

women's  
special

harmony

# celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

MARCH 2013 ₹ 30

**KRISHNA  
SOBTI  
PENS A  
CHANGE**



RUKMINI BHAYA NAIR'S  
POETIC ODE

PARO ANAND'S  
JOURNEY OF  
SELF-DISCOVERY

ISHA SHARVANI ON  
DAKSHA SHETH'S  
RHYTHM

ENIGMATIC EVE  
THROUGH THE LENS





Shri Akhilesh Yadav

Minister, Crime Minister, Uttar Pradesh



# LARGEST GATHERING OF FAITH

**KUMBH – 2013 (14 January – 10 March)**

**WELCOMING DEVOTEES IN PRAYAG - ALLAHABAD**

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**PRAYAG, ALLAHABAD**

# An act of COURAGE

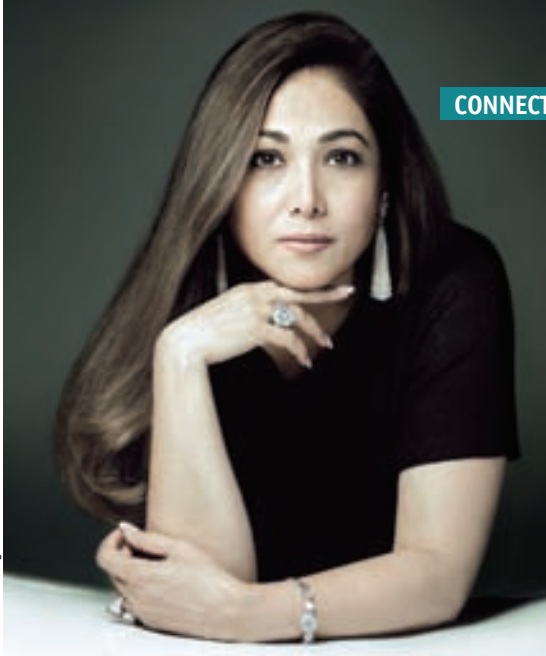
The news was a bolt from the blue. With his astonishing announcement that he would relinquish the highest office in the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI became the first pontiff to retire in nearly 600 years. (Pope Gregory XII quit in 1415 amid a civil war in the Church.) The pope's reason was simple: advanced age, which was increasingly hampering his ability to carry out his duties effectively.

From the media furore that has broken out since, two questions have emerged. The first: Is the papacy just a job that can be relinquished at will? The second: Does such a decision strengthen the forces of ageism? The first question is purely ecclesiastical; I'll leave it to the experts to ponder over the answer. The second, however, resonates tremendously with us at *Harmony-Celebrate Age*.

We have consistently maintained that age is not a barrier to life but a mere numerical construct—we continue to stand by this belief and believe that silvers must live their best life. This, of course, includes the right to work and remain productive. Yet, with every right comes responsibility; with every decoration, a duty; with every position the need for professionalism.

This wasn't about an older man being sidelined in favour of a younger one. We must remember that when Joseph Ratzinger was elected the 265<sup>th</sup> pontiff in 2005, and assumed the title Pope Benedict XVI, he was already 78—the oldest pope elected in 275 years. His age was not an issue then, as it isn't now; it's his physical ability to do the

Suresh Natarajan



job that lies at the heart of the matter. Even more significant, this was a decision he made unilaterally, voluntarily, flying in the face of tradition. And it is entirely in synch with his beliefs. Three years ago, he had indicated in a book that a pope who realises that he is no longer “physically, psychologically and spiritually capable” of carrying out the duties of his office would have “the right, and under some circumstances also an obligation, to resign”. Now, at the age of 85 with declining strength of body and mind, he felt it was time.

This decision was an act of courage, one that must be commended. It reminds us that there are no absolutes in life, only individual truths. While we must fight against discrimination of every hue and live to the best of our abilities, we also need to embrace our realities and know our own limitations: physical, emotional, social. Only then can we know our true potential—and fulfil it.

*Pina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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# index

## features

**36 . Diary 100:** 'Masterji' Tej Karan Dandia believes the responsibility of education lies with teachers

**40 . Footsteps:** Dancer Isha Sharvani decodes her mother Daksha Sheth's language of movement

**50 . Photofeature:** Six photographers share memorable silver images—and stories

**58 . Journey:** *Pure Sequence* author Paro Anand's visit to Mussoorie turns into a voyage of self-discovery



## 44 cover feature

### The grand dame of Hindi literature, Krishna Sobti

Cover portrait by Pradip Chakraborty

## every issue

**7 . ORBIT:** News, views, people, research, trends and tips from around the world

**22 . YOUR SPACE:** Reach out to fellow silvers with your inspiring stories

**63 . ETCETERA:** Culture, leisure, lifestyle, books, buzz and miscellany

**80 . SPEAK:** Dr Kasturi Bakshi on making Kalyani in West Bengal an open defecation-free city

## columns

**26 . NUTRITION:** Anjali Mukerjee says exercise and a lean diet go hand-in-hand

**28 . SILVER LINING:** Padmashri V S Natarajan suggests ways to manage menopausal symptoms

**30 . YOGA RX:** Shameem Akhtar demonstrates poses to lose weight and tone your body



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

**GREEN MAN**  
*Pioneer of agroforestry in northern India, Surinder Singh Hara has been converting thick jungles into scenic farms*



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# column one

In a month dedicated to the power and potency of women, there could be no better headliner than Krishna Sobti. Peopled by strong women characters with an earthy idiom, her books revolutionised Hindi literature. And even more remarkably, translated in languages as diverse as English, Punjabi, Urdu, Swedish and Russian, they went on to embrace people across the world. "My creative responses have been deeply rooted in electric and integrated human experiences," she tells us in "Sobtinama".

Sobti is at the vanguard of a group of remarkable women who grace our pages this month. Poet Rukmini Bhaya Nair gives us her "Ode to Women", a triptych of evocative verse. In "My Women and I", author Paro Anand reveals how the protagonists of her book kept her company—and then some!—in a cottage in Mussoorie. In "Rhythm and Rhyme", dancer Isha Sharvani talks about learning the nuances of dance from her mother Daksha Sheth, who has pioneered a new dance vocabulary. Wildlife writer Janaki Lenin tells us about encounters with animals (and life with her silver husband) in "Author-speak". And in a celebration of the Indian everywoman, six photographers share with us faces—and stories—they will never forget in "An Eve to Remember".

Equally inspirational is the life of our centenarian "Legend of Rajasthan". Read how 'Masterji' Tej Karan Dandia transformed the lives of countless children through his educational reforms. As Sobti asserts, "All human beings deserve a better world than what we have today." On that note, a toast to all our women readers—and the men who honour them!

—Arati Rajan Menon

The interview with Yasmin Khalid Rafi ('Etcetera', January 2013) was a delightful read. I am an ardent fan of melody king Mohammed Rafi and I am looking forward to reading *Mohammed Rafi: My Abba – A Memoir* by his daughter-in-law. I am sure this will give me a better insight into the unknown facets of this legendary singer.

A K Kaul  
Chandigarh

Many thanks for your article "Root Cause" ('Proactive') in the January 2013 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. I met prominent

senior citizens from the town of Murudeshwar and came to know that your article has had a very good impact among many farmers in Karnataka. On 7 January 2013, we conducted a group meeting for farmers on the importance of cows in agriculture at enterprising farmer Vishnu Naik's residence near my hometown Madiangadi. Nearly 100 farmers attended this life-changing meet with their families. With this encouraging response, I am sure a hundred more Vishnu Naiks will be created in our villages within a year.

Devidas Vaidya  
Mumbai

## CONTRIBUTORS



Award-winning author **Paro Anand** has written numerous books for children, young adults and adults. She has headed the National Centre for Children's Literature, National Book Trust and is a world record holder for helping over 3,000 children put together the world's longest newspaper. Her book, *No Guns at My Son's Funeral*, was on the IBBY Honor List and has been translated into German and Spanish while another book, *The Little Bird*, was featured on the *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Grow Up*—an international list covering children's books from all over the world.

A performance storyteller, she has performed her work in India, UK, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Germany.



**Rukmini Bhaya Nair** is professor of linguistics and English at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge and has since taught at universities ranging from Singapore to Stanford. Awarded another honorary doctorate by the University of Antwerp in 2006, Nair has authored several internationally acclaimed academic books. Regarded as one of India's leading poets, she has also published three full length poetry collections with Penguin and her writings, both

creative and critical, are included at courses in universities at Chicago, Delhi, Harvard, Oxford, Kent, Toronto and Washington. Married with two children, she has recently adopted an unprepossessing feline and lives in Delhi.



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## ► NEWSWORTHY

# H<sub>2</sub>S for HEALTH

Looking inwards for a solution need not just be metaphysical—it can be scientific too.

Scientists from the University of South China insist that **hydrogen sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S), a natural compound found in the human body and produced by the kidneys, is the next big thing in anti-aging.** Their study, published in journal *Molecular and Cellular Biology*, argues that it has the capacity to block inflammation and disease-causing free radicals and that it can act on various genetic processes tied to longevity, including an enzyme, known as SIRT1, which has been linked to lifespan. "H<sub>2</sub>S has been gaining increasing attention as an important endogenous signalling molecule because of its significant effects on the cardiovascular and nervous systems," writes lead researcher Zhi-Sheng Jiang. "It plays a variety of important roles in body functions. For instance, it helps maintain clean arteries, alleviates inflammation, moderates high blood pressure, and functions as an antioxidant, all of which imply an important role in aging and age-associated diseases. Once we determine the appropriate levels required, it may be taken as a food or dietary supplement."





## What you want

**I**t's always intriguing—and illuminating—to read something that flies in the face of popularly held (mis)perception. Here's one such media release: a new **survey by AZ Research Partners Pvt Ltd insists that nearly three-fourth of all silvers in India are ready to move from their own home to a community that offers them special services.** To arrive at this conclusion, the company polled 1,900 silvers across 12 cities between October and December 2012. The reasons: alienation from their families, a sense of loneliness and isolation, and a sense of growing insecurity about their safety. In fact, 80 per cent of the seniors surveyed expressed concern about

the possibility of theft and violence, as they lived alone. Further, close to 80 per cent said they wanted to continue working after retirement to sustain and improve their lifestyle. "The need for a comprehensive senior living community in today's day and age is increasing," underlines Sujay Misra of AZ Research in the release. "Three out of every four seniors are open to moving to an assisted senior living community and seniors are increasingly seeking and willing to pay for residential communities with housekeeping support and leisure avenues." An idea whose time has come—as *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has been saying for some years now!

**NEW COMMISSION:** THE MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SENIOR CITIZENS' COMMISSION. IT WILL INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEMS OF SILVERS IN THE STATE AND WORK TOWARDS FORMULATING A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY TO TACKLE THEM.

## Glow MICE

**SCIENCE GETS WEIRDER**—and more wondrous—by the day. To further their research, a team from the University of North Carolina have **used genetic material from fireflies to create the world's first luminescent mice.** These mice literally light up when the p16INK4a (p16) gene is activat-



ed—this gene activates a tumour defence mechanism called cellular senescence. As *The New York Times* informs, the scientists can now demonstrate this process visually with the mice that glow brighter when p16 activation levels are high and dim when levels are low. "There are intriguing relationships between ageing, cancer and cell senescence," says Dr Norman Sharpless, deputy director of the university's cancer centre. "Now, with the development of our 'super' mice, we have a valuable new tool to probe these relationships."





**ON THE ANVIL?  
UNION MINISTER  
KUMARI SELJA  
ANNOUNCED TO  
MEDIA THAT THE  
GOVERNMENT IS  
PLANNING TO BRING  
IN A NEW NATIONAL  
POLICY FOR SENIOR  
CITIZENS; SHE SAYS  
“CONSULTATIONS  
WITH VARIOUS  
STAKEHOLDERS” ARE  
ALREADY ON. WE’LL  
KEEP YOU POSTED.**

## Thumbs DOWN

### TALK ABOUT FOOT IN THE MOUTH.

In February, during a meeting of the National Council on Social Security Reforms, **Japan's finance minister Taro Aso** said the elderly should be allowed to “hurry up and die” instead of costing the government money for end-of-life medical care. Further, he repeatedly referred to silver patients as “tube people” when talking of patients who cannot feed themselves, as news agency Reuters reports. Following the global outrage at his remarks, Aso, who also doubles as deputy prime minister, backtracked, saying he was talking about his personal wishes to not prolong his own life—he is 72. “I don’t need that kind of care; I will die quickly,” he said in a press release. His comments will take longer to forget.



**ECO-IMPACT:** RESEARCHERS AT THE STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YORK AND SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY'S GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE IN CANADA ARE CALLING FOR BETTER AWARENESS AMONG POLICYMAKERS AND THE PUBLIC ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DETERIORATING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ON SILVERS.



**Y**ou may not be as healthy as you think. It's definitely true for Canadians—the country's Heart and Stroke Foundation asserts that there is a **noticeable disparity between people's perceptions of their own health and the reality of their medical situation.** Of the 800 baby boomers (born between 1947 and 1966) polled for its *Report on Canadians' Heart Health*, 80 per cent described themselves as 'healthy'. But an analysis of their health habits indicated differently. While nearly 85 per cent did not eat the recommended number of fruits and vegetables per day, more than 40 per cent fell short of ideal physical activity levels. A fifth described themselves as smokers, and 11 per

cent suggested they were heavy drinkers. "Those who indulge in unhealthy behaviours now are ignoring the fact that long life is not always equated with good health," cardiologist and foundation spokeswoman Dr Beth Abramson tells news website *Canada.com*. "People often live up to 10 years beyond the time their health has deteriorated and that final decade is often spent in discomfort and dissatisfaction. We're in an era where we have better treatments and medications for acute, sudden problems, but we're living with chronic diseases. We want to have healthy quality of life in the long run and it is under our control. We can make the decisions to make health last." Visit [www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com)



## STRESS NOW, PAY LATER

**A** chill pill is probably the best medicine you could ever take. We've always known that stress has an insidious effect on your health and now there's **evidence linking work-related stress in midlife to disability in the silver years.** In their study of over 5,000 people over a 30-year span, from working age to old age, Dr Jenni Kulmala and her team from the Gerontology Research Centre (GEREC) at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, identified four different stress profiles among occupationally active persons aged between 44 and 58 years: negative reactions to work and depressiveness; perceived decrease in cognition; sleep disturbances; and somatic symptoms. "People with long-term stress symptoms in midlife had more difficulties in the basic activities, such as bathing and dressing, and in more demanding activities, such as shopping, housework, handling financial matters, taking medication and using the telephone at the mean age of 78 years," Kulmala tells web journal [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com). "The risk for inability to walk 2 km was two to three times higher for those with constant stress symptoms in midlife."



# Yes, **we** can

**T**he next time you hear a nasty quip about silvers and their so-called incompetence, sit the person down and tell them: No. And back that up with some evidence: a new study by the University of Texas at Dallas' Centre for Brain Health in conjunction with American insurance firm MetLife. A media release by the university proclaims, "Contrary to conventional wisdom that cognitive function declines from the mid-40s, **ageing does not correlate with a deteriorating ability to think for ourselves.** And age alone is not a key factor in predicting the ability to make decisions." As study leader Dr Sandra Chapman tells us, the team focused on healthy adults in their 50s, 60s, and 70s, and found that those who demonstrated smart decision-making also excelled at strategic learning. And, interestingly, although participants had approximately the same strategic learning abilities, the oldest group actually surpassed the rest slightly, implying that strategic learning capacity may actually increase with age in normally functioning adults. What's more, the participants in their 70s were more conscientious and remained vigilant (considered their options before making a decision) compared to those in their 50s. "So, not only



does age not impair mental function, it actually makes it better," asserts Chapman. "As for all those previous studies that concluded otherwise, they failed to take into account early-onset dementia and other medical conditions."



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# New and improved

Independence, mobility and security are the troika of active aging. As *The New York Times* tells us, here are some products that can help silvers reach these goals



**Cook safe:** The Safe-T Element by Canadian firm Pioneering Technology is an electronically controlled solid cover plate that fits existing stove burners. If the temperature exceeds 350°C (662° F) owing to an unattended burner, the stove switches off automatically. Costs vary, depending on the stove. Go to [www.pioneeringtech.com](http://www.pioneeringtech.com)



**A new lifeline:** Philips Lifeline's new personal emergency response system GoSafe lets you get help wherever you are. In case of a fall or accident, it will automatically summon help and inform your family or caregiver. It uses a combination of Wi-Fi, GPS and cell-tower triangulation to piece together your exact location. If that doesn't work, there's an audio beacon! Go to [philipslifelinegosafe.com/new/](http://philipslifelinegosafe.com/new/)



**Safe track:** American tech company GTX and shoe manufacturer Aetrex Worldwide have launched the Navistar range of sports shoes with GPS trackers embedded in the base of the right heel—so inconspicuous that no one need ever know. But if the wearer veers away from a preset 'geo-zone', their family or caregiver is duly notified via SMS and email. The service also offers emergency tracking in case you want to contact the wearer immediately. Go to [www.navistargpsshoe.com](http://www.navistargpsshoe.com)

## Call and care:

For silvers who don't need constant monitoring but like to stay safe, American company VTech has launched its CareLine Home Safety Telephone System—apart from the standard corded base and cordless

handset combo, it includes a 'portable pendant'. This works as a cordless phone worn around your neck with two programmable buttons—one could be a relative or neighbour; the other 911. The user can also voice-dial up to 50 pre-programmed numbers. Visit [www.vtechphones.com/vtechphones/index.cfm/careline/careline-home-safety-telephone-system/](http://www.vtechphones.com/vtechphones/index.cfm/careline/careline-home-safety-telephone-system/)



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## The anti-ageing **VACATION**

Don't let the idyllic Austrian setting and the celeb clientele fool you—a stint at the Viva Mayr Clinic is not so much luxury as it is boot camp. With **the promise of taking 10 years off your face in a week**, the spa-cum-medical centre has little choice but to put you through your paces, as London newspaper *The Daily Mail* reports. After a thorough examination, the specialists at the clinic tailor-make a strict regimen for you based on the premise that most of what we eat causes premature ageing. So sugar, alcohol, caffeine and fast foods are out; instead you get a 700-calorie diet that includes tons of vegetable soup and spelt bread, a daily Epsom salt detox cocktail, and regular abdominal massages to rev up your gut and circulation. And, yes, every mouthful has to be chewed precisely 40 times. “If we don't chew food thoroughly, our bodies cannot absorb the nutrients properly,” says Dr Harald Stossier, the clinic's director. “Also, gulping food down puts our system under huge stress. Ultimately, it's not just *what* we eat but *how* and *when* we eat that can age us.” If you're up for the challenge, or just want to know more, check out [www.viva-mayr.com/en.html](http://www.viva-mayr.com/en.html)



## Cutting code

Cosmetology has become something of a meat market with a plethora of people—many of whose credentials are open to debate—administering a variety of procedures, from Botox and fillers to reduction and augmentation. In a bid to regulate the industry and protect the consumer, **the Royal College of Surgeons in Britain has published a new code of practice for plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures** that calls for legislation to enforce training, as London newspaper *The Times* tells us. Further, it stipulates that surgeons not tell clients that they will look more ‘beautiful’ after surgery and recommends psychological support, in the form of assessments and counselling, by medical professionals before (and after, if necessary) any major procedure to preclude any unrealistic expectations and/or disappointment. Something to think about for us in India.



## Lift yourself

Ten minutes to a facelift. That's the USP of the **CACI Microlift**, designed to "re-educate facial muscles and combat the signs of ageing with instant results", as the company's media release tells us. A **DIY non-surgical**



**face fix**, the portable handheld device targets the entire face including the forehead, eyes, brows, cheeks, jaw line, lips, chin and neck to lift facial contours and reduce wrinkles with low-frequency electrical impulse technology. "CACI Microlift works in harmony with the body's bio-electrical field, using a unique patented muscle gripping action," adds the media release, recommending a 10-minute session a week to maintain the results of the treatment. If you're interested, CACI Microlift is available online worldwide at a cost of £ 350 (about ₹ 29,500) plus shipping. If the price tag doesn't make you shudder, go to [www.cacimicrolift.com](http://www.cacimicrolift.com)

MORE FAT, PLEASE: IN THE UK, THE NUMBER OF COSMETIC OPERATIONS IN WHICH FAT IS INJECTED HAS NOW OVERTAKEN THE NUMBER OF PROCEDURES TO REMOVE IT. WHILE EYELID SURGERY, COLLAGEN IMPLANTS, FILLERS AND FAT TRANSFER TO CHEEKS SHOWED A RISE, LIPOSUCTION, TUMMY TUCKS AND BREAST REDUCTIONS FELL OUT OF FAVOUR.



## Cheers, gentlemen!

In the anti-ageing Olympics, men don't want to be left behind in any of the races. Last year, when women's anti-ageing collagen drink Pure Gold Collagen set the cash registers ringing in the UK, the men cried foul—they wanted their own. This year, manufacturer Minerva Research Labs has responded with **Active Gold Collagen: a drink for men that claims to target fine lines and skin ageing, reduce hair loss and protect and promote muscle tone.** As London newspaper *The Guardian* reports, each 50-ml bottle (£ 36/about ₹ 3,000 for 10 bottles) contains collagen—the protein that gives skin elasticity—along with acids designed to promote its pro-

duction, just like the women's drink. But the men's version also contains zinc, which accelerates the renewal of skin cells and battles hair loss and dandruff, L-Carnitine, a nutrient that turns fat into energy and helps muscles recover after exercise, and glucosamine, a compound that helps repair cartilage in joints and other body tissues. According to data provided by the company, in clinical trials, all the 1,500 men (aged 35 to 59) who drank the supplement daily reported younger looking skin with fewer wrinkles and healthier hair and joints within 12 weeks, with 80 per cent reporting better skin in just eight weeks. If you are a believer, check out [www.activegoldcollagen.com](http://www.activegoldcollagen.com)

**Go birding!** Bird watching or ornithology—the fastest growing outdoor activity in the US—has recently received a huge thumbs up from the American Medical Association for its health benefits. Physically, it gives you exercise as well as a boost of Vitamin D, which is associated with bone health and immune system function. Bird watching has also been proven to reduce anxiety and relieve stress. It's also a lot of fun!



## Then: Wine Corks Now: Bulletin Board

If you enjoy your wine, and still haven't thrown away all those corks, here's a way to turn them into a quirky—but useful—bulletin board that will help you keep your life, and schedule, organized. Gather as many corks as you can, depending on the size of the board you need. Use a sturdy piece of cardboard or ply that can fit the interior of an extra

frame you are willing to use for the project. Attach the board to the back of the frame and glue the corks on the board. Use the pattern you like—stick them lengthwise side to side, or do two sideways alternated with two lengthwise. You can even cut the corks vertically in half to keep the profile of the notice board thinner. Let the corks dry—and use!



### FACTS

- » There are about 2,200,000 hectare of cork forest worldwide: 32.4 per cent in Portugal and 22.2 per cent in Spain. Annual production is about 300,000 tonne; 61.3 per cent from Portugal, 29.5 per cent from Spain, and 5.5 per cent from Italy.
- » Carbon footprint studies by Corticeira Amorim, Oeneo Bouchage of France and the Cork Supply Group of Portugal concluded that cork is the most environment-friendly wine stopper compared to other alternatives.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. USING THE SAME TECHNIQUE AS ABOVE, MAKE A WELCOME MAT OUT OF WINE CORKS.
2. USE CORKS AS A STOPPER FOR OTHER BOTTLES.
3. BY CUTTING CORKS VERTICALLY IN HALF, YOU CAN USE THEM AS DOORSTOPPERS.





Twenty-two Harmony Interactive Centre members went in for a rejuvenating picnic, exploring the newly renovated Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum and Jijamata Udyan Zoo at Byculla on 14 February 2013. The picnic turned out to be a blend of history and fun, as well as a break from their daily routine. As an added bonus, a few members won goodies by participating in an on-the-spot 'Go Green' contest organised by a voluntary group.

A one-act play was performed at the Harmony Interactive Centre, Girgaum, by artist Suresh Paranjpe on 24 January. Over 30 members enjoyed listening to the dialogues and scenes from old and highly acclaimed Marathi plays like *Vahto Hi Durvanchi Judi* and *Sur Rahu De*. Paranjpe, for whom the show was his 533rd, delighted the audience by portraying famous Marathi actors such as Kashinath Ghanekar, Dr Shriram Lagoo and Balgandharv.





**T**hink twice before you pop that aspirin each time you have a headache. A recent study conducted at the University of Sydney reveals that **long-term users of aspirin are at a greater risk of developing blindness in the form of macular degeneration.** The study examined 2,389 people over a period of 15 years. Of these participants, 63 people were diagnosed with incident neo-vascular age-related macular degeneration (AMD). However, these findings are not related to a history of cardiovascular diseases, smoking or any other risk factors. The study also claims that the occurrence of neo-vascular AMD amongst non-regular aspirin users was about 0.8 per cent

at five years, 1.6 per cent at 10 years and reached 9.3 per cent by the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the study. On the other hand, the occurrence in regular aspirin users was 1.9 per cent in the first five years itself and went up to 7 per cent by the 10<sup>th</sup> year and 9.3 per cent in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the study. Though the findings have been published in journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*, this study has found a few critics. Dr Sanjay Kaul and Dr George A Diamond from Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in Los Angeles have both advised a more detailed and cautious interpretation of these findings. In fact, the National Health and Medical Research Council will fund a trial to assure the delivery of findings by 2018.



#### **NO TO FLU**

**ABOUT 100 SILVERS TURNED UP FOR A FREE HEALTH TALK ON 'COLD AND FLU PREVENTION' CONDUCTED BY DR VIKAS BHUTANI AT A MOHALI-BASED HOSPITAL. THOUGH THERE IS NO WAY TO CURE A COMMON COLD OR FLU, THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS TO KEEP IT AT BAY AND STAY HEALTHY. TO AVOID THE FLU THIS SEASON, DR BHUTANI LAID STRESS ON SIMPLE WAYS SUCH AS A BALANCED DIET, MINIMISING STRESS, REGULAR EXERCISE AND SHUNNING UNHEALTHY HABITS SUCH AS SMOKING AND DRINKING.**



## POSTURE PRESCRIPTION

A GROUNDBREAKING COMPANY IN POSTURE IMPROVEMENT AND BACK WELLNESS, BACKJOY ASIA IS NOW HELPING MORE THAN 80,000 PEOPLE MINIMISE THEIR BACK PAIN, GIVING THEM A BETTER CHANCE AT ENJOYING THEIR LIFE. THE COMPANY'S PRODUCT LINE, WHICH FOCUSES ON TRANSFORMING THE WAY THE WORLD SITS, STANDS AND SLEEPS, INCLUDES TWO DEVICES



FOR BETTER POSTURE: ONE WHILE SITTING AND THE OTHER FOR STANDING. THE RECENT LAUNCH OF ITS SLEEP-PRODUCT COMPLETES THE 24-HOUR BETTER POSTURE CYCLE. CALLED THE BACKJOY POSTURE SLEEP PILLOW, IT USES THE SAME APPLIED POSTURE SCIENCE THAT THE COMPANY USES FOR ALL ITS PRODUCTS.



# Lifesaver

For generations, we have grown up discussing the benefits of the *neem* tree and used it as a herbal remedy for diseases and ailments in India. Indeed, it is well-known to help treat fever and inflammation. Now a study by scientists at the Georgia Regents University Cancer Centre confirms that ***neem* can help kill cancer cells** as well. A protein found in its leaves can actually hijack cancer cells and boost immune response. The scientists are investigating the possibility of developing an antibody that can be used as a vaccine.

Dr Ahmed Chadli, researcher and senior author of the study, claims that a drug developed from *neem* leaves could play a key role in mutating proteins and making the plant an attractive cancer drug treatment option. The team will also try to develop a therapeutic approach to cancer, targeting specific molecules within the cancerous cells, including certain molecules called chaperones. This discovery has helped scientists come a step closer to helping patients in oncology wards. The study was named *Journal of Biological Chemistry's* 'Paper of the Week'.



# A better **view**

**T**raining officer with the Home Guards in Mumbai, open-sea scuba diver, lover of snakes and author **Bharat Joshi**, 56, is a man of remarkable talents. His two books, though, have been on the subject he is most passionate about: signalling danger to the blind. While his first book (in Braille) was *Snakes Bites for Blind People*; his second (also in Braille) is *Independent Blind*, with a clear focus on raising awareness

about disaster management. He released the book in January to mark the death anniversary of Louis Braille. *Independent Blind* prepares the blind for natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, storms as well as sudden fire, terror attacks and bombings. It teaches the visually impaired to take care of themselves, irrespective of their visual problem. "My aim is to not only empower the blind population of close to 11 million in India

but give them a chance of living an independent life," says Joshi, further discussing the need to develop amenities for their comfort. "Facilities like slopes and beepers are needed on the streets to make commuting easier. The more they go out, the more confident they will be of themselves." Though he lauds the diminutive organisational attempt to install beepers on railway platforms where a disabled compartment in a train would halt, he says it's not enough.

Some years ago, Joshi visited a place in Amravati for a programme and came across a couple farming together. The man was ploughing the field with the help of a rope that was tied at a certain level from the ground. He was digging the ground by following the route of the rope. When he realised the farmer was blind, he wondered about his safety. "What would happen if he got bitten by a snake?" wondered an agitated Joshi. That's how the idea of publishing a book on snake bites for the blind was born in 2009. In 21 days, over quick lunches and snacks, he learnt Braille for a predisposed cause.

After the book's success, questions and comments dropped in every day. People from blind schools across the country were interested to know how to be independent in other problematic situations. This encouraged him to publish his latest book. Going forward, he plans to publish another book on yoga for blind people, a more challenging proposition as it will not only have text but pictures of the positions in Braille. Joshi also plans to organise jungle walks for blind people; these will comprise audio-enhanced modules, with the guide explaining every view with sounds such as that of falling leaves. "If not vision, they will at least have a good view," he concludes.

—Radhika Raje





### BIRTHDAYS

- Music composer and lyricist **Ravindra Jain** turned 69 on 28 February.
- The girl-next-door of the 80s, actor **Deepti Naval** turned 56 on 3 February.
- Actor, teacher and author **Anupam Kher** (left) turned 58 on 7 March.

● Veteran actor and film producer **Shashi Kapoor** (right) turns 75 on 18 March.

● Rock legend **Eric Clapton** turns 67 on 30 March.



### MILESTONES

● **Jeet Thayil**, 54, became the first Indian author to win the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2013 for his debut novel *Narcopolis*. The US \$ 50,000 DSC Prize, along with a trophy, was given away in January at the DSC Jaipur Literature Festival by actor Sharmila Tagore.

● **Bhanu Patel**, the 57 year-old convict who earned 31 degrees in prison from January 2005 to December 2011, will enter the *Limca Book of Records 2013* for the 'Most Educational Qualifications during Imprisonment'. Patel is a medical doctor and has received certificates of merit from *Unique World Records* and *Asia Book of Records*.



● The 'big ben' of Ahmedabad, **Elaben Bhatt**, 80, was awarded the prestigious Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development 2011 by President Pranab Mukherjee for her lifetime achievement in empowering women through grassroots entrepreneurship. The award carries a citation and a cash award of ₹ 2.5 million.



### IN PASSING

● Veteran Congress leader and former Puducherry chief minister **P Shanmugam** (left) passed away on 2 February in Karaikal, Tamil Nadu, after a fall. He was 85.

● A proponent of modern style of prose in Malayalam poetry, **D Vinayachandran** (right) passed away in Thiruvananthapuram on February 11 after a stroke. He was 66.

● Distinguished administrator and civil servant **C R Krishnaswamy Rao**, 86, breathed his last on 12 February in Chennai.



● Former Somerset captain **Brian Langford** (left) died at the age of 77 on 12 February.

● Veteran journalist **Sumanta (Kajal) Sen** died in Kolkata on 18 February. He was 70.

● **Addoor Shivashanker Rao**, a veteran freedom fighter, agriculturist and one of the founding members of the Communist Party of India, passed away in Mangalore on 19 February. He was 92.



### OVERHEARD

"No one speaks about elderly people and I don't think it's because people are cruel or don't care. It's because you don't want to think about your own mortality. I think people don't talk about it enough. There's a strange arrogance. Sometimes being old is used as an insult, which is bizarre because, if you're lucky, that's literally going to happen to you."

—British comedian-actor-director-producer-writer-musician **Ricky Gervais**, whose latest sitcom *Derek* deals with life in a silver care home



## 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.

### WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST

What happens when both your elderly parents end up in hospital with life-threatening conditions at the same time? It's the closest I've come to my world crashing. Your life changes in an instant.

My dad, who had been healthy all his life, was suddenly admitted to a hospital in Mumbai, with severe pneumonia, respiratory failure and acute jaundice. My brothers and I live in the US and when doctors advised us to rush to Mumbai to stay at dad's bedside, we dropped everything and rushed over.

**Puja Verma with her father**



All the best medical treatment in the world didn't seem to help and dad's condition went from bad to worse. He was in the ICU for 10 days, practically comatose and on life support. There was a time when the entire team of doctors attending on him began losing hope.

Then, inexplicably, dad's vital signs began to pick up. It was, quite literally, unbelievable! Yes, just like that. When I was by his side, he couldn't say a word as he was on the ventilator but he managed to give me the thumbs-up. How gutsy it must be for a 77 year-old in that predicament to summon the courage to do that. I will remember that moment as long as I live.

Dad was eventually shifted out of the ICU and into the ward to recover when the axe fell, yet again. We were all in great spirits, considering the ordeal we had just been through, when my mother collapsed right before my eyes. She was motionless and unable to respond or breathe, and we rushed her to hospital, where my father was still recovering.

Mom had been complaining of chest pain for a few days but we didn't pay attention to it as dad was the main focus then. Doctors found that her right coronary artery was 95 per cent blocked and they inserted a stent. After spending a night in the ICU, mom was shifted to the room where dad was recovering so that I could take care of them together. By the grace of God, both mom and dad were discharged in time for Diwali and we were one happy family once again.

There are many lessons I learnt along the way: about the strength that comes from being a loving family, the power of prayer, about gratitude and patience. I believe that all this together can even rewrite one's destiny. We cannot choose how life teaches us our lessons. The important thing is to learn them anyway.

—Puja Verma, North Carolina, USA



## NEVER STOP LEARNING

My thirst for knowledge is endless and has held me together through thick and thin. Looking back, I realise that the merits of education go beyond books and can teach you many lessons for life along the way.

I was born and raised in Churu district in Rajasthan, where I completed my higher secondary education. As my family was economically unstable and there were no colleges in the district, I moved to Assam and stayed with my elder brother while doing odd jobs that earned me ₹ 200 a month. Then, I shifted to Raipur, then in Madhya Pradesh, to live with my elder sister.

When I sought to enrol at the Durga College of Arts and Commerce for the BCom course there, the principal was reluctant to admit me, saying the break in my academic record suggested I wasn't serious about getting an education. Eventually, he relented and granted me a 50 per cent concession on my fees, which were ₹ 18 a month.

The principal's words haunted me and I poured my heart and soul into studying. As I couldn't afford to buy textbooks, I visited the best libraries in the city and prepared notes from the books there. As a result, I was the college topper for all three years of graduation and secured the third rank in the university merit list in the final year!

In 1974, I landed a clerical job in Bank of India and completed my master's in economics immediately thereafter. In the 11 years that followed, I was posted all over the country but still managed to secure an LLB degree and postgraduate diploma in labour laws and industrial relations alongside work. You see, rather than wait for opportunities to present themselves, I seized those that were available.

There was just one goal that eluded me: an MBA in finance. I planned to enrol for this degree when posted in Bhopal but I was too late as admissions had closed. I finally fulfilled this dream when IGNOU started a distance education course in the subject in 1989! In 2007, I took voluntary retirement while posted as chief manager in the



For Sharma, knowledge is power

Bandra branch (Mumbai) of Bank of India. I returned to Raipur where I had built a house. However, to me, retirement is retirement from service, not from work. So I hooked up with a renewable energy consultancy firm and have been looking after their academic research since then. It is only because of my knowledge in different subjects that I feel confident to do well in any field I choose to work in.

I also enjoy writing and have to my credit over 25 articles on banking, finance, economy and management, published in various journals including the Indian Banks' Association bulletin and the Reserve Bank of India's *Banking Chintan Anuchintan*.

My quest for knowledge has been a long and satisfying journey, and my message to one and all is simple: keep learning, as the fruits of knowledge are abundant and sweet.

—Rudra Narain Sharma, Raipur

# The instructor

**MANOHAR JOGLEKAR, 71, MUMBAI**

I want to share my knowledge with the world around me. I never aspired to be a teacher after retirement but I am blessed with enough experiences that have made me excel in many fields. I eventually ended up being a teacher and I like this profession.

During my years of employment, I actively practised yoga and played chess. My job with the Reserve Bank of India took me to several cities in Maharashtra. I started by working in Kanpur and then moved to Nagpur where my wife accompanied me. I had to leave my two sons in Mumbai for them to finish their education. After 11 years in Nagpur, I moved to Ahmedabad and lived there till I retired. Constant moving and a stressful job made me want to pursue yoga. I started in 1984 and have attended many camps and workshops since then.

My love for chess has also been a constant. I played my first game in 1959. There has been no stopping after that. My first-ever win was at a championship in Ruia College. I introduced a different kind of chess tournament, wherein instead of singles playing against each other there were doubles. However, there was a twist; the partners were not allowed to discuss the moves with each other, and that made it even more difficult for players to contemplate the next move. It was almost like competing against three people instead of one. Most players found it interesting and challenging. I was quite pleased that the initiative was welcomed.

After retirement I moved back to Mumbai, my place of birth. Through word of mouth, people came to know about my yoga skills and I started



holding classes. After I conducted a camp for RBI employees, many companies invited me for similar camps. I never realised I would get such a good response.

I have received the opportunity to learn yoga from Yoga Vidya Niketan, Vivekanand Kendra and B K S Iyengar in Mumbai. I have also visited Yoga Nisargopchar Chumbak Chikitsa in Pune and Swamy Yogananda in Bihar. A few years ago, my second cousin invited me to Muscat, where I organised a yoga camp for Muscat Marathi Mitra Mandal. It was a different experience altogether.

Besides yoga, I have had the chance to groom upcoming chess students as well. After a few well-known chess players such as K Vishwanathan and Koneru Humpy, there seems to be a black hole when it comes to Indian chess champions. We need more experts and I am trying my best by teaching ambitious students. Apart from yoga and chess, I have taught languages as well. I also engage frequently in social work. I believe this is a new start—there's a lot more to live, a lot more to be done, a lot more to be shared, and a lot more that needs change in our society.

—As told to Radhika Rajee

## A BLOOMING FUTURE

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

**I have long been a florist with a hotel in Mumbai. I have always been fond of flowers and plants. I am retiring within a few months and would like to pursue my passion. How can I continue to be a full-time florist?**

The floristry industry is one with a long lifespan—flowers are perennially associated with friends, family and loved ones and enjoy huge demand from a broad customer base; though you must remember that the investment and losses both can be huge in this profession. Florists work hard and face tough competition; the industry might look fairly simple but behind the scenes are some very sophisticated operations.

To begin with, you need to maintain your relations with your customers. You can start by renting or buying a place in a busy location. That way, your shop will be a highlight and local commuters will notice it. You have to look happy to make people want to buy your flowers. Use your expertise. There are no specific rules you need to follow when starting a business, but if you employ staff you need to comply with employment legislation such as minimum wages and working hours. You will also have to work out your expenditure for electricity and water. Initially, it may be a no-profit-no-loss enterprise, but once it flourishes, you will enjoy the job.

—Suhas Kadam, franchise owner at Ferns & Petals Flower Shop, Mumbai





## The streets of San Francisco

This is a city with charm to burn. Breathtaking vistas of the Bay, the magnificence of the Golden Gate Bridge, entrancingly eclectic architecture, the charming cable cars and a lingering fog that flirts with you as you negotiate the impossibly steep streets. Yet what makes San Francisco, less than 80 sq km in size, so remarkable are its neighbourhoods, each one distinct in terms of character and history. From the hippie-chic '60s haven Haight-Ashbury and LGBT paradise Castro (or the Rainbow District) to the upper-crust Nob Hill, Italian North Beach and the bustle of Chinatown, each neighbourhood, while carrying the exterior trappings of 21<sup>st</sup> century life, is almost frozen in time, a living showcase of its provenance.

You realise how true this is when you wander into the stores of Chinatown, an experience intense in itself for the press of people, the unfamiliar fragrances of food, incense and produce, and the feeling of being instantly transported to another land. Silver reigns supreme in these stores—most are run by women, helped by their children and grandchildren when they get time off from work or college; a casual conversation would reveal that they have lived here for decades but never even needed to learn more than a smattering of English, enough to get by. “China, USA, how does it matter?” asked Lily, a luminous lady of indeterminate age, as she ladled steaming dim sum on to our plates. “This is our life; we spend it with our families.” She was unable to explain the ingredients of some of the food but her grandson Steve was happy to help out. “Steve is not his real name,” she pointed out when he introduced

himself. “Lily isn’t mine either,” she added, with a trill of laughter. “But people understand us this way!”

Just a few blocks south of Chinatown lies The Marines’ Memorial Club and Hotel, where we had the privilege to stay—this too is a unique historical tableau. Located in the heart of Union Square, the city’s shopping-dining-theatre district, it honours the country’s military heritage and its veterans. Established as the first ‘Living Memorial’ in the United States, it commemorates the valour of those who died in military service; provides space for lectures and meetings; and houses a museum and library. The Hotel, which is open to everybody (but with special discounts for soldiers, military veterans and members of the armed forces from all over the world) is an innovative mechanism to raise funds for the mission of the institution.

For military enthusiast and casual visitor alike, the rich memorabilia displayed throughout the hotel and the Museum form an added bonus to the excellent service. The best part, though, is the efficient staff, many of whom are veterans themselves—there is a preferential hiring policy, as the management proudly points out. We made a friend in Louis, the concierge, who was delighted to share some San Francisco secrets with us, including the best Irish coffee in town. But he refused to tell us his age. “I’ve been around,” was all that he would say. “I’ve fought for my country and I’ve come home and I’ve found a city that understands me.” If Lily could have heard him, she would have nodded—and smiled.

—Arati Rajan Menon





**EATING RIGHT** BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

## Fat question: Exercise and a lean diet go hand-in-hand

I am 71 and partially active, though my obesity makes it very difficult for me to exercise regularly. Is there a diet plan I can follow to stay energised?

Obesity affects a person's quality of life. Further, in later years, it leads to serious medical complications as well. Calories are needed by our body to carry out various vital processes. But when we consume extra calories (that too without any kind of physical activity), it causes weight gain. In people over the age of 65, hormonal changes also cause increased body fat. Methods used for losing weight in younger people do not necessarily work in older adults as there is low muscle mass.

There is energy within everyone—your body makes it from the food you eat. The good news is that energy can be increased at any age or at any level of fitness, whether you are lethargic or active, young or old. Every action of the body—waving your hand, laughing or talking—combusts or burns the bread or fruit you must have had for breakfast or the chicken you had last night for dinner. The ultimate fate of the food you eat is to supply energy for your current activities; the excess intake gets stored in the form of glycogen in the liver for future needs. The type of food you eat decides your energy level for the day and for the months to come. Your body cannot produce energy out of nothing. If you eat food without nutrients, it will affect your energy levels.



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There is energy within everyone—your body makes it from the food you eat. The good news is that energy can be increased at any age or at any level of fitness, whether you are lethargic or active, young or old

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Therefore, energy levels directly depend on the type of food consumed and not the amount. Another interesting fact to note is that even when two individuals of the same gender and age eat identical diets, their energy levels are poles apart. Such distinction in energy efficiency is because of various factors like hormonal imbalances, heredity, activity levels, ratio of lean muscle to body fat, stress levels, drugs consumed by the individual, environmental temperature (hot or cold season) and, more important, individual responses to food. Some individuals lose energy owing to the possible inability to digest food completely. They are unable to absorb nutrients from food as their body lacks the capacity to completely metabolise the food consumed and break it into glucose meant to provide energy.

### How does one increase energy levels?

**Eat more complex carbohydrates** rich in fibre like *jawar*, *bajra*, brown rice, oatmeal, sprouts, nuts, seeds and dry fruits.



## READERS ASK

### How can I improve my blood lipid and blood glucose profiles?

Disturbed blood lipid and blood glucose profiles are detrimental to one's health. The type and amount of fats you eat affect your lipid profile. Consumption of red meat, whole milk, palm oil, poultry skin and butter increases your LDL (bad cholesterol); try to avoid these foods. You can use oils like olive oil or canola oil and nuts and avocados as they decrease your LDL and increase HDL (good cholesterol).

Polyunsaturated fatty acids like corn, safflower and sunflower oil also decrease LDL and have little or no effect on HDL. Omega-3 fatty acids in flaxseeds, walnuts and fish (including tuna, mackerel, salmon) increase HDL levels so they can be included twice a week in your diet. Reducing saturated fats, trans-fats and cholesterol can improve triglyceride levels and help manage cholesterol.

Here are some foods that could help keep your blood sugar in check:

- Cinnamon helps reduce blood sugar levels. Take ½ tsp after dinner.
- Oats and barley keep a person fuller for a longer period of time because of the high soluble fibre that helps with blood glucose control.
- Fenugreek (*methi*) seeds are known to reduce blood sugar levels. Take ½ tsp powder after breakfast (if you have diabetes).
- Add non-starchy vegetables like broccoli and spinach to your diet as they are high in fibre; starchy vegetables have more carbohydrates and can cause rise in blood sugars. Also, if you are a rice lover, switch to brown rice instead of white rice.
- All whole pulses have soluble fibre and a low glycaemic index. Therefore, *rajma*, *chana*, *moong*, beans, and *chowli* are all beneficial in reducing blood sugar as well as blood lipids.

**Eat five to six mini meals every day.** Studies show that people who eat small frequent meals suffer less from fatigue and think more clearly than those who eat two to three large meals a day. These mini meals can consist of dry fruits, fresh fruits, vegetable juices like cucumber juice, tomato juice, juice of carrot and beetroots mixed with mint or coriander leaves, a wholegrain salad sandwich, wholegrain biscuits. To enhance energy levels, foods must be taken in their natural state, i.e. not processed or refined. These mini meals should be consumed between breakfast and lunch (around 10-11 am), between lunch and dinner (around 4-5 pm) and after dinner, before going to bed.

**Take Vitamin B supplements.** Lack of B-complex vitamins leads to chronic fatigue. The entire complex protects the nerves and increases energy. Food cannot be converted into glucose and utilised when there is a deficiency of B vitamins. Natural dietary sources of this group are wholegrain cereals, leafy vegetables, unpolished rice, banana, yeast, peas, *dal* and pulses. Avoid taking tranquilisers, as these help you sleep but do not reduce fatigue. On the contrary, they make you feel more lethargic and dull and cloud your thinking. Avoid smoking, eating more sugar, drinking more coffee and alcohol—these give you a temporary boost, but later make you feel worse than before.

Increase your activity level by exercising for 40 minutes regularly (don't overdo it, as it can work the reverse for you). The best form of exercise would be a brisk walk, a racket sport, swimming or jogging on the treadmill.

Limit your sugar intake, as sugar may give you instant energy but, in the long run, it reduces your lifespan and tires you more easily. Wheat and dairy products are difficult to digest and cause fatigue. Try eliminating them and see if your energy increases. But make sure you substitute these with brown rice and *bajra roti* and take other sources of calcium-rich leafy vegetables and soybeans.

Every day, drink a glass of raw vegetable juice; it could consist of one tomato, a carrot, a beetroot or half a bunch of coriander plus one-fourth bunch of mint, with juice of one lime. These help increase the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and improve energy levels. Take supplements of CoQ10. It is a potent antioxidant and will further help improve energy levels.

**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)**



**SILVER LINING** BY V S NATARAJAN

## Just a pause: You can manage menopausal symptoms through lifestyle changes

A woman goes through three vital phases: pre-menarche, the reproductive phase, and the menopausal phase. Each is crucially significant, but midlife encompassing the menopausal transition is considered a significant milestone with three sub-phases: the pre-menopausal, menopausal and post-menopausal years.

### Pre-menopause

A period of three to four years before menopause and followed by a year of cessation of period (amenorrhoea), this is associated with mild ovarian hormonal deficiency leading to anovulation and menstrual disorders. During these years, many women undergo noticeable and clinically observable physical changes caused by hormonal fluctuations. The best-known of these is the 'hot flush', a sudden temporary increase in body temperature. Changes in mood, insomnia, headache, fatigue, palpitation and vertigo may occur as well.

### Menopause

Menopause is not a disease but a hormonal deficiency state with permanent cessation of menses. It is defined as the cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhoea. It takes 12 months of amenorrhoea to confirm that menopause has set in. Women who have had their uterus removed but retain their ovaries do not immediately go into menopause, even though their period ceases. Adult women who have their ovaries removed, however, go immediately into full surgical menopause, no matter how young they are. Menopause normally occurs between the ages of 45 and 50 years, the average age being 47 years.

### Clinical symptoms

The manifestation of menopause is often an irregular period; it varies in duration, frequency and amount of flow but may be occasionally regular. However, unusual bleeding (for instance, bleeding that is heavy and lasts for more than 10 days) should be evaluated to rule out neoplasm, an abnormal mass of tissue that could

be malignant or benign. Hot flushes, cold sweats and night sweats are associated with menopausal transition. They occur in more than 70 per cent of women during midlife and 50 per cent of women may continue to have these symptoms for more than five years.

Sleep disturbance is another crucial problem and may occur because of changing hormonal levels. It may be accompanied by increased manifestation of aforementioned symptoms and stress (resulting from acute and chronic life events). Worsening of sleep can be associated with decreased quality of life and poorer work performance. Urogenital changes may also occur during menopause. The membranes of the vulva, vagina, cervix and the outer urinary tract become thin, possibly leading to itching, dryness, bleeding, watery discharge, increased urinary frequency, incontinence and increased susceptibility of inflammation and infection (vaginal candidiasis and urinary tract infections).

### Sexual dysfunction

Vaginal atrophy, decreased lubrication, and decreased libido can lead to sexual dysfunction in menopausal women. Apart from this lack of interest, medical problems, social factors, and lack of privacy can also be possible reasons for sexual problems in this age group. In menopausal women, breasts





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Menopause is a natural stage of life. It is not a disease, disorder or a condition and, therefore, it does not automatically require any kind of medical treatment. However, the resulting symptoms and conditions could be prevented through regular health checkups, a pap-smear and regular breast examination

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become less firm and begin to sag, even as fibrous bands may become more prominent. Increase in LDL cholesterol and triglycerides and decline in HDL cholesterol are greater in the pre-menopausal period in women and hence the risk for cardiovascular diseases increases (it almost equals men in this age group). Oestrogen deficiency, therefore, can cause atherosclerosis, ischemic heart disease, heart attack and decreased bone mass.

#### Skeletal changes

The incidence of osteoarthritis of the knee increases by 2-3 per cent every year during menopause and should, therefore, be regularly monitored. Gradually progressing skeletal disorder characterised by micro-architectural deterioration of bone mass results in increased fragility and predilection to fracture, further causing early osteoporosis.

#### Post-menopause

For a period of five to 10 years after menopause, post-menopausal problems are likely to develop in some women. These include osteoporosis, post-menopausal vaginal bleeding, vaginal prolapse and malignancies in the breast, uterus and ovaries. Bone loss accelerates as much as tenfold during post-menopause. As a result, **osteoporosis** occurs, further causing risk of fractures. **Post-menopausal bleeding** is defined as bleeding from the genital tract over a year after the onset of menopausal amenorrhea.

#### Causes of bleeding

- Atrophic vaginitis
- Endometrial hyperplasia, secondary to hormone replacement treatment (HRT)
- Benign tumour, e.g. cervical polyps
- Vaginal prolapse/ ulceration/ infection
- Carcinoma: Cervical /vulval/ vaginal/ ovarian/ breast

Weakness of ligaments (owing to descent of uterus along with bladder and rectum) may cause **prolapsed uterus**.

#### Help at hand

Menopause is a natural stage of life. It is not a disease, disorder or a condition and, therefore, it does not automatically require any kind of medical treatment. However, the resulting symptoms and conditions could be prevented through regular health checkups, a pap-smear test (a simple test to diagnose cancer of cervix at a very early stage) and regular breast examination.

Non-medical therapy for this period includes exercise, relaxation techniques, meditation, massage and yoga to help control the effects of hot flashes, fatigue, irritability and depression. To prevent osteoporosis, calcium-rich food (with additional calcium supplements of 500-1,000 mg per day) and exposure to sunlight (with additional Vitamin D3 supplements) are essential. In obese women, diet restriction and regular exercise are a must to reduce weight. Some women may need psychiatric counselling.

#### Medical therapy includes:

- Topical (vaginal) oestrogen replacement therapy for managing genital atrophy
- Tranquillisers for acute sleep disturbances
- Anti-depressants for alteration of symptoms and improvement of mood disorders pertaining to menopause
- Surgical management for all malignancies and prolapsed uterus.

#### Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Hormone replacement therapy refers to the use of oestrogen and progestin at low doses for amelioration of menopausal symptoms, to further prevent bone loss and provide cardiovascular benefits. But owing to side-effects like weight gain, pigmentation, deep vein thrombosis, cancer of cervix and breast, and liver dysfunction, the benefits should be weighed carefully before starting HRT.

All symptoms of menopause can be managed by appropriate medication and counselling. Women should be made aware about this transition period and adequately prepared to face it. Hence, awareness and health education about menopause are very important for both men and women; indeed, it's the moral responsibility of the entire family to help a woman—the glue that binds it together—to pass smoothly through this period.

*Padmashri Dr V S Natarajan, a specialist in the field of geriatric medicine, runs Memory Clinic, a service for silvers in Chennai. If you have a question for him, write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

## Less is more: A regular practice can lead to sustainable weight loss

Though having the ideal weight is seen as a cosmetic plus point, maintaining a healthy weight is as important for your overall health. In yoga, the approach to weight loss is gentle and non-aggressive. Though the results may be less dramatic than other, more drastic methods, the weight loss will be sustained and you will not suffer the yo-yos and emotional turmoil that other routes encourage.

Yoga assumes that if you are overweight, you are likely to resist excessive physical movements owing to the natural discomfort it causes. It also understands that you may not be able to bear the stress of a high-energy workout that would be more appropriate for a lither person. Therefore, its programme involves simpler practices such as the energy release series (*pawanuktasana*) as warm-ups. It will require a longer and intensive breathing practice (*pranayama*) to encourage mind control that will, in turn, stop binge eating. Meditation can be used as a wrap-up, to carry this idea of mind control further. Simpler poses or simpler variations of tough poses will first be attempted. Regularity will ensure that the practice becomes easy to negotiate.

The dynamic poses that intensify weight loss effects include the bow (*dhanurasana*), locust (*salabhasana*), squat (*utkatasana*) and cat pose (*majaraaisana*). In all these, though slower or static poses are ideal, when weight loss is involved, you may do these in a dynamic variation—usually referred to with the Sanskrit prefix *druta*—that will make them easier, yet more effective. Starting off with a repetition of 10 times with each pose, you can slowly up the ante by increasing the repetitions to 30. This will make you sweat intensely and give you a powerful cardiac workout, though in a less strenuous way. And the impact on weight loss will be dramatic.

Of course, you need to buttress this effort by including lifestyle changes that will further aid weight control. This may involve waking up to do your practice in the morning, eating a larger breakfast and subsequently smaller meals as the day progresses, as well as avoiding casual or mindless snacking, controlling sugar and salt intake, and ensuring you do not eat a very late or heavy dinner. The last habit, too, can have dramatic results in overall health and weight control.

### YOGIC MOVES

#### Dynamic snake pose (*Druta sarpasana*)

Lie on your stomach, with hands loosely held behind. Keep them lightly together. Now roll on the stomach, from the left and right gently, about five times. After a week or so, increase the rolls to 10 or more, then to 15. Ensure that you are breathing while rolling and that you are being gentle and controlled. Avoid jerky movements or holding your breath while rolling from side to side. **Benefits:** This pose tones the stomach. It has a mild aerobic exercise impact, making you sweat profusely. It works the overall body, helping to tone it. It is also useful in controlling back problems.

**Model:** Anita Namole,  
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)





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## THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT GEETA HAMLAI, RAICHUR

### An engaging series about the wisdom of love, nurturing and culinary bonding across generations

During my recent trip to Raichur, my host Smt Mankanwar Mootha was excited to see my feature in the previous issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. “I just know the perfect protagonist for your next write-up,” she declared and continued, “Geeta *bhabhi*. She is lovable, cheerful, full of warmth and one of the most caring women I have ever met.” I asked a few questions and her responses got me excited. And that’s how I happened to visit Smt Geeta Hamalai, 74. A mother of two sons and a daughter, a grand-

mother to six and a great-grandmother to one, she was everything I expected, and much more.

When we reached her house, she was chatting with a couple of neighbours. As I was introduced as the interviewer, the next hour was a collage of voices; each one proceeded to tell me what a beautiful person Geeta *bhabhi* was. And all this while, the lady in discussion sat there serenely, contentment and love written across her face. I tried to understand the se-

cret; the conclusion I drew from her Hindi-Gujarati responses was, ‘To be a recipient of affection, one must be a giver of affection.’

#### Where did you grow up Geeta *bhabhi*?

I was born in 1939 in Kutch, Gujarat, where I spent my childhood and youth. After marriage, I lived in Amravathi near Nagpur. Later, we shifted to Raichur and we have been living here for 40 years.

#### How would you describe your growing years?

I was the eldest among siblings; hence taking care and being responsible came naturally to me. Even before I was 10, I would help in the kitchen. Over the years, cooking simply became my favourite activity, and it continues to be so.

#### Do you now share your recipes with youngsters?

They all learn by watching. My friends and neighbours simply love the *dhokla*, *ganthiya* and pickles that I have learnt from my mother. I don’t know measurements—I just cook with love.

#### According to you, has there been a change in family structure over the years?

Earlier, we had better physical and emotional strength. But nowadays, that true emotional courage, or *himmat*, is lacking; similarly, physical stamina. I think of my mother as a strong woman, she is more than 90 and still does her own work, including washing her own clothes.





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“My friends and neighbours simply love the *dhokla*, *ganthiya* and pickles that I have learnt from my mother. I don’t know measurements—I just cook with love”

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We did not make distinctions between our children and nephews. In a joint family, one simply took care of all the children at home as one’s own. Nowadays, only the husband, wife and their children are considered part of one’s family.

**You’re right. Earlier, one’s affection was extended to a larger circle of people. With time, that circle has shrunk. It is natural that with this change the quality of affection in one’s life is bound to change as well.**

We were a joint family of more than 40 members for at least two decades. I can assure you, we were like one family. I enjoyed taking care of everyone. And my elders took good care of me; my mother-in-law was a very understanding person.

**That sounds intimidating. I would love to know how couples managed to nurture each other in such a scenario.**

Quite easily. Both of us loved watching movies and we did that quite often. On Sundays, my husband took me on long drives. He used to appreciate my cooking very much. It has been seven years since he passed away and I often think of him and the wonderful times we shared.

**It sounds so ideal. How does one learn to adjust?**

With faith and devotion! I am a devout Vaishnavite and prayers give

me all the strength I need. My morning prayers give me the energy I need for the day. Even though I am unwell now and cannot go to the temple, I enjoy listening to the temple sounds from my courtyard. Whatever we cook is always first offered to the family deity.

**Did you teach all your recipes to your daughters and daughters-in-law?**

**Sheela, her daughter-in-law, says:** She has taught us, but her flavours are unique. How much ever we try, we do not get the same flavours. The children know instinctively who has cooked. In fact, when I have to travel, I don’t have to worry at all. They are all excited because she will cook for them. But I must confess, when she travels, they are not as excited about my cooking.

**Does that not upset or irritate you?**

**Sheela:** On the contrary, I also feel the same as all of them [smiles]. Her food is really outstanding and special. Our neighbours and friends always enjoy her cooking. In fact, we always prepare her signature dishes in large quantities as they get distributed. She has always been like this. I will never forget how she took care of me while I was unwell. She attended to me better than anyone could have ever done.

## FROM GEETA HAMLAI’S KITCHEN

### *Khatta Dhokla*

Talk of Gujarati food and one of the first things that comes to mind is the



Haresh Patel

varieties of *dhokla*, a delicious snack with fermented lentil flour. Among these, the *khatta dhokla* is one of the most popular varieties. Most Gujarati homes keep the *dhokla* flour in stock at all times.

#### Ingredients

- Rice: 2 cups
- Whole black gram, husked (*udad*): ½ cup
- Fenugreek seeds: 1 tsp
- Sour yoghurt: ¼ cup
- Green chillies: 2-4
- Ginger: 1-inch piece

#### For tempering

- Mustard: 1 tsp
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Curry leaves: a few
- Fruit salt: 2 tsp
- Sugar: 1 tsp
- Coriander leaves: 1-2 sprigs; chopped fine
- Coconut: 1-2 tbsp, grated
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

#### Method

To make the *dhokla* flour, wipe the rice and gram with a damp cloth, allow to dry and grind in a flour mill like semolina. This can be preserved in larger quantities for months and used as and when needed. Combine the *dhokla* flour, fenugreek seeds and yoghurt. Mix well and leave to ferment overnight. Next morning, check the consistency of the mixture (it should be like *idli* or cake batter). Add more water if required. Pound two chillies with ginger; mix into the batter along with salt. Now, add fruit salt into the mixture and mix gently.

Grease a plate or a special *dhokla* plate with a little oil and immediately pour in the mixture up to a height of 1 inch. Shake the plate gently to ensure the mixture is evenly distributed. Steam the mixture in a steamer or *idli* cooker for 8-10 minutes. Insert the edge of a knife into the steamed mixture. If it does not stick to the knife,

it's done. Otherwise, allow to cook for a few more minutes. Cool and cut into diamond-shaped pieces. Set aside.

For tempering, heat the oil and add the mustard. When the mustard starts spluttering, add asafoetida powder, curry leaves and 1-2 julienned green chillies. Switch off the flame. Garnish the *dhokla* with the tempering and sprinkle sugar on top. Garnish with coriander leaves and grated coconut. Serve as a teatime snack or a starter to a meal along with coriander-mint chutney.

*Pratibha Jain, an author and translator from Chennai, is the co-author of two award-winning books Cooking at Home with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. Her area of specialisation is documenting Indian traditions through research, translation and writing*

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# Legend of Rajasthan

Better known as 'Masterji', Tej Karan Dandia, a son of the Pink City, has taught countless children to believe in themselves, discovers **Abha Sharma**

When I visited him in 2010, a few days before he celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was cheerful, chatty and in good health. He was sitting in the courtyard of his Bapu Nagar residence in Jaipur, deep in conversation with his visiting niece and her husband. Three years

later, the only difference was that he was in a wheelchair, recovering from a nasty fall. He was still cheerful and chatty, only more tanned owing to hours spent in the sun to battle the bitter January cold. His 83 year-old son Prabhakar says he is recovering quickly.

Why doesn't that amaze me? After all, the secret to his longevity lies in a more metaphorical interpretation of his current incapacitation. *Dil-dimag theek hai, sharir kabhi-kabhi dhokha de jata hai. Is tarah tay ki hain hamne manzilen, gir pade, gir kar uthe aur chal pade* [The heart and brain both



Photographs by Abha Sharma

work fine; it's the body that gives up on me sometimes. I have reached my destination in a way that even if I fell, I stood up and kept walking]," says the lovable 'Masterji' of the Pink City, more formally known as Tej Karan Dandia.

It is hard to describe this centenarian. Most people call him a pioneering educator who changed Rajasthan's education system. I prefer to think of him as a simple soul who always spotted the good in people. Dandia was preordained to be a teacher. He started as an assistant teacher in Subodh Middle School at the age of 22 and retired as secretary of the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education in 1968. "Mine is the success story of a *fisaddi* [no-good] student who turned into a math expert," smiles Dandia, subtly underlining the irony.

This lad was born into a middle-class family in Jaipur. Haunted by mathematics, he decided not to take the Std VI math exam and instead scurried away to the Shri Mahavirji Mela (a religious fair of the Jain community) to serve pilgrims. His father advised him to seek the advice of Moti Lal Sanghi, a teacher who lived next door. "No one really thought about children those days," he recalls. "My father was an ordinary clerk struggling to make ends meet. When I was taken to Sanghiji, he simply suggested that I meet him every day for 20 days before I decided whether to take the exam a month later."

According to Dandia, Sanghi was amazing at judging a child's aptitude. "He first assessed my IQ and never forced me to study. He taught mathematics in such an interesting way that my phobia turned into fascination. I took the exam and secured a distinction! It was a turning point in my life," admits Dandia, with a deep sense of gratitude. Sanghi left an indelible impression on Dandia, who says his mentor spent ₹ 24 from his salary of ₹ 40 a month to distribute books to motivate children and inculcate the

habit of reading. "He would visit every household and encourage people to send their children to school," says Dandia. When his memoirs were published to commemorate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, Dandia dedicated the book, *Ujale Meri Yadon Ke Apne Pas Rahne Do*, to Sanghi. "*Balak man ke bade parkhi, bhatke manzil pate the* [He understood a child's psychology perfectly and was able to give them the right direction]."

Dandia took up odd jobs to fund his graduation. He tutored children and pierced pearls for a rupee an hour. "Piercing pearls was predominantly a Muslim occupation in those days and a few Hindus like me were grappling to learn the craft," he recalls. Our educator-in-the-making discovered

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Masterji was a true visionary and, in times when vocational training was nowhere on the horizon, he conducted courses where students could learn candle-making, weaving and other skills

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his calling early and pursued it with utmost zeal, as the following anecdote reveals. He was giving a neighbour tuitions and as it turned out, his pupil's exam coincided with his own final graduation exam. "I was in a dilemma—should I concentrate on my own studies or do justice to my job? My conscience guided me to do my duty first. So I devoted quality time to teach my student and then spent extra time studying for my own exam. We both passed!"

Dandia had learnt a lesson for life from his mentor Sanghi, and dedicated his own life to encouraging all students under his care to be the best

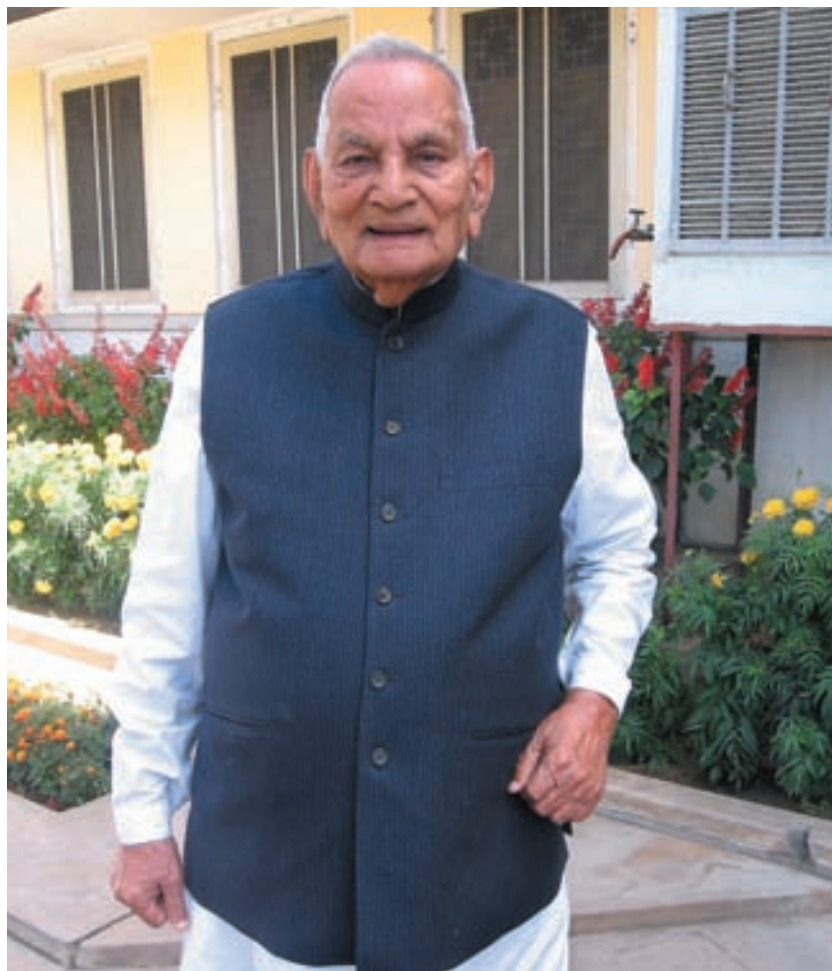
they could be. Recalls Sunita Sharma, a former student at Mahavir Public School, where Masterji taught after retirement, "I once forgot my speech at a school function and the teachers signalled me to return to my seat. But Dandiaji intervened and said, 'Let her continue.' Without his encouragement, I would have never overcome my fear of public speaking. He knew exactly how to inculcate a sense of confidence in each one of us."

Mahavir Public School became almost synonymous with Dandia. His former students, many of them bureaucrats and high-profile individuals today, remember the humble teacher and great administrator that he was. Sudhir Mohan Sharma, consultant with Tata Consultancy Services in Kolkata, says he was inspired to join the National Cadet Corps thanks to Dandiaji. "He is a pioneer who changed the pattern of education in Rajasthan. He focused on the overall development of students so they could become responsible citizens and excel in all aspects of life." Adds Justice (retd) N K Jain, former chairperson, Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission, "A *yugpurush* like Dandiaji has many inspirational qualities but, most of all, he has a rare quality to appreciate the good in others. He is also a man of principles, a social worker with common sense and has the rare virtue of a positive mental attitude."

Masterji initiated many reforms in the Rajasthan school system. "The responsibility of education lies not with students but with teachers," reasons Dandia, who is credited with an innovative method of teaching English. He introduced a Linguaphone programme that used audio tapes to help children learn pronunciation. The school authorities loved the idea so much that they set up a special lab for this purpose.

"I also believe handwriting is very important and mine was awful. So I designed the Dandia Technique of Handwriting, which is based on





## Age is no bar to learning new things. By learning to drive at 58, Masterji proved that age is not a limitation to finding new facets to ourselves

flowers and motifs. It was more enjoyable than the routine handwriting worksheets." Testament to this is an insight from Sunita Sharma, a teacher at Sadhu Vaswani School in Jaipur. "I owe my calligraphic handwriting and perfect pronunciation to Dandiaji. I learnt my first letter of the alphabet by drawing a betel leaf."

Dandia has published two books and held camps to train teachers in his technique in and outside Jaipur. Our Masterji was a true visionary and, in

times when vocational training was nowhere on the horizon, he conducted courses where students could learn candle-making, weaving and other skills. There were many more ground-breaking programmes that Dandia introduced. Reminisces Raj Kumar Kala, an advocate and honorary secretary of the Mahavir School Administration, "He had remarkable acumen, which he used to unerringly judge the aptitude of his students. In a moot court, he had picked me to be a lawyer and N K Jain [quoted above]

to be a judge. Both of us chose those very professions, the 'roles' he had chosen for us!"

Age is no bar to learning new things, a maxim Dandia both preaches and practised. "We must keep challenging ourselves," he says. By learning to drive at the age of 58, he proved that age is not a limitation to finding new facets to ourselves. It was precisely for this reason that Masterji, despite being an expert at math, decided to teach commerce and science too. He even picked up Urdu while doing his BEd in Aligarh.

Dandia has a number of honours to his credit like 'Legend in Education', 'The Great Son of Rajasthan', 'Avantika Ratn', among others. He has also been instrumental in strengthening the Scouts and Guides campaign in Rajasthan. He was honoured by the President of India with the Silver Elephant in 1996, the highest award for scouting. He has also authored many books on mathematics; one of them on the Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education's syllabus for a record four decades.

Accolades, achievements and titles have only humbled the man; Dandia lives a simple and disciplined life. He wakes up early and, after he puts down his morning cuppa and newspaper, he exercises. He doesn't visit temples but follows a philosophy that has kept him on the straight and narrow throughout his life. "I am not an atheist but I believe we should do what is right and leave the rest to Him." A firm believer in karma, he penned the following couplet in his memoir. It succinctly sums up his philosophy: "*Beete kal ki yaad karun kyon; Agle kal ki chinta kya; Karm aaj ka bhagya banata; Kal me bharta pran.*" [Why remember yesterday and fret for tomorrow? It is your actions that frame your destiny and infuse life into your tomorrow]. The perfect centenarian has just one failing: a sweet tooth! "I love *laddoos* and *gulab jamun*," he chuckles. 🌸





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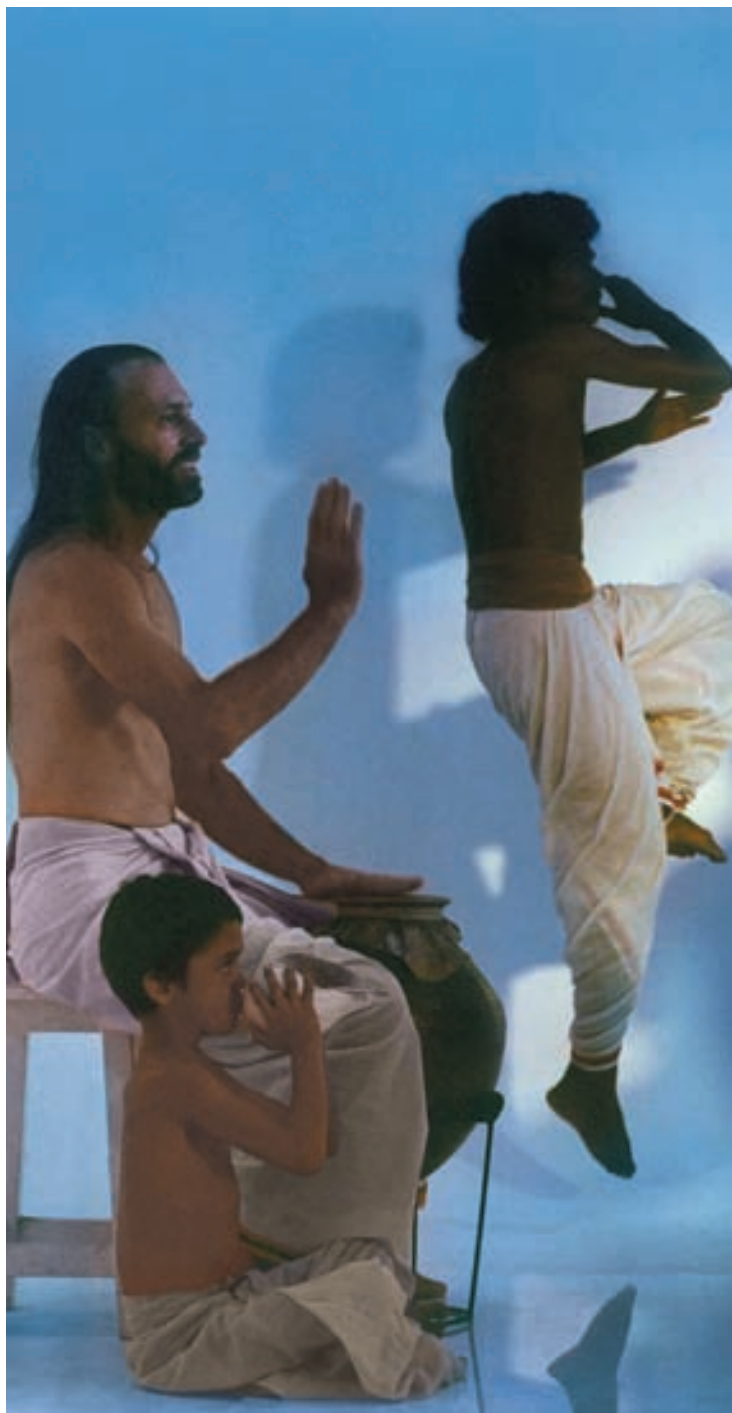
# RHYTHM AND RHYME

Daksha Sheth has created a new dance idiom, bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary dance forms. Isha Sharvani decodes her mother's language of movement, as **Srirekhya Pillai** listens

**T**he sylvan settings on the banks of lake Vellayani near Thiruvananthapuram regularly reverberate with drum beatings from Natyashram, where traditional art forms and contemporary movements synthesise to create a new dance vocabulary. For 60 year-old Daksha Sheth, awarded by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 2010, dance is a constantly evolving medium that finds expression in newer ways. Her Daksha Sheth Dance Company is an experimental hub where Kathak, Mayurbhanj Chhau, Kalaripayattu and Mallakhamb merge to create new movement idioms. Sheth's 28 year-old daughter Isha Sharvani, part of the ensemble dance movement, is still learning the signature steps from her mother, capturing the rawness of folk and ritual performing arts with the aesthetics of aerial technique. We present, in her own words, Sharvani's journey from being a toddler watching her fully pregnant mother rigorously following the discipline of the performing arts to being her companion and co-dancer.

**We are an uncommon family.** My parents gave me life and released me. We are together, yet independent to choose our own path. All four of us in the family are artists. While my mother, brother and I perform on stage, my dad directs the show. You will be surprised to know that none of us share the same surname. My mother is Sheth, I'm Sharvani; while my father is Devissaro and my brother Tao.

**My mother's passion for dance is phenomenal.** While I was a toddler, she took me and went to live in a filthy hut in Baripada, Orissa, to learn Mayurbhanj Chhau. In those days, Baripada had just a dirty *nullah* to source water. My mother used to wake up at 3.30 am and get one bucket of water to do all the dishes, take a bath, give me a wash and do the laundry. It was a crazy schedule for her, getting up early and rehearsing Chhau till noon and waiting for the sun to go down to rehearse again. My dad, who was in Delhi then, happened to visit us and was appalled at my



condition, looking every inch like an *adivasi* baby. But my mother was not one to give up. She persisted.

**My mother did not give me a single dance lesson till I was 13.** I was a free-spirited child and used to groove to music. But my mother never pushed me into dance. She left the decision to me. I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade when I decid-



ed to learn dance full time. I was pulled out of school and initiated into dance in a proper, structured way. I'm sure it would not have been an easy decision for my parents to take, as I was a topper in school. Though they respected my decision, they told me, "If you regret your decision later, you will have to be prepared to go back to school and study with your juniors."

**We enjoy each other's company.** When we are not practising dance, we spend time cooking and going for long walks. As I travel so much, I feel my cultural identity lies in my stomach. My mother being a Gujarati, I find Gujarati cuisine comforting. Right now I'm learning to cook Gujarati food. As we live on a farm on the outskirts of Thiruvananthapuram, there is plenty of greenery and



nature around us. Both of us love taking long walks along the fields. When we travel abroad, we visit museums, catch up on shows and do dance workshops together.

**My relationship with my mother has changed over the years.** To begin with, she was only my mother. Later, she became my guru. Now, as I have matured as a person, my mother is more like a companion. We share our innermost thoughts and feelings. Today, we are each other's best friends.

**Whenever I need the truth, I look to her.** My mother keeps me grounded with her honest and frank opinion. In our profession, when there are thousands falling over each other to praise you, it is very important to be in touch with the truth. I can always trust my mother to tell me the way it is.

**In 1996, my mother introduced the aerial technique in modern dance for the first time in India during her show *Sarpagati*.** In the course of their travels, my parents had come across a Mallakambh convention in Maharashtra. My mother was fascinated by the beauty and flexibility of the movements. She got the instructors to come over to our Natyashram in Kerala to teach us. We also used to go regularly to Satara and Mumbai to learn Mallakambh.

**As dancers, we are not mirror images.** There is no comparison between my mother and me. We are completely different. My mother has mastered rhythm. She comes from a classical background and can say a thousand things without moving her body. She practiced Kathak for 20 years before getting into Chhau and Kalaripayattu. Her grace and rhythm come from there. In comparison, I have broader

shoulders because of the tough aerial and acrobatic acts I indulge in. I'm still learning Kathak, and growing to enjoy it.



**As dancers, we are not mirror images. There is no comparison between my mother and me. We are completely different. My mother has mastered rhythm. She comes from a classical background and can say a thousand things without moving her body. Her grace and rhythm come from Kathak**

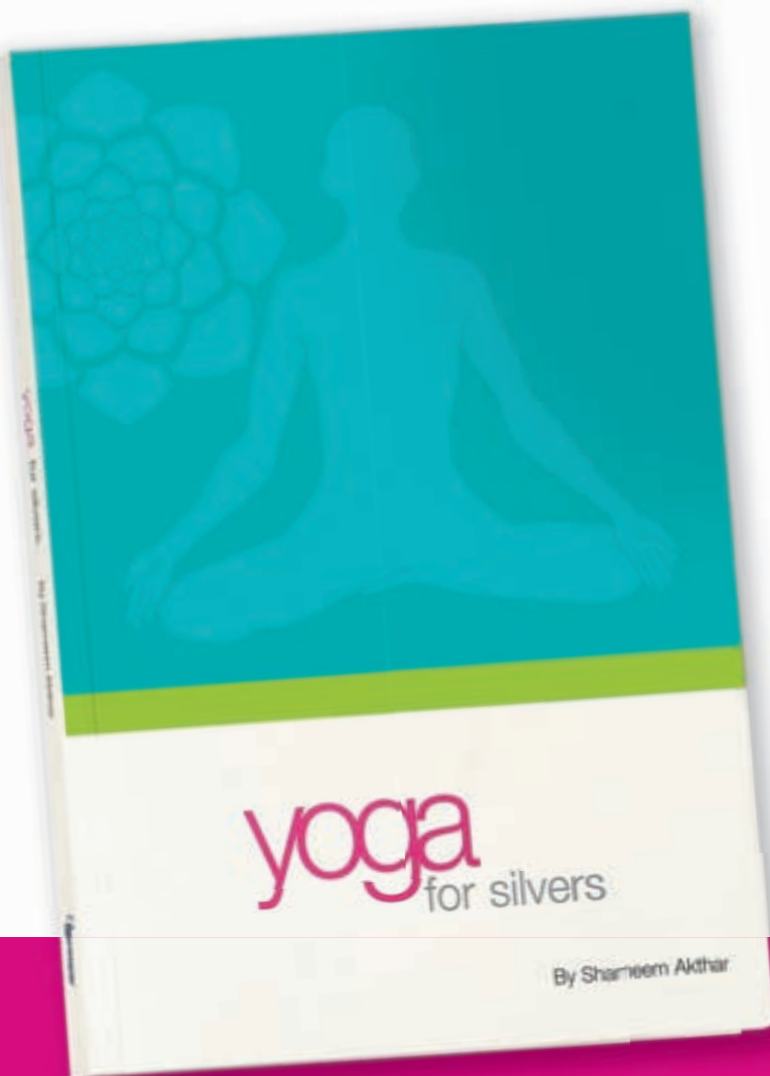
the family together at that time, waking up early to make breakfast for me and dropping me at school. I can proudly say that my parents have jointly shared the responsibility of raising us. ✨

**Our most memorable duet abroad was at the pre-Olympics event.** I still remember how an all-white audience gave us a standing ovation at Leicester. It was overwhelming because the show, *Shiva Shakti*, had its roots in our mythology and my brother and father had composed the music while my mother and I were dancing.

**My mother is an extremely evolved person.** She is a strong, fiery, independent woman, who is also extremely spiritual. Not many people know that she did Krishna seva in Radha Raman temple in Mathura for three years. During those years, she stayed at the temple, dedicating herself to the Lord completely, without doing any public shows.

**My mother teaches dance as a *sadhana*.** Dance is not a physical activity for her but a way of life. As a guru, she has taught dance as a way of connecting with nature. It works as a therapy as well. Whenever I'm feeling down, I start dancing, and immediately feel at peace with myself.

**My parents have a perfect partnership.** My father is the backbone of the family. He is the reason my mother is what she is today. During my growing-up years, my mother was at the peak of her career, dancing for 10-12 hours a day. It was my father, also an artist, who held



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COVER FEATURE

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Photograph's courtesy: Ananya Mann



Her contribution to Indian literature transcends all cultural boundaries. Known as much for her individualistic women characters as their refreshing candour, **Krishna Sobti** is a trailblazer. We present the author in conversation with **Reema Anand**, the award-winning translator of her work, *Dil-O-Danish*



er readers have met her through her indomitable and outspoken characters. The grand dame of Hindi literature, Krishna Sobti, 87, is doughty and dauntless, much like the characters she has birthed. The glint in her eyes stands testimony to the iron will housed in her frail frame. Truant grey strands break free from her woollen cap as she leans on the sofa at her home in a quiet corner of New Delhi's Mayur Vihar.

In 2006, I had the honour of receiving the Hutch Crossword Book Award for Indian Language Fiction Translation, along with Sobtiji, for *The Heart Has its Reasons*—the translation of *Dil-O-Danish*. A year later, we met again to give away the award at Nehru Planetarium in Mumbai. Her speech, delivered to a packed auditorium, gave an insight into the writer and woman she is. “A genuine writer must have a clear soul,” she said. “The deepest part of a creative writer is his or her honesty. It is important to reach the truth and look into the realities of life and not just skim the surface.”

Sobti has always posed a challenge to her contemporaries, critics and the established genre of writing. She chose to dwell on subjects that were swept under the carpet. Her power-packed works *Mitro Marjani*, *Ai Ladki*, *Zindaginama*, *Surajmukhi Andhere Ke*, *Dil-O-Danish* and *Hum Hashmat*,

among others, held a mirror to society. Her characters, grounded in reality, echoed a real world. While Mitro, the married protagonist of *Mitro Marjani*, shook conventions in 1960 with her unequivocal desire, *Samay Sargam* (2000) dealt with the lives of two lonely senior citizens, the friendship they strike up and the problems they face in a fast-changing world. Such has been the popularity of her works that they have been translated into English, Punjabi, Urdu, Swedish and Russian.

When she started writing from a rented room on the first floor of Delhi's Sapru House, Sobti realised the limited options available to a writer. At the same time, she knew that there was place for someone like her in the world of literature. Gradually, she created a vast world of her own, peopled with plucky characters who spoke an earthy idiom that found resonance with her readers. Such has been her oeuvre that she defies classification. Sensitive to a multitude of causes and concerns, irrespective of gender, race or religion, she perceives life in its absolute complexity. In her hands, language becomes a profound tool to convey the message. While it takes on a Punjabi flavour in *Zindaginama*, in *Mitro Marjani* it takes on Rajasthani nuances. Speaking about her literary style, Sobti says, “Just because one's writing does not fall into the recognised genre, it doesn't mean it's not good. It is very important to satisfy the writer's instinct.”



**Zindaginama**, a chronicle of Partition, which won her the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1980, teems with the ethos of pre-Partition rural Punjab that Sobti experienced while growing up in her ancestral *haveli*

*Zindaginama*, a chronicle of Partition, which won her the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1980, teems with the ethos of pre-Partition rural Punjab that Sobti experienced while growing up in her ancestral *haveli* in Gujarat in West Punjab (now in Pakistan).

Although her writings are hued by the pain of the times, Sobti believes that writers should rise above personal grief and tragedy. Her writing has met its match in that of her spiritual double, Hashmat, who usurped her pen and thoughts while becoming the chronicler of a modern world. Thus, came into being *Hum Hashmat*, a compilation of pen portraits of writers and friends.

“As a writer, I confront, I struggle, I discover, I define and refine and then with the help of language I create my text. If a writer is gifted, he or she can touch a dream, a vision, a cry of pain and the innocent laughter of happiness,” admits the iconoclast who declined the Padma Bhushan in 2010, out of her need to maintain a distance from the establishment and preserve her identity and



integrity as a writer. Sobti also served as a consultant for *Buniyaad*, a television serial based on Partition.

Today, Sobti lives with her long-time companion-turned-husband, former bureaucrat Shivanath, who also happens to be a published author in English and Dogri languages. His latest work is *Reminiscences of a Jammuite*. Excerpts from an exclusive interview:

**Besides Partition and migration, which form the backdrop of most of your stories, what are the other sources?**

My generation was not a bystander. It was caught up in historical events like Independence after a long struggle and a great divide. History was chasing our subcontinent

with tension and conflicts leading to unprecedented violence and migration. It was difficult to forget Partition; dangerous to remember it. I wrote only two short stories on Partition, *Sikka Badal Gaya* and *Meri Maa Kahan Hai*. The latter is still found in some anthologies as a memory of mass migration. My creative responses have been deeply rooted in electric and integrated human experiences.

**The subjects you chose to write on have always been much ahead of their times. How did your spirit cope with the critique's lobby at those times?**

My critics say I celebrate life in my writing. My cult has never been woven around fear and despair. All human beings deserve a better world than what we have today. There is an urgent need to even out the differences between the rich and the poor. Critics understand that creative people have different ways of touching reality and creating the ultimate vision. The intense lingering images, our artistic capacities, intellectual capabilities and inner energies, all combine to weave the human narrative. All these demand an expression of power and a vision. A writer has to explore and touch reality with unusual flashes like a poet.

**How do you mentally sectionalise each of your themes, so that each work doesn't intrude on the preceding or successive themes?**

My relationship with my creative reality is through my 'thinking vision'. While working on a new text, I remember that the texts published under my signature have been read by my readers and critics. I also know that no one is exempt from creative failings. A book or theme, once published, is over with me.

**How do you strategise your work? And how much of autobiographical elements do you allow in it?**

Creative writing is the result of a complex cerebral activity that emerges from intellectual and emotional activity. This, in turn, emerges out of an idea and the transformation of reality. I never attempt to start with a well-thought-out theme or design. I situate myself as an alert recorder of life and wait for the narrative to unfold itself. It is almost shedding half of your authorial rights

## MAJOR WORKS

- *Dara Se Bichuri*: 1958
- *Mitro Marjani*: 1960
- *Yaaron Ke Yaar*: 1968
- *Teen Pahar*: 1968
- *Surajmukhi Andhere Ke*: 1972
- *Zindaginama*: 1979
- *Baadalon Ke Ghare*: 1980
- *Ai Ladki*: 1991
- *Dil-O-Danish*: 1993
- *Samay Sargam*: 2000
- *Jenny Meherban Singh*: 2007
- *Budh Ka Kamandal: Ladakh*: 2012





## NOTABLE AWARDS

- Sahitya Akademi Award: 1980
- Shiromani Award: 1981
- Hindi Academy Award: 1982
- Sahitya Akademi Fellowship: 1996
- Katha Chudamani Award: 1999
- Shalaka Award: 2000-2001
- Vyasa Samman: 2008

to the characters because the other half is consciously conceded to the emerging text. As my own person, I give freedom to my emerging characters, so that they are free in their movement and speak their silences without inhibition. A writer's first-hand impression and expression are deeply independent. Any two individuals could confront or experience a similar situation, but their narrative could be different! On the autobiographical front, a writer has to route the text by selecting from and reflecting on the sum total of not only personal experiences but also wider concerns. This crucial inward journey provides a huge panorama to the writer and his writings.

**It is believed that for many years your life revolved around *Zindaginama* alone....**

*Zindaginama* is life documented in its enormity. While writing the book, I tried to focus on a precise visual and dramatic recall in the form of a peasant speech. The simple use of the visible and the audible created a world of its own. All I wanted to paint was

the surge of humanity—their strong rustic faces, their noise. I had to create the vocabulary for them, rough and potent, with the help of the rural dialect. The language one speaks is not just the taught one which is grammatically skilful, it also comprises what one has experienced and imbibed in life! All this I practiced in *Zindaginama*. I believe that every word has a body, a soul and a deep vibrant rhythm and life of its own. It is for the writer to pick up the right vibrating text. This book is also close to my heart, because I fought for its title for 26 years in the Court. I was facing a strong Punjabi writers' lobby who believed Amrita Pritam had a right to the title. I won in the end and published *Zindaginama* under its actual name. During the long wait for the case to be solved, I wrote *Dil-O-Danish*.

**What are your thoughts on regional literature and young authors writing in English?**

Regional literature leaves its nuance when trans-created in English. Similarly, when

writers from different cultures write in English or Hindi, they bring the regional flavour to the language, which is very attractive. English or rather Brit English was always spoken by the elite and was the language of the administration. Hindi, on the other hand, was the language of the common man, and this helped build up a huge base in India. Regional literature is much more energetic intellectually and is presenting new trends in innovative ways because of intermingling of people from different regions. This is creating a new linguistic romance.

**You have been in the forefront of activism as well, protesting against the distortion of history in school textbooks.**

The archival papers and official reports are official versions of the happenings, but the collective sources comprising the version of common citizens are also immensely valuable. A creative writer must touch the collective memory and consciousness of the people side by side. He/she must know the difference between official history and the unstated history. History has an ideological function too. A dangerous element is growing within various political parties, which seeks to assert and interpret history according to their respective agenda. Some of them are mixing mythology with history, unmindful of the plurality of democracy. Exaggerating differences does not help anyone.

**Where do you think we are headed as a society?**

I am a creative writer. I have no pretence; neither as a thinker nor as a scholar. All I know is that our society is in turmoil. The old values are fast changing, but the various dimensions to this change in our social set-up are good for democracy. They are transforming thoughts and reactions into a mass movement. This process is likely to bring the high-caste narrative and the low-caste narrative of Indian life to a certain degree of equality.

**For years, you have had a literary alter-ego, Hashmat. How does it help you creatively to see, feel and write as another person?**

Hashmat is my spiritual double. I do believe in the age-old concept of *Ardh-Narishwar*. Bisexuality is not only a fantasy of a complex

**hashmat** is my spiritual double. I do believe in the age-old concept of *Ardh-Narishwar*. Bisexuality is not only a fantasy of a complex being; it is a reality in creative arts. I am my own person, but when I am at my table, I am the other. When the first line appears on the paper, the space is slotted for both the writer and the text

being; it is a reality in creative arts. I am my own person, but when I am at my table, I am the other. When the first line appears on the paper, the space is slotted for both the writer and the text. No overstepping is permitted. The third volume of *Hum Hashmat* has been recently published.

**As a writer, what unique methodology do you follow?**

I work at night. It is the idea that dominates my table. Next is the language, vibrating through words. It needs great restraint and merciless accuracy to find the right expression with right words. I make three drafts. The first is done, when the flash is on. My second draft is necessary for making the corrections. Sometimes a few changes can make all the difference. Relying heavily on the first, I compare the third with the first one. Usually, the first and the third are closer to each other. After the final draft is ready, I always read aloud the complete text in one sitting. So I can say I am my own critic!

**What are you working on right now?**

At present I am working on a short novella about the days when I was a governess to the child Maharaja, Tej Singh of Sirohi State in Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Let us see how well I can touch those difficult days post-Partition. Interestingly, I then had a chance to meet three legal luminaries—K M Munshi, Seetalvad and Amin—at Swarup Vilas Palace to discuss the dispute over Tej Singh's succession. ✨



WOMAN





# An Eve TO REMEMBER

HARMONY-CELEBRATE AGE INVITED SIX PHOTOGRAPHERS TO PRESENT THEIR MOST MEMORABLE 'SILVER EVE' MOMENTS FROM BEHIND THE LENS. CAPTURED FOR POSTERITY ARE NOT JUST THEIR FACES BUT THEIR STORIES STEEPED IN OUR COMPLEX CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS THAT ARE AS INEXTRICABLE FROM OUR SOCIETY AS NATURE FROM EARTH

## **Hari Mahidhar**

Squatting outside her home, she was watching a 'child wedding', a regular affair in Kutch every August. The cracks on her vintage ivory bangle challenged the lines on her face. She had, of course, witnessed scores of such social proceedings... her own alliance one of them. Her life companion, I have no clue about. But the antique bangle, one that caught my attention, is a sign of prosperity in the Rabari community. Hers seemed to have been a silent witness to her world for years together.

## Fawzan Husain

During a photo-shoot in Vrindavan, I saw her silently chanting the Lord's name for the sake of a dear departed one. Originally from West Bengal, she had made the temple town her home after the demise of her husband a decade ago. Draped in a pure white sari and a huge *tilak* decorating her forehead, she was a picture of serenity, completely at peace with herself and the world around her.



## Sivaram V

While passing through Mulavukad village near Kochi on a bright morning, I spotted this fisherwoman at a pond with a small fishing net capped on her head. Bagging prawns and pearl fish with bare hands, she was moving on the slippery ground of the pond with deft ease. She amazed me with her quick movements and alacrity while going for the kill and smiling generously at everyone around. Here, indeed, is a happy soul.









## Sandhya Suri

I ran into this toothless charmer with an open smile on a wintry morning during a weekend trip with my friends to Vasai, near Mumbai. The warmth of her face attracted me instantly. She was intrigued by our cameras and her eyes lit up the moment we started photographing her. While speaking to us, she meticulously went about preparing a fire. Her simple and self-contained demeanour reaffirmed that happiness is not bound by riches; it's the consummate result of an enriched soul, free from all boundaries.



## Pratyush Pushkar

Sitting lost in her thoughts at the *dargah* of Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, she cut a picture of introspection, loneliness and grace. She had come all the way from Kashmir, after the loss of her only son, to search for her husband who claimed to be working in Delhi. With a prayer on her lips, she visited the *dargah* every evening. We find many such destitute women, some abandoned by their loved ones, others by destiny. But how many have the courage to hold on to hope like her?





## Samir Pathak

I came across her during a visit to Bansakantha district near the Rann of Kutch. She was collecting edible gum from *babul* trees. Every day, she would rummage through the tree's thorny branches, regardless of the scratches and bruises she earned, to reach for those tiny blobs of gum sticking to it. To me, she represents the strength of life against all odds.



# Experience

## A second childhood

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# MY WOMEN AND I

Cooped up in a cottage in Mussoorie, with just the protagonists of her book for company, author **Paro Anand** embarks on a voyage of self-discovery

**I** come from a large family, a busy, bustling household, where people come and eat the best food in the world and laugh and hang out. I love it. I thrive on it.

So what was it going to be like to go away into a mountain retreat, to a cottage, all by myself for a month? For, I had just been made the Mussoorie Writers' first writer-in-residence. And I was going to be there for a month. I had been a mother for a lifetime. And finally, I was going to be no one but a writer. It sounded like bliss. Was it really going to be?

I packed the bare essentials. For I was going to make this trip different from any other I'd ever been on before. This was going to be like no other ever before. My laptop was my most precious possession. A couple of good outfits and, for the rest, it was stay-at-home easy clothes and a hot water bottle for added comfort.

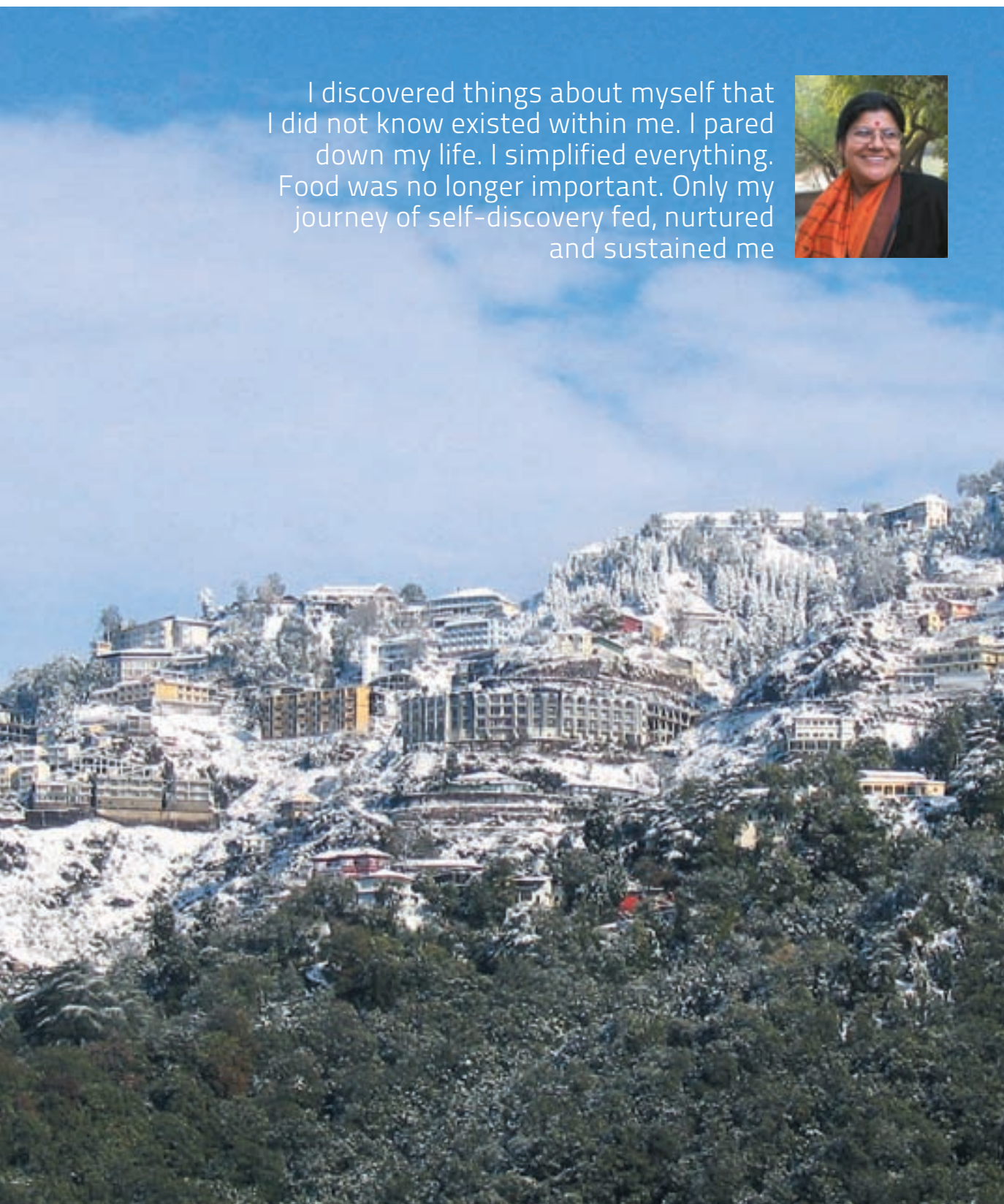
I took the overnight train, having said an almost tearful goodbye at the station. My heart started thudding along with the wheels as the train pulled out. There was a driver at the bustling Dehradun station to take me up into the mountains. I had been asked by Steve Alter, the founding director of the Mussoorie Writers' Festival, whether I wanted to be housed in a room at the Woodstock School or in a cottage all by myself. I'd chosen the cottage. I did not want to be surrounded by screaming children, if I was going to get away from the six children in my own home. I did not want bells ringing early in the morning or to have a sense of structure and routine. I was breaking all the rules I'd ever lived by.

So now, I was in my cottage. A darling place. I took the sunniest bedroom that overlooked Steve's stepped, flower-





I discovered things about myself that I did not know existed within me. I pared down my life. I simplified everything. Food was no longer important. Only my journey of self-discovery fed, nurtured and sustained me



Photograph courtesy: **Agendra Kumar**



JOURNEY





filled garden. I put an armchair out in the sun and packets of soups and stuff into the kitchen. 'This is it,' I thought, 'this is the ideal life for a writer.'

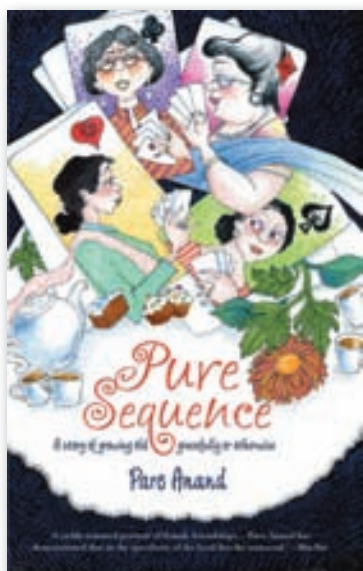
And it was. Essentially, I had nothing in the world to do but write. Any time of the day or night I wished. I could eat when I wanted, sleep, wake, bathe when I wanted. Someone came in to shop, chop and clean for me. I realise now that I can barely recall their faces. So immersed was I to become. Best and worst of all, there was no Internet (I could get it if I went into one of the school buildings a half an hour walk away), there was no mobile connectivity (I could get it if I went around the hill, which was also a half hour walk away), there was no landline and no television. I could get to the TV in Steve's house, which was a 10-minute walk away, but after a few days of missing my programmes, I found I was becoming more and more a writer and less and less a desperate housewife.

The quiet first night was scary. I was in a house, in the middle of nowhere. I was without a way of contacting anyone if something happened. What had I let myself in for? Why did not I have my husband next to me, my kids in the room next door and my dog at my feet? I sat up. Too alone for comfort. I needed company. But there was no one there to give it to me. I could never get used to this. Out of habit, I picked up my phone. I dialled my husband's number. But of course, there was no connectivity. I was wide awake. The city sounds that I thought had disturbed my sleep were now missed. I knew that they could lull me to sleep. But sleep was very far away. So I got up to do the only thing I could, went to the only ones who could comfort me. The women in my book. My *balle balle* biddies, who I'd started to write about. And, as if by a sorcerer's magic, they made their laughing way out of the pages of my book. They held my hand; they helped me as though in gratitude to me, their creator. There was Sheila, Satya, Tosh and Kunti. Their laughter became mine. Their tears were mine to cry. I had friends; ones who were there when I needed them. Just as they were there for each other in the book that told of female friendships. A book about the overcoming of loneliness through the company of other lonely women. I became one of them. A lonely woman, in search of something. But something that was there within me.

And so *Pure Sequence* came to life in three weeks flat, even as I discovered things about myself that I did not know existed within me. I pared down my life. I simpli-

fied everything. Food was no longer important. Only my journey of self-discovery fed, nurtured and sustained me.

I would write almost all night. And then, as day broke, I'd step out and walk. And walk. Around the hillside. As langurs, lit up by the early morning sun kept me company, and little chap-cheeked children greeted me on their way to school, I walked. I stopped at Char Dukan and ate pancakes for breakfast, or sometimes eggs and *parantha*. I walked to Lal Tibba to breathe in the magnificence of the mountain ranges, snow-capped and chap-cheeked themselves, blushing like beautiful brides. I passed the home of Victor Banerjee and occasionally smiled at him as he passed. I walked into the graveyard a couple of times, where the peace and restful repose of the long gone gave me a sense of repose and restfulness. I walked to Sisters Bazaar and made my phone calls home to find out what was going on in the madness of the city. There was, as always, lots and lots happening. I enjoyed hearing about it. It gave me a sense that my world still existed. But right now, I was in another world. Far away and remote. Removed from all that I had known before.



The knots in my brain and body began to open and unravel. All that I had thought was important melted into a perspective that made me look at my life anew. Then, two Bhutia dogs started accompanying me on my walks. They were magnificent beasts. Mindy, who belonged to a friend, was silver with almost blue eyes. And Chela, who was a neighbour's, was golden, with honey gold eyes. They

looked liked formidable beasts, but the gentle repose of the mountains had given them softness and sweetness of temperament. I felt as though I was walking with the moon and the sun—that silver and gold pair. It thrilled me when passersby stopped to look at them. Once, someone asked me if they were mine. And I said, yes. At first, I had a little pang of guilt. I was lying. But then, I realised, that no, I wasn't. They were mine. They were mine for the hour that they chose to be mine, chose to bless me with their special sunshine.

And I knew that this was something that had changed my life forever. I knew that I did belong here. And yes, I know now, that I could get used to this.

It has been some years. *Pure Sequence* is a successful book now. But I would recommend to all you women out there who have lived your lives for others always—take a couple of weeks to soak in the glory of yourself. You never know who you may find there! ✨

***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

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INSIDE

p72: On animal planet

p77: Top of the world

# Etcetera

CULTURE ● LEISURE ● LIFESTYLE ● BOOKS ● MISCELLANY

## FOLK THEATRE

### Puppet master

Mumbai was pleasurably indulged with a glimpse of Rajasthan's royal intrigues at the Kala Ghoda Festival in February 2013 when Babulal Ujira, a string puppeteer from Ajmer, performed a folk tale about Amar Singh Rathore's legendary bravery. Traditional Rajasthani puppets dressed as various characters from the historical tale were brought to life by the 55 year-old artist. Creating animated sound effects and deftly handling the colourful puppets, he proudly proclaimed, "This is our 2,000 year-old family tradition and I have been performing ever since I can remember."

Haresh Patel







# FAITH AND HOPE

Millions of pilgrims from across the globe congregated this year at the Purna Kumbh Mela held at Prayag in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. Held once in 12 years, the Kumbh Mela is believed to be the largest religious gathering across the world. During the auspicious dates spread over 55 days, devotees take a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of the holy rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. This year, the Kumbh Mela which began on 14 January, will go on till 10 March, Mahashivratri. A holy dip during the Mela is believed to wash away your sins and redeem you from the cycle of birth and death.

Prabhat Singh







Promotion





THIS SONG MOVED INDIA'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TO TEARS ALONG WITH THE MASSES. *AE MERE WATAN KE LOGON* CELEBRATES A QUIET 50 YEARS IN 2013. WRITTEN BY POET PRADEEP SHORTLY AFTER THE INDO-CHINA WAR IN 1962, IT IS AS BELOVED TO INDIANS AS THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AND NATIONAL SONG *VANDE MATARAM*. FIFTY YEARS AGO, ON THE EVENING OF 27 JANUARY, LEGENDARY SINGER LATA MANGESHKAR PRESENTED THE SONG AS A TRIBUTE TO INDIAN MARTYRS; EVEN TODAY, IT IS SUNG ON EVERY PATRIOTIC OCCASION.

## MORE THAN A STROKE

A pioneer of modern Indian painting, Akbar Padamsee, 85, is back with a new series of lithographs and photographs. Along with Syed Haider Raza, the late Francis Newton Souza and the late M F Husain, Padamsee set the Indian art scene on fire and has, over the years, effortlessly worked with various media like sculpture, oils, watercolours, printmaking, photography, lithography, engraving and computer graphics. The current display of his oeuvre, a series of portraits, is a profound exhibition of what lies between fact and fiction. The show opened at Art Heritage Gallery in New Delhi in January. Alam Allana, director of the gallery, which she founded with her father, theatre legend Ebrahim Alkazi, calls the series "abstract reality". Padamsee's black-and-white photographs, which he has been taking for several decades, form the second module of the exhibit, using various light-and-shade compositions to create multiple dimensions. Even as intellectuals and masses alike remain equally amazed at the octogenarian's opus, *Harmony-Celebrate Age* salutes the artist for a new chapter in his life.



## DIGITALLY YOURS

**Partha Mukherjee** visits the National Library of Kolkata and comes back impressed by its ongoing digitisation programme

**I**n this age of 'information at your fingertips, what could the country's largest reading institution be doing to stay relevant? With digitisation, the legendary 177 year-old National Library in Kolkata

has given itself a new lease of life.

In an effort to save rare books and manuscripts from the brink of an irrevocable loss, the National Library went in for a digitisation programme in 1999,

reviving over 9,100 books (3.2 million pages), including a precious, ancient manuscript called *Tutinamah*. A marvel to any lover of old and rare documents, *Tutinamah* is an elegant copy of the ancient,



**STAGE: MY FIRST LOVE**

IT SEEMS TO BE A SEASON OF RETURNS. ADVERTISING AND THEATRE GENIUS ALYQUE PADAMSEE WILL STEP BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS AS 'WILLY' IN DAUGHTER RAEEL PADAMSEE'S ADAPTATION OF ARTHUR MILLER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*. PADAMSEE IS ALSO DIRECTING THE PRODUCTION. HE ACTED IN 'DEATH OF A SALESMAN' 20 YEARS AGO, ONLY TO STICK TO DIRECTION THEREAFTER, EXCEPT WHEN HE PLAYED JINNAH IN 'JINNAH IN GANDHI' (1982). "RAEEL URGED ME TO MAKE THE COMEBACK; I HAVE ALWAYS LISTE-NED TO MY DAUGHTERS LIKE AN OBEDIENT FATHER," HE MUSES, ADDING THAT HE HAS ALSO BEEN MISSING THE STAGE. THE CAST OF THE PLAY ALSO INCLU-DES SABIRA MERCHANT, FARROKH MEHTA AND FARID CURRIM. WHILE MERCHANT PLAYS THE 'SALESMAN'S WIFE', MEHTA PLAYS WILLY'S BEST FRIEND—A ROLE HE PLAYED 20 YEARS AGO AS WELL.



Photographs by Shilbhadra Datta

unabridged version of the well-known tales of a parrot written in Indian Taliq (one of the main scripts used in writing the Perso-Arabic script), as composed by Diya-I-Nakhshabi in 1330 AD. In addition, more than 3,000 ancient manuscripts (including the famous Vaiyapuri Pillai Collection on palm leaf) written in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Bengali, English, Hindi, Tamil and Sanskrit were digitised between 1999 and 2001.

While the process helped rescue priceless documents and private collections of eminent personalities that were lying scattered all over the country, they couldn't be web-enabled in this initial phase owing to technological constraints. Equipped with scanners for making microfilms of documents, the second phase of the project started in 2003 and precious records like those of the East India Company and Land Settle-

**What is digitisation of documents?**

Digitisation is a process in which any document can be converted into digital information; this ensures better preservation, improves accessibility, and prevents excessive exposure of original documents, thereby increasing longevity.

ment were digitised. In the ongoing third phase that commenced in 2011, Bengali documents dating before 1914 have been digitised. From storing the documents on CD-

ROM, which could not be preserved for long and be circulated freely among the users, "books and manuscripts are now being stored on the server and users can directly access



*In the new building, we have fireproof vaults like the Reserve Bank of India. In addition, we have made new arrangements for stacking books to maximise their shelf life*

*Prof Swapan Chakravorty, director-general, National Library*



Sheikh Alimuddin digitising an old newspaper; (previous pages) the old building of National Library housed in Belvedere Estate, Kolkata; a library member reading a microfilmed document

them in the library," says Prof Swapan Chakravorty, director-general of the library, who is overseeing the third phase of this mega project.

For proper digitisation of documents, the microfilms are required to be treated chemically and restored in an amenable environment with controlled temperature and humidity. "This is why we shifted them from our old building to Bhasa Bhawan [a new block in the same premises] where we could adhere to the necessary conditions," says Prof Chakravorty. "Here, we also have fireproof vaults like the Reserve Bank of India. In addition, we have made new arrangements for

stacking books to maximise their shelf life."

To scan unique manuscripts comprising beautiful illustrations, fine calligraphies and sheaves of ancient papers with elegant bindings, extreme care has been taken to retain their splendour. About 100 volumes of xylographs comprising more than 800 items on barks of rare Nepali trees, presented to the library by the Dalai Lama, have been also archived in the repository. With this, the target of the third phase to digitise 2 million pages was met in December 2012. Not only was it a technological challenge, it also needed people employed with the library to accept that times

**PRESERVED FOR POSTERITY: Libraries in the country that have gone in for digitalisation**

- Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
- Delhi Public Library, Delhi
- Connemara Public Library, Chennai
- State Central Library, Mumbai
- Roja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai


had changed. Fortunately, the staff at the National Library was ready to take the leap.

With several employees from within the department showing interest in technology, the library entrusted the task of microfilming to Sheikh Alimuddin. The 38 year-old was an assistant librarian and had no previous background in computers. Also, he has been trained as the webmaster to look after the library's blog, *Indian Library Review*. "At a time when the electronic media are giving us tough competition, employees like me want to preserve and care for our multilingual cultural heritage. I am doing my bit to serve the users of this library," Alimuddin says with a smile. All for the sake of memories.

**HOME RUN**

FOR 23 YEARS, ELEPHANTA ISLAND PROUDLY DISPLAYED ITS BEAUTY AND HOSPITALITY THROUGH ITS ANNUAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL, THE ELEPHANTA FESTIVAL. LAST YEAR, THE MAHARASHTRA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (MTDC) STRAYED FROM TRADITION AND MOVED THE LEGENDARY SPECTACLE TO THE GATEWAY OF INDIA. AFTER COMPLAINTS FROM THE FORLORN RESIDENTS OF THE ISLAND, ELEPHANTA HAS YET AGAIN STAKED ITS CLAIM ON THE CULTURAL SHOW; IT WILL BE HELD THIS MONTH. FIRST ORGANISED IN 1989, THE SHOW HOSTED CLOSE TO 1,000 VISITORS EVERY DAY DURING THE FESTIVAL. THE ISLAND'S CAPACITY BEING 700 TO 800, THE MTDC, WITH THE CHANGED VENUE, HOPED TO ACCOMMODATE 2,500 VISITORS AT THE FESTIVAL LAST YEAR—THE POOR TURNOUT CAME AS A SHOCK TO THE ORGANISING BODY. "THE FESTIVAL IS POPULAR BECAUSE IT IS HELD ON ELEPHANTA ISLAND. MOVING IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE," SAYS RAJENDRA PADTE, A FORMER SARPANCH OF THE ISLAND, ADDING THAT THE RESIDENTS ARE THRILLED ABOUT EARNING ITS TREASURE BACK.



A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair playing in a pond. The man is in the water, wearing a dark shirt, with his hands outstretched towards the girl. The girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress, looking at the man with a smile. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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# An equal footing

French existentialist **Simone de Beauvoir's** *The Second Sex* (1949) was a significant inspiration for the women's liberation movement. Here's an excerpt

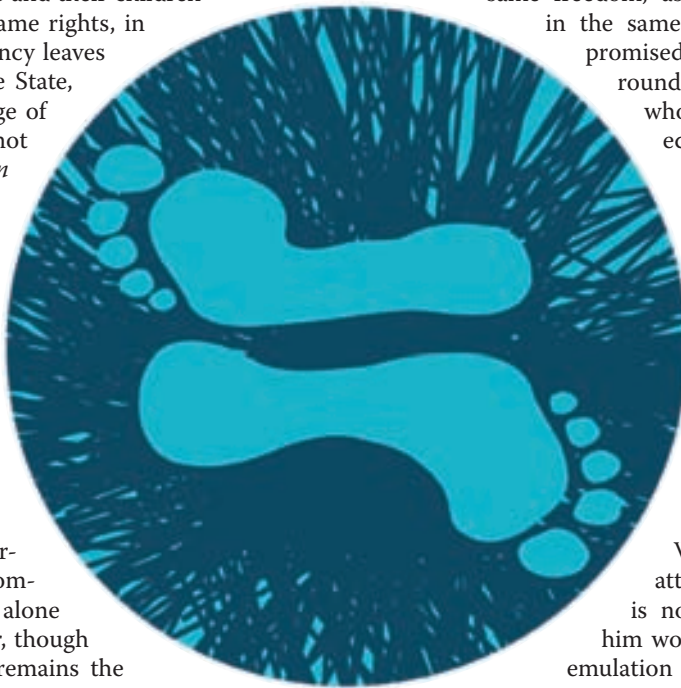
A world where men and women would be equal is easy to visualise, for that precisely is what the Soviet Revolution *promised*: women raised and trained exactly like men were to work under the same conditions and for the same wages. Erotic liberty was to be recognised by custom, but the sexual act was not to be considered a 'service' to be paid for; woman was to be *obliged* to provide herself with other ways of earning a living; marriage was to be based on a free agreement that the spouses could break at will; maternity was to be voluntary, which meant that contraception and abortion were to be authorised and that, on the other hand, all mothers and their children were to have exactly the same rights, in or out of marriage; pregnancy leaves were to be paid for by the State, which would assume charge of the children, signifying not that they would be *taken away* from their parents, but that they would not be *abandoned* to them.

But is it enough to change laws, institutions, customs, public opinion, and the whole social context, for men and women to become truly equal?

We must not believe, certainly, that a change in woman's economic condition alone is enough to transform her, though this factor has been and remains the basic factor in her evolution; but until it has brought about the moral, social, cultural, and other consequences that it promises and requires, the new woman cannot appear. At this moment they have been realised nowhere, in Russia no more than in France or the United States; and this explains why the woman of today is torn between the past and the future. She appears most often as a 'true woman' disguised as a man, and she feels herself as ill at ease in her flesh as in her masculine garb. She must shed her old skin and cut her own new clothes. This she could do only through a social evolution. No single educator could fashion a *female human being* today who would

be the exact homologue of the *male human being*; if she is raised like a boy, the young girl feels she is an oddity and thereby she is given a new kind of sex specification. Stendhal understood this when he said: "The forest must be planted all at once." But if we imagine, on the contrary, a society in which the equality of the sexes would be concretely realised, this equality would find new expression in each individual.

If the little girl were brought up from the first with the same demands and rewards, the same severity and the same freedom, as her brothers, taking part in the same studies, the same games, promised the same future, surrounded with women and men who seemed to her undoubted equals, the meanings of the castration complex and of the Oedipus complex would be profoundly modified. Assuming on the same basis as the father the material and moral responsibility of the couple, the mother would enjoy the same lasting prestige; the child would perceive around her an androgynous world and not a masculine world. Were she emotionally more attracted to her father—which is not even sure—her love for him would be tinged with a will to emulation and not a feeling of powerlessness; she would not be oriented toward passivity. Authorised to test her powers in work and sports, competing actively with the boys, she would not find the absence of the penis—compensated by the promise of a child—enough to give rise to an inferiority complex; correlatively, the boy would not have a superiority complex if it were not instilled into him and if he looked up to women with as much respect as to men. The little girl would not seek sterile compensation in narcissism and dreaming, she would not take her fate for granted; she would be interested in what she was *doing*, she would throw herself without reserve into undertakings.



# LIVING ON **ANIMAL PLANET**



**T**here has never been a dull moment!" That's how wildlife writer **Janaki Lenin** likes to describe her marriage to renowned herpetologist and wildlife conservationist Rom Whitaker. Introduced to the wilderness by Whitaker, Lenin took to it like a "fish to water; and there's been no looking back". *My Husband & Other Animals* (Westland, ₹ 250; 282 pages) is steeped in delightful encounters with wildlife of all sizes, shapes and species. Living on a farm south of Chennai, with four dogs, a pair of emus, a flock of geese and a pig, Lenin has made her peace with the many wild creatures who occasionally stake claim to her house, "treating it as their own". Right from battling pesky tree-frogs that insist on

colonising her house to befriending Gila monsters, Lenin's book provides an amusing and rare insight into the animal kingdom.

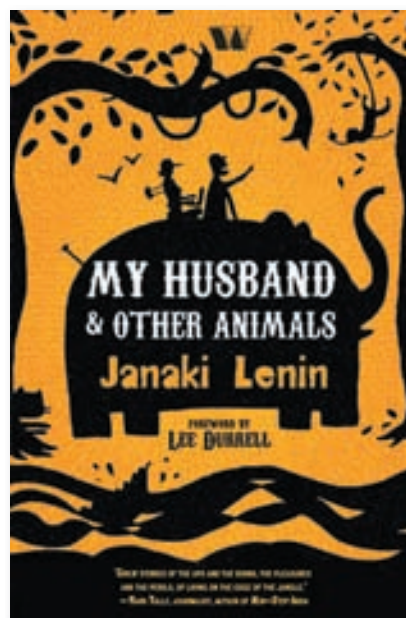
**Would you say that animals are far more intelligent than we give them credit for?**

#### **AUTHORSPEAK**

Most definitely. Japanese primatologists have recently established the incredible memory for symbols that chimpanzees possess. If a human being was to perform those feats, we'd call the person a genius.

**Tell us some little known traits of commonly known species.**

Almost every animal except human beings, from elephants down to the







humble bumble bee, is capable of returning to its home after being moved far away. They are able to navigate through unfamiliar terrain, land or sea, with precision whereas we humans would be lost without the aid of GPS devices and maps.

**Are we in a conflict situation with the wild today?**

Depends on who is the 'we'. City people have the least tolerance for anything wild. For instance, two elephants who strayed from neighbouring jungles to Mysore a couple of years back were treated in an almost inhuman manner; they were pelted with stones before being injected with tranquilisers. There are routine incidents of leopards being beaten up in Nashik and Mumbai. More common, monkeys found within city limits are translocated to the rural countryside. Agriculturalists have always had conflicts with some animal or the other throughout history. It's understandable because elephants, nilgai

**When we got to know each other, Rom was a single-minded reptile freak who loved the company of wild animals more than people. I was a city girl who had never seen a wild animal**

and wild pig also want a part of the delicious irrigated crops that humans like. And then, there are insects of all kinds that are the bane of all farmers. Tribals seem to have the least problems with the wild. As long as other creatures, large and small, covet the same things that we do and we refuse to share, there is bound to be conflict.

**If you were to name a few species rapidly facing extinction in India, which would they be?**

Gharial, because we dam rivers and throw filth in the undammed ones, and dugongs and river terrapins, because people eat them. In my lifetime, I'll probably see the extinction of at least gharials and dugongs. River terrapins may cling on for longer.

**Your husband has been at the forefront of nature conservation. For a 69 year-old, he leads an active lifestyle. Where does he draw his energy from?**

He doesn't see his work as a chore. He does what he does because he's having fun and enjoys it. For as long as I've known him, his day begins early every morning and goes on till late into the evening. The only concession he has made in recent years is taking Sundays off. But, when we are out in the forests, just the sheer excitement of the unexpected overrides any fatigue. The one job he dreads, however, is answering letters and emails. I used to do that for him for more than 10 years, masquerading as Rom, using his lingo. Then I got tired of handing the volume of emails he gets; so now the poor chap works valiantly at it.

**An age gap of 27 years, a man wedded to the wild—what was the clincher for you as far as the marriage was concerned?**

Being in love! When we got to know each other, Rom was a single-minded reptile freak who loved the company of wild animals more than people. I was a city girl who had never been in a forest or seen a wild animal before I met Rom. My perverse mind took it as a challenge to see if I couldn't twist his head a little bit in my direction. On a serious note, both of us work at the relationship, and I'd like to say we don't take each other for granted. We trust each other enough to be able to bare our deepest worries, concerns and anxieties. That is the bedrock of the relationship and everything else is superfluous.

—Srirekha Pillai

# BETWEEN THE LINES



An evocative pictorial tribute to the lyrical beauty and poignancy of Kashmir, **Amit Mehra's KASHMIR** (Penguin; ₹ 3,499) is a treat to glance through. Moving away from the beaten track of snapshots of protests and clashes that have come to symbolise this political hotspot, Mehra's photographs capture silhouettes of lives in their honesty and fragility. The result of painstaking research spread over five years and 25 visits to Kashmir, these stunning images are deeply introspective. Devoid of any drama and coloured with silence and stillness, they capture people in a totally unobtrusive manner, catching them in their daily action and thoughts.

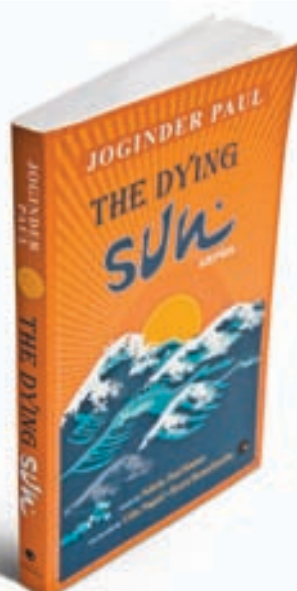


A pot-boiler in every sense, **THE ACCIDENTAL APPRENTICE** (HarperCollins; ₹ 350; 436 pages) is a coming-of-age narrative based on the trials one has to undergo to become a successful CEO. **Vikas Swarup**, the acclaimed author of *Q & A*, which was successfully adapted into award-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*, tells the story of the power of dreams, the lure of money and the need to get in touch with our innermost aspirations. Through the seven "tests of life" set by Vinay Mohan Acharya, one of India's richest men, Sapna Sinha, an ordinary salesgirl in an electronics boutique in Delhi, sets out on a challenging journey that tests her character, courage and capabilities. In the bargain, she discovers her mettle and true calling. Swarup's characterisation works well, with even minor roles being fleshed out in a wholesome manner. References to current affairs, inspired by people ranging from Anna Hazare to Kareena Kapoor, make the story even more relevant for the modern reader. Though predictable in bits, the book ends on a completely surprising note.



A collection of eminent Urdu writer **Joginder Paul's** stories of wonder, whimsy and wisdom, **THE DYING SUN STORIES** (HarperCollins; ₹ 299; 200 pages) is refreshingly original. With elegant simplicity, Paul describes the journeys of his characters through myriad landscapes, from the tangible to the internal and imagined. While on the one hand you have Lord Ram running away from the frenzy at the Babri Masjid; on the other, you have Heer and Ranjha trying to escape the legendary lives they are leading to rest in peace forever. For translators **Usha Nagpal** and **Keerti Ramachandra**, the task is

made easy as Paul's writing style is simple and uncluttered, without ornamental flourishes. Particularly eloquent and poignant is the story of the lonely Dadu, which addresses alienation and loneliness among silvers. A pungent satire on liberalisation, a mother's longing for her son, a playful take on an accountant's obsession with a character in a TV serial as he goes about his daily drudgery—Paul's writing encompasses worlds that defy imagination.







# Ode to WOMEN

Rukmini Bhaya Nair delves into the different facets of womanhood as seen through the eyes of an artist



## I. *Portrait of a Lady*

Did you expect me to describe  
A goddess from Atlantis  
Or the uncompromising grace  
Of a green-gold praying mantis?

No, I have a greater oddity  
In mind-the portrait of a lady.

Small, reclusive, fifty  
Wearing flowers in her hair  
I wish you could have seen her  
I wish you had been there!



## II. *Basohli Pahari Miniature*

Take the yellow curving path  
The trees are separate, sturdy  
All the storms in your heart  
Will not bend them,

*Radha*

Krishna stands behind a rock  
Hidden by the river's spate  
Unable to see  
And unseen by you,

*Radha*

Love must be these mixed  
Colours, this suspended time  
Where particle joins wave  
And separates, separate,

*Radha and Krishna*



## III. *Renoir's Umbrellas*

This woman looks straight at you  
Her dark hair hectic

Imprisoned in a cage of water  
*Une triste lunatique*

When the rain beats down across  
The world's asylums

She negotiates small puddles  
In the afternoon sun

Lifts high that froth of skirts  
Over netted pantyhose

And waits for summer's downpour  
To shimmer to a close

Holds out her hands to you  
Through bars of rain

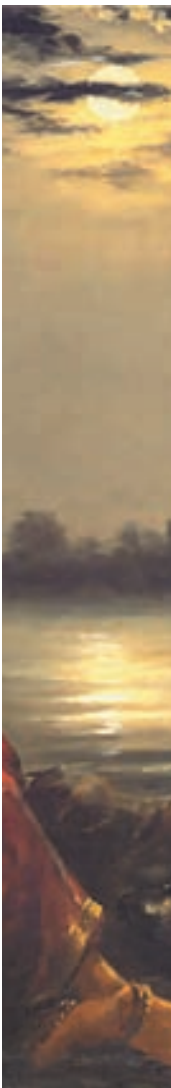
Grey pearls and luminous pallor  
Her enraptured pain

You see each tiny thing about her  
Gleam with disorder

Taut stretch of madness overhead  
Like a parabola

On some damp morning when  
a woman  
Looks straight at you

Victim of a painted liquefaction  
Whom you do not rescue.



One of India's leading poets, Nair is professor of linguistics and English at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

# Blessing in disguise

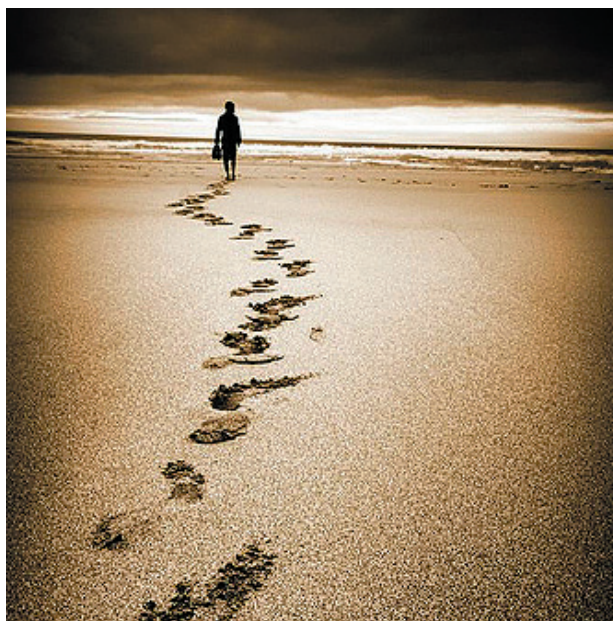
Our worst setbacks are our best teachers, points out life coach and author **Robin Sharma**

During the life leadership seminars I give, I often ask participants this question: “Who would agree with me that we learn the most from our most difficult experiences?” Inevitably, nearly every hand in the room goes up. Given this, I often wonder why we, as human beings, spend so much of our lives focusing on the negative aspects of our most difficult experiences rather than seeing them for what they truly are: our greatest teachers.

You would not have the wisdom and knowledge you now possess were it not for the setbacks you have faced, the mistakes you have made and the suffering you have endured. Once and for all, come to realise that pain is a teacher and failure is the highway to success. You cannot learn how to play the guitar without hitting a few wrong notes and you will never learn how to sail if you are not willing to tip the boat over a few times. Begin to see your troubles as blessings, resolve to transform your stumbling blocks into stepping stones and vow to turn your wounds into wisdom.

Like most people, I have encountered my own share of pain as I have advanced along the path of life. But I always try to remind myself that our character is shaped, not through life's easiest experiences, but during life's toughest ones. It is during life's most trying times that we discover who we really are and the fullness of the strength that lies within us. If you are currently experiencing challenges of your own, I respectfully offer the following words of Rainer Maria Rilke, which have helped me greatly when life throws one of its curves my way: “Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present, you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.”

Forgiving someone who has wronged you is actually a selfish act rather than a selfless one. Letting go of the hostility and hatred that you may have allowed to bottle up inside you is actually something you do for yourself rather than for the benefit of the other person. As I teach in my life-coaching programmes, when you bear a grudge against



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You would not have the wisdom and knowledge you now possess were it not for the setbacks you have faced, the mistakes you have made and the suffering you have endured

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someone, it is almost as if you carry that person around on your back with you. He drains you of your energy, enthusiasm and peace of mind. But the moment you forgive him, you get him off your back and you can move on with the rest of your life.

Mark Twain wrote, “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that crushed it.” Forgiveness is a great act of spirit and personal courage. It is also one of the best ways to elevate the quality of your life. I have discovered that every minute you devote to thinking about someone who has wronged you is a minute you have stolen from a much worthier pursuit: attracting those people who will help you.

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*Extract from Who Will Cry When You Die? (Jaico; ₹ 175; 225 pages), a compilation of life lessons from Robin Sharma, the author of The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari and the founder of Sharma Leadership International, a global leadership training firm*



# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

When **Valentina Tereshkova** hurtled into space from a secret Russian launch pad in Baikonur in central Asia in 1963, she became **the first woman to fly in space**. Thousands of jubilant women gathered in Red Square, Moscow, to celebrate this historical moment. Launched aboard Vostok 6 on 16 June, Tereshkova, code-named Chaika (seagull in Russian), chirped from space, "I see the horizon—a light blue, a beautiful band. The earth...it is so beautiful."

Having already beaten the United States in the race to send the first person to space with Yuri Gagarin, the Soviet Union was looking at scoring yet another 'first' with a woman in space. An amateur parachutist, the 26 year-old Tereshkova beat competition from four other women—three other parachutists and a pilot—recruited for the cosmonaut training programme to emerge the frontrunner. Under the guidance of Gagarin, the selection programme, shrouded in secrecy, got rolling in mid-1961. Even Tereshkova's mother learnt about the



mission only when it was announced on the state-run radio.

During the flight, lasting 2.95 days (70.8 hours), Vostok 6 orbited the earth 48 times. When it re-entered the earth's atmosphere, Tereshkova parachuted, landing about 380 miles northeast of Karaganda in Kazakhstan. She was honoured with the title Hero of the Soviet Union, and the

Order of Lenin, besides the United Nations Gold Medal of Peace. Though she didn't fly again, Tereshkova went on to graduate from the Zhuykosky Air Force Engineering Academy in 1969 and earned a degree in technical science in 1976. She married fellow cosmonaut Andrian Nikolayev and had a daughter, Elena, who became the first child to be born to cosmonaut parents.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MARCH 1963

- On 8 March, international direct dialling was introduced for the first time, with a telephone link between London and Paris.
- On 10 March, the first air show for the Confederate Air Force (now known as the Commemorative Air Force), a group dedicated to preserving World War II aircraft, took place in Texas.
- On 21 March, all communication was lost from the Soviet Union's Mars 1 spacecraft, which would become the first man-made object to reach Mars, because of a malfunction in its antenna.
- On 23 March, microbiologist Maurice Hilleman began the development of the Mumps vaccine by harvesting the live virus from his five year-old daughter.



## Ticket to travel

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## Long Data

*n.* A massive data set that extends back in time hundreds or thousands of years.

**Example.** By **long data**, I mean datasets that have massive historical sweep—taking you from the dawn of civilisation to the present day. The kinds of datasets you see in Michael Kremer's *Population Growth and Technological Change: 1 Million BC to 1990*, which provides an economic model tied to the world's population data for a million years; or in Tertius Chandler's *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth*, which contains an exhaustive dataset of city populations over millennia.

—Samuel Arbesman, “Stop hyping big data and start paying attention to **long data**”, *Wired*, 29 January 2013

## Hedge Rage

*n.* Extreme anger or aggression exhibited by a homeowner in response to a neighbour's massive or overgrown hedge.

**Example.** It's hardly surprising that high hedges are the thorny issue of many neighbourly disputes. Now SNP MSP Mark McDonald is to bring a bill to Holyrood in a bid to create new laws to tackle so-called **hedge rage**.

—Roxanne Sorooshian, “Answer found at the bottom of a glass”, *The Herald*, 10 September 2011

## Oversharenting

*pp.* Sharing intimate details about your children on social media. The practice can begin before birth with ultrasound images posted to Facebook and extend to faux first-person Twitter feeds sure to cause adolescent embarrassment.

**Example.** As more of Gen-C begins having kids, I suspect they'll agree. In the last decade, we've watched parents embrace social media, often too much. I call it **oversharenting**: the tendency for parents to share a lot of information and photos of their kids online.

—Steven Leckhart, “The Facebook free baby”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 May 2012

“A woman is like a tea bag: you cannot tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt



## Unbanked

*n.* Indians who are not accounted for through their bank accounts, people without a bank account

**Example.** In the context of banking, just how primitive India's economy is can be gauged from the fact that two-thirds of the country is still **unbanked** with no access to even a no-frills bank account.

—Shailendra Tyagi, "A justified License Raj", *OPEN*, 21 January 2013

## Social Swearing

*n.* Casual swearing that helps to define and bind a social group.

**Example.** "Swearing to define the gang, **social swearing**, is where you are most relaxed. That is where the swearing is the most," Professor Burridge said.

—Lisa Power and Ian Walker, "Rum crew of ladettes— the swearing, brawling, obnoxious young women of Sydney", *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 June 2012

## BYOD

*n.* Bring Your Own Device. The use of a personally owned mobile device, such as a laptop, Smartphone or tablet, to access a workplace network.

**Example.** Companies in 2012 generally conceded that **BYOD** is unstoppable. That said, workers who opt to join the BYOD craze this year won't have the same freewheeling experiences that characterised the trend in its earlier stages.

—Byron Acohido, "Security for personal mobile devices for work tightens", *USA Today*, 7 January 2013

“ A woman is the full circle.  
Within her is the power to  
create, nurture and transform

—Diane Mariechild

## CINEMAGRAPH

*n.* A still image where an element or small area of the image has been animated.

**Example.** But the coolest GIFs as of late have come from the rise of **cinemagraphs**, where creators take an image and animate one aspect of it, looping it together seamlessly to create an illusion of video where there is none—the image of a woman's skirt ruffling in the wind, or of a taxi seen in a reflection, driving past a café window.

—David Mendez, "Show us your GIFs!", *Tucson Weekly*, 13 December 2012

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## “I wanted to create an environment that would enable slum dwellers to live in a filth-free and dignified manner”

*Dr Kasturi Bakshi, 53, for making Kalyani in West Bengal an open defecation-free city*



Slum dweller Sambhu Bafore was in for a surprise recently while defecating in the open, when an entire army of patrolling activists descended on him, blowing whistles. The open embarrassment he faced has ever since deterred him from being caught with his pants down. This is not a one-off act. For slum dwellers in Kalyani, 65 km from Kolkata, open defecation is now a thing of the past. It started with Harijan Para, a slum where sweepers who clean toilets in nearby towns reside, turning into a 100-per-cent open defecation free area under the guidance of **Dr Kasturi Bakshi**, a health officer attached to Kalyani Municipality. “The first day I went past the slum, I had to clip my nose with fingers,” she remembers. Determined to make a change, she set up the Harijan Para Slum Folk Theatre Group, involving some enthusiastic locals. The

group started staging skits in and around Kalyani to spread awareness about the need for hygiene and sanitation. In 2006, Dr Bakshi started implementing the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) project in Harijan Para and the incidence of diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases dropped dramatically. The group then started staging shows in 52 other slums reaching out to over 40,000 people. The Municipality also chipped in, spending ₹ 250,000 to set up toilets in the area. In 2008, Kalyani was declared an open defecation-free city. Dr Bakshi and her theatre group are now addressing other social issues as well, from alcohol abuse and domestic violence to the need to educate children. Meanwhile, her whistleblowers remain on vigil day and night to target rule breakers!

—Partha Mukherjee





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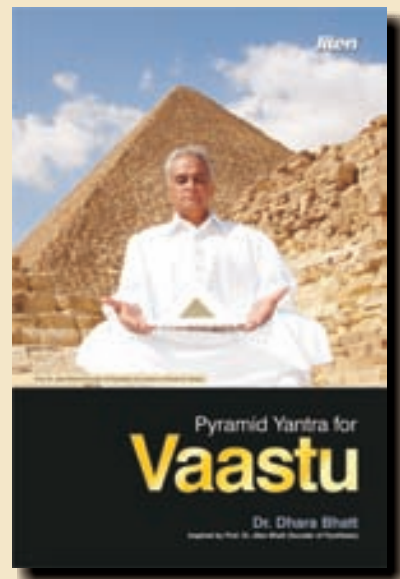
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