fictional characters through whom Radhakrishnan has been exploring the world. The shifts of vision and the varied metaphors his sculptures evoke make him a sculptor of hope—one who wraps the world in memories and dreams, and measures the earth and the sky with figures cast in bronze, while awakening a keen sense of seeing and feeling in us who view them,” writes professor of art history at Santiniketan, R Siva Kumar, in the catalogue. Titled *The Song of Small Things*, the show took place at Mumbai’s Art Musings Gallery recently.



Courtesy: Art Musings



Photographs by J Ramaswamy

SOUTHERN RHAPSODY

Ambassadors of Carnatic music, the Manis pass the baton to son Karthik, who is creating ripples across the world as a percussionist, reports **Chitra Ramaswamy**

Impeccably dressed in a white *veshti* (dhoti) and shirt, a vermillion dot with a vein of *vibhuthi* above it adorning his forehead, Mridanga Chakravarthi T A S Mani looks agile and spry, even though he's in his 80s. With a cherubic smile and quick gait, he ushers us into a classroom on the second floor of his three-storey school, the Karnataka College of Percussion (KCP), in Bengaluru.

Mani's other half, Vidushi Ramamani, an internationally acclaimed musician and pioneer of Carnatic-jazz fusion, and their son Vidwan Karthik Mani, an ace drummer, join us in the classroom, where a dozen mridangams in black covers are lined up on a table, with walls displaying photographs of landmark events in their journey. The senior Manis have made a colossal contribution to Carnatic music by taking it across continents through their exploits in world music. Mani alone boasts seven decades of concert experience, playing for a galaxy of maestros across four generations.

Mani hails from an illustrious musical lineage of vocalists and percussionists, including his father, Arunachala Bhagavatar, who was a renowned vocalist from Palakkad. He displayed a natural flair for percussion from the age of five as he would drum on any surface. This talent was spotted by an uncle, upon whose advice his father placed him under a reputed tutor.

"I did not have a single class in six months after my first class with my guru. When, at the end of this period, he told me, 'You are eligible to learn the mridangam now,' it dawned on me that he had tested my patience, passion and craving to learn the instrument," says Mani. By his mid-teens, he had already carved a niche for himself as an exemplary accompanist, sharing the stage with top-notch musicians.

legacy

But being a percussionist was not Mani's idea of a career; he wanted to be a mathematician. That was not to be. Even at the cost of grave financial and personal sacrifices, his family made sure he received the training he needed to actualise his abundant talent.

Still only a teenager, Mani entered the big league when he got to accompany one of Carnatic music's Goliaths, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. Impressed with him, Chembai took Mani to Chennai, where the youngster blossomed. In this Mecca of South Indian music, Mani distinguished himself—in fact, he holds the unique record of accompanying artists during the Madras Music Academy concerts for 25 years running!

Mani's experiments in the field led to the creations of new *sholkat* (percussion played at the end of a rhythmic cycle, lending it punch), a distinctive fingering technique, and new and easy-to-learn lesson formats backed by science

and rationale. His work in the field is very inventive, allowing the musician more scope to improvise.

In 1964, at the age of 28, when he was a sought-after accompanying artist to maestros in Carnatic music, Mani established KCP to teach percussion and Carnatic vocal music. Teaching allowed him to enhance his own musical knowledge and he went on to mentor over 1,000 students. More than a hundred of them have professionally pursued percussion. Mani was a true-blue ambassador of percussion music. His tours abroad with leading musicians brought him and percussion instruments such as the mridangam, ghatam, *khanjira*, *thavil*, *morsing* and *konnakkol* to the forefront because of the tremendous response to Carnatic percussion by foreign audiences. This was in contrast to the greater appeal of lyrics and *swara*-based music among Indian *rasika*.

Mani's life took another turn in 1977, when he married Ramamani, who he had accompanied during her concerts. Her brother R A Rajagopal was already his student at the academy. Together with Ramamani, whose passion for *laya* or rhythm was phenomenal, the Manis started performing in, composing and directing jazz ensembles, and working with internationally acclaimed artists such as Louis Banks, Charlie Mariano, Ranjit Barot, Karl Peters and Chris Heinz. "We'd discuss and practise a lot together and it's been a journey in learning," reveals Mani.

Ramamani was born to erudite parents: her father was a Sanskrit scholar and Harikatha exponent, and her mother a connoisseur of music. She began training at the age of five and later learnt under several maestros, including the Bellary Brothers and Anoor Ramakrishna, and also trained in the mridangam and *konnakkol*. With her mellifluous voice and unwavering emphasis on *laya*, Ramamani's rise in the concert

arena was spectacular. The year 1966 was momentous for the 16 year-old, who won a prize for rendering a *pallavi* (the thematic line of a song), which was considered very tough in those days. This propelled the young genius into a spate of competitions, which held her in the spotlight.

"I owe my success in this musical journey to my mother because of the exposure to high-class music that she gave me from the age of five through 17," says Ramamani. The family was living in Mysore back then and her mother made sure she attended music concerts practically every day, not to mention actively imparting her own musical knowledge to her daughter. Unlike many women musicians of the time, Ramamani also received valuable support from her husband. It was on his urging that she entered the

I went to the green room, there were people knocking on the door. I used to lock the door and sit down, feeling overwhelmed by it all. Louis would tell me, 'Rama, they like your singing, they want to ask you questions. Don't close the door, come out.' Language too was a problem at that time because my accent was not very good."

Fans came to her rescue with regard to the food. She tells us, "When we were touring Poland, a fan brought me carrot halwa after referring to cook books! On the same tour, a journalist presented me a giant pumpkin he had grown on his farm because I am a vegetarian! In Switzerland, another fan was so overcome listening to me at a concert that she took off her finger ring and presented it to me. Then, there was a 90-year-old Gandhian in Portugal, who asked me

In Chennai, the Mecca of South Indian music, Mani distinguished himself—he holds the record of accompanying artists during the Madras Music Academy concerts for 25 years running!

world of fusion and jazz in 1979, and took part in the Jazz Yatra in Kolkata.

The rising singer became the vocalist for Sangam, a band formed that year with Braz Gonsalves, Louis Banks, Kari Peters, Ramesh Shoththam, Ranjit Barot and her *mridangist* brother Rajagopal. Her debut foreign tour with the band in 1979-80 was a landmark event. The tour, which ended in West Germany, covered events in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Portugal. "The most difficult aspect of that first tour was adjusting to the cold European weather," she remembers. "To steady my voice in shivering temperatures was my first challenge. I was also taken aback by the foreigners' overt appreciation for my music. It was very different to what I was used to here. There was thunderous applause for prolonged periods and standing ovations. When

to sing *Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram* on every day of our 10-day tour there!"

After her debut in fusion, Ramamani and her husband began regular collaborations with international bands. They witnessed monumental success with the album *Jyothi* by famed American saxophonist Charlie Mariano. Recorded in Germany and released in 1983, it featured Mani, Ramamani and Rajagopal. It was a blend of jazz, country, folk and world music, rendered in contemporary jazz style. The Ramamani Quartet is her most recent fusion band, which includes her son Karthik on the drums, Sameer Rao on the flute and Vivek Santosh on the piano.

At the Century of Song concert during the Ruhrtriennale 2007 in Germany, Ramamani sang Western jazz



“Music is a great leveller. We gave a cassette of bhajans to a gentleman in Switzerland who was to undergo cardiac surgery. Miraculously, the following day, the doctors found no blocks”

for the first time and had her audience in tears. She cites several instances of patients developing a positive attitude after listening to their performances in clinics. “Music is a great leveller,” she says. “We gave a cassette of bhajans to a gentleman in Switzerland who was to undergo cardiac surgery for arterial blocks. On the eve of the surgery, he danced to the bhajans in the hospital. Miraculously, the following day, when he was wheeled in for surgery, the doctors found no blocks in his heart. He wrote to us saying it was a miracle from KCP.”

While Ramamani was creating ripples wherever she went, Mani actively began directing ensembles, combining Carnatic melodies with jazz and Western music genres. He also authored a book on the science of learning percussion instruments. Titled *Sogasuga Mridanga Talamum* and written in English, it is widely used in universities all over the world.

Their son Karthik’s entry into the world of music and percussion also came early. He began playing the *ghatam* at the age of five; at around 11, he was accompanying junior

artists at local concerts, without any formal training. Despite his natural flair for instruments, music did not feature in the youngster’s plans. That’s why it came as a thunderbolt when he quit his engineering degree course in the fifth semester in 2002 to pursue music.

“On New Year’s eve, in 2003, I got this sudden brainwave that music was my calling! I announced to friends with whom I was partying, and then to my parents, that I would discontinue college. Though I was accompanying artists on the ghatam from the age of 11, I had no formal training. I was prepared to go to the Malleshwaram Railway Station, take my drum kit and spread a bedsheet there and begin playing,” says Karthik, as his parents’ faces beam with pride and joy.

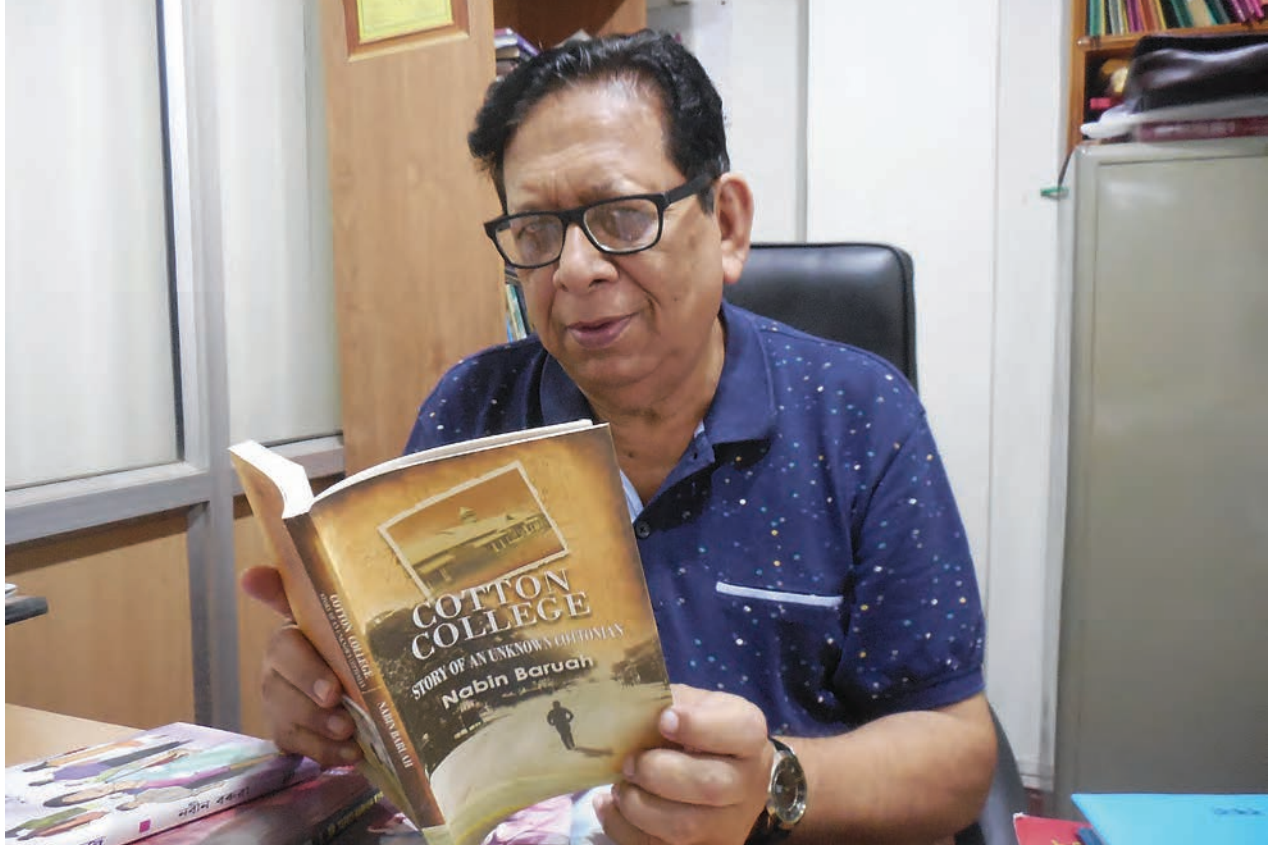
Ramamani became the punching bag between father and son. She says, “Mani wanted his son to become a doctor or engineer to avoid the struggle that he experienced.” Mani reveals, “I told him he could pursue music as a profession after he equipped himself with an engineering degree. I did not have the luxury to follow

my academic dreams, but we had the wherewithal to provide him a sound academic education. Although I was not really convinced, when Karthik told me he was willing to struggle and make it in the music field, I didn’t want to erode his confidence.”

The youngster made good on his promise and carved a name for himself in the percussion world, playing multiple instruments in various bands. While he has been part of his parents’ Tala Tarangini, he has also been playing at several international music festivals and winning accolades. He became the first Indian musician to be awarded the Independent World Music Award, playing for the Indo-Canadian band Lehera in 2009.

For 15 years, the globe-trotting Karthik has blossomed with all genres of music, from the purely classical to contemporary, folk, jazz, world music. Like his parents before him, he has collaborated with and played alongside legends and renowned names, including Zakir Hussain, Mandolin Srinivas and Shankar Mahadevan.

As for the senior Manis, they are happy their legacy is being taken forward. They echo each other when they say, “We set ourselves challenges to grow, because even as we reach our journey’s end, there is so little that we would have really learnt, practically nothing at all!”



Dr Tapati Baruah Kashyap

Mind your LANGUAGE

Guwahati-based novelist-cum-publisher **Nabin Baruah** is giving contemporary Assamese writers the greatest gift an author could ask for: a platform to take their work to non-Assamese readers. One of the books he published recently, *Nirmalprabha Bardoloi*, has already found a place in the Library of Congress in the US. All this is possible because Baruah is publishing translations of Assamese works, each of which includes a holistic picture of the life and works of each author.

The 73 year-old is all too aware of how ambitious his goals are. He had begun work on a series called 'Studies on Modern Assamese Writers' in 2014 and published the first book in this series a year later. He released four more books in the last few months. It was one of these that made it all the way to Capitol Hill.

Baruah reveals that the other four writers he is promoting through his publishing house, Purbanchal Prakash, are Homen Borgohain, Syed Abdul Malik, Nirupama Borgohain and Nirmalprabha Bardoloi—all Sahitya Akademi Award winners. "Although they don't sell like hot cakes, readers as well as libraries and institutions have shown keen interest," he says. He is promoting the authors he has selected with almost missionary zeal. How did it all begin? "At a book fair in New Delhi in 2005, I realised Assamese writers were not known outside Assam. This is because neither are there many translations of their works into English and other languages, nor are there books about them. A publisher at

the fair told me the only Assamese author he had heard of was Indira Goswami, as her works were available in English too. He said that as I was a Guwahati-based publisher, perhaps I should shoulder the responsibility of introducing these writers to the outside world."

literature

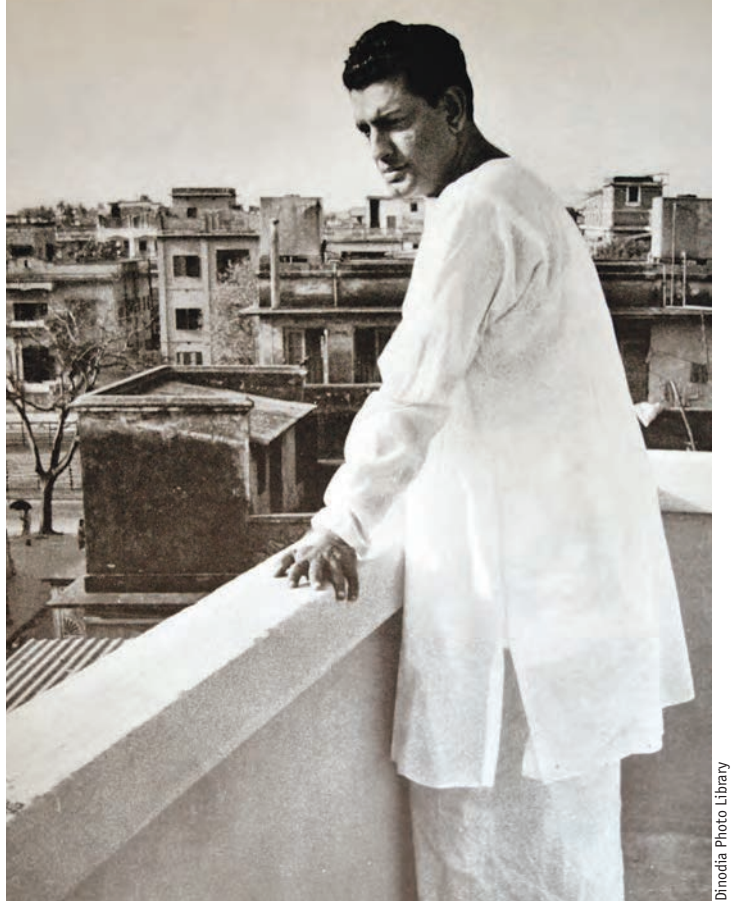
Although publishing is his livelihood, Baruah is also a writer of note. He has authored eight novels and a collection of short stories, but is best known for *Cotton College*, his first novel and one he wrote as an undergraduate of Cotton College in Guwahati. The story first appeared as a novella in a special issue of *Nilachal*, a weekly newspaper, in the 1960s. He later expanded it into a novel and published it as a book. It has since seen nine editions, including a translation into English. "People say it is one of the earliest campus novels in any Indian language. Written in 1965, *Cotton College* continues to sell more than 50 years later," Baruah says with pride.

The first book Baruah published was a novel by noted Assamese author and litterateur, Debabrata Das, in 1983. He has since published over 500 titles, about 50 of them English, the rest in Assamese. "I publish a range of books, from novels and literary criticism to economics and science. I take part in books fairs in the state and also send my books, especially the English titles, to fairs across the country through other publishers." Right now, he's got his sights firmly focused on the English titles.

—Dr Tapati Baruah Kashyap

Down memory lane

Film connoisseurs were in for a treat at the 24th Kolkata International Film Festival. A poster exhibition, titled *Chalochitro*, to commemorate a century of Bengali cinema, contained rare treasures that drew in crowds of all ages. On display was precious memorabilia, from posters of Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (1955), Ritwik Ghatak's *Titas Ekti Nodir Naam* (1973) and P C Barua's *Aparadhi* (1931), the first Indian film shot with artificial light, to the first gramophone record of Bengali cinema's *Chandidas* (1932) and rare stamps and photographs of film personalities of yore. The exhibition was inaugurated by veteran actors Soumitra Chatterjee, Jaya Bachchan and Prosenjit Chatterjee, among others.



Dinodia Photo Library

Photographs courtesy: Vadehra Art Gallery



WE ARE WHAT WE EAT

It's finally here, proof that age-old truths about the way we eat did not come out of nowhere. Thanks to nutritionist Kavita Devgan's new offering, *Ultimate Grandmother Hacks* (Rupa; ₹ 295; 236 pages), we can now find out why we were told to drink water first thing in the morning, why adding ghee to the phulka is good for health, or why raw onions and green chillies are served with a meal. Devgan writes in her book, "The biggest lesson I learnt from my mother is that common sense should prevail. She is a firm believer of the fact that our gut feeling tells us what's good for it and for the rest of our body. We just need to listen." If you still don't buy that, pick up a copy of the book where she backs up many of our food customs and traditions with science and reason.

“ I adapt techniques of tholpavakoothu to portray a contemporary message. While traditional artists usually depict stories from the *Ramayana*, and use colour pigments, I use charcoal. They put an oil lamp in a coconut to create shadows, I use LED bulbs. Light and darkness give life to a picture. I use this old technique in a modern style to reflect the state of the world today.

—Artist **K M Madhusudhanan**, 62, speaking to *Open magazine* on his recent solo exhibition, titled *Granite Lamp & Mirror*, which took place at Vadehra Art Gallery in Delhi recently

Experience

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OFF THE CUFF BY RAJU MUKHERJI

MY FIRST HERO: An ode to exemplary mountaineer— and selfless and generous man—Tenzing Norgay

DARJEELING, 1955. Dr 'Pahari' Guha Mazumdar was at the time the civil surgeon of the Darjeeling district. A selfless man of charm and honour. The hill people were his family. He spoke their language, he wore their 'sarong', he ate their food and he took care of them. The Sherpas and the other hill tribes literally worshipped him.

Among the hardy Sherpas who came to visit the 'Pahari *daktar saab*' was a man who began life as a guide and coolie to foreign mountaineers who came to the foothills of the Himalaya with the intention to climb the various high peaks of the region. Within a few years he was not only the best guide available but the most sought-after supervisor of the labourers, who carried heavy loads on their back to help the expedition teams.

Away from mountaineering expeditions, this stocky, tough Sherpa was a social worker par excellence in his hometown *bustee* in Darjeeling. He would carry the old and the infirm to the good doctor and flash his heart-winning smile. He became Dr Guha Mazumdar's younger brother in every respect imaginable.

When Sherpa Tenzing came down from the skies in 1953, the noble doctor complimented him on his 'conquest' of Mount Everest. The world-renowned climber in all modesty replied, "Doctor *saab*, I was lucky to go on a pilgrimage to God's abode." The doctor embraced him and began to weep uncontrollably. Years later, Dr Guha Mazumdar told our family, "I realised there and then how small we were. The real people are these men who have the highest regard for the bounties of nature. Our knowledge is so very shallow, so very superfluous. These simple, innocent hill people have a far more profound understanding and respect for nature."

In a country where genuine heroes are forgotten, erosion in values is the only option. A true champion of Tenzing

Norgay's stature has receded into the background. The spirit of adventure has ebbed. We have no inclination towards sports of high risks. Our whole ethos revolves around 'heroes' of doubtful potential.

The greatness of Tenzing lay in his simplicity. International renown and awards chased him. Presidents and kings followed his trail. Press and politicians pestered him. But he remained his smiling self with the barest minimum of needs. The greatness of the man lay in his innocence. He just could not utter a lie, not even a white lie. When asked who stepped first on top of Mount Everest, Tenzing replied that though they had the same rope around their

waist, Edmund Hillary's feet were the first on the summit and his own followed soon after. It takes great courage to express that degree of truth.

In mountaineering parlance, two climbers handling the same rope are considered to be together and not separate from each other. In a high-risk adventure sport like mountaineering, the issue of individualism does not arise. It is a total

team effort. He could easily have avoided the issue with a vague answer, but then Tenzing would not have been Tenzing. This was the real Tenzing. Throughout his life, he was 'used' by others. On being appointed director of Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, he was assured by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chief Minister of West Bengal Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy that his appointment was for life and that he would accordingly draw remuneration throughout his tenure. But after the death of those political leaders, he was asked to retire! No further remuneration, no pension followed. Moreover, throughout his period of directorship, not once did he get any increment on his salary!

When some little money came to him by way of book royalty and donations, numerous blood-relations appeared and came to stay in his humble home and lived off him. The kind-hearted man just could not turn them away. When India began sending expeditions to Mount



Five year-old
Mukherji
with his first
hero Tenzing
Norgay

Courtesy: Raju Mukherji

Everest, nobody thought him important enough to be invited at the flagging-off ceremonies. But not once did he ever express any grudge against any of his exploiters.

Born in Nepal of Sherpa stock, Tenzing lived in the British-built hill station of Darjeeling in North Bengal. After the epic achievement of summiting Everest in 1953, he was offered 'nationality' by both Nepal and India. Both countries, which had done nothing for him or for his indomitable Sherpa people, wanted to claim him as one of their own for international publicity. Pressure was piled on him from either side, but Tenzing, true to his honest belief, maintained that he was both a Nepali and an Indian! In his innocence he highlighted the international nature of his personality.

This is exactly the kind of pettiness and disregard we showed a man who literally put India on top of the world.

On 29 May 1953, he and New Zealander Edmund Hillary reached the summit of Mount Everest as part of the British expedition team under John Hunt.

When the tricolour fluttered on top of the world on that historic day, the brave man holding the pickaxe was none other than this self-made mountaineer from Darjeeling in Bengal. When they realised they were on the summit, these two toughest and bravest of men embraced each other and began to shed tears. They were mesmerised by the beauty and the grandeur of nature. Tenzing took out the sweet lozenge and the coloured pencil stub his daughter Nima had given him and offered it to the Almighty!

People who climb peaks are themselves at the summit of the human race. They have little interest in borders and barriers. Rarefied realms they traverse in isolation. They do not bother about nationality, race, colour of skin, levels of education, financial backgrounds. Edmund Hillary would not have opted for the 'coloured', poor Sherpa when he decided on the final launch if he was a racist. Tenzing did not blink an eye to say Hillary was the first to step on the summit ahead of him. In mountaineering, two climb-



Dinodia Photo Library

On top, Hillary clicked Tenzing's photo on Mount Everest. They had just two exposures left! So to get the perfect frame, Hillary took Tenzing's picture and with the single remaining frame he clicked the final path they traversed for the benefit of future mountaineers

ers together on the same rope are like twins. The rope is the umbilical cord. They are together, inseparable. They have the same identity. Both Hillary and Tenzing were very appropriately given the honour of being the first to climb the highest peak on earth. None would consider them first and second in order.

If Tenzing was magnanimous, so too was Hillary. On top, Hillary reciprocated by clicking Tenzing's photo on Mount Everest and did not insist on having his own photo taken. Why was just Tenzing's photo on the summit taken? Why not Hillary's as well? The reason: they had just two exposures left! Hillary realised that Tenzing may not be able to handle the camera well enough. So to get the perfect frame, he took Tenzing's picture and with the single remaining frame he clicked the final path they traversed for the benefit of future mountaineers. These acts of Tenzing and Hillary are at the summit of man's selflessness.

Mountaineering is an amazing sport exclusively for the bravest and selfless of men and women. There are no spectators to cheer and applaud up on the mountain.

No media support for instant glory. It is a complete team effort. No individual can do it alone without the active, selfless support of his colleagues. One small error and the climber invites his own death; sometimes even dragging down his partner with him. The progress is very lonely, very slow, very difficult. Courage, strength, patience, teamwork, leadership all combine to be successful in this most dangerous of all sports.

Mountaineering is man's communion with nature, not a sport between humans. It is a pursuit to overcome the almost insurmountable hazards of natural obstacles: climate, rain, blinding sunlight, gusty wind, snow, rocks, crevices, chasms, lack of oxygen, no shade or shadow, glaciers, avalanches. Why would anybody want to volunteer to attempt to overcome such odds?

The mind of a genuine mountaineer is almost impossible to fathom. They are above the concept of self. These

daredevils care not about fame or fortune. Why would any sane person opt for a sport where there is no return in any form? Why aim for a deserted summit? To help us understand the reason for a mountaineer to climb a peak, a legendary climber by the name of Keith Mallory simply said, "Because it is there." Full stop. All questions vanish in a moment. One is astounded in the face of such selfless courage. Incidentally, Mallory vanished in the Himalaya in the 1920s while attempting to climb the world's highest peak. His body was never found.

Tenzing could not write yet he sent hundreds of letters to his fans worldwide. Tenzing could not read, yet he received thousands of articles and books written on

him from his admirers all over the world. Generous, courageous, honest and selfless, the exemplary mountaineer remains a legend and inspiration to millions around the world to this day. But in his own country, he is a forgotten man.

When 'Pahari' doctor took our family to meet him, the ever-smiling, all-conquering Tenzing Norgay picked me up in his arms and related constantly to my parents, "It was a pilgrimage to the Almighty's abode." I was five years old then—I can still feel the blessed touch. He was my first hero. And despite each passing day, I can still smell the earthy odour of the most marvellous of human beings. For me, it was a pilgrimage to the best of creation.

Kolkata-based Mukherji is a former cricket player, coach, selector, talent scout, match referee and writer



ONE STITCH AT A TIME

It was in the late 1970s that I held my first embroidery exhibition. It was at Valliammal School in Chennai, the school my children attended. The principal saw my work and invited me to display it. I sent it over and she had arranged it beautifully all across the classroom.

I have always stitched and embroidered as a hobby. I watched my sister do needlework; that's where my learning began. In then Madras, I took tailoring classes, and have since done nearly 1,000 pieces of embroidery, ranging from clothing to upholstery.

My husband (*in pic*) was in the civil services and as a young bride I was expected to adhere to the norms, with no exceptions. I was never allowed to go out alone, and often stayed indoors. It was at this time when my children were young that I consistently sewed. When I had to buy thread, I had to ask the household staff to get it for me!

I also learnt to make fabric dolls from a lady in Karai-kudi. My design inspiration comes from books I bought in London. Somehow I've never been able to part with my designs. What I have begun to part with, though, is my collection; I've given them to my grandchildren.

I've held exhibitions in 32 places across India. In 1974, I exhibited 300 pieces of my work and they were well-received. One of those special moments was when a relative



of Raja Ravi Varma requested me to replicate two of his designs on fabric. One was of late prime minister Indira Gandhi and the second was a small book. He was thrilled to see the finished product!

I am 81 years old, and have no health issues. I always attend to my work at home first, and then sit with my embroidery work. I begin slowly and pick up the pace as I near completion. My vision is fairly good and I still take classes, free of cost, for those who are interested in embroidery.

Honestly, embroidery is not very useful. It is challenging and takes enormous energy, a strong will and keen interest to pursue this hobby. In many ways, I see this skill as God's gift. I do think it's important to keep yourself active all through the day. Apart from using one's skill, embroidery teaches us many lessons, like being disciplined, using time productively and, most important, learning to pay attention to detail—appreciating the little things in life.

—Lakshmi Dhandapani, Coimbatore

What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson

to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.



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 magic of storytelling

Author **Manjiri Prabhu** on how words weave a magical world, creating hope for humanity

Don't buy it," my good friend Sarita admonished me. "It's just a stick; pure marketing gimmick." I nodded, even as my fingers lingered over wooden, slick wands wrapped in black velvet in grey boxes. The names in embossed gold on the long, rectangular boxes were all too familiar—Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, Ron Weasley and many more.

Sarita took a couple of pictures of the sticks. "I'll make you an exact replica when we return to Pune," she offered.

Being an architect, it wouldn't be difficult for her. Common sense dictated that she was right and I was being silly in wanting to possess a wand that was but a planned marketing strategy of the franchise. Common sense prevailed and I walked away.

It was a surreal world—The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios in Los Angeles with Hogsmeade Village and its snow-topped tall grey slate spires of the street shops. Having lived with Harry Potter through the books, it was like stepping into a world that had gripped my imagination for years. But it was the 'Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey' ride inside Hogwarts castle that made my day. It took us on a broomstick, zipping through the sky over the Hogwarts grounds with Harry, battling demons, fire dragons, death eaters and magic spells and finally emerging victorious in the fight for good against evil. It was as if the characters that had been a part of the fantasy had come alive, filling me with a sense of wonderment and joy.

For the past few months, I had been going through a 'phase' that almost every writer probably goes through at least once in their lifetime. I had just visited an annual exhibition in Pune, where books were being sold by a kilo. Seeing all those books in scattered piles in varying states of neglect had set a ball of thoughts rolling in my head, leading to the inevitable self-questioning. What would happen if I stopped writing?

Would anyone even notice if my books didn't reach the market? Why was I even writing when there were already hundreds of books being whipped out, year after year, around the world? Barely read, many of them ended in a fateful pile of trash, to be sold for a pitiful sum per kilo.

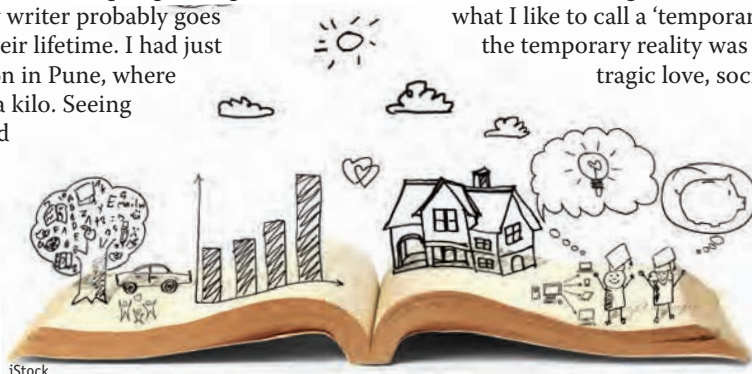
It was in this state of mind that I had come to Universal Studios. The moment I stepped into that magical world, I experienced nothing but sheer joy. It was an unforgettable day, which showed me that pure unaltered happiness exists, that age is no bar for this wild pleasure and that belief and joy are two sides of the same coin, if only you allow yourself to recognise it.

As I moved from one adapted world to another in the studio, masterful creations of scenes and characters from books and films, I got in touch with the child in me. In fact, I got in touch with 'me'! As did everyone around me—strolling through the world of Harry Potter, taking thrilling rides and studio tours—living a slice of imagination in reality. It lifted us from the mundane into a realm of dreams, which were more real than reality itself.

I looked around at groups of people, all fans of the creative world, soaking in the recreation of their imagination. They were reliving their childhood and rejuvenating their energies in the most marvellous way possible. Forgetting their worries, rituals, jobs, commitments, they, like me, were being reborn at various levels. All this was possible only because someone, somewhere had the inspiration, energy and dedication to come up with an idea, which took shape as a story.

Writers write from their imagination, put in their sweat and life into creating an alternate world for readers—what I like to call a 'temporary reality'. Whether the temporary reality was a story of sweet or tragic love, socio-political awareness,

personal or spiritual transformation, or filled with atrocious audacities and suggestions, each story touched someone's heart somewhere—



healing, inspiring, disturbing, prodding into thought and giving hope.

The troubling questions in my mind had been answered. Writers were an essential part of society because from their island of imagination they produced joy and hope, which snowballed across hearts, making a difference.

My steps were heavy as we reluctantly headed out. We were almost by the Hogwarts Express stationed by the entrance, when I stopped. Sarita glanced at me, exasperated. She knew what it was. I wheeled around and headed straight back to Hogsmeade's village. Standing in the long queue for my turn to enter

I simply had to buy Hermione's magic wand for myself. I knew it wasn't really a 'magical' wand. But that wand, in a way, represented the author in me, everything I believed in and strived to achieve: a place in the hearts of readers

the shop, I did my best to convince Sarita. I simply had to buy Hermione's magic wand for myself. I wanted Sarita to understand how important it was for me to buy this wand in Universal Studios and carry it back with me to Pune like a prized possession. I knew it was just a stick. It wasn't really a 'magical' wand. But that wand, in a way, represented the author in me, everything I believed in and strived to achieve: a place in the hearts of readers. And in that sense, it was indeed magical.

Today, when I see the wand in my house and curl my fingers around its wooden, intricately carved body, I feel its magic. But better still I feel my own magic.

Pune-based Prabhu is a writer of mystery. Her latest book, Voice of the Runes, is a destination thriller that unfolds over 36 hours in Sweden



You know, old guys, old people, think about death once in a while. I'm no exception. In fact, I called my family together a few months ago, sat them down, and I said, "In no way do I want to live in a vegetative state, kept alive by a machine and fed liquid from a bottle. If that happens, pull the plug." They got up, pulled the cord on my computer, and threw away my wine. But I'm going to get back at them because I know what my last words are going to be. Picture everybody gathered around the hospital bed and with my last breath, I croak out, "I hid a million dollars under the...."

—American comedian Chuck Esterly (b. 1926)

Blast from the past

As a 17 year-old, this young short story writer from Delhi was handpicked by veteran actor Balraj Sahni to assist his theatre group in Bombay. Later, Sahni introduced **Raaj Grover** to director Krishan Chopra, who took him under his wing. As Chopra's chief assistant on *Heera Moti*, *Char Diwari* and *Gaban*, he learnt the ropes of the trade.

In the meantime, he caught the eye of Sunil Dutt, the lead actor of *Gaban*. Dutt anointed him production-in-charge of his production house, Ajanta Arts. Grover went on to helm many films for Ajanta Arts including *Yaadein*, *Man Ka Meet*, *Reshma Aur Shera* and *Nehle Pe Dehla*. Incidentally, *Reshma Aur Shera* marked the debut of Amitabh Bachchan. Later, as an independent producer, Grover produced *Taaqat* with Vinod Khanna, Rakhee and Parveen Babi in the lead and *Thikana*, directed by Mahesh Bhatt and starring Anil Kapoor, Amrita Singh and Smita Patil.

A poet at heart, the 81 year-old Grover is known for his joie de vivre. His book *The Legends of Bollywood* (Jaico; ₹ 399; 269 pages), originally written in Hindi and Urdu, and translated by journalist Suchitra Iyer in English, is replete with memorable anecdotes from the Mumbai film industry. Grover, who currently lives in New York with wife Shashi, children and grandchildren, shares some starry tales over an email interview with **Shirekha Pillai**. Excerpts:

You have spent many years in the Mumbai film industry. What is your major takeaway?

The major learning for me has been that 'humanity' is the only religion in Bollywood. Irrespective of your race, religion, caste and job, everybody is equal. Whether you are an actor or spot-boy, the only thing that matters is your love, dedication and sincerity towards your job.

In your memoirs, you gush about the love between Nargis and Sunil Dutt....

They were, indeed, the ideal couple—madly in love with each other. *Bhabhiji's* love for Dutt *saab* contained a little *tadka* of fun. For instance, she used to add extra onion

authorspeak



Jignesh Patel

and garlic when he had to shoot romantic scenes. On the other hand, Dutt *saab's* love for her was so intense and respectful that, many a time, I have been witness to *bhabhiji* getting emotional and teary. When she was admitted to Sloan Kettering Hospital in New York for 10 months, Dutt *saab* left work to be a constant presence by her side. She was so moved by his selfless dedication that she told him, "How much ever I thank the Lord for bringing you into my life as my husband, it will never be enough."

You've written about Amitabh Bachchan's struggler days in Bombay. To what would you ascribe his longevity in films?

When I met him for the first time for an hour or so at my cousin sister's house in Calcutta, I found him simple, shy and a little short of words. But, even then, Amitabh was

certain he wanted to make a career in acting. I would say the qualities that have made Amitabh the Big B of Bollywood are his punctuality, hard work, professionalism and love and respect for elders.

Can you name one person who was completely unaffected by stardom?

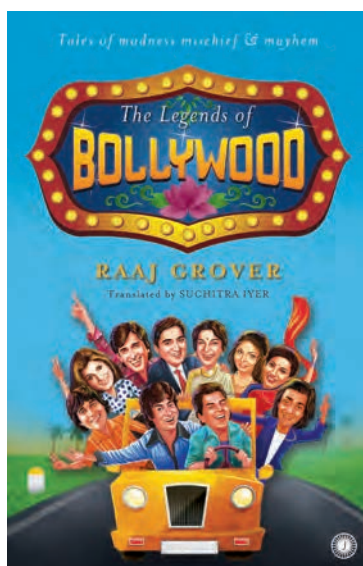
That has to be Balraj Sahni. He has a special place in my life. Balraj's father Harbans Lal Sahni and my father Dina Nath were neighbours and good friends in Delhi. Balraj had been my main benefactor when I was in Bombay. He had read one of my stories, *School Bus Driver*, published in a popular Urdu magazine. He told my father he would take care of me and took me with him to Bombay. I stayed at his house for about a year. As I was fluent in Hindi, Urdu and English, he helped me join film director Krishan Chopra as an assistant director. He and his wife Santosh even arranged everything for my wedding and reception.

You're pretty close to Manoj Kumar, whose memoir you've penned.

Hari Krishan Goswamy was a good-looking, dashing boy from old Rajinder Nagar in Delhi. While studying at Salwan School, he fell head over heels in love with a beautiful and charming young girl, who was a student of Lahore Montessori School in Karol Bagh. This was before he acquired his screen name, Manoj Kumar. Though he became a big star, Manoj married his first love, Shashi. Manoj still tells everyone he earned his first rupee in the industry because of his friend Raaj Grover. Incidentally, I had introduced him to my filmmaker friend Homi Sethna, who signed him for *Gangu Teli*, a documentary for which he was paid ₹ 1,000.

In *The Legends of Bollywood* you talk about Manoj Kumar's homeopathic skills.

Manoj went to K Prehlad, a close relative of mine, who was a popular homeopathic doctor in Bombay, for some health issue. Manoj was so happy with the treatment that



“‘Humanity’ is the only religion in Bollywood. Irrespective of your race, religion, caste and job, everybody is equal. Whether you are an actor or spot-boy, the only thing that matters is your love, dedication and sincerity towards your job”

he became Prehlad's student. Manoj also learnt from popular actor Ashok Kumar, who was also well-versed in homeopathy. It goes to Manoj's credit that he became so proficient in the science later that, along with others in the film industry, Ashok Kumar used to turn to him for homeopathic cure.

Your recollection of Shashi and Jennifer Kapoor exudes wit. Can you share some lighter moments with them?

Shashi and I used to openly discuss family, films and politics. He would often say 90 per cent of husbands are henpecked and the rest are liars when they say they are not! He would also add that the entire Kapoor clan belonged to the second group! Though Shashi was fit in his younger days, he put on some weight later. When I asked him about it, he said, “It is in the Kapoor genes. After 40, our bums become enlarged, as we religiously stick to our daily routine of eating and acting. During lunch, we Kapoors discuss what to have for dinner, and during dinner we discuss next day's breakfast!” On another occasion, when I told Shashi my wife (Shashi) had gone to Delhi, he said, “So, should I come over? What difference will it make? My name is also Shashi!” This was followed by rapturous laughter that was characteristic of him.

Besides the Duttas and Manoj Kumar, what are the other friendships in the industry you value the most?

I cherish my friendships with Vinod Khanna, Rakhee Gulzar, Dharmendra and Prakash Mehra.

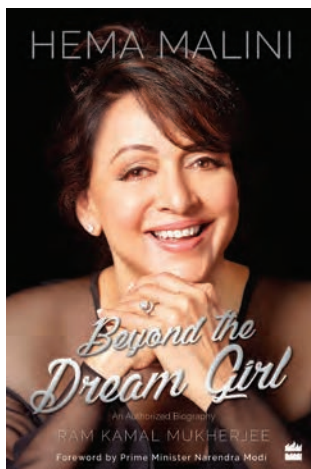
You're an octogenarian, yet your lust for life remains unabated. What's your motto?

At 81 years of biological age, I feel cheated by the last digit '1', which has jumped to the wrong side of the number 8! In spirit, I feel only 18. I feel age can't make one feel old because that is just a number. What matters is how you feel about life. If you feel good about yourself and others, you are young! There's this joke between my friends and I; when they call me over the phone, they greet me by saying, “Hello, Raaj Grover—never over.”

The quintessential Dream Girl

It's a bold and beautiful story, of a bold and beautiful person. **Ram Kamal Mukherjee's** *Hema Malini: Beyond the Dream Girl* (HarperCollins; 219 pages; ₹ 599) is as close to an autobiography of Hema Malini that we will ever get. Mukherjee, Hema's long-time admirer and biographer, has done every fan of the 'Dream Girl' a solid service by unspooling the exciting and enticing inside story. Unlike his worshipful tributes to her in the past, such as the coffee table book titled *Hema Malini: Diva Unveiled* from more than 10 years ago, *Beyond the Dream Girl* is a step up in terms of readability and content.

With a foreword by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and an afterword by long-time collaborator and director Ramesh Sippy, *Beyond the Dream Girl* celebrates the life and times of one of Indian cinema's greatest stars, who has, incidentally, completed 50 years in the industry.



We partake in an intimate journey, which takes us from her childhood, relationship with her parents and brothers—Jagannath and Kannan—who later took over their parents' roles as manager and accountant, to the legendary Hema-Dharmendra love story, among others.

Early on, we are introduced to Hema's late mother, Jaya Chakravarthy (*in pic below, left*), a disciplinarian who paved the way for her daughter's uncompromising stand on her primary vocation, i.e., dance. Hema went on to create a niche for herself in an industry where larger-than-life male superstars reined.

Through friendships and collaborations with the likes of Gulzar and Ramesh Sippy, Hema was inspired, encouraged and challenged to get into music, direction and production, besides acting. It's a well-known fact that she gave Shah Rukh Khan his big break in *Dil Aashna Hai*.

We are also entertained by behind-the-scenes stories that showcase Hema's grit and gumption. For instance, while shooting for *Sholay*, she danced barefoot on hot ground despite scorching heat. Later, she kept dancing on glass splinters—a requirement for the scene!





Photographs courtesy: HarperCollins

But the most exciting chapter has to be the one which talks about a love-struck Dharmendra. Titled “An Eternal Love Story”, it plays out in true filmy style. We get to know that Dharmendra rushed to stop Hema’s impending marriage to Jeetendra, and asked for her hand in marriage. Hema boldly decided to stand by an already married Dharmendra at a time when society was much more conservative.

We come to understand that, for Hema, life as a public servant came with a different set of challenges than just life in the public eye... but it was nothing she couldn’t rise up to meet. That is the Hema Malini we come to know of in *Beyond the Dream Girl*—brave and beautiful!

EXCERPTS FROM HEMA MALINI: BEYOND THE DREAM GIRL

Meanwhile, Jaya kept working on her plans. Every day was spent convincing her daughter to marry Jeetendra. She managed to coax Hema to meet his parents, and once Hema did, things started spiralling. Jeetendra’s family was ecstatic – they could hardly wait for the alliance. A close friend of Jeetendra’s remembers him saying, “I don’t want to marry Hema. I am not in love with her. She is not in love with me. But my family wants it, so I might as well. And she is such a good girl.”

For all practical purposes, it was to be a marriage of convenience. It had to be quick – before either party changed its mind – and it had to be a clandestine affair, so that no ‘untoward trouble’ could take place. Hema, Jeetendra and their families had flown to Madras and the wedding was supposed to happen there. But an evening daily got a whiff of the sensational news and their next issue carried the ‘big story’. It left much of the industry in a state of disbelief but more importantly, it gave Dharmendra a jolt he was clearly unprepared for. Recovering his wits quickly, he rushed to Shobha Sippy’s house – then Jeetendra’s airhostess girlfriend – and the two took the next flight to Madras to take matters into their hands.

When they reached Hema’s house in Madras, the scene, ironically was no less dramatic than a blockbuster. Hema’s father couldn’t contain his rage and almost physically pushed Dharmendra out of the house. “Why don’t you get out of my daughter’s life? You are a married man, you can’t marry my daughter,” he repeatedly yelled. But a pleading, helplessly sentimental and slightly inebriated Dharam could not be budged. Finally, they agreed to let him talk to Hema alone in a room, while everybody else – Hema’s parents, Jeetendra’s parents and the registrar of the marriage bureau – waited outside on tenterhooks.

Inside the room, the two were going through an emotional turmoil of catastrophic proportions. Dharmendra, distraught and on the verge of falling to pieces, kept begging Hema not to make such a ‘big mistake’.

When Hema finally came out of the room – puffy-eyed and visibly shaken – her voice quivered as she asked everyone if they could wait for a few days. Jeetendra and his parents, livid by now, declared that that was not an option. The marriage had to happen now or never. As everyone waited desperately for an answer, Hema quietly shook her head. The insult was far too much for Jeetendra and he stormed out of the house with his parents.

This incident occurred in 1974. It took Hema another two years before she finally spoke to *Stardust* about this tumultuous event. “I did not propose to Jeetendra. His parents made the proposal. I was confused. It was the most unexpected thing that has ever happened to me. They came over in the morning. By evening Shobha and all landed there – and the matter ended there. But as far as the press was concerned, that’s where the story began!”

....

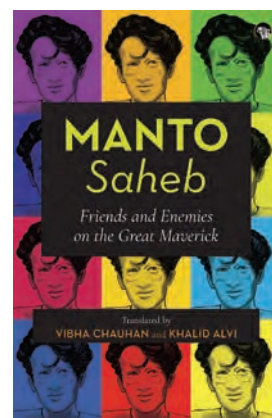
Who would have known that for Hema and Dharmendra, the moment of truth would finally arrive with a film called *Hum Tere Ashique Hain* (1979)? Based on the classic *My Fair Lady* (1974), this Prem Sagar venture featured Hema and Jeetendra once again, and upon the release did reasonably well, making it to the top 20 films of the year. In it was a scene where Jeetendra plants a kiss on Hema’s cheek; in yet another scene, she had apparently cried without the need for glycerine, which, of course, could be taken to mean that she was living her emotions. It is said that one of those instances, if not both, finally drove Dharmendra to take a decision. On 2 May 1980, Hema and Dharmendra got married.

A tour de force of love and loneliness, **KILLING COMMENDATORE** (Penguin; ₹ 799; 681 pages) is an impressive work of magic realism from one of the greatest writers of our times—**Haruki Murakami**. We are introduced to the standard Murakami protagonist—a socially isolated character with interest in books and music, who keeps slipping into the world of ghosts and spirits. The narrator, in this case, is an unnamed portrait artist who embarks on a trip of self-discovery as his marriage crumbles. He decides that he does not want to show smiling public faces anymore, but the skull and the soul, beneath the skin. In Murakami's magical world, enigmatic, surreal incidents are a constant. After the narrator discovers



the painting of 'Killing Commendatore' in the attic of his new residence, he starts hearing the sound of a bell emanating from a "strange circular pit in the woods". A dreamlike atmosphere permeates the book, with odd characters such as the 2-foot-tall Commendatore, who hops out of the painting and introduces himself as an "idea", a grey horned owl and a 1,000 year-old, bell ringing, mummified Buddhist monk buried close to the house bowing in and out of the story, creating a world of enchantment.

Saadat Hasan Manto seems to be the flavour of the season. The release of Hindi film *Manto* and subsequent write-ups in newspapers and journals have managed to reopen the life and work of a literary personality that draws both fascination and criticism. Translated



by **Vibha S Chauhan** and **Khalid Alvi**, **MANTO SAHEB: FRIENDS AND ENEMIES ON THE GREAT MAVERICK** (Speaking Tiger; ₹ 499; 287 pages) is a compilation of essays on him by some of the finest writers in Urdu and Hindustani, including Ismat Chughtai, Krishan Chander, Upendranath Ashk, Balwant Gargi and Ahmed Nadeem Qasimi. Treated as an outcaste by the Progressives, Manto broke new ground in the genre of short story writing. As Manto himself admitted, his writing is a consequence of the mutual contradiction between two aspects of his life—his strict *mian ji* (father) and tender-hearted *ammi jaan* (mother). Each of the confessional essays in this anthology talks about the eccentric writer's temperament, limitations, addictions as well as his insatiable passion to tell stories.

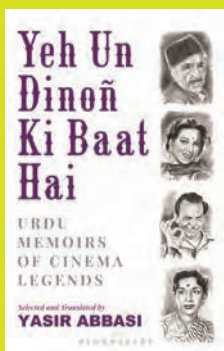
Also on stands



Becoming **Michelle Obama**

Penguin Random House; ₹ 999;
448 pages

This intimate memoir by the former First Lady of the US takes us from her childhood in Chicago to the time spent at the world's most famous address.



Yeh Un Dinon Ki Baat Hai **Translated by Yasir Abbasi**

Bloomsbury India; ₹ 699;
448 pages

Abbasi handpicks candid memoirs of cinema legends from the archives of Urdu film magazines.



The Accidental Further Adventures of The **Hundred-Year-Old Man**

Jonas Jonasson

HarperCollins; ₹ 399; 437 pages

This sequel to *The Hundred-Year-Old Man* has the plucky centenarian taking on some big names—from Donald Trump and Angela Merkel to Kim Jong-un.

Little TREE

Written from a child's perspective, this poem by **E E Cummings** celebrates the festive cheer that Christmas brings

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
see i will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight
just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid

look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and allowed to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy threads,

put up your little arms
and i'll give them all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"



One of the most innovative poets of his time, Cummings (1894-1962) experimented with poetic form and language to create a distinct personal style

To new beginnings!

All endings lead to new paths, experiences and opportunities, writes **Melisa**

Every ending is a new beginning. When something ends, something new begins and a new beginning is always a new opportunity. Learning to see the end of something as an opportunity rather than a punishment would help to change our whole life experience in the moment when we begin a new chapter in our lives.

Every ending that I have experienced in my life was because something better was coming. If my life had never been full with endings and changes, everything that I have experienced in my life would have never happened. I am where I am now because certain things in my past have changed. Something that has ended in my past has allowed me to have new opportunities and challenges in my life, and the outcomes I got were always positive.

If you look into your past, everything that has ended has allowed you to be where you are now. In my case many things have ended: relationships, jobs, working visas, and those endings had led me to the place I am now.

The life that I have is the result of many endings. Every single new opportunity and new challenge that I have experienced was possible because an ending had taken place in my past.

The problem is we normally see the end of something as the end of everything, especially when we were not looking for that ending. In those moments when something ends, it is very difficult to see a new beginning. For instance, when a relationship

ends, we normally do not see that as a new beginning or a new opportunity, we see that as a painful ending, and the sorrow and frustration we feel in our hearts in those cases consume our spirit, making it impossible for us to see that as a new beginning.

Endings are most of the time very difficult to accept, even if we were looking for that ending, because it is always hard to start again. Some

The answer is: by living in the present. There is no other way we can live. The past is gone and the future has not arrived yet. The only place where we can truly live is in our present. Therefore, we must focus all our energies not in trying to change our past but in creating our present moment. This very moment is all we have; therefore, we must focus our mind in the things we would like to experience in our life rather in what



endings are easier to digest while others are so painful that it tears our heart apart. Those kinds of endings paralyse our world, and nothing in our lives seems to make sense. But there is always a reason why things happen the way they happen. Every ending, no matter how hard it is, is always a new opportunity in disguise.

But how can we see an ending as a new beginning? How can we see an opportunity between so much sorrow, frustration and uncertainty?

we do not want. We cannot change what happened, but we can change how we experience what is going on in our present moment.

When something ends, something new begins. We must remember that when a door closes, others open. When a chapter ends, another begins, and it is in our hands to write a new and most wonderful story. This new chapter, this blank paper, is our new opportunity, and we can create anything we want.

Argentina-based Melisa shares positive thinking, love and happiness through her blog <https://loverevolutionblog.com/>

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

Yellow Submarine



With optical illusions, psychedelic colours and avant-garde animation, *Yellow Submarine*, the animated adventures of the Fab Four—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—was a pop art landmark, far ahead of its time. An exuberant fusion of music, film and art, this phantasmagorical Beatles film released in 1968, influencing fashion, graphic design, animation, music, and even organised religion!

It depicted an epic battle between the dancing, flower-picking residents of Pepperland and music-hating, bomb dropping Blue Meanies, who turn Pepperland's colourful hippies into grey stone. The Beatles, who arrive in a magical, banana-coloured submersible, battle the Blue Meanies armed only with the power of love. Iconic numbers from the world's greatest band, such as *Yellow Submarine*, *When I'm Sixty-Four*, *All You Need is Love* and *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, found their way to the soundtrack of this cult classic.

Interestingly, the movie, which was created by a team of mostly young, unsung artists in London, spawned 'submarine churches' across America, with 'Love is all you need' as their gospel, attracting the quintessential hippie crowd, who converged for rap sessions and counter-culture protests. It also gave birth to a range of merchandise—from socks, lunchboxes and tea infusers to Monopoly boards and Lego sets. Most important, it revolutionised the landscape and language of animation movies, heralding the birth of modern animation.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: DECEMBER 1968

- On 3 December, the videotaped NBC television special *Singer Presents...Elvis* marked the comeback of the 'King of Rock and Roll' Elvis Presley after a break.
- On 6 December, the Rolling Stones released their album *Beggars Banquet* with the legendary number *Sympathy for the Devil*.
- On 11 December, the film *Oliver!*, based on the hit London and Broadway musical, opened in the US to box office success.
- On 24 December, the iconic picture 'Earthrise', the view of Earth from the moon, was photographed by astronauts aboard Apollo 8.

While words generally convey tangible expressions, there are some words that go beyond into intangible territory, hard to translate but intrinsic to the human experience! Here are some such words taken from the languages of the world

Uitwaaien

DUTCH

To walk in windy weather for fun

ONGKANG-ONGKANG

INDONESIAN

To sit with one leg dangling down

Kibitzer

YIDDISH

One who interferes with unwanted advice

Bel hevi

TOK PISIN,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The heavy sinking feeling that often accompanies extreme sadness (literally, belly heavy)

Iktsuarpok

INUIT, ARCTIC REGIONS

To go outside often to see if someone is coming

Skeinkjari

FAROESE, DENMARK

The man who goes among wedding guests offering them alcohol ('that popular chap')

Purik

INDONESIAN

To return to one's parents' home as a protest against one's husband

**RAINEN NO KONO
HI MO ISSHO NI
WARATTEIYOH**

JAPANESE

One of the most successful chat-up lines, it means 'this time next year let's be laughing together'

MAMIHLAPINATAPEI

FUEGIAN, CHILE

Denotes that shared look of longing where both parties know the score, yet neither is willing to make the first move

Wampum

ALGONQUIAN,
CANADA

Strings of beads and polished shells, used as money by Native Americans

Gumusservi

TURKISH

Moonlight shining on water

PARMAKLAMAK

TURKISH

To eat with one's fingers

ZHAGHZHAGH

PERSIAN

The chattering of the teeth from the cold or rage

GRILAGEM

BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

The old practice of putting a cricket in a box of newly faked documents, until the moving insect's excrement makes the papers look plausibly old and genuine (literally, cricketing)

Ohrwurm

GERMAN

A catchy tune that gets stuck in the brain or rapidly obsesses an entire population (literally, an earworm)

Nono

RAPA NUI, EASTER ISLAND

Fish thrown onto the beach by the waves or which jump out of the water into a boat

BAGABAGA

TULU, INDIA

The crackling of a fire

KUMMERSPECK

GERMAN

A word that describes the excess weight you will gain from emotion-related overeating (literally, grief bacon)

Razblyuto

RUSSIAN

The feeling for someone once but no longer loved

Weltschmerz

GERMAN

It broadly means world-weariness, but carries with it both a sense of sorrow at the evils of the world and a yearning for something better

Compiled from *The Meaning of Tingo: And Other Extraordinary Words from Around the World* by Adam Jacot de Boinod. You can purchase the book on www.amazon.in/Meaning-Tingo-Other-Extraordinary-Around/dp/0143038524 for ₹ 2,038

GAYATHRI NARAYAN, Mudhugiri, Karnataka

“It’s challenging to approach grieving families in hospitals and burial grounds and convince them to donate the eyes of their dear departed. What keeps me going is the thought that each cadaver can gift eyesight to two visually challenged people”



Photographs courtesy: Gayathri Narayan

Fifty-seven year-old **Gayathri Narayan** from Mudhugiri, Tumakuru district in Karnataka, has been visiting homes, hospitals and even burial grounds to help doctors retrieve eyes from cadavers for the past 30 years. Inspired by a TV programme, Narayan arranged the first eye donation in 1989. Word spread, and people started approaching her directly. In 2017, she became a certified eye retriever. To date, Narayan has arranged 250 eye

donations. In fact, she has retrieved eyes from 35 cadavers herself. Storing the retrieved eyes in an eye kit, Narayan transports them through a cold chain to Dr Rajkumar Eye Bank, a wing of Bengaluru-based Narayana Netralaya. She also conducts awareness programmes to inspire and convince people to donate their eyes and has been awarded by Dakshin Bharatha Netradana Sammelan.

—Rachna Virdi

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