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The magazine for silver citizens

MARCH 2012 ₹ 30

{ woman }

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# FULL CIRCLE

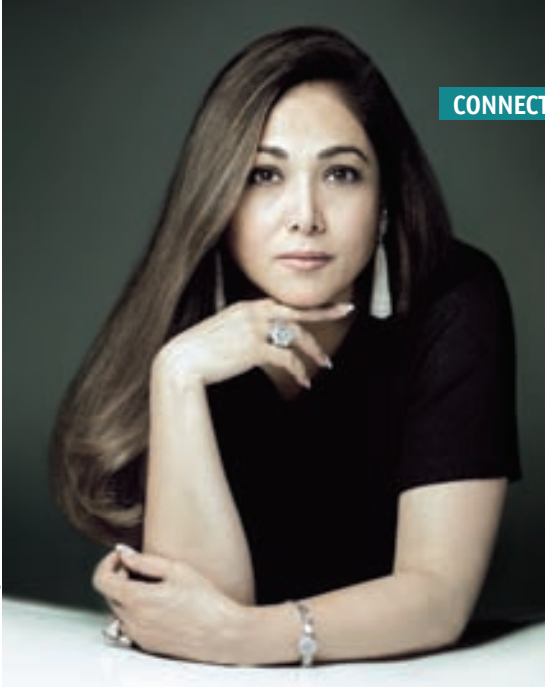
The first work of art I ever brought featured a woman wearing a *bindi*. There can be no symbol more appropriate, no metaphor more relevant. Indeed, a woman is a full circle, her ability to create, nurture, transform and evolve through the arc of the circle renders this figure infinite, much like the potential of women, anywhere, everywhere.

Blessed with a mother who empowered me with her wisdom and grace—and her unwavering faith in me—I have always believed in the transformative power of women. And through the years, this belief has been reinforced time and again by the remarkable women I have encountered at home, and work.

Take, for instance, Princess Zahra Aga Khan, who recently visited us at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai. The eldest child of His Highness the Aga Khan and head of the Social Welfare Department of the Aga Khan Development Network in France, she led a large (and all-male) delegation with confidence and aplomb. Her intellect (she holds a BA in development studies from Harvard), acumen and leadership were evident as her team looked to her for guidance.

The wonderful thing is that privilege is not a prerequisite for a woman's success. Recently, I watched in awe as a television awards show honoured unsung women

Suresh Natarajan



achievers. The women nominated have scaled every barrier, overcome every adversity to emerge triumphant—whether it is a battle against sex trafficking, addressing the psycho-social rehabilitation of people with disfigurement; providing over 27,000 rural women loans through a micro-financing initiative, or even achieving a personal milestone to become India's first sumo wrestler.

Remarkable. But par for the course for women, who are natural multi-taskers, born leaders and driven by their emotional quotient, which is every bit as strong and powerful as their intellect. This month, the pages of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* resound with such women who have charted their own course, led by our cover girl, the astonishing Yoko Ono. This 1960s wild child continues to inspire us in creative and constructive ways at the age of 79. Only women can save the world, she insists. She's right—the proof is all around us. Look around you, and believe.

*Pina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

*Harmony Celebrate Age*—March 2012 Volume 8 Issue 10

Publisher **Dharmendra Bhandari** Editor **Tina Ambani** Deputy Editor **Meeta Bhatti** Associate Editor **Arati Rajan Menon**

Correspondent (Mumbai) **Radhika Raje** Consultant Editor **Malvika Singh** Design Consultant **Jit Ray**

Studio Manager **Haresh Patel** Production Manager **Rohidas Adavkar** Graphic Designer **Dattaguru Redekar**

Visual Coordinator **Anuradha Joshi** Website Coordinator **Ajit Nair**

Assistant Vice-President, Business Development **Shrenik Mehta** Assistant Manager, Business Development **Kumar Kislay**

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**WEB EXCLUSIVES** [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)



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**Yoko Ono shows us how women can change the world**

Cover photograph by **Chris Floyd**; copyright Yoko Ono

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**FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE CONTACT:** HarmonyCare, Living Media India Ltd, A-61, Sector 57, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) - 201301.

**Toll-free: 1800 1800 100 Phones:** New Delhi: (95120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India Fax: (0120) 4078080; **Kolkata:** 033-22827695 Fax: 22828949; **Bengaluru:** 080-2212448, 22213037, Fax: 2218335; **Mumbai:** 022-24444423/4/5/6 Fax: 24444358; **Chennai:** 044-28478525/26/27 Fax: 28472178; Email: [harmonyindia@intoday.com](mailto:harmonyindia@intoday.com)



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# column one

Recent research, reported in TIME magazine, reveals that though women are perceived to be most insular and capable of taking a lot of pain, they hurt the most. Tamed by oestrogen, their physical pain resurfaces when the hormone hits a biological low. But what about the metaphysical—pain of loss, love and longing? Women can't be categorised by home or citizenship; they are same everywhere—their lives, struggles, angst. Their sentiment of being mothers-sisters-wives is omnipresent. While a Yoko Ono, the controversial artist-musician wife of Beatles front man John Lennon, is creating waves in India with her revolution for gender empowerment, we forget our own women have carved a niche for themselves where they are free. In *Harmony-Celebrate Age* this month we give them all space—Yoko Ono for her radicalism ("Woman"), and her Indian counterparts for their realism. It's a space we should all take inspiration from and use.

Sumitra Senapaty founded Women on Wanderlust (WOW) from her own happy feet. We invited her for experiential recommendations for our readers ("What Women Want")—you can hold your own anywhere in this world, she says. "Socially conscious" Nandita Ray is 68 and just received her doctorate in alternative banking for rural women. Octogenarian Ajit Kochhar ("Speak") demands we clean up our own surroundings before we try and turn the world on its head. And five women from the Harmony Interactive Centre undertake a self-cleansing act ("A Fine Art") with a Tai Chi course. The word unachievable doesn't exist in the lexicon of the world's women. The genitors, they are the beginning of everything that exists. Kudos and happy Women's Day.

—Meeta Bharti



**T**hank you so much for sending us copies of your magazine that featured our daughter Kaumudi Marathe ('At Large' – "Memories of Food"; January 2012). We also thank you for such an apt introduction about her and displaying her name on the cover. We are proud of her but when colleagues and others also appreciate her work we feel justified and know it is not just parental bias! We liked *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. There are a variety of articles in it that interest us. We are thinking of subscribing to the magazine and contributing to it as well.

**Meera and Sudhakar Marathe**  
Via email

**F**irst of all, let me congratulate you on your noble efforts to highlight the needs, rights and issues of senior citizens through

*Harmony-Celebrate Age*. I would like to bring to your attention an error published in the January 2012 issue under the title "Striking End" ('Health Bytes'). The article states that the Dementia India Report 2010 was "released by Pune-based Chaithanya Mental Health Centre". Dementia India Report 2010 is an official document of Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India, a national voluntary organisation. This report was released at the National Dementia Summit in November 2010 in New Delhi. There is another mention of a national conference for Alzheimer's held in December 2011. Again, I would like to mention that it was the XVIth National Conference of Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Society of India, which was held in Pune on 26 and 27 November 2011.

**Dr Jacob Roy K**  
National Chairman  
Alzheimer's and Related Disorders  
Society of India

The errors are regretted.  
—Editors

## CONTRIBUTOR

**Sumitra Senapaty**, an internationally known travel writer, has seen and done just about everything. She has kayaked the South China Sea, snorkelled the Great Barrier Reef and Red Sea, sailed the waters of Seychelles and the Maldives, rafted the Zaskar in Ladakh, driven through New Zealand, cruised the Mediterranean, toured Alaska, Canada, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, France and Australia, and camped out in the African bush. She always felt her treasure of experiences needed to be shared with other women and turned her wish into reality with the WOW Club (Women on Wanderlust), which pioneered the concept of all women travel in the summer of 2005. This issue, she gives readers a peek into the delights of the 'girlie holiday' ("What Women Want") and urges you to sign up—WOW's travel calendar for 2012 includes Uzbekistan, Kashmir, Ladakh, China, Europe, South America, Central Europe, USA, Tanzania and much more.





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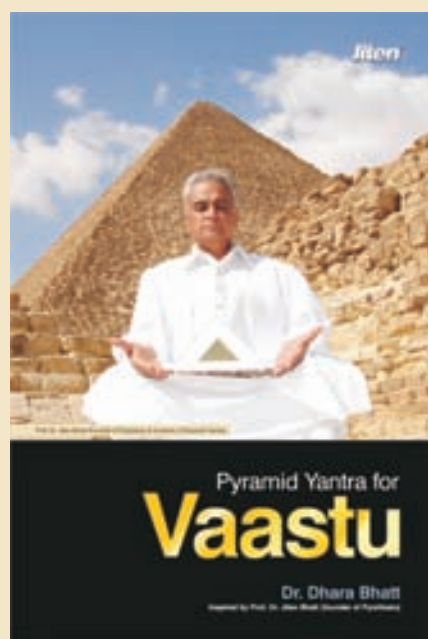
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## ► FIRST RESORT

# HOME TURF

Specialised housing for silvers is an idea whose time has come. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has said it time and again; now research firm Jones Lang LaSalle India is agreeing with us. In its latest **research report *Senior Living Sector in India***, it identifies the untapped opportunity for development in the silver living market; enumerates the needs of silvers; analyses the challenges faced by developers; discusses various formats of living facilities and

the features and amenities they must contain; assesses the demand for senior housing in India; gives us a comprehensive rundown on major projects and players in the sector; and offers key insights and recommendations on the road ahead. A valuable read for silvers and entrepreneurs alike, the report is available for free download at [www.asiapacific.joneslanglasalle.com/india/gurgaon/Dec2011/OnPoint\\_Senior\\_Living.pdf](http://www.asiapacific.joneslanglasalle.com/india/gurgaon/Dec2011/OnPoint_Senior_Living.pdf)



# Sad, but true

**W**hen the Union Government comes clean voluntarily about the sorry state of silvers in India, you know that things are *very* bad. A new report released to media by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, titled ***Health Problems in the Elderly***, throws up some alarming numbers:

- 25 per cent of India's silvers are depressed.
- More than 30 per cent suffer from arthritis.
- 20 per cent cannot hear.
- While over 30 per cent suffer from hypertension in rural India, the figure shoots up to 50 per cent in urban areas.
- Almost 50 per cent have poor vision.
- 10 per cent of silvers in rural India and 40 per cent in urban areas suffer from diabetes.
- About 30 per cent suffer from bowel disorders.

- About 10 per cent experience a fall that results in a fracture.
- 40 per cent of Indian silvers are anaemic.

Following the bad news, the silver lining: the Ministry plans to raise its spend for geriatric care by 300 per cent, taking into account that the population over 60 is expected to increase to 100 million in 2013, and 198 million in 2030. While ₹ 10 billion was allocated for senior citizens as part of the National Programme for the Healthcare of the Elderly (NPHCE), ₹ 30.147 billion will be required to ramp up the programme over the next five years. Here are the Ministry's promises:

- 20 institutions with the capacity to produce 40 postgraduates in geriatric medicine per year.
- An additional 6,400 beds in district hospitals and 1,000 beds in medical

colleges for the elderly by 2017.

- Geriatric clinics in OPD and physiotherapy units in 640 district hospitals with over 2,000 geriatric clinics in community and primary health centres.
- The establishment of a National Institute of Ageing in New Delhi and Chennai, attached to All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Madras Medical College, respectively.
- 12 additional Regional Geriatric Centres in Chandigarh, Lucknow, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Cuttack, Agartala, Bhopal and Patna.
- A six-month certificate course in geriatric medicine to train service candidates in these institutions. Each one will train six candidates at a time, and there will be two sessions each year.

Will it all really happen? We'll keep you posted.



# A study of CONCERN

**H**ere's another cause for concern: **our silvers are more challenged by age than their counterparts** in the West. According to SAGE (Study on Global Ageing and Adult Health), a WHO initiative that studied the cognitive health of silvers in 19 countries, "age debilitates India's senior citizens far more gravely than those in the US or countries in northern Europe." In other words, silvers of the same age in other countries could remain more independent and productive than their Indian peers. For the study, close to 60,000 people between the ages of 50 and 85 were given lists of 10 words and asked to recall them in a minute. While silvers from Western Europe and the US managed to recall 50-60 per cent of the words on average, Indians managed to recall just 40-45 per cent.

"Cultural factors play a major role in how nations define their ageing population and that could be relative," writes lead author Vegard Skirbekk, professor at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria. "Cognitive and language abilities can be tested far more objectively and are far more indicative of an ageing population's wellbeing." The study has been published in journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.



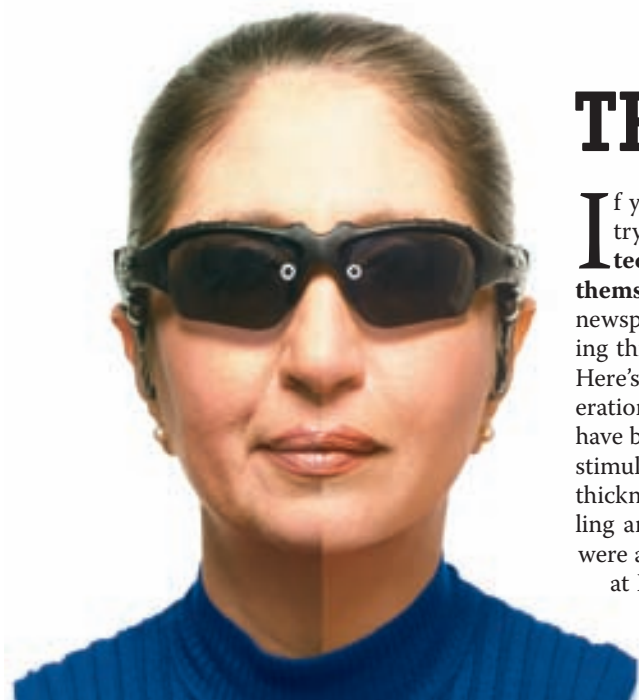
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## Paradise lost

**SAY FAREWELL** to 'Pensioners' Paradise'. In a nine-city survey by HelpAge India, **Bengaluru emerged the leader in verbal and emotional abuse of silvers**. Over 80 per cent of elders polled in the city expressed a fear of abuse and crime based on concrete past experience. What's worse, over 40 per cent insisted that bringing it out in the open would shame them further; close to 20 per cent reiterated their lack of faith in the authorities to solve the problem; and almost 10 per cent were scared of getting embroiled in legal issues if they reported abuse.



So how many people were actually willing to take any real action against the abuse? A dismal 1 per cent. To know more about the survey, which also covered Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bhopal, Chennai and Patna, go to [www.helpageindia.org](http://www.helpageindia.org)



## TRICK AND TREAT

If you can't beat your skin fair and square at the ageing game, try deception! That pretty much sums up **Glycanactif**, a technology that 'tricks' human skin cells into regenerating themselves, making skin wrinkle-free and healthier. And as British newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, cosmetics giant L'Oreal is harnessing this technology to launch a new range of anti-ageing creams. Here's how it works: as natural chemicals that stimulate the regeneration of skin cells become less active with age, artificial chemicals have been developed to mimic their behaviour. This manufactured stimulus causes a significant improvement in the skin's elasticity, thickness and smoothness. "There is still much more to cell signalling and the ageing process, but all the cosmetics we had before were acting on the surface," says Bruno Bernard, research director at L'Oreal. "Now, we are able to create a rejuvenating effect on the deeper levels of the skin." The new range is expected to be on shelves this summer.

**KIWISPEAK:** LADIES IN NEW ZEALAND HATE WRINKLES JUST AS MUCH AS WOMEN ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD. BUT THEY AREN'T READY TO GO UNDER THE KNIFE. ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY, 90 PER CENT OF WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY ARE READY TO USE AN ANTI-AGEING CREAM—BUT ONLY 40 PER CENT WOULD UNDERGO A COSMETIC PROCEDURE, NO MATTER HOW MINIMALLY INVASIVE.

## Sweet salvation?

Here's some sugar that may actually be good for you: **Forever Youth Liberator**, a skin serum packed with synthetic versions of glycans, which are naturally occurring sugars in the skin. Brought to you by luxe cosmetics giant Yves Saint Laurent (YSL), the product claims to make skin more radiant. According to British fashion bible *Marie Claire*, in a trial of 50 women, 90 per cent said their skin looked more luminous after just four weeks of use, while over 70 per cent said their fine lines were less visible. The serum was developed in collaboration with Professor Peter Seeberger of Germany's reputed Max Planck Institute. "I was surprised YSL was interested in my work," he tells the magazine. "I'm interested in health, not face paint. Still, glycobiology is going to change the world in many areas and we were able to apply our existing techniques to glycans in the skin." Not surprisingly, the product is flying off the shelves in the UK, where it was launched in January, despite the hefty price tag: £ 50 (about ₹ 4,000) for just 30 g. If you're still sweet on the idea, check out [www.yslbeauty.co.uk/skincare/ysl-ranges/forever-youth-liberator.aspx](http://www.yslbeauty.co.uk/skincare/ysl-ranges/forever-youth-liberator.aspx)





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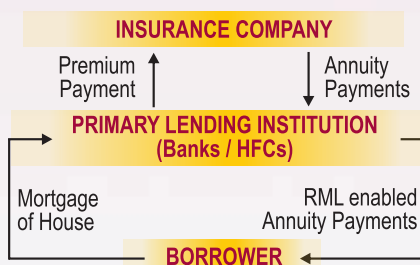
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75	1000000	70%	Rs. 3311 to Rs. 7166

\* Net of Servicing Charges subject to detailed terms.

The above estimates are indicative and the actuals may vary depending upon the age of borrower, annuity options and other terms of the Primary Lending Institutions..

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# All about arthritis

**A**rthritis is a common concern for silvers—however, like so many other maladies, lack of awareness about the condition exacerbates the problem. With this in mind, Harmony for Silvers Foundation, in association with senior citizens' groups in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, arranged for a talk on 'arthritis care' on 18 February on the premises of Somaiyya College in Ghatkopar. The talk was supported by Maxx Medical Pvt Ltd, a company that provides innovative orthopaedic medical devices on an international scale. About 100 silvers were in attendance; while some were on hand to share their own experiences with the disease, others came to learn.

And learn they did. A comprehensive presentation by Dr Harish Bhende, joint replacement surgeon at Mumbai's Laud Clinic, served to bust several myths related to the disease; for instance, that arthritis only affects people living in cold climates. He went on to offer useful information and guidelines on diet and exercise to

minimise and even prevent joint ache. Then, Dr Bhende opened the floor to questions from the audience, which was eager to participate.

Among them was Gulabbhai Parekh, 82, president of the Senior Citizen Mandal in Ghatkopar, who has been suffering from arthritis for the past four years. "Though I exercise regularly, the pain hasn't improved," he says. "This talk helped me to realise that a knee replacement operation is the answer to all my problems." Along with awareness, Dr Bhende believes we require much more research on the subject. "There is not much done by way of collection of data on arthritis in India," he rues. "There should be some kind of research that will help sufferers at an early stage and delay or even prevent the onset of the disease."

An interesting sidelight: the groups attending the talk had linked up with website *Rickshawale.com*, who provided its fleet of auto rickshaws—thus ensuring that all the silvers got home, safe and sound!



Photographs by **Hareesh Patel**

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# Wingspan

We've told you ever so often about telomeres—protective caps at the end of chromosomes that prevent the fraying of DNA—and how researchers have indicated a link between telomere decline and the ageing process in humans. Now, thanks to a delightful little bird, we are one step closer to establishing the connection. Researchers at the University of Glasgow have conclusively proven that **telomeres are a marker for lifespan in the young zebra finch** (*Taeniopygia guttata*). The team, led by population ecologist Pat Monaghan, chose this small Australian bird because its lifespan (nine years) was short enough for a speedy study but longer than animals like mice (only a couple of years) whose life history is fundamentally different to humans. In the study of 99 zebra finches, they found that longer lifespan was associated with longer telomeres at all ages of the bird's life. Specifically, though, the association was strongest when the



## FUN FACT

Zebra finches usually breed between October and April. The female takes charge and chooses the nesting site while the male collects all the materials needed to build the nest. Female zebra finches can lay between three and 12 eggs; they hatch after about two weeks.

birds were 25 days old, nearly fully grown but reliant on their parents for nutrition, and sexually immature. "It's difficult to pin down an equivalent age in humans because we continue to grow after reaching sexual maturity," writes Monaghan in journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of*

*Sciences (PNAS)*. "The closest analogy is probably to a prepubescent human."

# GO FISH

**THIS SHARK IS NOT JUST LETHAL**—it also boasts longevity rare among animal species. The **spiny dogfish, which is believed to live up to a 100 years**, is the subject of a new study by researchers from the University of New Hampshire



(UNH) and the University of New England in the US. "We need updated and accurate biological information; we need to determine the age of these fish at maturity," Paul Tsang, UNH professor of molecular, cellular and biomedical sciences, tells university website [www.seagrant.unh.edu](http://www.seagrant.unh.edu). "To really understand the cause of their longevity, we need to understand their basic life history." The team has recorded biological information including fish length and weight, taken blood samples, and harvested dorsal fin spines, vertebrae and reproductive organs for laboratory study. "Similar to how the age of a tree is determined by the rings in the trunk, certain bony structures on a fish can be cross-sectioned and examined for bands, or annuli, that are laid down each year," explains Tsang. "The ages of fish are often determined by the annuli on otoliths [inner ear bones], dorsal or pectoral fin spines. We are also examining their vertebrae. There is an almost mythic quality attached to the lifespan of this fish. We want to get a more realistic estimate—and then get to the root of their longevity." The team expects to have some answers on that score by 2015.

## The centenarian test

**Y**ou may soon have an 85 per cent shot of **predicting whether you'll live to 100**. Scientists at Boston University have developed a test for healthy ageing after scanning the genomes of over 800 centenarians and cross-referencing them with samples from over 900 normal, healthy people from a spectrum of ages. Through this, they identified 281 genetic variants that appeared to play a role in ageing, and found that they could be grouped into 26 genetic signatures. As London newspaper *The Telegraph* reports, this exercise led them to markers that appeared to have made people genetically predisposed to a long and healthy life.

"While genetic factors are only thought to influence our chance of living to 85 by about 20 to 30 per cent, our study suggests they could play a much greater role in the late 80s and beyond," says Dr Thomas Perls, one of the lead authors. "These genes could help explain why living beyond 100 appears to run in families, despite the importance of lifestyle factors like smoking and diet on our long-term health." Don't bother to get the test done when you are young though. "This test is most reliable late in life, so it is



unlikely to be useful as an early predictor of an individual's lifespan," clarifies Perls. "However, further study of these genetic characteristics may yield a better understanding of the genetic and biological bases of delaying or escaping age-related diseases and achieving longer survival."

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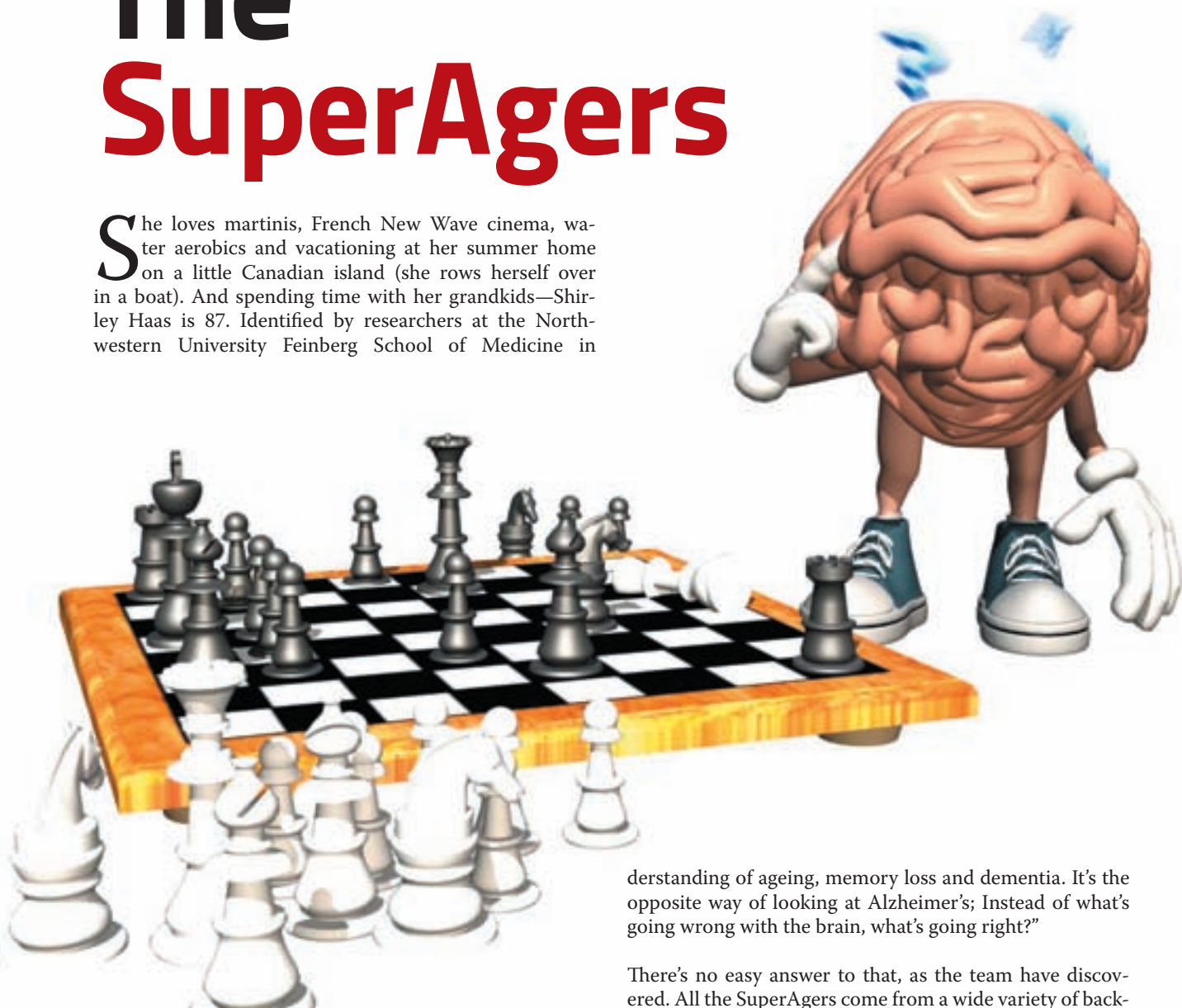
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# The SuperAgers

She loves martinis, French New Wave cinema, water aerobics and vacationing at her summer home on a little Canadian island (she rows herself over in a boat). And spending time with her grandkids—Shirley Haas is 87. Identified by researchers at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in



derstanding of ageing, memory loss and dementia. It's the opposite way of looking at Alzheimer's; Instead of what's going wrong with the brain, what's going right?"

Chicago as a SuperAger, she is one of 27 **extraordinary octogenarians who have proven in tests that their memories are as sharp as a typical person in his 50s.** "As you age, things change, your memory gets worse, your muscles decline but sometimes people don't fit these criteria," Emily J Rogalski, assistant research professor, tells newspaper *Chicago Sun-Times*. "They are over 80 and still cognitively sharp. We began to consider what these men and women might be able to contribute to our un-

There's no easy answer to that, as the team have discovered. All the SuperAgers come from a wide variety of backgrounds; some have degrees while others are high-school dropouts and, even more surprisingly, some exercise five days a week while others have been smoking a pack a day for over 30 years. "There is no one path to SuperAgeing," concedes Rogalski. "But all participants provide clues into the way the ageing brain functions. And we continue to test their DNA, their brains, their blood. As the study grows, we hope to learn about possible connections to lifestyle or genetics." In fact, the SuperAgers have all agreed to donate their brains for further study. "They commit to brain donation so at the time of death we can see if the brain is resistant to age-related pathology," adds Rogalski.



# 2 MILLION

**AMERICANS ARE NOW 90 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER, NEARLY TRIPLE THE FIGURE JUST THREE DECADES AGO. DEMOGRAPHERS ATTRIBUTE THE INCREASES TO BETTER NUTRITION AND ADVANCES IN MEDICAL CARE.**

## Growing SMARTER

**NOTHING STAYS THE SAME—EVEN YOUR ACUMEN.** Flying in the face of conventional belief that intelligence is purely inherited, scientists at the University of Edinburgh argue that it may change as you age, a process determined by your environment as well as your genes. The team analysed the genomic data and life experiences of close to 2,000 Scots whose intelligence was first measured when they were 11 years old, and then measured again at an age ranging between 65 and 79 years. They found that while intelligence is certainly highly heritable, it can change over time depending upon one's environment and circumstances. "These results suggest that genes contribute to



our understanding of why some people's brains have aged better than others, but the environment is probably the larger influence on lifetime changes," lead researcher Ian Deary writes in journal *Nature*. "It causes the intelligence of some people to improve while others witness a decline."

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**Open your mind.** Get cracking on brain teasers right away. According to a study by researchers at Washington University in St. Louis, they don't just safeguard your brain; they also make silvers more open to new experiences. After just 16 weeks of activities that incorporate inductive reasoning—like Sudoku, crossword puzzles, acrostics and word jumbles—silver participants, ranging between 60 and 80 years of age, demonstrated more willingness to try new activities and challenges. The study is published in journal *Psychology and Aging*.



## Then: Old Sweater and Glass Bottle

## Now: Yarn-Wrapped Vase

Pull out the yarn from any old sweater that is too ragged to wear or donate. Try to keep the threads of the yarn as long as you can. Take a used bottle of any shape you like. Paint a layer of strong adhesive or glue to the bottom patch of the bottle and start wrapping yarn around it. Try not to cover too much of the bottle with adhesive as it may dry by the time you reach that spot. After a few layers, you can switch colours—but ensure you switch colours at the same point of the bottle so the seams are connected. While switching colours, choose the back of the bottle so any loose ends stay hidden. Continue applying glue and wrapping yarn until you reach the top. Take your time with wrapping to make sure the lines are even. Drop in a few flowers or sprigs and your colourful vase is ready.



### FACTS

- » Glass was discovered over 5,000 years ago and it takes a million years to break down naturally.
- » The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle can run a 100-watt light bulb for four hours or a compact fluorescent bulb for 20 hours. It also causes 20 per cent less air pollution and 50 per cent less water pollution than when a new bottle is made from raw materials.
- » Recycled wool fibres can be combined with new wool, cotton, or other fibres to make the material more durable than the original.

Haresh Patel



### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. INSTEAD OF WRAPPING YARN, YOU CAN CUT SWEATERS INTO SMALL PATCHES AND STICK THEM ON THE BOTTLE.
2. STUFF THE BOTTLE WITH COLOURFUL THREADS OF YARN AND PLACE IT ON A STUDY TABLE TO ADD SOME COLOUR.



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# THE BLOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

**W**e love our wrinkles, but it doesn't hurt if our skin is a little less pigmented and a little more elastic. BLK Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi has a solution. A **new therapy uses blood from a person's body and processes it with growth hormones, only to inject it back into the person's face.** "We extract about 15-20 ml of blood (platelet-rich plasma) and add growth hormones to stimulate fresh cells for DNA repair, healing scars and treating wrinkles; all this without any chem-

icals or surgical procedure," says A S Bath, senior consultant and head of the department of plastic and cosmetic surgery at BLK Super Speciality Hospital. Called 'Dracula therapy', it uses local anaesthesia and can be done in three sittings without hospitalisation. "As the person gets back his or her own blood, the procedure has minimal chances of allergic reactions," Bath tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Initially introduced in the UK by London-based French cosmetic doctor Daniel Sister, the therapy is said to have found many enthusiasts in India, where it arrived about four to five months ago—BKL Hospital does about 10 processes each month. Apart from reversing ageing, this therapy also claims to improve skin texture and replenish damaged cells. A single sitting for the therapy costs about ₹ 25,000. "Although it's a promising technique, people have to be sure of the hygiene at the laboratories where their blood is being processed," concludes Bath.

## CUT THE CANCER

**A** little over a year ago, a retired corrections officer suffering from leukaemia felt his end was near; even chemotherapy didn't work any longer. Short on options, the 65 year-old decided to be the first to undergo a unique experiment at the University of Pennsylvania, USA: **using gene therapy to kill cancer cells.** The treatment involved extracting a billion T-cells (white blood cells that fight viruses and tumours) and morphing them with genes that would regenerate cells attacking the cancer. The newly created cells were injected back into his veins. With no change for the first 10 days, his temperature soared and he went down with the chills. As scientists despaired, he was moved into the

ICU. Incredibly, a few weeks later, his fever disappeared—along with the leukaemia. The new cells had succeeded in killing two pounds of cancer cells. While this is still an experimental study and not strictly a human trial, the

doctors are refusing to stake a claim of victory. Yet, it is undeniable that this could be a turning point in the struggle against cancer. "We are aware of this study, but so far nobody has been willing to try it out," says Dr Jawahar Ticku, oncologist at Colombia Asia Hospital in Delhi. "We can confirm if it suits Indian patients only if we get one person willing to take up this experimental trial." Two other patients have also undergone this experimental treatment since the first voluntary admission; one of them has had a partial remission.





## Pet peeve

**F**or long, scientists have reinforced the belief that that pet owners live happier, healthier and longer than those who don't own pets. A new American study, however, claims that all those studies have contributed to conflicting results. **While there are several studies confirming the benefits of owning pets, the gloomier studies have been simply ignored.** One such study from the 1980s went to the extent of claiming that heart attack victims who had a pet were about four times more likely than victims without pets to survive for a year without a crisis. Howard Herzog, a professor of psychology at Western Carolina University writes in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, "While pets are undoubtedly good for some people, there is insufficient evidence to support the contention that pet owners are healthier or happier or that they live longer." Dr Adarsh Tripathi, psychiatrist at Adarsh Neuropsychiatric Clinic in Lucknow, explains, "There is no Indian data or research being done in this field but effects of pets on owners are as good as effects of any companion on humans. It mostly revolves around how much a human can share and communicate. Loneliness results into various ailments and pets help keep these ailments at bay as humans find a companion in them. The same is the case with 'god'. People don't see god, but their faith helps them get through many things. It's ultimately about companionship."

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Anand Kumar Soma

## Socially conscious

**N**andita Ray, 68, would like to write a memoir someday—something for the family to know and remember. Besides the work she has done for various not-for-profit groups, the book would include her doctorate in alternative banking for rural women, which took her almost a decade to complete. Born in Patna, educated in Kolkata, Ray went to Oxford for her postgraduate studies and went on to do chartered accountancy against her own wish (she wanted a diploma in agricultural economics). She returned to Mumbai for a short stint—“It was tough finding a job,” she remembers, “men with similar qualifications could just walk into jobs.” In 1972, she married Smarajit Ray, an IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre posted in Medak district. Nandita Ray discovered she loved the district life, and began her consultancy work with small projects. In 1981, they moved to Delhi where she worked with a semi-government organisation called Bureau of Incomes and an NGO called Shruthi. Soon after, she worked on an All India Women’s Conference (AIWC) assignment, where she joined a study on ‘income generation for poor women.’ Back in Hyderabad some years later, she looked forward to her involvement with rural development. “With my husband’s involvement in rural development, my life and work took a certain direction.” After assignments with the Swiss Development Corporation in livestock and Timbaktu Collective in drought-prone areas, she went on to work towards the ecological restoration of drought-prone areas in Ananthapur district. Her interest was strengthened when she was appointed chairperson of an organisation called Outreach. “Last year a friend Uzramma and I, along with others associated with the Timbaktu Collective, floated the Timbaktu Kutumbam Trust, which is experimenting on a large tract of drought-prone land,” she tells us with a quiet pride. “We hope to make it a success.”

—Shyamola Khanna

### BIRTHDAYS

- American actor and *Basic Instinct* siren **Sharon Stone** turns 56 on 10 March.



- Canada’s first woman prime minister (in 1993) **Kim Campbell** turns 64 on 10 March.

- American **Billy Crystal**, 63, and Briton **Michael Caine**, 78, have 15 years between them—but both actors share their birth date on 14 March.



- Film and theatre legend **Shashi Kapoor** turns 74 on 18 March.

- The boy-next-door of 1970s cinema **Farooq Sheikh** turns 64 on 25 March.

- Rock legend and guitar god **Eric Clapton** turns 66 on 30 March.

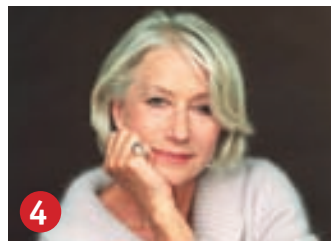




# White hot!

**LAST MONTH**, we told you about the irrepressible **Betty White**, who's the anchor of the zany new TV show *Off Their Rockers*, which features silvers 'punking' the younger generation. She's clearly struck a chord with her peers—the 90 year-old, who also stars in another show, *Hot in Cleveland*, was ranked the top senior role model in a recent survey of about 2,000 retired and soon to retire Americans. Titled *The Age of Opportunity*, the study was conducted for The Hartford Financial Services Group Inc, an insurance and wealth management firm, and the MIT AgeLab, a think tank of researchers, business partners, universities and the ageing community. White was chosen winner because 'she shows no signs of slowing down'; appropriately enough, her press agent told media she "was too busy to make the time to comment on the study".

Clearly, a tough act to follow! Following her on the winner's list were former US president **Jimmy Carter**, 87; domestic guru and TV chef **Martha Stewart**, 70; Oscar-winning British actor **Helen Mirren**, 66; rock band Aerosmith's front man **Steven Tyler**, 63; former CEO of General Electric **Jack Welch**, 76; and former heavyweight boxing champion **George Foreman**, 63, who is enjoying somewhat of a second coming with the launch of his line of cooking products. You can read *The Age of Opportunity* study in its entirety at <http://thehartford.com/retirementstudy/>



## IN PASSING



● Popular Hindi film music arranger **Anil Mohile** died of a massive heart attack on 1 February. He had arranged music for 85 films, including Amitabh Bachchan-starrers *Don* and *Sharabi*. He was 71.

● Mumbai-based historian and champion of its heritage **Sharda Dwivedi** (above) succumbed to a flu attack on 6 February. She was 69.

● The haunting voice of love and heartbreak **Whitney Houston** (right) died on 11 February in a hotel room in Los Angeles, from a suspected drug and alcohol binge. She was 49.



## MILESTONES

● Thumri exponent **Girija Devi**, 82, received this year's Sangeet Samman at the 60th edition of Dover Lane Music Conference in Kolkata, where she mesmerised the audience with a powerful performance.

● Pakistani author, **Jamil Ahmad**, 80, was awarded the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize for his debut work *The Wandering Falcon*, published 30 years after he wrote it.

● **Sunil Gavaskar** (right) was inducted into the ICC Cricket Hall of Fame, which was launched in January 2009 with 55 inductees; the number has grown to 72 in the past three years.





Sanjay Kurl

## HANDS ON

**CHAMAN LAL OBEROI, 70, AMBALA**

**I** owe my success to honesty, sincerity and hard work. Whether it was my 35 years in the defence wing of statutory audit as senior audit officer; three years stationed in the office of director, Indian Accounts Washington; or now running a venture of homemade, eggless cakes; at the end of the day, only honesty and hard work must bring food on your plate.

From a career that involved extensive touring, dealing with the Military Engineering Service, ordnance/ammunition depots, defence estate offices and ordnance factories, switching to a second one that is popularly perceived as *ghar di gal* (home affair) where your wife, son and daughter-in law are members of your team may appear easy. But it is more challenging and sometimes tougher. Familial bonds tend to be more demanding, and running a business with family can be exacting, especially when each person is of a different temperament.

The recipe of our 100 per cent vegetarian fruit-and-nuts cake was given by a close relative and my wife frequently made it at home. One day, while sitting in my son's office, the idea of going commercial struck me. I shared it

with my family, they liked it, and that's how PEE BEE Bakers was founded. The ideology behind the venture was in sync with Guru Nanak's *Sachaa Sauda*, a belief that promotes a food item that is totally natural, made without any artificial preservative and tastes better than its counterpart.

I started the business in 2010 and promoted it through word of mouth. I operate out of home and deliver for a variety of occasions. The price range varies from ₹ 95 for a slice to ₹ 700 for a 2 kg cake laden with dry fruits. Some of our products, like date-walnut, cashew-date, almond-date, and walnut-*kishmish* cakes, are exclusive. Maintaining quality, ensuring punctual deliveries and obliging last-minute clients have given us an edge over local competitors. While my wife Pramod and daughter-in-law Sarika handle the kitchen equipped with 13 ovens to bake 50 cakes every day, my son Vivek and I take care of promotion, accounts, sales, delivery status, and building fresh clientele. Though every commercial initiative pivots on profits, my cardinal principle remains the same—the larger good of society, in howsoever small measure it may be.

—As told to Suparna-Saraswati Puri

## SMALL STEPS

*Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement*

**I am 67 and retired from a ball bearings business. I want to start a small business. I read in the paper about an industry offering income by way of making paper plates and disposable items. They offer machinery and are ready to buy back the finished products. I'm interested as it does not require a big budget but have doubts about the authenticity. Please advice.**

Industries who make such claims are not always reliable—only about 5 per cent are genuine. If you want to go ahead, double-check the contract and terms and conditions. Find out if you can supply the products to other buyers too. Starting a disposable product manufacturing business on your own, without anyone's help, is the safest bet. You will need an investment of about ₹ 50,000 to ₹ 500,000 depending on how much you can spare and be assured of at least 12 per cent annual profit. You must cover all the bases: confirm availability of the machinery from the supplier, confirm space and raw material and, more important, analyse the market for competition. Disposable packaging material is designed for short-term convenience and is intended for one-time use. It is widely used in hotels and for catering businesses; you could also target event management companies. This business is profitable if you put in hard work and target the right kind of people. Currently, it's the right time to invest in this segment as this industry has only about 1 per cent market penetration this side of the world, compared to 98 per cent in developed countries.

—Raghuveer Swami heads Royal Paper Industries in Jaipur, Rajasthan



## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

### NATURE'S TECHNOLOGY

I sometimes feel that I have lived many lives. I was an electronics engineer, an administrator for Mumbai's first home for women schizophrenics, and have witnessed a return to sanity purely through Sudarshan Kriya when there was no money for psychotic medications.

Now I work in the area of toxicity management and if there's one thing I've learnt it's that Mother Nature is generous and will provide everything, and the universe is by nature unlimited. On the flipside, human thinking deteriorates with toxicity build-up, which impairs our thinking. But the question is whether our brains are already too toxic to listen to ecological solutions?

My journey to this point began 20 years ago, when I attended the Indian Institute of Technology Science Congress and was amazed to see the canteen's waste being put to use through vermiculture. After that, I attended a workshop by the pioneer of vermiculture, Dr Uday Bhavalkar, where we visited a Venky's chicken plant, where we noticed 3 tonne of chicken waste.

Many years later, while working on a water-related project for Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation, I learnt fantastic things about how chemical and biological toxicity can be solved in a manner that regular science could not explain. Simply put, I was astonished at the power of the lowly earthworm.

But that was only a stepping stone to a totally different world that began to unfold before my eyes. It's called Bio-Sanitizer technology developed by Dr Bhavalkar and is based on the principle that nature is also electronics (nature is about chemistry, and chemical reactions take place through electron bonds). This eventually led to the development of the Bio-Diversity Chip. For instance, if you put these chips in engine oil, there is no need to change the oil as it keeps mending itself.

We capture the essence or *guna* of plants and then put them in tiny biochips. A packet less than a third the size of your palm can hold an acre of biodiversity. We take the plant function and concentrate and focus it. When we use the Bio-Sanitizer technology and Bio-Diversity Chip, something unusual happens. We call this a miracle. But when you can make the miracle happen consistently, we



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

#### Shenai believes nature-driven processes can heal the earth

call it technology. And this technology will bring about a paradigm change in the way we live.

Our current economics is based on profit manipulation, while a green economy converts waste to wealth. Does that mean we must return to a rural lifestyle to live 'green'? Not at all. It is possible to enjoy the benefits of discoveries of modern civilisation if adequately protected with nature-driven processes that heal toxicity, by converting poison into medicine.

—Shantaram Shenai, Mumbai





## For a healthy heart: Counter the effect of nutrient-depleting drugs

I am in my 50s and suffer from heart disease, for which I have been prescribed cardiac glycosides. However, I recently discovered that some of my medications cause nutritional deficiency. How can I build my diet around these drugs?

Many medications prescribed to prevent or treat heart disease, reduce blood pressure, control cholesterol and dilate arteries can also deplete vital nutrients. Cardiac glycosides (like digoxin) fall in this category. They can cause deficiency of magnesium, potassium and thiamine. In case nutrient intake is marginal, depletion can be a huge health concern. Medication-induced nutrient depletion can occur in several ways. Some drugs may interfere with the absorption of nutrients, while others may lead to increased excretion. Digoxin increases the renal excretion of magnesium, whose deficiency affects metabolism of calcium and Vitamin D and is primarily associated with hypocalcemia. Digoxin also inhibits thiamine uptake by cardiac cells; prolonged use may cause deficiency of this nutrient. Thiamine deficiency rarely occurs alone. It is usually accompanied by deficiency of other B vitamins.

Being the vital organ in the body, the heart requires the best nutrients for its health. While including foods that are healthy for it, you should also avoid foods that can add to heart ailments. Specific foods to cover deficiencies of potassium, magnesium and B-complex vitamins include green leafy vegetables, nuts, banana, potatoes, eggs and whole grains like wheat bran, barley and millet. However,

you can make your heart and the rest of your cardiovascular system even healthier by improving your diet. Here are a few heart-healthy additions:

- **MUFA Oils:** Limit saturated fat to 7 per cent of your daily calories—about 10-11 gm—and trans-fat to less than 1 per cent. Replace your regular oil with olive oil, or canola oil. No matter what your age and risk factors, this will help lower your LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) and improve heart health.

- **Protein:** Some of the best sources of protein for heart patients are skim or low-fat milk (1 per cent), egg whites, cold water fish like salmon, skinless chicken, soybean, tofu and legumes. Foods that should be strictly avoided are fried meats, egg yolks, organ meats and full-cream dairy products.

- **Vegetables and fruit:** Fresh vegetables and fruits are the best sources of vitamins. Most fruits and vegetables are low in fat and high in fibre, both of which are important for a healthy heart. Fruits and vegetables are also packed with antioxidants, which help protect against heart disease. Antioxidant vitamins such as beta-carotene and vitamins C and E work their magic by mopping up harmful free radicals, which can cause oxidation of LDL cholesterol, a problem that potentially speeds up the process of the narrowing of arteries. In addition, many fruits and vegetables are good sources of naturally occurring plant chemicals such as flavonoids, which also act as powerful antioxidants. You can get an extra serving of vegetables by drinking low-sodium vegetable juices (carrot, spinach, beetroot and celery).



## READERS ASK

● **Grains:** Whole grains like wheat bran, brown rice, buckwheat, barley, and oatmeal are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals and help lower cholesterol levels. Another way to add whole grains to your diet is ground flaxseed. Flaxseeds are small brown seeds that are high in fibre and omega-3 fatty acids, which help lower your total blood cholesterol. Grind the roasted seeds and add to yoghurt or soup.

● **Dry fruits as snack:** Dry fruits offer great health benefits as they are rich in fibre, which is essential for lowering cholesterol, and are also full of vitamins and potassium. Dry fruits like dates and apricots are good for heart health and a great way to satisfy a sweet tooth.

● **Go nuts:** Nuts can help lower LDL cholesterol while providing your body with essential fatty acids, fibre and protein. Walnuts are considered the best nuts because they have the highest amount of omega-3 fatty acids; other nuts like almonds and unsalted pistachios are good as well. Snack on a handful every day or mix them with salads.

● **Drink your vegetables:** Begin drinking at least a glass of vegetable juice everyday. You can extract juice from vegetables like tomatoes, gourd, mint, coriander or carrots. They are rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium and the B vitamins. Daily intake of wheatgrass juice also provides nutrients that you tend to lose by taking heart medication.

You also need to know how much you should eat. Overloading your plate can lead to needless calories, fat and cholesterol. Keep track of the number of servings you eat and control your portions. Here's an indicative diet plan:

● **Breakfast at 8 am:** A slice of whole wheat bread with two to three egg whites; or oatmeal porridge; or muesli with low-fat yoghurt. To either of these, add any fruit like orange, banana, apple and a glass of tomato or carrot juice.

● **Mid-morning snack at 11 am:** A cup of green tea; a handful of nuts like walnuts and almonds.

● **Lunch at 2 pm:** A bowl of brown rice or *jowar* roti, a bowl of *moong dal* or fish curry, any cooked green vegetables, and a bowl of raw salad.

● **Evening snack at 5 pm:** A bowl of pomegranates; or spinach or tomato juice with 1 tbsp of sunflower seeds; or a bowl of low-fat yoghurt; or black *channa* salad.

● **Dinner at 8 pm:** Barley *chapatti*, a bowl of green vegetables, a bowl of *dal*, and a bowl of mixed salad.

Eating nutrient-dense foods becomes important when caloric needs decline but vitamin and mineral needs remain high. A balanced diet with a high proportion of green leafy vegetables and fruits is essential to keep your heart healthy.

**I am 65 years old and have teeth and gum problems. As a result, I can't eat raw vegetables. How else can I get enough fibre?**

Raw vegetables, though good for you, are not the only source of dietary fibre. Here are some other options:

- Increase your intake of whole grains by making *chapatti* of grains like barley, oats, *jowar* or wheat bran; switch to wholegrain bread instead of white bread.
- Drink juices of spinach, celery, mint and coriander.
- Eat 1 tbsp of roasted and ground flaxseeds daily.
- Eat lots of fruits like apple, pear, banana, oranges. You can make fruit smoothies to increase fruit servings in a day. You can also grate fruit and eat it.
- Eat legumes like chickpeas, black-eyed beans, split beans. Add to soups or pair with brown rice.
- Add wheat bran to soups and curries.
- Eat vegetables like broccoli, sweetcorn, cabbage, spinach, peas and green beans. Soften them by baking or steaming. You can also make *chapatti* rolls with lots of shredded and cooked vegetables filled inside.

### What are the advantages of eating whole grains?

Whole grains are cereal grains that retain the bran and germ along with the endosperm. As they contain all three parts of the grain, they break down more slowly in the body. Carbohydrates enter the blood slowly so it is easier for your body to digest them. Common whole grains are brown rice, whole wheat, oatmeal, white oats, barley, whole rye, millet, buckwheat and corn.

- Whole grains have high fibre content. This helps keep bowels healthy, prevents constipation and can also guard against colon cancer.
- Fibre in wholegrain foods adds bulk to diet, so they make you feel fuller for longer and help in weight loss. The soluble fibre found in whole grains such as oats can also help reduce blood cholesterol, which, in turn, protects against heart disease.
- Whole grains are also a great source of antioxidants that protect body cells from damage by harmful substances, including smoke and pollution, thus reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer.
- They are also full of minerals such as iron, calcium, copper and zinc.
- Wholegrain foods are good sources of B vitamins that help the body convert food to energy.
- Whole grains are also a good source of protein, essential for growth, body maintenance and repair.

**Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health related disorders. Visit [www.health-total.com](http://www.health-total.com). If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)**



## WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

# Trim your tummy: Work on your lower abs with these easy exercises

I am a 58 year-old woman leading a busy and active life. I go to the gym occasionally and walk regularly. I feel I am fit, but my lower abdomen seems to sag. Please suggest some easy exercises to help make my muscles more taut.

To reduce the loosening of skin around the lower abdomen, you need to follow the following steps religiously:

- Regular cardio exercises
- Strength training for the entire body (treating the abs just like any other muscle in the body)
- A healthy, low-calorie diet

You must get all three of these (especially your diet) right on a consistent basis.

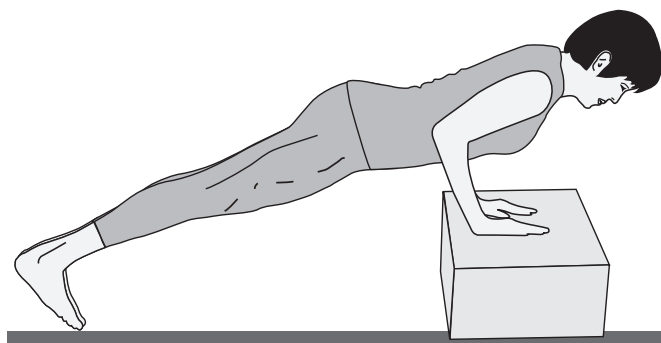
### Here are some easy exercises for the abs

**Crunches:** Lie flat on your back on the floor. Take a deep breath, suck in your stomach, keep your eyes focused on the ceiling, and raise your upper body off the ground until it is at a 45° angle with the floor. Don't pull on your neck, as this can lead to neck pain and, in extreme cases, migraine. If you suffer from any back problems, consult your physician and trainer at the gym. Hold the contraction for two to three seconds and slowly return to the starting position. Perform three sets of 10-15 repetitions (reps).

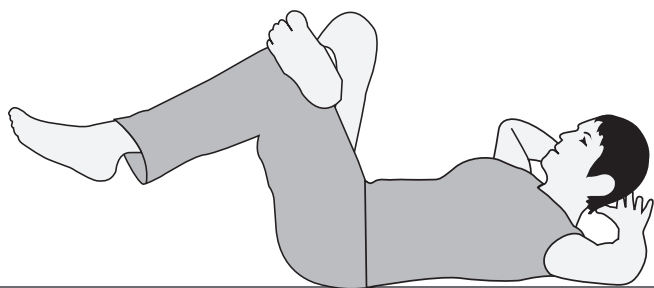
**Standing side bends:** Stand up straight and suck in your stomach. Keeping your legs straight and your arms at your sides, lean from left to right. Make sure you don't rotate the hips; rather, keep your upper body in a forward-facing position and simply tilt your body left and right. This easy exercise primarily works the obliques; it also engages the entire abdominal wall and some of the lower back muscles. Perform three sets of 10-15 reps, or as much as you can manage as a beginner. This could be increased to 10-15 reps for three sets over a few weeks.

**Torso twists:** The torso twist is one of my favourite routines for tightening up the midsection and it is among the best, yet easiest, abdominal exercises. Stand up straight, suck in your stomach and rotate your upper body from left to right while keeping your legs straight. As you turn, you will engage both the internal and external obliques, which are very important core muscles. The contraction produced in this exercise will hit the obliques from a different plane of motion than the side bends. Perform three sets of 10-15 reps.

**Double crunches:** Whenever you do a crunch, you work the entire abdominal area, but there are ways to add a little more emphasis to certain sections of the abdominals. The double crunch combines the crunch and another exercise called the knee raise, which will place more emphasis on the lower abdominal region. Lie flat on your back on the floor with your legs in the air and your knees bent at a 90° angle so your calves are parallel with the floor. Take a deep breath, suck in your stomach, keep your eyes focused on the ceiling, and raise your upper body off the ground until it is at a 45° angle with the floor. Once again, make sure not to pull your neck. Hold the contraction for two to three







seconds and slowly return to the starting position. Perform three sets of 10-15 reps.

**Plank hover:** Start the exercise lying face down in a push-up position, or plank, but resting on your forearms and elbows. Stay on your toes, and slowly flex your feet. Push back on your arms, keeping your hips in line with your shoulders and feet. Slowly push forward, pointing toes, maintaining the long line with hips, shoulders and feet. Repeat front and back 15 times.

**Oblique twist:** Sit on the floor with knees bent, and lean back slightly, holding a weight or a heavy book. Twist your upper body, and lightly touch the object to the ground. Then, twist to the other side to complete one rep. To make it harder, lift your feet off the ground, keeping abs tight to protect your lower back.

**Bicycle exercise for abs:** Lie on the floor with your fingers behind your head. Bend your knees and raise your legs above your hips, calves parallel to the floor. Bring one elbow to the opposite knee while pressing the other leg away from your body at 45°. Change sides. **Beginner tip:** Start with both feet on the floor. As you bring one elbow across, bring the opposite knee up to meet it, then put it back down and repeat on the other side.

**Side planks:** Lie on one side with your knees bent and your forearm on the floor. Keep your elbow in line with your shoulder. Press your weight into your elbow and lift your hips and upper body off the floor so you make a straight line from knee to head. Hold for as long as you can—try for 10-20 seconds at first; build up to a minute. Switch sides. As you get stronger, try straightening the arm, straightening the legs, and then straightening both.

**Rockette moves:** Start by lying on your back with your hands laced behind your head and your legs straight up, perpendicular to your waist. Pull your abs down toward the floor and lift your head and shoulders up towards the



ceiling. Then, lower one leg down and bring your opposite shoulder towards that thigh. Alternate and slowly build up to 20-40 reps.

**Tailbone lifts:** To work your lower abdominal muscles, lie on your back, arms stretched straight over your head and legs fully extended and crossed in the air. Exhale and lift your tailbone, then slowly lower as you inhale (don't just drop—resist on the way down). Repeat a few times and build up to 30 times.

**Inverted crunches:** To work your lower back, lie on your stomach, arms in front of you as if flying. Exhale and lift just your right arm and left leg as high as you can. Inhale and lower. Then switch sides, lifting your left arm and right leg. Try doing 20 lifts on each side. Finally, lift both arms and legs 20 times.

**Rest and recovery (R&R):** Abdominal muscles need R&R just like the rest of your body. It's only during rest that your muscles build.

**Work on posture:** Balance out your exercises and posture by working on your back as well as abs. Lie face down on the floor, arms extended above your head. Use your back to lift your arms and legs a few inches off the floor. Release and repeat.

It is very important that you do not overdo these exercises; always start with a lower number of reps and build your way up. Also, if you start to feel any discomfort or pain, stop the exercise immediately or you will end up hurting yourself. Always remember to breathe as you do these exercises.

*Madhukar Talwalkar is chairman of Talwalkar's, one of India's largest chain of fitness centres with 78 branches across major cities.  
Website: [www.talwalkars.net](http://www.talwalkars.net)  
If you have a question for him write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## True grit: Cultivate pluck with regular practice

Grit is simply defined as pluck. For many of us who still quiver with every shock that life lobs at us, grit is like the proverbial grail, seemingly unattainable. However, a regular practice of yogic standing balancers and inversions can help us cultivate this quality.

To use either inversions like the headstand (*sirsasana*), shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*), inverted psychic union pose (*viparitakaranimudrasana*) and plough (*halasana*), you need to learn to move into them elegantly, exit them with grace. This entry and exit into a pose with control is a particular stage of learning in yoga. Sadly, this is ignored by many. These aspects of the pose actually create immense strength in subtle parts of the body that feel and suffer mental pressure and tensions. So, apart from elegance in execution, they create subtle, intangible but definite grit in body and mind. To

achieve this, however, you must learn to stay steady in each pose for long, up to a minute or so. This requires physical and mental strength, and in turn creates them in us.

Similarly, if using standing balancers for developing mental grit, you need to learn to hold them for long. Also, you need to use tough balancers, like the crescent (*ardhachandrasana*), crane (*bakasana*), warrior pose (*virabhadrasana*) and dancing Shiva pose (*natrajasana*), to name a few. You must learn to hold each pose, for either leg, for a minimum of half a minute and can even go up to a minute after regular practice. Interestingly, each time you hold these poses, they will present a challenge. Thus, like grit itself, these poses can never be taken for granted—you must nurture your practice regularly and diligently. Indeed, regularity is of immense importance if you wish to use yoga for emotional culturing. Further, to cultivate grit, you may combine tough poses or use variations that combine tough poses. A good example is a squat in a one-legged prayer pose, as below.

### YOGIC MOVES

#### One-legged squat prayer pose (*ekapada utkat pranamasana*)

Stand on your right leg. Fold the left leg at knee, place the left foot either high on the right thigh (if flexible) or lower down if a beginner. Place hands together at the chest, as shown. Then, lightly lower your torso to the point where you still feel certain of your balance. Ensure your body is not tilting forward and control this tilt by becoming aware of and using your back muscles. Continue normal breathing throughout. Hold for 15 seconds initially, working it up to half a minute over weeks of practice. Release the pose, and relax. Then repeat for the opposite side.

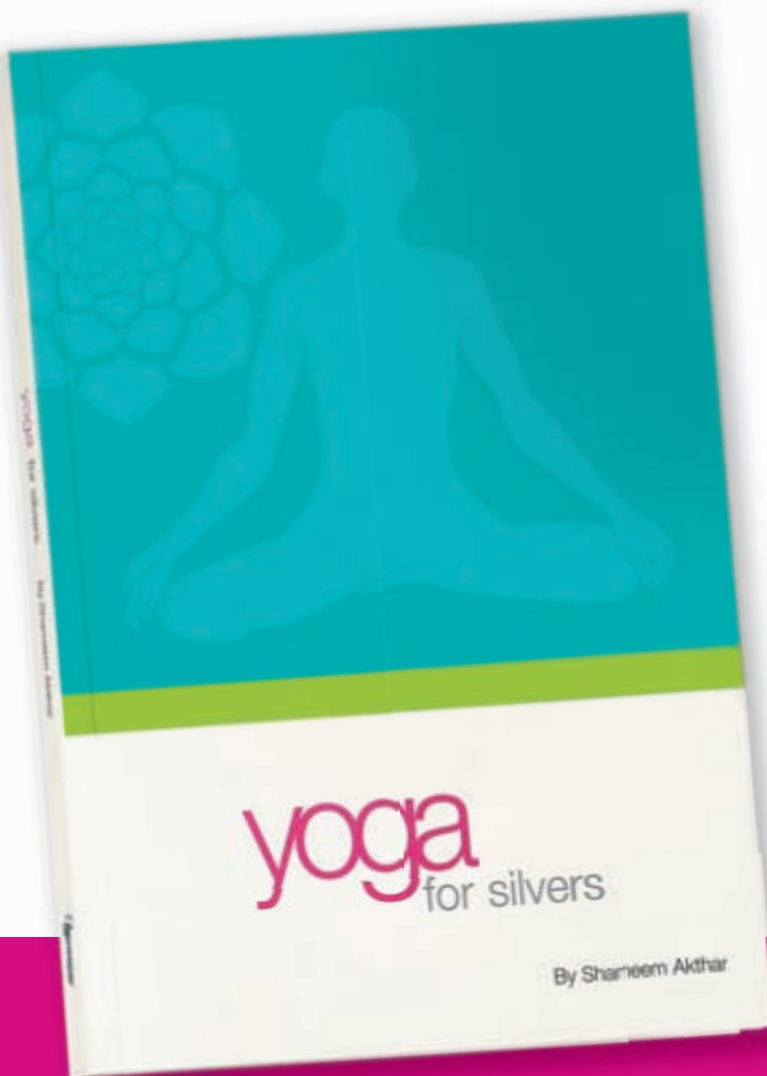
**Benefits:** This pose improves balance, mental focus and physical tone. The squat also boosts mental stamina tremendously. The legs are toned,

as is the spine. **Caution:** This pose must be attempted only after mastering the simpler, one-legged prayer pose (without the squat).

**Model:** Purnima Deshpande  
Harmony Interactive Centre  
**Photographer:** Haresh Patel

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





# yoga for silvers

Yoga shiromani and acharya **Shameem Akthar** urges the elderly to heal body, mind and soul with ancient yogic habits that are easy to learn. From the philosophy behind practices and poses to step-by-step instructions with illustrations, this is a comprehensive guide written especially for Silvers.

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## SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET DR GITA ARJUN AND DR ARJUN RAJAGOPALAN, CHENNAI

### An exclusive series about life, love and food that unites hearts

Dr Gita Arjun, 60, and Dr Arjun Rajagopalan, 60, a Tamilian doctor couple from Chennai have been best friends for 42 years; they tied the knot 37 years ago and have continued to keep their romance alive. She is an obstetrician and the medical director at the E V Kalyani Medical Centre; he is a surgeon and trustee of Sundaram Medical Foundation. Intelligent, articulate, dedicated, sensitive and fun-loving—several similar facets spiced with differences make each one unique. They both believe in individuality and togetherness, commitment and harmony. She moves headlong into the interview with her dynamic enthusiasm, while he remains reticent in the beginning; once the ice is broken, you can see that here is indeed a couple who breathe new life into the term 'soulmates'.

**Jigyasa Giri and Pratibha Jain:** We have heard about both of you being an ideal couple. So, are marriages made in heaven?

**Dr Gita:** Well, destiny seems to have played its role in our lives! We were both born in the same hospital with a gap of nine months, in the same room, and in the hands of the same obstetrician. My mother came to Dr E V Kalyani, who was Arjun's paternal aunt, after she lost five pregnancies and that is how I survived. And well, Gita clearly came into being for Arjuna!

**When did you first meet?**

**She:** We met in our second year of college at the Madras Medical College



Chennai Pix

and got along fine right from the start. We were both very competitive and I found him extremely bright; that mattered to me.

**So when you decided to marry, how did your families react?**

**She:** I am a Mudaliar (non-Brahmin) and he is an Iyengar (a Brahmin), hence there was some resistance, more from his side of the family. My parents approved of him but my mother was concerned that his parents would not permit the marriage. However, both of us were willing to wait as long as it took.

**Have you always lived in Chennai?**

**He:** I have always lived in Chennai. She grew up in Indore and Delhi; after our marriage, we went to the US to complete our medical residencies for six years. Since then, we have been living in Chennai.

**That both of you were professionals, did it help your marriage or was it tough?**

**He:** Being in the same profession helps because there is deep involvement in each other's professional life. A doctor will understand his doctor wife's long hours.

**She:** It is true that many men cannot handle the success of their wives, but in my case it was different. In fact, not just Arjun, my mother-in-law had been extremely supportive as well.

**That is so wonderful! What made it happen?**

**She** (*with a smile*): Actually, Arjun made it happen.

**Have your children joined your footsteps professionally?**

**She:** Our son Ashvin is extremely creative; he runs the Ashvita art gallery and two restaurants—he marches to a different beat. Our daughter

Kavita is very focused on educating the underprivileged and worked with Teach India.

**Having lived independently for so many years in the beginning, how did you cope with the joint family system when you returned?**

**He:** In the US, we had to depend on each other to cope with the demands of residency and the physical, mental and emotional pressures of handling

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“Many young couples think that the other will change once they are married. But can you really change anyone? I still remember how my husband's fetish for cleanliness irked me. On a Sunday, he would start vacuuming early in the morning. But over the years he went from crazy neat and I went from crazy untidy to find a middle ground”

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18-hour work days in a completely different culture. I think it was the best thing that happened to us; it paved the way for us to learn to adjust.

**She:** After six years, when we came back to live in a joint family, we were already moulded by each other and we were a bonded unit.

**That's a fresh perspective. One would think that if you have remained independent for so long, it is difficult to adjust.**

**She:** I don't think so. I think it helps. When you get married as a young

couple, the emotional, mental and financial aspects are yet to develop fully. At that time, you need space with each other to explore and identify your strengths rather than coping with pressure from in-laws. You must first work out your own spaces.

**Is that what you would advise young couples to do?**

**She:** We actually asked our son and his wife to live independently when they were married. It really helped both of them. They have formed a strong connection with each other.

**He:** It is not right for the potential or professional growth of any individual to be thwarted. I remember how my mother used to resent the fact that she was not allowed to work but she broke the cycle by remaining supportive as a mother-in-law.

**She:** That is so true. I believe that we have to be supportive of our children without standing in the way of their relationship.

**He:** Whatever our feelings might be, we have to let them be.

**One change you would like to see in each other!**

**She:** You can't change anybody. The problem with many young couples is that each one thinks that the other will change once they are married. But can you really change anyone? I still remember how his fetish for cleanliness irked me. On a Sunday when we could sleep late, he would start vacuuming the apartment early in the morning. But over the years he went from crazy neat and I went from crazy untidy to find a middle ground.

**He:** Gita must always have her way. But at work, she is a thorough professional.

**She:** He is much more forgiving than I am. But Arjun says that I compartmentalise and move on easily.







### Do you have a tip for youngsters on love, marriage and commitment?

**She:** Keep your eyes open when you fall in love. Always be open with each other. For us, however much we may disagree, we are finally able to see each other's point of view. Also, we have our differences and arguments, but never in the presence of our children. What takes us through is our sense of humour. We can talk, laugh and enjoy each other's company thoroughly.

**He:** Stay healthy and fit together. From 1975, we have been taking our exercises seriously. We stay fit and enjoy trekking whenever we get a chance.

**She:** Compatibility is important—never wed a man who is less smart than you. Also, you need to work at enjoying shared interests and shared spaces. As for us, we share our love for reading and travelling. We also share aesthetic sensibilities and enjoy keeping a beautiful home. Our philosophies are very similar and we are eclectic readers. He calls himself a Zen Buddhist and practices the inner calmness that is much needed for my restless energy. We also enjoy healthy eating habits.

**He:** She is a good cook; such is her enthusiasm that in the midst of our residencies in the US, she went for baking and cake decoration classes.

**She:** I love cooking, though I must confess that I did not know how to cook when I first went there.

**He:** And she was lucky because whatever she cooked I ate it and said it was great.

### Any memorable incident?

**She:** When I first saw iceberg lettuce—remember, this was 1975—I bought it thinking it was cabbage. I pulled out *Samaithu Paar*, a cook-book I often used, and attempted cab-

bage *poriyal* which never happened because lettuce shrinks as soon as you start cooking it. Anyway, I added some *dal* and made it into a *kootu*. I still remember how he enjoyed it. That's how he is, always uncomplaining! He is indeed gentle with me.

### Thank you for sharing your views with us. They seem to be something that youngsters can also relate to.

**She:** That's true. I call them the 5Cs of a successful relationship: courtesy, communication, compromise, caring and commitment.

### Tell us; how would you define communication?

**She:** The capacity to discuss and listen to each other's point of view without saying hurtful words. To be able to laugh with each other and to say 'I love you' in many ways. We have never gone to bed with a fight.

### And compromise and commitment?

**She:** Meeting each other half way. I believe that this trait proves to be their strength for women because they are much better negotiators than men. And commitment must not be to the individual but to the relationship by consciously wanting to make it work.

### A RECIPE FROM DR GITA ARJUN'S KITCHEN

## Healthy tomato soup

#### Ingredients

- Ripe tomatoes: 4-5; medium-sized
- Onion: 1; medium
- Carrot: 1; small
- Olive oil: 2 tbsp
- Tomato purée: 2 tsp; or thick tomato ketchup
- Sugar: one good pinch
- Bay leaves: 2
- Hot stock: four cups; made with boiling water and two vegetable stock cubes

### Method

First, prepare your vegetables. Cut each ripe tomato into quarters and slice off any hard cores. Peel the onion and carrot and chop into small pieces. Pour olive oil in a large heavy-based pan and heat on low flame. Once hot, add onions and carrots and mix with a wooden spoon. Cook on low heat until they are soft and start changing colour. This should take about 10 minutes; stir them two or three times so they cook evenly and don't stick to the bottom of the pan. Add tomato purée and stir around so it turns the vegetables red. (You can use tomato ketchup instead of the puree, but then you need not add sugar.) Add tomatoes, sprinkle in a good pinch of sugar and freshly ground black pepper. Add bay leaves. Stir and cover the pan and let the tomatoes stew (over low heat) for 10 minutes until they become mushy.

Slowly pour in the stock, stirring at the same time. Turn up the flame and wait until everything is bubbling; turn it down again and put the lid back on the pan. Cook gently for 25 minutes, stirring a couple of times. At the end, the vegetables will look like a stew. Remove the pan, take the lid off and wait for the mixture to cool. Remove bay leaves and discard. Turn the soup in a blender for a smooth mix. You can do it in batches.

Pour the puréed soup back into the vessel and reheat over medium heat for a few minutes, stirring occasionally until you see bubbles breaking gently on the surface. Taste a spoonful and add a pinch or two of salt if you think the soup needs it; you can add more pepper and sugar if you like. (The stock cubes usually have enough salt for the soup.)

*Jigyasa and Pratibha are authors and publishers of two award winning books **Cooking at Home** with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. They specialise in documenting culinary traditions. Visit them at [www.pritya.com](http://www.pritya.com)*

# CHAMPIONS AGAINST DIABETES.



With over 50 million patients, India is slowly gaining the notorious reputation of being the 'Diabetes Capital' of the world. Diabetes is a life altering disease, if not maintained properly. By 2030 this illness is expected to have risen to 196 million cases.

Diabetes doesn't just affect the physical health of diabetics, but their mental health as well. The reason being, they are not prepared to adapt the lifestyle changes required.

However contrary to the facts, we, at Sanofi, would like to introduce you to a group of 'Champs'. They have proved that life can go on, even though they have been diagnosed with diabetes.

Mrs. Narmada. M, Mr. V. Senthilkumar and Ms. S. Gomathy are our crowned 'Champs' from Chennai. Their love and desire for a happy life have earned them the title of a 'Champ', at the 'I Am A Champ' Awards – India's first National Diabetes Awards instituted by Sanofi, to celebrate diabetes control.

Our first champ, Mrs. Narmada M hadn't even crossed the age of 30, when she was diagnosed. Shocked with this news, she began to think that all was lost. "Shock wasn't the only thing that affected me initially. I was confused. I always thought I led a healthy life. But this shot down my confidence and then I began to blame everything around me."



**Mrs. Narmada M**

But being young and spirited, she didn't plan on letting anything tie her down. "I was barely 29 years old. I had friends who would go out and enjoy all the time and I wanted to do that too. So, I made

up my mind to control my life, and not let my disease control me." Taking on the challenge, and with the support of her loving husband, she strategised a way to get her life back on track.

"My husband didn't want to see me unhappy. And I didn't want myself unhappy either. So, I decided that enough was enough. My biggest challenge was controlling my diet. I am a person who loves food and I found myself being put to the test on several occasions. But my husband is my rock. His support and love made me realise that I had every reason to get my life back."

“ I began with my diet and regular medication. Any diabetic must remember that medication timing is crucial. Without that, a diabetic's condition can go haywire. Also, it's important that diabetics must confide in their doctor and counsellor, regularly. That is the way one can come to terms with their diagnosis - especially mentally. ”

When we asked her how she feels now, she said, "I feel proud about my achievement. I feel more confident. I would like to thank my counsellor, doctor and family for getting me through this hard time. Without these special people in my life, I would have been mentally lost, guaranteed."

Diagnosed with diabetes in 1998, our second 'Champ', Mr. V. Senthilkumar tried to accept his diagnosis, with ease. He says, "Accepting my diagnosis helped to gain control of my diabetes faster. My parents have always taught me to be a strong person, and I try to implement it everything I do. It is understandable for one to get shocked with this type news, but brooding about it won't get anyone anywhere."

His strong will and determination gave him the boost he needed to take control of his illness.

“The first step to take control was to read about diabetes. I related with some of the stories that I read and took cues on how to make life better. I began with my lifestyle. I drastically changed my diet and took my medication well on time. I became much more disciplined with myself. I exercised on a regular basis. One thing diabetics must realise is that for their exercise regime, they must invest in a pair of good running shoes. This will make you feel a lot more comfortable and takes good care of your feet, no matter what exercises you take on.”

Mr. Senthilkumar thanks his family and doctor for the much needed support, during his diagnosis. “My family and their well-wishes



Mr. V. Senthilkumar

made me pull up my socks and take responsibility of my health. I want to thank Sanofi for giving me this opportunity to show that I can conquer hurdles. By being a ‘Champ’ today, I am proud of my achievement. It has given me a platform to show other diabetics that it is not that tough to gain control of diabetes. All it takes is a little faith and full commitment to your programme.”

His message to diabetics all over the world is, “Live a healthy life. That way you won’t just be proud of yourself, but you will inspire people around you. Your family will look up to you.”

As a member of ‘Saath 7’, a diabetes management programme by Sanofi, he believes that an ideal ‘Disease management programme’ should contain diet control, exercise, regular check-ups, proper medication and lifestyle modification. “Without these, coping with any disease will be a very big challenge. Also, I advise all diabetics that they should confide in their doctors about what kind of an exercise regime is perfect for them.”

Our third ‘Champ’, 57 year old Ms. S. Gomathy, was diagnosed with diabetes in the year 1997. Being in her early forties at the time, she took her diagnosis seriously. “I never expected that I

could have ever been affected with diabetes. Yes, I was worried with my diagnosis. Who wouldn’t be? Diabetes changes ones lifestyle drastically. But I accepted it quickly. Mental stress doesn’t do anything for anyone. In fact, it just adds to the anxiety.”

Ms. Gomathy gives the entire credit for support to her mother and grandparents. “They saw me through some very tough times. I began to lose faith in life in the initial stages of my diagnosis, but their love and support for me changed everything. My mother made sure I followed a diet and my grandparents gave me the much required mental support I needed. I considered them to be my 24X7 counsellors.”



Ms. S. Gomathy

Happy that she has proved her strength and commitment to control diabetes, she says the ‘Champ’ title has boosted her confidence even more.

“Today I know that I have beaten the odds. But one must remember that diabetes can never be cured. You may control it today, but never let that control go! Your life depends on it. Diabetes is not a disease, but a disorder. We can live with it and carry on with a normal life, as long as we control it.”

Ms. Gomathy says she is grateful to Sanofi for giving her the chance to prove herself. “It has given me the confidence to take life head on. Today as a ‘Champ’, I know that life can never take me down again.”

Our three ‘Champs’ from Chennai have proved that life goes on, no matter what. Confronting the challenge is the key to leading a good, healthy life. They have shown that commitment and perseverance, is all it takes. Mental stress will get a diabetic nowhere.

From our ‘Champ’s’ messages, we see that confiding in doctors, counsellors and family will help diabetics get rid of their mental anxiety, about diabetes. We hope that their stories have inspired other diabetics to realise that life is precious, and to **NEVER GIVE UP**, no matter what it throws at you.





# Mine to give

For Father Davis Chiramel, giving is a religion. Kerala's 'Kidney Priest' has transformed an organ donation trust into a movement that's reached the PMO, reports Nisary Mahesh

**A**bout 18 months ago, a hospital in Ernakulum, Kerala, witnessed the unusual launch of a voluntary organisation that helps patients of renal failure achieve the near-impossible: finding donors for kidney transplantation. Its founder Father Davis Chiramel announced the inauguration of the Kidney Federation of India (KFI) from his hospital bed within minutes of donating his kidney to a 43 year-old electrician on the verge of death.

KFI has since helped around 1,800 patients find donors while growing into a movement as well as a platform to address all types of issues faced by patients and their families. "As the transplant surgeon extracted my kidney, he was symbolically cutting the ribbon of KFI," recalls the 52 year-old priest with an infectious smile.

Fondly called the 'Kidney Priest', Father Davis is happy to talk about the federation's growth. A full-fledged charitable trust headquartered in Thrissur, KFI achieved a milestone when the Kerala government passed an order in November last year, cutting the red tape involved in kidney transplants. "Patients now need to process only 16 instead of 42 documents," Father Davis reveals. "There were instances where patients died during the complicated and lengthy process."

Today, Father Davis's unusual strategy has succeeded in taking KFI to almost every nook and corner of the state. "As the hospital did not allow television channels to broadcast my surgery, we uploaded the video on YouTube. I wanted to send out hope

and urge people to avoid falling into the clutches of the kidney trafficking trade," says the resolute priest.

He leads by example. "I don't know what came over me but when Gopinathan's [the recipient of Father Davis's kidney] desperate family was prepared to approach 'agents', I blurted out, 'Take my kidney,'" recounts Father Davis, who sold his car while still recuperating from his own surgery to finance the transplant of a kidney from woman to her son.

Apart from a deep empathy for people in need, 'spontaneous' and 'spirited' are words that probably best describe our social crusader. A year ago, Father Davis embarked on a Manava Karu-

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**KFI started cross-donation and kidney chain programmes, and has helped around 1,800 patients find donors. It has also cut the red tape involved in transplants**

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nya Yatra or 'human compassionate journey' when he travelled across the length and breadth of Kerala in just 20 days to raise awareness about KFI. Accompanied by young supporters from his parish, he visited hospitals, churches, colleges and NGOs. "The idea was to show that I could travel extensively and do whatever an ordinary man can do even with one kidney," he explains. During the trip,

he met hundreds of renal patients and lived in some of their homes to get acquainted with their problems.

For any kidney recipient, the biggest challenge is getting donors, and in the absence of any state transplant programme, thousands of lives are on the line. "Families and friends may be willing to donate their kidneys but the blood groups often don't match. So we started a 'cross-donation' or 'paired donation' programme, which increases the chances of finding a donor with a match," says Krishnan, manager of KFI. He says that according to the programme, A's relative/friend donates a kidney to B while B's relative/friend donates to A. "As we maintain a databank of willing donors, it is easy to cross-match when seekers come to us." According to Dr Rajesh K Nair, a kidney recipient through cross-donation, "Father Davis is now the guardian angel of my life. If KFI did not exist, I could have died while waiting for a miracle to take place."

The federation has also pioneered the 'kidney chain', where a recipient finds a family member or friend to donate to another person whose relative or friend in turn donates, and so on. The first chain ended abruptly when a recipient died before the paperwork for his transplant was completed. But it was restarted and, as a result, a patient will receive a kidney in March.

Father Davis's eyes crinkle when he speaks excitedly about future plans for KFI. "Once the momentum began to roll, professionals, celebrities, businessmen and NRIs came forward to offer financial support. We will soon



**(From top) Father Davis with the family of a beneficiary; discussing finer details with volunteers; and in the office with support staff of KFI**

set up 30 chapters across Kerala to reach out to even more people” says the priest, who had sought a transfer to a small church near Ammadam in Thrissur district just so he could devote more time to the federation.

KFI is also planning to launch an insurance product for transplant patients in collaboration with an insurance company and a chain of renal medical services, including a multi-speciality hospital on a plot donated to the federation. Other plans include a donor network, a cross-donation data bank, counselling services for patients and donors, and assistance with the documentation process. “We will also open a corporate office with a dialysis unit in June,” reveals the priest. “There are over 10,000 people in Kerala who are alive today thanks to dialysis but there are many misconceptions. In the first year after I donated my kidney, I attended almost 800 functions, which is more than two events a day.”

On a much larger platform, KFI is planning to call for a national-level organ donation programme to promote kidney donation in the case of brain-dead individuals. “This will help increase the number of kidneys available to patients who dearly need them,” says Father Davis, who discussed the concept with the Prime Minister’s Office in January.

Indeed, giving is a way of life for this priest, who also founded two more charitable trusts: Janananma, a village self-help initiative in Vatanappilly, and ACTS or Accident Care and Transport Services, which runs an ambulance service in Thrissur district. Not surprisingly, Father Davis, who is revered by many, has even been called a ‘living saint’. Like former Member of Parliament Sebastian Paul, who says succinctly, “I see God in him.” ❀





*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.**

The all new

**[www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)**



*the website  
celebrate age*



# WOMAN

AT 79, YOKO ONO  
IS MARCHING  
STRONG, MAKING  
ART, CAMPAIGNING  
FOR WORLD PEACE  
AND SPIRITUAL  
CALMNESS, AND  
KEEPING ALIVE JOHN  
LENNON'S MEMORY  
ON HER VISIT TO  
INDIA, DISCOVERS  
SUDHA G TILAK

E

nvoy hits you upon setting eyes on Yoko Ono for the first time. She belies her age. This is not a cute granny knitting woollies for a doting grandchild, but a seasoned public personality who carries an enduring memory of a genius (Beatles front-man John Lennon), talking hard of things that make an impact—world peace, gender empowerment, spiritual connect with the world around us—and now, in India for more than a month, showcasing her conceptual and public art projects that will focus on the cause of women's empowerment.

Petite, hair mussed artfully and worn short around her face with a trilby hat and dark glasses, in trademark dominatrix black leather, Yoko Ono seems in control. At a press conference, her face remains a mask, creasing child-like in little smiles while she delivers her lines with practised ease and little pauses. She is here in Delhi showcasing her conceptual art for over two months dedicated to gender empowerment at Vadehra Gallery. Titled *Our Beautiful Daughters*, it is a mammoth show and will showcase nothing less than 20 public art projects at various venues at schools, hospitals, the American and Japanese consulates, and a parallel exhibition *The Seeds*, a special installation piece on gender for her Indian visit at Vadehra Art Gallery. She will also collaborate with local craftswomen to produce work to commemorate her Indian sojourn.

"Her works elicit audience response and participation," says Vidya Shivadas, curator for





Briana Blasko. Copyright: Yoko Ono

### Remember Us: Ono at work at Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery

Ono's exhibitions in Delhi. "She has often spoken about the distortion and indoctrination that takes place in society today and the need to foreground individual experience and agency, so people can clarify how they relate to the world and each other. We look forward to the exchange between Yoko Ono's art and the audiences here, and how the two will be transformed in the course of the exhibition."

Yoko Ono (her name means ocean's child in Japanese) was described by her late husband John Lennon as a "famous unknown artist: everybody knows her name, but nobody knows what she does". Well, we know now. As Roshini Vadehra, director of Vadehra Gallery who is hosting Yoko Ono's many art projects for the first time in India, says, "She is a committed artist whose works have been talking points for decades now." When she first began to showcase her work in the 1960s, she was described as 'avant-garde'.

You come close to believing it as Ono's unit works in a fashion that befits a rock star. Her photographs are quickly checked before passing through to the publicity, her associates monitor our chat, clarifying and offering details; all the time her photographer comes around taking photographs.

Ono's public face as an artist began in the early 1960s when she moved from Japan to Manhattan, then the hub of artists in America. She hung around Fluxus, a group of avant-garde artists who were inspired by Dada, a cultural

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IT IS SIMPLER  
TO JOIN WOMEN  
AND BRING A  
PEACEFUL WORLD  
TOGETHER"

movement incorporating poetry, lyrics and graphic design that challenged conventional art and social mores and chose irrationality and surrealism as vehicles of expression. Fluxus founder George Maciunas is said to have promoted her, finding promise in Ono's work. Yet, she preferred not to join and chose to work as an independent artist. She once used a fly as a symbol of her alter ego for an exhibition; in another aspect of conceptual art, *Cut Piece*, exhibited in Tokyo, New York and London, she stood wrapped in a loose garment and visitors to the exhibit had to scissor away the material around her until she stood shorn and naked; and in *Painting to be Stepped On*, where material or fabric was spread on the floor of the exhibition, the artwork evolved as visitors left their footprints on it.

Through her own peace prize (inaugurated in 2002) and many memorials and performance art works, Yoko Ono continues to champion and support peace, the marginalised, the gay community. Does she find the peace her sisters sought during the *Imagine* days in the 1960s valid today? "The peace we sought then is nothing like the need we have now to seek the same. We are now at a point in time that we will all sink together unless we work together for Peace," she warns.

Age has not withered Ono's rage against gender inequity. Gender, sexism, identity, suffering and imagination, being and consciousness become themes she continues to explore through her performances; existential art and communal participation mark many of her art works even today. She was also a part of the New Wave music trend (a subgenre of rock music) and made short films. In 1966, her short film titled *No.4 or Bottoms* exhibited in America showed extreme close-ups of posteriors as the subjects were walking on a treadmill; in 2004 in London, her piece *My Mummy was Beautiful* showed enlarged photo images of a woman's breast and vulva, presumably Lennon's mother, Julia Lennon. Many were shocked while Yoko Ono wondered why the nurturing and life-giving aspects were rejected. Following the nature of her work and performances, she was more often tagged controversial following the unconventional appeal of her art that was often misunderstood and labelled shocking than serious. "We give birth to the human race, yet are seen as objects," she says.

A black and white photograph of John Lennon and Yoko Ono. John is on the right, wearing his signature round glasses and has a beard. Yoko is on the left, with her long dark hair. They are both looking towards the camera. They are holding a large white sign that has the words 'WAR IS OVER!' printed in large, bold, black capital letters. Below the main text, in smaller capital letters, it says 'IF YOU WANT IT'. At the bottom of the sign, it says 'Happy Christmas from John & Yoko'.

# WAR IS OVER!

IF YOU WANT IT

Happy Christmas from John & Yoko

## WOMAN

*This song, written and performed  
by John Lennon from his 1980 album  
Double Fantasy, is an ode to his "wife  
Yoko Ono and to all women"*

Woman, I can hardly express  
My mixed emotions and my thoughtlessness  
After all, I'm forever in your debt  
And woman, I will try to express my inner  
feelings and thankfulness  
For showing me the meaning of success

Woman, I know you understand the little  
child inside a man  
Please remember, my life is in your hands,  
and woman

Hold me close to your heart, however  
distant don't keep us apart  
After all it is written in the stars

Woman, please let me explain  
I never meant to cause you sorrow or pain  
So let me tell you again and again and again  
I love you, now and forever  
I love you, now and forever

"ART IS ANOTHER STRONG POWER WHICH COULD CHANGE  
THE WORLD. LET IT BE, WITHOUT HAVING TOO MUCH  
DOUBT OF WHAT IT CAN DO"





In 1996, she produced *Wish Tree*, which involved a live tree and visitors sticking their wishes on it that is a part of her India exhibits as well. This year the ficus tree will be placed at different venues in the capital beginning January until March. "I've pasted my wish for India already," Yoko Ono says cheerfully inviting the people of the city to paste their wishes on paper tags. These will be taken to enjoin the many wishes on the tower of light and peace at Reykjavik in Iceland at the Lennon Ono Imagine Peace Tower. And she has made her one big wish for India's daughters too: "Be yourself and have respect and love for what you are." For those sceptics who quiz how art can help counter violence and inequalities, Yoko Ono only has this to say: "Art is another strong power which could change the world. Let it be, without having too much doubt of what it can do."

At Delhi's Vadehra Art Gallery, Yoko Ono is able to touch on the gender quotient immediately. Her installation has various fabrics on the wall coloured in the tie-and-dye process by Rajasthani women, a tribute to the work of unsung Indian craftswomen. "We are seemingly not equal, but we are. The beautiful work done by Indian women is helping the world as part of the Peace Industry, quietly and strongly," she says. On the floor space stand dark coffin-like boxes that hold silicone forms of female bodies on beds of coal. She picks a brush and black paint and writes on the wall, 'I am uncursed'; clearly an indication of the accursed status of women in India.

"An Irish activist said, 'It's better to stand up and be shot than to live on your knees,'" Ono tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. "I say, 'One day, we will stand up and see that they won't shoot us, because they will need more women.' The world needs women power, and men are starting to notice that very rapidly."

Indeed, protest remains pivotal to performance for Yoko Ono whose art is a call for action. This is strictly not her first visit to India; that was probably in the Sixties but she cannot "remember the date now". She and Lennon had a famous stay-in at a hotel in Mumbai for a couple of days and then travelled to a neighbouring ashram. However, the artist-couple had protested at the segregation of men and women devotees at the guru's feet and she muses with a smile now, "Maybe it was rude,

Briana Blasko. Copyright: Yoko Ono



*Our Beautiful Daughters: Ono's installation at Vadehra Art Gallery*

"THE PEACE WE  
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THE STRUGGLE  
OF WOMEN"

but John held on to me and insisted we sit together for the evening discourse."

As a feminist of an earlier generation, Yoko Ono's opinion on gender issues in India is linked to her observations from across the world. "The struggle for World Peace is parallel to the struggle of women," she observes. "Men are starting to realise that it is getting harder and harder to control women and make them be what men want them to be. Smart men are starting to notice that it is simpler to join women and bring a peaceful world together. Right now, men are writing a script for doomsday for all of us by trying to control the world with might, while killing the strong nurturing power of women."

Among her many battles against inequities, pushing 79, Yoko Ono has defied the ageism tag levied so harshly against women. She walks at a brisk pace, her eyes are rimmed by dewy lashes and her shoulders are straight; her black pants and jacket add a hint of mystery. She admits to feeling "freer and more energetic" spiritually and physically at her age now. Ageism may be a nagging worry across a world that loves youth but Ono looks fighting fit. She dismisses age and its additional discrimination on women in society and disregards her own advancing years: "Time is a man-made concept. I don't go by it." ❀

EMPOWERMENT

A woman with dark hair in a braid, wearing a white sari and a bindi, is performing a hand gesture (mudra) with her right hand extended towards the camera. Her expression is focused. In the background, another person is visible but blurred. The overall scene suggests a cultural or artistic performance.

a fine  
art



Madhuri Jhaveri (opposite page) and Meenal Shah (above left) practise under the guidance of instructor Carlton Hill (above right)

“One is not born a woman, one becomes one” philosopher and theorist Simone De Beauvoir famously wrote. Part of that process is learning to empower oneself. To celebrate ‘Woman’s Month’ this March, **Radhika Raje** spoke to five women from Mumbai’s Harmony Interactive Centre who set out to learn Chinese martial art Tai Chi—renowned for honing balance and busting stress. Fresh from receiving their certificate of proficiency in the ancient art, they tell her how it has changed their lives for the better



Rupa Rele (top row, extreme right) and Charusheela Dhotre (bottom row, first from left) pose proudly with their certificate; (opposite page) Shilpa Chiplunkar has even taken her love for Tai Chi to the Internet



**Charusheela Dhotre**, 55, took voluntary retirement from her banking job to become a special educator for mentally challenged and autistic children. The next step in her personal journey was learning Tai Chi. Three years later, Dhotre says, “I have learnt to control my feelings and have acquired a sense of calm.” Tai Chi has also helped Dhotre with stress management (and who doesn’t need that!). Better still, she has tapped into Tai Chi’s healing powers and regularly uses it to ease mild pains. “When I began to learn this martial art, I had no idea it would boost my morale. It has helped me socially as well!”

A few years ago, yoga enthusiast **Rupa Rele**, 64, fell down the stairs and seriously injured her left hand. Doctors said it would remain weak forever. Rele turned to Tai Chi with purely physical healing in mind. What she didn’t know was that this Chinese martial art would also help her regain confidence and energy. Rele will never forget her instructor’s words when she was taking a Tai Chi exam. “I had asked him to excuse me if I made any mistakes as I had a weak hand. At the end of the exam, he asked me which hand I was referring to!”

**Meenal Shah**, 65, starts her day relaxing with Tai Chi. Her tryst with this martial art began when she discovered she was suffering from arthritis and osteoporosis, both dreaded

words in any woman’s lexicon. However, this mother of two has managed to lead an active life and keep both ailments in check. It’s been four years since she turned to Tai Chi. “My family can see the difference in me and so can I. It helps me manage my day-to-day stresses.”

After yoga and singing, **Madhuri Javeri**, 67, was inquisitive about Tai Chi. She attended a class five years ago and became an instant convert. And what do you know? Javeri claims she’s stopped ageing since she took up Tai Chi. We believe her—she doesn’t look like the grandmother she is! But Javeri says it’s not about looks. “It doesn’t matter whether I look old or not. I feel young and my thinking has changed. Not only have I received mental peace but I have become well-informed about my body.”

Depression took over **Shilpa Chiplunkar**’s life when her husband passed away 25 years ago. She became a social recluse and all she did was work and cook for her family. She also developed many chronic illnesses. After her retirement from her job with the Indian Railways in 2005, she took up Tai Chi “just to while away the time”. It was a turning point. Today, at 67, Chiplunkar is a bundle of positive energy. She is so passionate about this Chinese martial art that she has even tried to ‘Indianise’ it by uploading a video on YouTube, called *Tai Chi in Saree*! “My whole life revolves around it now,” she affirms. “I even miss functions to practise.”





# After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

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







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.

**h**  
celebrate age **harmony**  
the magazine

# He wants you to know!

Activist Vikram Simha is fighting for our basic right to information, reports Priya N

After working for nearly three decades, his last job being with Canara Bank, Vikram Simha hadn't yet turned 50 when he decided to start a new journey for 'greater good'. Following early retirement in 2000, he came back to Bengaluru where his wife joined the local residents' welfare association called Basavanagudi Nagarika Samiti and he started attending various programmes and seminars on human rights. "Some months later, Maya Daruwala, director of CHRI [Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative], came to the city for a seminar where she told us about the Right to Information [RTI] Act that had been passed in Karnataka, but they didn't have the rules to implement it," recalls Simha, who accepted the offer for a training programme on RTI, and later wrote a handbook (published in English and Kannada) that gives readers complete information about the RTI Act 2005.

"It's shocking that so many people are not even aware of their right to know. In fact, in our group we say RTI is a subject of drawing room discussion because that's pretty much where it stays," says Simha, who is currently working on the Police Complaints Authority. The Supreme Court directive says every state should have such an authority, which has to be represented by one working judge from the High Court and one representative from civil society, who could be from an NGO as well.

"However, when I asked about it, no one had a clue. They do have a judge in place, but no one knows who he is or how was he chosen. This committee is supposed to take up issues including harassment and search warrant and FIR-related problems. And when I sent an RTI application about

this committee, my form was sent to the grievance cell!" he says. Being a headstrong person, Simha followed up the issue till two police officers were given a show cause notice as to why his application had been sent to the wrong department. "What they don't understand is that this cell is important for the police too; even they need to approach someone with their complaints," he says.

There is more on Simha's agenda; he is working on the sexual harassment act. "There is a rule that even with one woman on staff every organisation should have a committee to address sexual harassment complaints," he adds. "But reality is far from the rule."

Simha also works as a trustee at Mahiti Hakku Ahdayayana Kendra (Right to Information Research Centre) and is an active member of KRIA (the forum of Karnataka Right to Information

**"In our group, we say RTI is a subject of drawing room discussion because that's where it stays! We want to teach people how to file an RTI inquiry"**

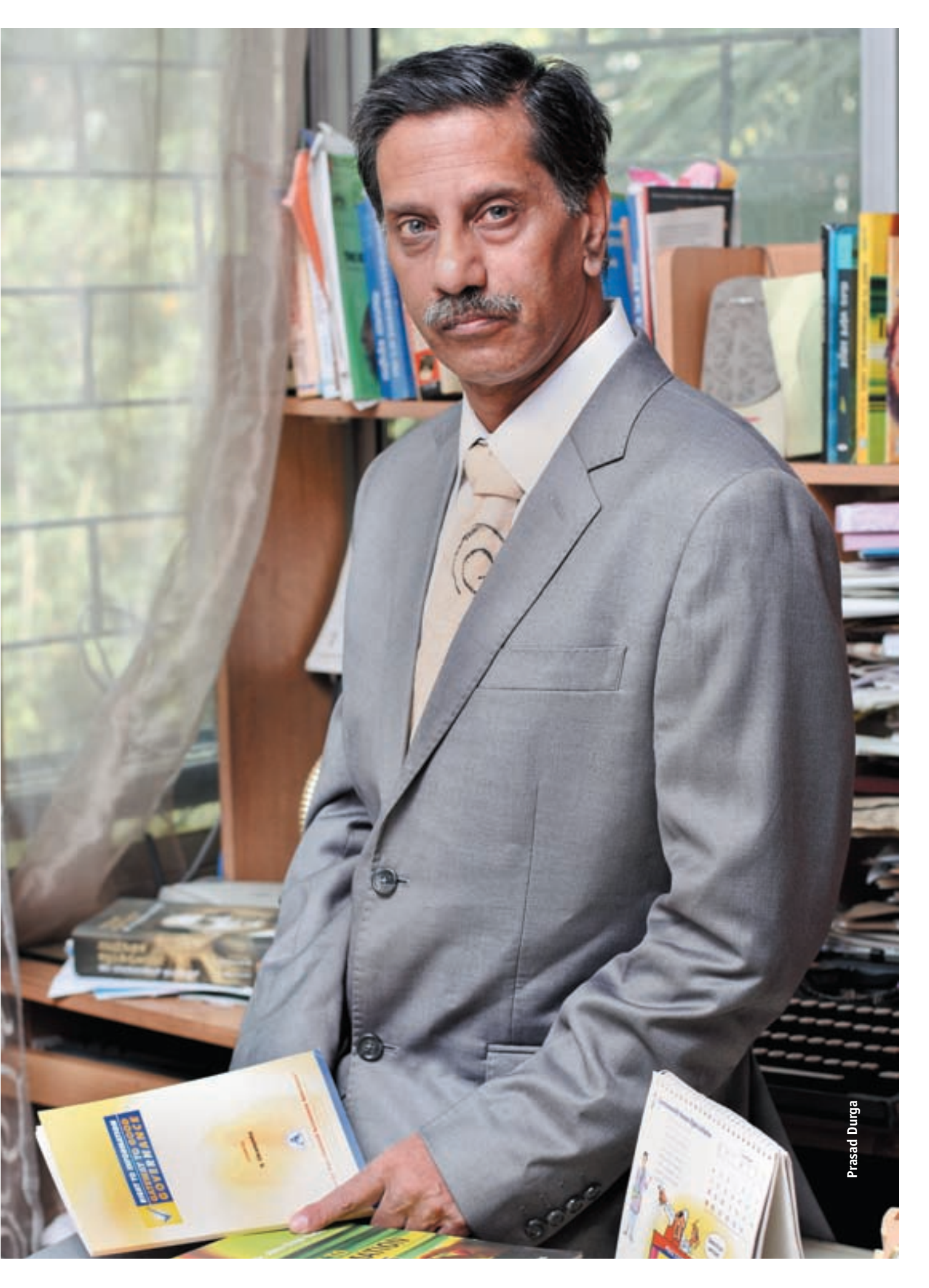
Act users and activists). "We wanted to create a space where people could come and know about the thought behind RTI," he explains. "So we have created a study centre where all the information is available; we also hear people's complaints and try to follow them up with the authorities. The idea is not only to disseminate information, but teach people what to



do, where to go, and how to file an RTI enquiry."

For his part, Simha has visited each and every district in Karnataka at least once in the past decade. He has also tied up with the Chartered Accountants Institute in Bengaluru, where like-minded people meet occasionally and address people's complaints. Simha's organisations have trained about 20,000 people in the state through short programmes. "As officials tend to wash their hands of government schemes as soon as they are announced, we trace their progress and development," says Simha, quite sure that there is no way corruption can be entirely eradicated from this country. But he does believe it can be controlled, especially in places where it matters the most. "The idea is to help people who are not even directly affected by a certain problem," adds our crusader, turning in his hands the guide he wrote on RTI. ✨





Prasad Durga





All photographs courtesy WOW Club

# WHAT WOMEN WANT

Planning an all 'girls' holiday this year? Seasoned traveller Sumitra Senapaty, founder of Women on Wanderlust (WoW), a travel club that organises trips for women across the world, tells you where you can go—and what to expect

**A**s a woman traveller, and the type that tends to wander off the beaten track, I long for a recommended list of places and countries that point out where women should go and where they should not. I think planning a holiday would be that much easier if there were a clear divide between best and worst places for women venturing out into the big bad

world. Though some of the most exotic, interesting places are labelled 'unsafe', you just cannot drop them from your wish list, if you are really a true traveller. It's sure hard to say which country is 'good' or 'bad' for women to visit. Terrible things can happen in safe places all over the world, and for every horror story, there's a tale of how a lost soul was given the right directions by a friendly local!



Living it up: (opposite page)  
WOW ladies in Mykenos,  
Greece's party capital;  
in Istanbul, Turkey

***Women love South Africa for its beautiful landscapes, wildlife and wine.***

Sojourns in Southern Africa are the odyssey of a lifetime. You cross great landscapes and stand on what seems the edge of the world, and feel your heart soar into its ancient sky. At night it is your chance to be David Attenborough. The animals are out there; if you don't see them, you can often hear them and that rumbling noise may not be your stomach! Soweto sounds and safari sights are unbeatable. That is until you stroll through the pier in Cape Town. It's everybody's darling destination, lively, sun-kissed and a perfect place for Africa's last stop. Whether it is the Eastern Cape, Western Cape or the African Bush, follow one rule: never venture out solo during the evenings, always remember to go out in the safety of a group and you will continue to have a safe and memorable holiday.

***Women love Greece because it is very exotic and expensive!***

You land up in Athens, the capital with its array of historical sights and the per-

fect base for connections to other parts of Greece. Towering above it and visible from almost any angle is the Acropolis with the impressive Parthenon. Your 'safe' hotel choice includes new hotels near the city centre, or quaint, old-world hotels in the Plaka district at the foot of the Acropolis or others around the two main squares, Syntagma or Omonia. Greece is packed with things to see and do but I would undoubtedly recommend the Greek isles of Santorini and Mykenos. Here, in spite of centuries gone by, the islands have still retained that spell of magical enchantment—the scent of frangipani at night, the bright blue sea, and skies burning with stars, stars and more stars! The Greeks dedicated the islands to the gods and the gods have mercifully preserved them for us to enjoy. Enjoy you will, just about everything Greek! The startling blue of Santorini, the whitewashed buildings that cling to the cliff sides, the turquoise window boxes and pink bougainvillea, and the people...oh, those warm, hot-blooded interesting men! While on the topic of men, Greece has plenty of local Casanovas who are ready and eager to sweep you off your feet with declarations of





(Top) A well-earned rest after a shopping spree at Grand Bazaar, Istanbul; WOW's first photo stop at Alexandria, Egypt



Leh, Ladakh, is the perfect place for a holiday in India. The beautifully bizarre land is woman-friendly, and the locals tend to mind their own business—and therefore not yours

love. If you're looking for a fling, fine. Just don't let yourself get charmed and flattered into an uncomfortable situation. Most men in cultures around the world are respectful toward female travellers. Remember to never let it get to you emotionally, brush away romantic thoughts about your guide, and you will enjoy your holiday utmost!

***Women are very comfortable in Ladakh because it's safe for women travellers!***

Most places are as safe as you make them! Remember that pickpockets live everywhere, as do affectionate men, so take precautions, such as avoiding walking alone at night and keeping valuables in a safe

place. Leh, Ladakh, is the perfect place for a holiday in India. The beautifully bizarre land is woman-friendly, and the locals tend to mind their own business—and therefore not yours. You'll love the way you can come and go as you please, the casual, warm atmosphere. Even the places to stay don't seem to be typical hotels, more like staying with family. Try to stay close to the centre; the nearby market is a must-see-must-do area with loads of options for shopping and eating out—Tibetan fare and a variety of bread and pastry from the German Bakery to pig out on after energies spent on haggling for Yak-Yak-Yak Tees and silver knick knacks. After you are done with monastery hopping, plan to see Khardung La, Nubra



Valley and Pang Gong Tso, all very remote areas, but the soldiers of the Indian Army ensure comfort and safety for both men and women travellers, so you are at ease to linger on and soak in paradise. Ladakh has one of the lowest crime rates in South Asia and is absolutely safe compared to other popular tourist spots in the country.

***Women love Egypt because of the Nile Cruise and the Pyramids.***

The Land of the Pharaohs is jam-packed with some of the most famous, spectacular,

historically important sights on earth. Here one can opt for sitting astride a camel, to take a ride from the Great Pyramid closer to the Sphinx. Dinner can be on a ship plying the Nile—the same river that Egyptians used as their highway more than 5,000 years ago. They certainly wouldn't recognise it now. Who says that women cannot visit Egypt sans men? I have done so and survived to tell the tale! Just look and act confident in Egypt, even when you aren't. Don't act lost (even when you are), and don't stand in the street poring over your map, as wannabe hustlers will take this as

---

Sharing a holiday with likeminded sisterhood, sometimes described as a meeting of souls, might even influence or change your life, or help you through a midlife struggle

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(Top) Enjoying the beautiful tulips in Istanbul; walking with the lions in Kruger National Park, South Africa



## THE GIRLIE HOLIDAY

'Girlie holidays' represent a cultural shift. Thirty years ago, women didn't vacation without their families; a woman who did travel without her husband was asked whether there was something wrong in the marriage. Traditionally, women planned family vacations where they were the ones making sure everyone was happy, safe and entertained. Meanwhile, men went drinking or golfing with the guys, and teenagers started travelling too, with school and youth groups while their parents footed the bill. Now women from all age groups, ranging from 25 to 70 years are venturing out, saying "Hey it's *my* turn!"

What's more, sharing a holiday with likeminded sisterhood, sometimes described as a meeting of souls, might even influence or change your life, or help you through a midlife struggle.



WOW ladies at Pangong Tso, Leh, Ladakh

Soon after you return from your travel binge, you can't help wondering why you had to travel a thousand kilometres or more to find companionship and bonding.

### Travel tips

- In every part of the world, there are cities and countries that are safe for women to visit, but remember that there are risks wherever you go.
- Even when you're in a 'safe' place, it's important not to let your guard down and always use common sense

when you move out to sightsee, shop or eat a meal.

- Both in India and anywhere else in the world, women should use common sense, not look at strange men straight in the eye, not walk down dark, deserted streets, and always ignore cat calls and advances.
- If you follow these basic rules, the world will be your oyster. Travel you will—and be safe at all times.

**You can contact Senapaty at [www.wowsumitra.com](http://www.wowsumitra.com)**

an invitation to 'help' you. Be cautious toward offers of hospitality, especially if the hospitality separates you from safe public areas. When in your hotel, make a habit of keeping your door locked at all times, and be suspicious if someone knocks on your door late at night.

But Egypt is Egypt! Charismatic country, it grows on you and tugs at your soul! All in all, one can cruise on the Nile in a felucca, the traditional sailboat, or lounge around like Cleopatra, taking in the cool beauty of a Nile sunset to end the day and start the night. Every serious traveller should go to Egypt at least once. The Great Pyramids, the elaborate temples of Luxor, the remote and ingeniously reconstructed temple of Abu Simbel all truly seem wonders of the world.

### ***Women love Turkey because of the Blue Mosque, Hamam and Grand Bazaar.***

Turkey is another country popular on women's wish-lists. This ruin-rich land is characterised by bright sunshine, crystal clear Mediterranean waters, olive groves and cypress trees. Here you find gracious

people, amazing food and fascinating culture. But, when I first ventured out on my own one morning to get breakfast in Istanbul, I felt the men staring at me. I noticed some women were veiled. I was not. Though I never felt threatened, I did feel I was on display for all the local men drinking their morning tea. As such, you're likely to see many women in full *hijab*, or at the very least covered discreetly by veils, long shirts, and flowing pants. No one will tell you that you have to follow suit, but if you're planning a trip, consider these details when you're packing. Here you can take a ferry through time and across continents, from Eminonu terminal in Europe to the Kadikoy district in Asia. Crossing the Bosphorus at dusk, you'll have knock-out views of the illuminated minarets of the medieval Suleymaniye Mosque, the fairytale Galata Tower, Hagia Sophia's vast dome and the majestic walls of the Topkapi Palace. Later, there are good chances of getting disoriented at the six-century-old Grand Bazaar, which has about 50 lanes holding 5,000-odd shops packed to the rafters with tea sets, gaudy gold, trinkets, carpets, water pipes with flavoured tobacco, besides loads of Turkish artefacts. 🌸

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## MUSIC

# Black diamond

**T**he Indian music scene is witnessing a 360-degree turnaround. Long playing (LP) records are moving out of personal music collections and fast making a popular comeback. Contributing to the change of fortunes is Sa Re Ga Ma, the record company that has brought back the magic of LPs by launching a LP player. "Listeners were craving for the quality of music they had access to years ago," says Divya Dikshit of Sa Re Ga Ma. "So we decided to give them the sound they wanted to hear." In its mission to promote the medium, Sa Re Ga Ma also offers free LP records with the players. These range from the 1960s hits of *Pakeezah* to those from the 1970s (*Mughal-e-Azam* and *Bombay to Goa*), including popular music from the 1990s, such as *Hum Aapke Hai Kaun*. Apart from Bollywood songs, Sa Re Ga Ma has also cut records of devotional and classical songs.

To catch up with this trend, music companies have started cutting records for upcoming movies. Satish Shettikar of

The Shop, a dealer and distributor of record players across India, has witnessed an upsurge in demand in the past couple of years. "Some years ago, the sale of the LP record player had come to a standstill. Now we sell at least two every month." Echoing the voice of LP record dealers, Mehmood Curmally of Rhythm House, a Mumbai-based music shop that started selling LP records again last year, says "*Rockstar*, *Ra.One* and *3 Idiots* are the most recent movies that have been cut on record. Every month, we sell quite a few, though mostly of old movies because of the nostalgia factor." Anuj Rajpal of New Gramophone House, a music retailer in Delhi, says "We have regular demand for Hindi film music on LPs, though some ask for jazz and blues too."

Evidently, amid the Mp3, CD and Ipod frenzy, LPs have proved their worth. The fact that a computer can't copy songs to an LP has also proved to be beneficial for record companies in curbing piracy. A blessing in disguise?

—Radhika Raje



# The right path

A documentary celebrates Gandhism through the journey of Narayan Desai—the Mahatma's biographer and close confidante's son

With Mahatma Gandhi smiling from a picture on the wall and a *mandali* (group) singing *bhajan*, Narayan Desai takes the audience on a spectacular journey. As there are no fixed milestones in this tale, the journey can include places as varied and far as London, South Africa, Champaran, Bombay and Bardoli. It even visits prisons. Apart from the protagonist—the Mahatma himself—the characters comprise a galaxy of stars: our revered freedom fighters. It, however, doesn't exclude the unnamed millions who followed *Bapu*. Featuring four songs penned by Desai,

## HISTORY

son of Gandhi's personal secretary and biographer Mahadev Desai, this show aims to popularise the Mahatma's vision and values. And before you think it is yet another *pravachan* (preaching), the show is called *Gandhi Katha*, a new way to reintroduce the Mahatma to the world.

Desai's *Gandhi Katha*, which was first conducted in August 2004, has now become part of a 40-minute documentary called *Gandhi ke Tulsi* (Gandhi's Tulsi). "It was not Valmiki but Tulsidas who took the *Ramayana* to the masses. Narayanbhai, by holding such sessions, is to Gandhiji what Tulsi was to the *Ramayana*,"



says Hindi poet-writer R K Paliwal, who has co-directed the documentary with cartoonist-writer Abid Surti.

One who imbibed Gandhi's values as he grew up in his ashrams in Sabarmati, Ahmedabad, and Sevagram near Wardha, Desai, 88, holds the *katha* for three non-stop hours, five days at a stretch. But does he mention the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption crusade? "Without mentioning Anna Hazare, Narayanbhai says corruption cannot be removed merely through law," says Desai's daughter Sanghmitra Desai Gadekar, who closely works with him at the ashram and educational institutions founded by Desai at Videchi, a tribal village 60 km from Surat in Gujarat.

*Atm-shuddhi* (self-purification) is what Desai emphasises in the *katha*. "Gandhi didn't fast to blackmail or twist the arm of any group. It was his way of opposing a policy he didn't like or when he felt the country wouldn't halt the communal cauldron. This is what Naryanbhai reminds people of," adds Kapil Shah, an activist who organised *Gandhi Katha* a few months ago in Vadodara.

The documentary is a tribute to Desai's commitment to communal harmony as well. "The post-Godhra pogrom of 2002 shattered me. I don't blame Narendra Modi alone for it. I, as a Gujarati, felt guilty. I felt I too was part of the mob," recalls Desai in the documentary. "I am doing *pray-schit* [penitence] through *Gandhi Katha*." His daughter insists Desai is brutally honest in calling 2002's pogrom a "blot on Gujarat" because he doesn't seek any favours. "He is not the one who will bow to politicians," she says. "He is neither in awe of anyone, nor does he fear anybody. His sole aim is to take the Mahatma's message to as many people as he can."

Desai's *Gandhi Katha* is held in Gujarati inside Gujarat, in Hindi outside Gujarat, and in English outside India. Recently, Desai toured Mexico where he held the *katha* at a university. "This is a nice way to take Gandhiji's ideas to youngsters," says Gadekar. "University students and faculty were thrilled when they heard about the Mahatma's philosophy of truth and non-violence from one of his diehard disciples." At one point in the documentary, Desai reminisces that he found both the Mahatma and his own father Mahadevbhai mostly either in "jail or rail". "When they were not in jail, they would constantly travel," says Desai who himself traversed the length and breadth of Gujarat during Vinoba Bhavé's Bhoodan Movement. Apart from Gandhi and Vinoba, Jaya Prakash Narayan (JP) too influenced Desai and helped him form the Janta Party. Having moved to Videchi after JP's death, Desai founded the Institute for Total Revolution ('Total Revolution' was JP's slogan, which later became a movement and was also turned into a book), which imparts training in non-violence and the Gandhian way of life.

—Adab Nawaz

## ART

# WITHIN

THE REVERED KARAIKKAL AMMAIYAR FROM THE 6TH CENTURY WAS BORN TO DEVOTE HER LIFE TO LORD SHIVA. FROM THE VEERASHAIVA BHAKTI MOVEMENT OF 12TH CENTURY, AKKA MAHADEVI'S DIDACTIC POETRY WAS A GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO KANNADA BHAKTI LITERATURE. AND LALLESHWARI (BETTER KNOWN AS LAL ARIFA OR LAL DED) FROM KASHMIR'S 14TH CENTURY SHAIVITE SECT LIVES THROUGH HER SAYINGS EVEN TODAY. THESE THREE WOMEN SAINTS SHARED A COMPASSION FOR HUMANITY, LOVE OF GOD AND DISDAIN TOWARDS GENDER-BASED STEREOTYPES. RAMESH VEDHANBATLA OR V RAMESH, THE RECLUSIVE ARTIST FROM VISAKHAPATNAM, HAS FINALLY GIVEN INDIA'S LEGENDARY WOMEN SAINTS THE FREEDOM THEY SO CRAVED IN THEIR TIMES. THE 54 YEAR-OLD, WHO IS FIRST A TEACHER OF ART AND THEN AN ARTIST, TELLS THEIR STORY AND ONE OF UNIVERSAL WOMANHOOD THROUGH HIS OIL PAINTINGS AT DELHI'S THRESHOLD GALLERY, IN A SHOW TITLED *WHY CROSS THE BOUNDARY*. THE GHOST-LIKE FORM OF KARAIKKAL AMMA, WHO WANTED TO BE SET FREE FROM THE TRAP OF BEAUTY ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN; AKKA MAHADEVI'S DARK LIFE SET AGAINST THE LUMINESCENT JASMINE FLOWERS IN WHICH SHE SAW HER 'GOD'; AND LAL DED'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST THOSE WHO SAW NOTHING BEYOND FLESH IN WOMEN. VISIT THE SHOW FOR A COMMENTARY ON THE SELF AND BEYOND.

# Bravehearts

ANJU MOHAN INTRODUCES YOU TO THE MOHYALS, A COMMUNITY THAT HAS KEPT ITS TRADITION OF DOING BATTLE FOR JUSTICE ALIVE ACROSS GENERATIONS

**J**ai Mohyal! The refrain echoes off the walls of the Kulachi Hansraj Model school, Ashok Vihar, where the 51<sup>st</sup> All India Mohyal Conference is being held. A small, traditionally agriculturist Kshatriya Brahmin community who forged a reputation as a martial race, the Mohyals comprise seven castes—Bali, Bhimwal, Chibber, Datt, Lau, Mohan and Vaid—who claim to be descendants of the great ‘raj-rishis’ Parashar, Koshal, Bhrigu, Bhardwaj, Vashisht, Kashyap and Dhanvantri, respectively. The Conference celebrates the essence of this community of about 700,000 people, its ‘Mohyaliat’, a doctrine of fighting for dharma, religion and justice that has impelled them to serve in the armed forces since pre-Vedic times.

The Conference is held under the aegis of the General Mohyal Sabha

(GMS), the apex body of the community. Originally known as Mohyal Mitter Sabha, it was founded on 24 May 1891 in Lahore to promote interaction and work towards bringing positive change by spreading awareness about social evils like female infanticide and child marriage. Because the community was predominantly based in Punjab and North West Frontier Pakistan, an ashram was built for students who came to Lahore to study. As 90 year-old O P Mohan, senior vice-president of GMS, proudly proclaimed at the conference, “Many progressive-thinking Mohyals participated actively in the Arya Samaj movement and the freedom struggle. Mohyals are known for their valour and virtuosity and have always made sacrifices for the sake of the nation.”

Over the years, the elders of the community have made a conscious—and

concerted—effort to pass their legacy of honour and service to the younger generation through *Mohyal Mitter*, the community journal started in 1891 that has been recognised by the *Limca Book of Records* as the oldest continuously published magazine in India; and the establishment of ashrams and ‘bhavans’ in various cities (such as Delhi, Haridwar, Ambala, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Jammu, Saharanpur) as well as the Mohyal Educational Research Institute of Technology (MERIT) in 1999 and junior school in Dehradun. Local Mohyal Sabhas have a women’s wing and organise youth festivals. GMS also felicitates young achievers through its Pratibhashali Vidyarthi Samman; provides financial assistance to students; and confers awards like the Mohyal Ratna, Mohyal Gaurav, Mohyal Sewa Puraskar, Mohyal Yuva Sewa Puraskar, and Excellence in Professional Achievement.



Anju Mohan

Judy Frater from Washington is now Judyben (left) of Bhuj. This sexagenarian first came to India as an arts exchange student. Impressed by the culture, she made India her second home in 1989 and co-founded an international not-for-profit organisation for Kutchi handicraft artisans in 1993. Later, in 2005, she started a design school to teach this dying form of art. Frater, who spends most of her time in India, also helps improve the lives of tribal craftsmen and revive their ancient arts.



Little wonder then, that the younger generation has embraced its legacy with such readiness. For Pankaj Bali, secretary, youth affairs, Mohyalat is part of his DNA. "I still remember the comment I made to my grandfather, Raizada Lt. Anant Ram Bali of Ambala," he recalls with nostalgia. "I was about four to five years old. When I saw a wedding *baarat* with a procession of cars, I asked him whether they were going to bring the bride in so many cars, or just loot the bride's family!" Socially conscious Mohyal youngsters like Bali now organise activities like blood donation camps and career counselling services under the aegis of the youth wing.

Such dedication is worthy of pride—and emulation. A mother of two young boys, 27 year-old Poonam Mehta of Ludhiana is keen that her sons learn the Mohyal values of helping others and standing up against injustice. And she's anxious for them to start right away. It's a sentiment Prachi Sondhi, 32, can relate to. "I've been married for about 11 years to a non-Mohyal," she shares. "But my son Kunal has always called himself a Mohyal because he believes they are fearless and big-hearted."

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# Her mystique

An English author who retained his romantic sensibility in an age of irony, Richard Le Gallienne (1866-1947) waxed eloquent on the allure of the woman in his essay “Woman as a Supernatural Being,” part of the collection *Vanishing Roads and Other Essays*, published in 1915. Excerpts....

The boy’s first hushed enchantment, blent with a sort of religious awe, as in his earliest love affair he awakens to the delicious mystery we call woman, a being half fairy and half flower, made out of moonlight and water lilies, of elfin music and thrilling fragrance, of divine whiteness and softness and rustle as of dewy rose gardens, a being of unearthly eyes and terribly sweet marvel of hair; such, too, through life, and through the ages, however confused or overlaid by use and wont, is man’s perpetual attitude of astonishment before the apparition woman.

Though she may work at his side, the comrade of his sublunary occupations, he never, deep down, thinks of her as quite real. Though his wife, she remains an apparition, a being of another element, an Undine. She is never quite credible, never quite loses that first nimbus of the supernatural.

This is true not merely for poets; it is true for all men, though, of course, all men may not be conscious of its truth, or realise the truth in just this way. Poets, being endowed with exceptional sensitiveness of feeling and expression, say the wonderful thing in the wonderful way, bring to it words more nearly adequate than others can bring; but it is an error to suppose that any beauty of expression can exaggerate, can indeed more than suggest, the beauty of its truth. Woman is all that poets have said of her, and all that poets can never say:

Always incredible hath seemed the rose,  
And inconceivable the nightingale.

And the poet’s adoration of her is but the articulate voice of man’s love since the beginning, a love which is as mysterious as she herself is a mystery. However some may try to analyse man’s love for woman, to explain it, or explain it away, belittle it, nay, even resent and befoul it, it remains an unaccountable phenomenon, a “mystery we make darker with a name”. Biology, cynically pointing at certain of its processes, makes the miracle rather more miraculous than otherwise. Musical instruments are no explanation of music. “Is it not strange that sheep’s guts should hale

souls out of men’s bodies?” says Benedick, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, commenting on Balthazar’s music. But they do, for all that, though no one considers sheep’s gut the explanation. To cry “sex” and to talk of nature’s mad preoccupation with the species throws no light on the matter, and robs it of no whit of its magic. The rainbow remains a rainbow, for all the sciences. And woman, with or without the suffrage, stenographer or princess, is of the rainbow. She is beauty made flesh and dwelling amongst us, and whatever the meaning and message of beauty may

be, such is the meaning of woman on the earth—her meaning, at all events, for men. That is, she is the embodiment, more than any other creature, of that divine something, whatever it may be, behind matter, that spiritual element out of which all proceeds, and which mysteriously gives its solemn, lovely and tragic significance to our mortal day.

If you tell some women this of themselves, they will smile at you. Men are such children. They are so simple. Dear innocents, how easily they are fooled! A little makeup, a touch of rouge, a dash of henna—and you are

an angel. Some women seem really to think this; for, naturally, they know nothing of their own mystery, and imagine that it resides in a few feminine tricks, the superficial cleverness with which some of them know how to make the most of the strange something about them which they understand even less than men understand it.

Other women indeed resent man’s religious attitude toward them as sentimental, old-fashioned. They prefer to be regarded merely as fellow-men. To show consciousness of their sex is to risk offence, and to busy one’s eyes with their magnificent hair, instead of the magnificent brains beneath it, is to insult them. Yet when, in that old court of law, Phryne bared her bosom as her complete case for the defence, she proved herself a greater lawyer than will ever be made by law examinations and bachelor’s degrees; and even when women become judges of the Supreme Court, a development easily within sight, they will still retain the greater importance of being merely women....





## Wild at HEART

Think about the 'coffee table' book on wildlife you skimmed through at a friend's or the Nat Geo feature you chanced upon while your fingers were dancing over your remote control. All it takes is an image or two to transport you into the cradle of nature, somehow extracting you from your comfort zone into an unfamiliar space that is as intimidating as it is exhilarating. Now, imagine the impact of a book that, instead, draws the wild into your own space, making the jungle your comfort zone, offering you a bewildering intimacy with the beautiful creatures who people it. That's the beauty of **RANTHAMBHORE: THE TIGER'S REALM** (Sujan Art Pvt Ltd; ₹ 4,800; 164 pages), written and produced by couple **Anjali and Jaisal Singh**, and **Priyanka Gandhi Vadra**. Each of them have a long-standing and personal connection to the forests of Ranthambore and their denizens; this heartfelt connection is felt through every musing, memory, photograph and painting you find through this book. The heroes, of course, are the magnificent tigers—in the short time it takes you to devour this book, Shadow, Brat, Split, Zaalim, Junglee, Macchli will all be friends, their idiosyncrasies and special ways so familiar you will hate to say goodbye. So compelling are their tales, in fact, that they almost overshadow the X-factor of this book: a rare glimpse into the very private world of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and her family through her own words and some wonderfully intimate pictures.

—Arati Rajan Menon



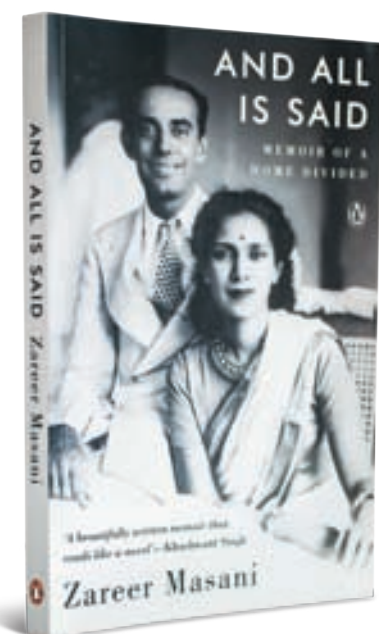
## In the **crossfire**

**P**olitics has an inherent quality to divide. Nations bear its brunt with relative ease than individu-

als, especially in a marriage. Left-wing Congress activist turned leader of the Opposition in Parliament Minoo Masani ("Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's ideological inspiration") fell in love with Shakuntala, one of several daughters of Sir J P Srivastava, an Empire loyalist and, therefore, a successful businessman. Masani was twice divorced and Shakuntala a journalist 15 years younger. They eloped and married, only to lock horns years later over their individualistic thoughts about the Congress, socialism and globalisation. After they both departed, their son **Zareer Masani** opened their black boxes to search for causes of their political arguments and resultant angst, leading to a logical conclusion: **AND ALL IS SAID -MEMOIR OF A HOME DIVIDED** (Penguin; ₹ 299; 236 pages). Besotted by Mrs Indira Gandhi's charms and her moral high ground from India's

victory involving neighbouring Bangladesh, Shakuntala's political differences with her husband grew over the years, the gulf widening so much so that she thought everyone was driving a personal agenda against her. The consequent physical and nervous breakdown took a toll on their son, the author, who was at the same time battling his own sexuality. That both his parents were not pliable didn't help Zareer in his growing-up years. His parents' public political postures and diverse philosophical and ideological attitudes drove them apart permanently, the divorce becoming acerbic and bitter with Shakuntala losing face over Mrs Gandhi's face-offs in Parliament. Read this book to look for prominent names and incidents from the past; and for a close look at the aftermath of politics—familial and real.

—Meeta Bhatti

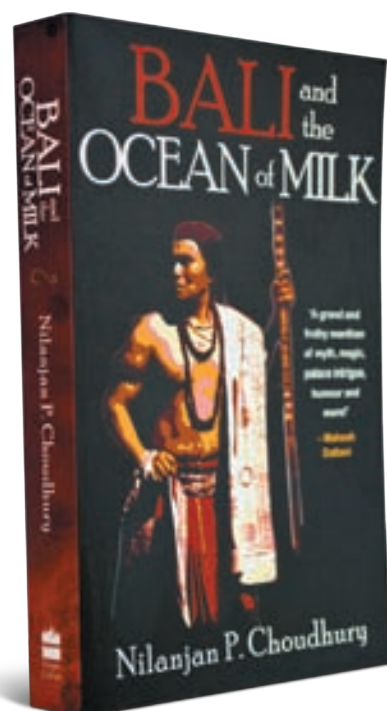


## A mighty churn

**F**ollowing on the heels of the insanely successful *The Immortals of Meluha* franchise, it is inevitable that a slew of Indian writers will follow suit to mine from the treasure trove of Indian mythology and imbue ancient tales with a modern twist. The hero—well, sort of—in **BALI AND THE OCEAN OF MILK** (HarperCollins; ₹ 199; 306 pages) is Indrah, or Indy as his women in Amravati call him. Sadly, the once virile lord of the gods is losing, shall we say, his touch (Urvashi complains that they haven't made love for 200 years). Meanwhile, his *asura* counterpart Bali, ruler of Tripura, faces internal rebellion and the threat of assassination. When both men realise they could do with a shot of immortality, they

come together for Operation Ocean's Twelve—you guessed it, a twist on the *samudra manthan* (or churning of the primordial ocean) that held us all in thrall as kids. This is an unabashed romp and author **Nilanjan P Choudhury** has a lot of fun with it as he throws in gadgets and gizmos, social networking, modern political catchphrases (animal rights violations by the *asura*, if you please), and poor jokes by the dozen. This is not the kind of book that would ever qualify as literature and sharing it with your grandkids may skew their notions of divine denizens that you've taken so long to cultivate. That said, this is loads of fun—if your funny bone is in the right place.

—Arati Rajan Menon





# Ancient wonders

While it appears to be *a la mode* to re-craft our epics and their protagonists in a contemporary mould, **Ashok K Banker** is very much an old-fashioned guy. The journalist-turned-writer who brought us the much-acclaimed *Ramayana Series* and the *Krishna Coriolis* steers clear of 're-imagining' his mythology; instead he uses his extremely vivid imagination to gild the lily; adding texture, depth and resonance to the stories told and retold over generations. His latest MBA, or *Mahabharata Series*, is no exception—it adheres strictly to the original Sanskrit *shloka* of the epic. The first instalment **THE FOREST OF STORIES** (Westland; ₹ 295; 351 pages) transports you to the ashram of Kulapati Shaunaka in the depths of Naimisha-van, the dark and haunted jungle. The residents of the ashram welcome Suta, a tired travel-



ler who tells of the passing of Maharishi Krishna Dweipayana Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas. He also shares Vyasa's legacy: the *Maha Bharata*, an epic narrative poem. What follows is an exquisite narration of the composition, replete with myths of creation and populated by creatures divine and evil, incredible beasts and nature's bounties. The forest seems to gather close around the ashram, its ghosts from the Kuru Bharata race crowding nearer to hear their own saga told with passion and poetry. With this lyrical beginning, Banker doesn't just set the stage for the main narrative of the *Mahabharata*—watch out for the second volume, *The Seeds of War*—he also opens the door to the myths and magic that are so intrinsic to the idea of India, reminding us that the best stories in the world can be found right here, at home.

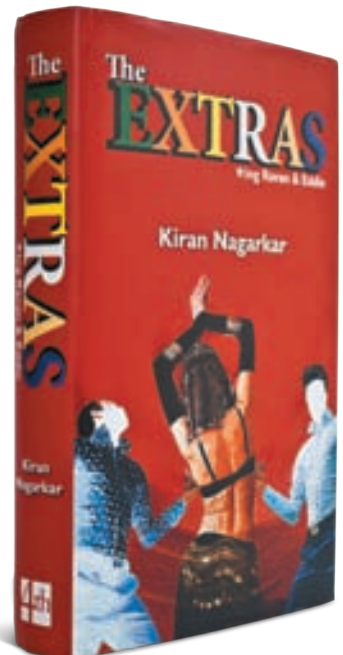
—Arati Rajan Menon

# Second row, third from left!

Every Indian film has far more to tell than just that dirty story. The tales of struggle, sustenance and the road to glamour are sometimes sad and sometimes funny, but never sordid. **Kiran Nagarkar's** *Ravan and Eddie* (and their CWD *chawl* in Mumbai) brought India closer to the business capital at the time when Hindi film songs were nationalising Bombay's famous roads —Lamington Road, Sandhurst Road, Carter Road...; *Ravan and Eddie* was set in the 1940s and 1950s. It's been close to two decades and the boys are back in **THE EXTRAS** (Fourth Estate; ₹ 599; 467 pages), all grown up and harbouring dreams of fame through inroads to Bollywood. They want to be singers and actors. Ravan loves his enemy-by-birth neighbour Eddie's sister Pieta

and Eddie loves Belle for a ticket to London. Glass shards in their bioscopes change patterns, bringing new colours to their lives. The hooch joint Eddie works for, and Ravan's part-time taxi, takes them places, yet nowhere. The comic circles are far more seriously intriguing than they seem. Is this life a film? The parts we play might have been written by an unseen power but how it finally shapes up is in our hands. Is it really? Two boys, now men, who never spoke to each other by turn of fate, find themselves together chasing unseen fate, bumping into each other at every possible turn. Just when you thought the two would live as cult figures penned by Nagarkar, here he is giving them new life in this rollicking ride.

—Meeta Bhatti





# Mind over matter

Deepa Karmalkar pays tribute to the unflagging scientific spirit of her aunt Pushpa Krishna Oke (18 March 1929 - 20 December 2011)

She always had her way. Whether it was taking a trip to Nairobi, Kenya, for the great African Safari, teaching slum children mathematics or continuing her ritual morning walks after being bumped by a truck.... Even in death, Pushpa Oke, my headstrong *baabi atya* (aunt), had her way. She asserted her scientific side by signing up for cadaver donation. I am sure she must be chuckling somewhere above, grey eyes twinkling, declaring triumphantly in her characteristic hoarse voice, "Let those medical students get a good anatomy lesson through my remains!"

Giving lessons was her true calling. *Baabi atya* retired as headmistress of Fatima Devi English High School in Malad, Mumbai. During her tenure, she made sure her students got the concepts right. After retirement, she gave free math and science tuitions to children from slums in the neighbourhood. Though she lived in Mumbai, *atya* went every March to Pune to "coach" her grandson Nikhil for his annual exams. Now a civil engineer, Nikhil acknowledges his grandmother's contribution. "She made sure I learnt the tables pat; how I hated it then, but now those oral computations come in so handy," he admits.

A decade ago, when her scientist husband, uncle 'pappa' Oke, passed away, his body was cremated according to Hindu rites with elaborate rituals on the "8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>" day after his death. Just widowed, Pushpa Oke was struck by the futility of these rites. "What a waste of resources," she sighed and steeled herself for an alternative. At a social gathering in suburban Vile Parle's Tilak Mandir, she learnt about body donation and its scientific significance. She went

to J J Hospital, located at the other end of Mumbai, to pick up the 'body donation' form. She got her brother and his wife and her cousin brother to sign up the form as three witnesses. Then she informed her son Kishore and daughter-in-law Vrunda (with whom she was to spend her last days) about it.



For someone who lost out on a chance to pursue medical studies for want of funds, this venture by which she would end up in the anatomy department of a medical college seems like poetic justice

When Kishore started reading about cadaver donation, he discovered that J P Narayan and Morarji Desai had also donated their bodies. Not only did he and his wife appreciate and support *atya's* wish, even they have

pledged their eyes and bodies for medical research. Last month when *atya's* health deteriorated and she was being admitted to the hospital, the first thing she did was to remind Kishore that her 'form' was in her handbag and that he was to use it at an appropriate time. As she breathed her last in Krishna Hospital, Pune, at 3 am, Kishore promptly notified the authorities. "Within three hours of death, the body must be transferred to cold storage. So by 5.30 am, we took her body to B J Medical Hospital mortuary and went back to hand over the body to the anatomy department in the morning. The person in charge told us about the paucity of such donations; they receive 40 bodies in a year when they need at least 80; as a result, 20 medical students have to crowd over one body."

Unlike her husband, no elaborate rituals followed her death. A short religious ceremony devised especially for those who have donated their bodies was held by Dnyan Prabodhini Sanstha. For friends and relatives, a small condolence meeting was organised and 10 body donation forms were kept handy for visitors. Kishore has put up the information on the notice board of his housing society and gets several queries. Though there is curiosity, there is general apprehension among people. I am proud, though, that *baabi atya* has set the ball rolling and minds ticking.

Neither ostentatious nor pretentious, *atya* always believed in action. She dressed simply but took great care of her health; she had regular timings to eat and made sure that her meals included salads. If Vrunda forgot to make a salad, *atya* would chop some veggies herself.



Pushpa Oke with husband Krishna, sons Shekhar and Kishore and their families; the photograph was taken a decade ago

As *atya* was born and brought up in the holy city of Ujjain, she knew the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Gita* by heart from her days at school and later in Pune she also memorised *Sri Sukta* [a hymn from the *Rig Veda*]. A great devotee of knowledge, she insisted that everybody should know basic math and she was all for women's education. She wasn't a spendthrift but was charitable. She loved to travel and went all over India twice. She went for the great African Safari in Nairobi with *pappa* and then did the Far East with Nikhil after his 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Later, she toured Europe on her own. But of all her travel destinations, she recom-

mended Andaman to everybody for its beauty and historical significance. A pragmatist, she gifted me a lush green synthetic Punjabi suit saying, "Use it in the rains; it isn't revealing when wet and dries faster!" The most uncharacteristic gift from her was the golden necklace at my wedding; also the most tangible token of her affection other than glucose biscuit packs she bought for my kids without fail.

For someone who lost out on a chance to pursue her medical studies for want of funds, this philanthropic venture by which she would end up in the anatomy department of a medical college seems like poetic justice. I hope that her donation certificates, which are displayed proudly in young Nikhil's living room in Mumbai, will inspire many more of us to make the ultimate donation!

#### PROCEDURE FOR BODY DONATION

- Get consent form from the local government hospital.
- Sign up and get three witnesses to attest your will.
- Notify your relatives about it and show them where the form is.
- Upon death, close family members should procure the death certificate and transfer the body to cold storage within three hours.
- Hand over the form to the anatomy department concerned.

Deepa Karmalkar was deputy editor of film weekly Screen; now she is a freelance journalist



# Being human

Murtadha Mutahari spells out the qualities that make people different from one another

By the standard of anatomy, medicine, and, even to some extent, psychology, there are no major differences between two or more individuals. But is humanity limited to the body? Is human perfection and mobility confined to man's physical aspect? In humanistic sciences there is talk of perfect and imperfect man, of the low and high kind. What are the criteria that measure the differences between human beings?

Can we say that human beings are equal genetically, but that they differ in knowledge? That is something acquired not inherited; so a person with more knowledge is higher than one with less. Do we respect people only in proportion to their learning? I do not believe that learning is a criterion. If it were so, we should say that Einstein was the most endowed with qualities of humanity as he was the most learned man of his time.

Another view is that although knowledge is one of the requisites of humanity, and although the importance of awareness of the self, of the society and of the world cannot be denied, it is inadequate. This view claims that humanity is measured by character and disposition. An animal behaves according to its instincts and it possesses no will to rule over its instincts. When we call a dog a faithful animal, its faithfulness is instinctive. There are also human beings who have animal-like disposition. They possess natural instincts, but have done nothing to refine themselves and are condemned only to follow their nature. The awareness of an animal is limited to its own time and place, while man's awareness allows him to



**I don't believe that learning is a criterion. If it were so, we should say that Einstein, the most learned man of the time, was the most endowed with humanity**

know the past and have an idea of the future and also step beyond his own area and even his own planet.

But what kind of characteristics and dispositions are criteria of humanity? One answer is love, which is the mother of other fine dispositions. A person with love is as interested in others as in one's 'self'. In religion this is called self-sacrifice. There is a statement in a book that there is an instruction in all religions to love for others what you love for yourself, and dislike for them what you dislike for yourself. This is the logic of love.

Another school of thought considers resolution and will power as the criteria. It claims that if a person

can dominate himself, his instincts, nerves and passions by his will-power and reason and not be dominated over by his inclinations and desires, he is really human. There is a difference between desire and will. Desire is an attraction by an exterior force, a relation between man and external objects, like a hungry man drawn by food, or sexual attraction. Even sleep is an attraction. So is desire for rank and position. But resolution is something internal, which liberates one from the urges of desire. It places desires at the disposal of will-power to employ them as it considers expedient...

Another criterion for humanity is freedom. It means that to the extent that one is not captivated by any power and can choose freely, one is human. In modern schools of thought, much emphasis is laid on freedom as one of the criteria of humanity. As a requisite for humanity, it is correct, but as the sole criterion for humanity, it is wrong.

Islam has laid great emphasis on self-control. It is narrated that the Prophet was passing by a place in Medina where a number of young men were testing their strength by lifting a heavy stone. When they saw him, they asked him to act as judge. The Prophet agreed, and at the end of the competition he said, "Do you know who is the strongest? It is he who controls his anger and does not allow it to overcome him. He must not use his anger in a way contrary to God's satisfaction and should be able to dominate over his own desires." On that day, the Prophet transformed a physical contest into a spiritual one.

*Murtadha Mutahari (1920-1979) was an Iranian scholar, cleric, lecturer, and politician. Excerpt courtesy the Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project*

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# Write now

When it came to writing, our forefathers had the technique down pat—it is believed that ancient Indians were the first to use a 'pen'. Made of bird feathers and bamboo sticks, these rudimentary instruments were used to write iconic texts like the *Purana*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Along the years, of course, the world welcomed many variations of the fountain pen, followed by the ball point pen, until the next chapter of the saga was written with the advent of the fibre or felt-tipped pen.

Invented in 1962 by Yukio Horie of the Tokyo Stationery Company, Japan, fibre-tip pens have their own ink source

within and a porous tip of fibrous material. The smallest and finest tipped pens are used for writing on paper while thick and wide-tipped pens are used as markers. The simple concept was improvised upon over the years, giving us delights like coloured sketch pens that defined our growing years.

Today, though fibre-tip pens continue to be used extensively, many serious writers have gravitated to roller ball pens, which make use of a mobile ball and liquid ink to produce a smoother line. No matter, the felt-tipped pen continues to live to write another day.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MARCH 1962

- On 12 March, Mohan Lal Sukhadia began his third term as chief minister of Rajasthan, serving for 15 more years.
- On 21 March, Canada became the last country to ban the drug thalidomide, which caused many birth defects.
- On 23 March, cricketer Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi became the youngest Test captain for India at the age of 21.
- On 31 March, the 2nd Lok Sabha of the Parliament of India was dissolved.

## Black-Hole Resort

*n.* A resort that blocks all incoming and outgoing Internet signals.

**Example:** Around the same time, I noticed that those who part with \$ 2,285 a night to stay in a cliff-top room at the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur pay partly for the privilege of not having a TV in their rooms; the future of travel, I'm reliably told, lies in **black-hole resorts**, which charge high prices precisely because you can't get online in their rooms.

—Pico Iyer, "The joy of quiet", *The New York Times*, 29 December 2011

## Zombie Debtor

*n.* An indebted consumer who is only able to pay the debt interest each month.

**Example:** Steve Inch, chair of the Scotcash board, said the collaboration—which sees a loan advisor based full time in the offices of North Glasgow Housing Association—also helped avoid the phenomenon of 'zombie' loan accounts. "There's a new term being coined for payday borrowers who are able only to pay the interest on their loans—**zombie debtors**—so that the principal debt just rolls on, and while there's talk of those institutions having a code of conduct introduced, that's only in the pipeline at present and we want people to know that there is an alternative in the shape of Scotcash," he said.

—Joan McFadden, "Loan service launches attack on the zombies", *Herald Scotland*, 30 December 2011

“Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present.”

—American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker Jim Rohn (1930-2009)

## Workshifting

*pp.* Using portable devices and wireless technologies to perform work wherever and whenever it is convenient.

**Example:** Did you go into the office this past Labor Day weekend? Did you work this past Labor Day weekend? If your answer to the first question is 'no' but you answered 'yes' to the second, you and your business are part of the growing trend toward **workshifting**.

—Rieva Lesonsky, "How workshifting is changing the way we work", *Small Business Trends*, 7 September 2011

## Bashtag

*n.* The use of a corporation's Twitter hashtag to bash the company's products.

**Example:** Here's a cautionary tale for the corporate social media consultants of the world. Last week, McDonald's launched a Twitter campaign using the hashtag #McDStories; it was hoping that the hashtag would inspire heart-warming stories about Happy Meals. Instead, it attracted snarky tweeps and McDonald's detractors who turned it into a **#bashtag** to share their #McDHorrorStories.

—Kashmir Hill, "#McDStories:

When a hashtag becomes a bashtag", *Forbes*, 24 January 2012

## FOMO

*n.* The fear of missing out on something interesting or fun, particularly when it leads to obsessive socialising or social networking.

**Example:** The patrons—30 per seating, two seatings per night—enjoy cuisine from a rotating roster of local star chefs. The buzz about the venture has been almost rabid, with passionate bloggers speculating on the identity of each surprise chef (the first was Marc Cassel from Park), leading to sell-outs. It's all for a good cause, as each seating is expected to raise about \$ 500 for a group of local charities. 48 Nights' organisers clearly have the followers, which draws the coveted chatter. Add in an expiration date and the potential **FOMO**—fear of missing out—only escalates the notion of exclusivity.

—Jason Sheeler, "Temporary shops, galleries, eateries popping up in Dallas", *The Dallas Morning News*, 2 March 2010



## HAPPY JOURNEY!

BUZZ

A retired Army officer based in Haryana has found a new mission: to put his passion for travel to best use. Sixty-eight year-old K J S Chatrath has launched a website that provides silvers travel-related information on different cities, from solo trips to package tours... what to expect, where to stay, what to eat, and what to buy. Other than travel news, travel enthusiasts are

invited to write in and share their experiences. While the promised picture gallery is still under construction (remember, the site is new!), Chatrath has already created a page for all the travel books he has authored, most of them focused on France. The best part—he'll chalk out the perfect holiday for you. Check out [www.fiftyplustravels.com](http://www.fiftyplustravels.com)

## Pollotarian

*n.* A person who supplements a vegetarian diet with poultry.

**Example:** Now everybody with a cardigan and crocheted beanie has to have their own special food-limited diet. Not content with mere veganism, we have freeganism (people who only eat free stuff), flexitarianism (a vegetarian who occasionally eats meat) and **pollotarians** (those who eat chicken or other poultry but not red meat).

—Tim Elliott,  
"Eating their words",  
*The Sydney Morning Herald*,  
17 December 2011

## Physible

*n.* A digital file containing instructions that enable a 3D printer to create a physical object.

**Example:** A **physible** is a digital plan for an object that can either be designed on a computer or uploaded with a 3D scanner. Those plans can be downloaded and used to assemble real, tangible objects using a 3D printer. Printers are getting more affordable, but they're still limited by the kinds of materials they can use.

—Jon Mitchell, "Forget MP3s: Soon you'll download your sneakers from The Pirate Bay", *ReadWriteWeb*,  
24 January 2012

## SIFI

*n.* A financial institution so crucial to the economy that its failure could cause a financial crisis.

**Example:** The FSB list of 29 banks, known as **SIFIs**, includes those judged to be the most globally important to the financial system by their size and complexity. The measures were agreed on by regulators to prevent any 'systemically important financial institution' from failing and roiling the global economy.

—"Global regulators to subject 29 banks to stricter regulations,"  
*The Washington Post*,  
4 November 2011



## “We build our lives with hard work; why can’t we build a clean home for ourselves?”

*Ajit Kochhar, 82, Delhi, for turning around the face of her neighbourhood*



About 15 years ago, Ajit Kochhar moved to her new residence in Delhi’s posh New Friends Colony. Since then she has been working tirelessly to improve her neighbourhood. “We build our lives with hard work; why can’t we build a clean home for ourselves? If each one of us starts taking care of our surroundings, India would be a great country to live,” says Kochhar, who found her new neighbourhood to be a dumping ground. Today, the colony has three parks—one with a skating rink and a cycling track for children, one for playing football and cricket, and the third for silvers, where they gather in the evening for socialising, walking and singing *bhajan*. The

third park, she reveals, was the most difficult to develop as it was notorious for bootleggers. She credits its building to contributions from the councillor Jamal Khan and residents. Kochhar’s work inspired young women in the colony to get involved as well. Each park has been adopted by young mothers who ensure cleanliness in the area. Kochhar and her ‘brigade’ have also started a school for children of household help working in the locality. From three children, the school has grown to a strength of 150. Kochhar also runs a charity clinic at the local gurudwara. “My colony is my *karmabhumi*,” declares the octogenarian.

—Text and photograph by Anju Mohan





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