

harmony celebration age

MARCH 2016 ₹ 40

The magazine for silver citizens

The Women Issue

RTI crusader

VINITA DESHMUKH

Women's rights activist

RENANA JHABVALA

**Postmenopausal
bleeding**

Veteran journalist

Kamla Mankekar's

Immigrant Diary

Anjolie Ela Menon's art adventures



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Bonds that endure

*Those we love don't go away
They walk beside us every day
Unseen, unheard, but always near
Still loved, still missed, and very dear*

These beautiful words I read have been echoing in my mind these past days. We recently attended 'Voices of Faith', a memorial concert to honour a dear friend, Shyam. It was an elegant interfaith event, soulful and spiritual, organised with attention, care and love by his sensitive wife Nina.

The poignancy of the evening underscored how so very soon Shyam was taken from us. He was sincere and simple, kind and gentle, true and thoughtful, loving and positive, a cherished friend who cherished you in return. And he had so much more to give—to his family and friends, to his work, to society at large. But destiny had other plans.

Nevertheless, though Shyam is no longer in our midst, I don't believe he will ever leave us. His gentle presence was palpable that evening; in fact, I feel it is always there, just a thought, whisper or memory away. This

holds true for the people we love—whether my brother, mother, father or father-in-law, they are always near me. Sometimes, they come unbidden into my thoughts; their heartbeats transformed into memories. And sometimes, I reach out and they respond; joining me in connection and conversation.

I am neither scientist nor savant, nor is this a discussion of cosmic truths, spiritual beliefs or metaphysics. It's just about feeling and instinct, the knowledge that those who have walked with us and left their imprint always remain near, embracing us in a circle of love that defies destiny and the unforgiving hands of time. It's also a wake-up call on what's important. The trappings of our lives will not withstand the winds of fate; only the core endures; only love sustains. So make each moment a precious memory, live with passion, treasure your loved ones, and forge bonds that endure—beyond time and space.

Tina Ambani

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column one

Women make the world go round. But much of the world is still to catch on. Misogynistic mindsets aside, the real tragedy is that many women underestimate their potential. At *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, we take this potential very seriously; that's why our March women's issue is special.

Leading the charge this month is the feisty Anjolie Ela Menon whose journey of creativity continues unfettered—by circumstance or age. “At 76, I am still climbing ladders and working on 20-ft-high scaffoldings,” she tells us with pride. “The rocking chair will probably come but it would be lovely to die with one’s boots on!”

Indefatigable indeed. Much like investigative journalist Vinita Deshmukh, a gladiator who wields the RTI Act as her sword to battle corruption and injustice, no matter how powerful the adversary. Deshmukh shares this dogged determination with women’s rights activist Renana Jhabvala, who has proved to be a game-changer for women in the unorganised sector in India with her work for SEWA.

Other remarkable women who grace our pages this month include photo-journalist Sohini Sen, whose graphic novel following the adventures of two women in Ladakh is making waves; Gailing Begg, who offers care and companionship to silvers and the destitute in Bengaluru; and veteran journalist Kamla Mankekar, whose new column, “Immigrant Diary” offers insight into silver life in America.

All our ‘she-roses’ this month know—as we do—that every woman, of every age, can become a change agent. All it takes is self-belief.

—Arati Rajan Menon

The January 2016 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* was an interesting one with topics all relevant to silvers. I am glad I got a chance to look at the magazine!

Vijaya Ghose
New Delhi

Contrary to accepted convention, I find the 60-plus age is a magical time when you are no longer held back by responsibilities and can focus on doing the things that make you feel super. Senior living communities have replaced old-age homes, all for the better. While enjoying the company of many independent silvers and exchanging life stories, our children can also rest assured that we are living among like-minded people—it’s the modern-day joint family! With working children



and ever-engaged grandchildren, silvers have a responsibility to take care of themselves, besides helping each other when needed. Blessed, indeed, are those who expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed.

N Subramanian
Chennai

CONTRIBUTOR



Journalist, author and social activist **Kamla Mankekar** (born in 1928) writes a new column, ‘Immigrant Diary’ for us from California. Mankekar is one of the first women to serve on the staff of a daily newspaper in India. She worked in *The Times of India*, Delhi, from 1949 to 1961, *The Indian Express*, Bombay, from 1962 to 1966, and then as a freelance writer from Delhi, contributing among others for Press Trust of India, *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Eve’s Weekly*.

She was founder-editor of *Social Change*, journal of the Council for Social Development. Mankekar has written seven books, including *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*, which she co-authored with her husband, late D R Mankekar. Other notable works include *Women Pioneers in India’s Renaissance*, edited jointly with late Dr Sushila Nayar, and *Abortion: A Social Dilemma*. She recently published her memoir, *Breaking News: A Woman in a Man’s World*.

Mankekar had a long association with the All India Women’s Conference and was elected vice-president. She is founder chairperson of the Consumer Guidance Society of Bombay, founder chair of the Inner Wheel of the Rotary Club, main branch New Delhi, is a life member of the Indian Council for Child Welfare, and is a trustee of the Kasturba Gandhi National Trust, Indore. She has also served as member, Film Certification Board, Economic Task Force of the Status of Women Committee, National Integration Council, and many other voluntary and professional bodies. Mankekar was appointed the first chairperson of the Delhi State Commission for Women. She now lives in California with her daughter Purnima Mankekar and son-in-law Akhil Gupta, both professors at University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA).

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NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



➔ FIRST RESORT

BACKWATER BOOM

Good news for silvers in God's own country. **Kerala will soon be home to Graceland Foundation, a luxury retirement home**—the first of many such projects to follow in a state where 13 per cent of the population is over the age of 60. As website www.gulfnews.com reports, Graceland is being steered by seven 'non-resident' Keralites, including former advertising maven K George John and two doctors from Dubai. To be built in Mulanthuruthy near Kochi, it will feature 80 villas with a host of modern amenities; residents can lease a villa for ₹ 3.4 million and pay a monthly fee of ₹ 9,500 for food and facilities. If a resident decides to leave or passes away, the deposit is refunded to them or their nominees. "I checked out 18 old-age homes from Thrissur to Karukachal in central Kerala and found none to be good enough for someone who can afford a comfortable retired life," John tells the site. "And at the lone one that was reasonably good, I was told I would be 140 on the waiting list." John adds that Graceland Foundation will open its doors to people as young as 55 to enliven the group, adding, "It's not the money that is lacking for many seniors in Kerala, it's the support systems that are missing, which we are putting in place." The first of the villas will be launched on 2 October on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti.



PROTECT AND DEFEND: From defending the nation's borders, retired jawans in Kolkata are now protecting its people. A brigade of ex-servicemen has been roped into 'Support Elders', a silver-care start-up by entrepreneur Apratim Chattopadhyay that leverages technology to respond to silvers living alone. "We ensure timely intervention in case of a medical emergency by providing a GPS-enabled wristband with a one-touch alert button," explains Chattopadhyay. "Once the alarm is triggered, our National Alarm Centre tracks the location of the member via GPS and immediately arranges for an ambulance and a member of our staff, primarily comprising former servicemen, to get there and escort the member to a pre-decided hospital." So in case of a fall, silvers living alone in and around Kolkata can depend on highly disciplined first responders to come to their rescue—just at the touch of a button. For more information, go to www.supportelders.com

Work on: The Thai government is urging businesses to hire more silvers, reports news agency Reuters. The country's population is rapidly ageing; the World Bank estimates its working-age population will shrink by 11 per cent by 2040, the fastest contraction in Southeast Asia. In fact, Thailand established a Department of Older Persons in March 2015 to tackle elderly employment and related issues.

Net Connect



Click and connect seems to be a growing trend for American silvers. According to a new survey of over 2,000 adults by think tank Pew Research Centre, **online dating use has doubled among adults between the ages of 55 to 64 since 2013**. The study found that 12 per cent of respondents in this age group have tried to find companionship online, up from 6 per cent three years ago; 28 per cent know someone who has entered a long-term relationship via online dating; and 33 per cent know someone who uses online dating. The numbers shouldn't come as too much of a surprise considering social media usage among silvers in the US has more than tripled since 2010. Read the entire report on www.pewinternet.org/files/2016/02/pi_2016.02.11_online-dating_final.pdf



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The gold standard: Sexy just got redefined in this year's much awaited 'Swimsuit Edition' of American magazine *Sports Illustrated*. In a bid towards inclusion and body positivity in fashion, swimwear brand Swimsuits for All's ad campaign #SwimSexy featured 56 year-old model Nicola Griffin (right) in a reflective gold bikini, set off to perfection by her flowing white tresses. The brand's glorious triptych also included plus-size supermodel Ashley Graham and British Nigerian model Philomena Kwao. Griffin is the oldest women to appear in the magazine's swimsuit edition. "Young and skinny is typical," Moshe Lanaido, CEO of Swimsuits for All, tells website *adweek.com*, "but we're saying it can also be curvy and older women." For her part, Griffin tells media, "I've never felt sexier." See why at her website www.nicolagmodel.com/#!about/c786 and check out the campaign at www.swimsuitsforall.com/Swim-Sexy

Courtesy: Sports Illustrated





Love, actually

British newspapers are raving about ***Love Lived***, a powerful, collaborative video and photography exhibition that shares the journeys of love and loss of 14 Londoners between the ages of 70 and 95. The brainchild of photographer Holly Wren, the project was created in partnership with video production agency Bold Content and charity Contact the Elderly. "The theme of love came around because I was seeking to express the universality of life, to find a way to cross that generational divide, something to unite the young with the elderly," she tells website huffingtonpost.co.uk. "Each unfolded a unique tale with all of the joy and sorrow, the convenience and compromise, and the trials and tribulations of a love that I recognise, either from my own experiences or that of friends and family. There's every type of love represented in the stories and reflected through the faces of the subjects." A particularly resonant story is that of Chitra, who met her husband Ron after moving to England to train to be a teacher. "I was brought up to think that when I was marriageable age, a suitable partner would be found for me so I wasn't interested in love and that kind of thing," the 74 year-old reminisces. The couple had only 15 years together before she lost him at the age of 45. However, she insists, "When I think of him, I smile." The exhibition is on at the Broadgate Tower, London, until 10 June 2016 (entry is free) but you can enjoy the videos and photographs from the comfort of your home at lovelived.co.uk

UP SLOPE!

Online magazine ***SeniorsSkiing.com***, launched by 72 year-old American Jon Weisberg, is becoming increasingly popular, according to an article in *The New York Times*. The site offers information on the **latest ski technology and destinations that afford greater accessibility and mobility as well as discounts for elders**. For instance, its research suggests that the best North American ski resorts for silvers are Lake Louise Ski Resort in Alberta, Mount Hood Skibowl in Oregon, Waterville Valley in New Hampshire and Alta in Utah; and in Europe, Zermatt and Verbier in Switzerland, Chamonix and Megève in the French Alps and St. Anton in Austria. "Skiing is associated with youth, glamour and sexiness," says Weisberg. "It is all those things, but there are also plenty of people who aren't so young but are into the sport. They're increasing in numbers because baby boomers are getting older. And as they have entered retirement they have more time and are turning to skiing." Cool.



BAG SWAG This "is not a soap commercial about how everyone is beautiful, even older women. It is a statement about refusing to allow our youth-loving, commercialised, media-ridden culture to have the last word about who we are and our place in American society." Bam. These words by architect Faith Baum and documentary filmmaker Lori Petchers encapsulate the spirit of the **'Old Bags Project', a multidisciplinary venture that explores the experience of the middle-aged American woman**, through documentary, visual art and social media. The project involves getting women from diverse backgrounds (from the ages of 45 to 70) to pose in their underwear with shopping bags over their heads—a one-two blow against consumerism and ageism. The women are also invited to express their thoughts on the impact of biology and culture on post-menopausal women. The results have been displayed in exhibitions, as video and audio installations, and now a book, *Old Bags Taking A Stand*. Go to oldbagsproject.com

CHEMICAL WARFARE?

There's a new weapon in the war against ageing, it would appear. And it's a common chemical. Researchers at the University of Maryland in the

US claim methylene blue, which is used to clean fish tanks—yes, really—can repair the damage to genes caused by ageing. They also believe it could soon be available over-the-counter medicine as a cosmetic or even ingestible. According to the university's website, the study found the chemical repairs damage to the "batteries" that produce energy in

cells, which are ruined by the normal ageing process. "It seems methylene blue rescues every affected structure in the cell. When we looked at the treated cells, it was hard to tell they were progeria cells at all—it's like magic," team member Kan Cao tells the site. Animal and clinical trials will now follow. The study was published in online journal *Ageing Cell*.



Neck DEEP

It's considered a telltale sign of the passage of time. Not surprisingly, then, cosmetic companies are making a killing with anti-ageing products for the neck. London newspaper *The Telegraph* surfs some hot (and haute) new products that'll supposedly have you turning your collars down:

- **Bliss Thinny Thin Chin:** Claims to firm and tightens the neck and décolleté 'both instantly and over time'; £ 35.50 (about ₹ 3,500); www.blissworld.co.uk
- **PREVAGE® Anti-Aging Neck and Décolleté Lift and Firm Cream:** Claims to be a 'thick, intensive treatment'; £ 85 (about ₹ 8,300); www.elizabetharden.com
- **Origins Plantscription Powerful Lifting Neck and Décolleté**

Treatment: Claims to hydrate, lift and contour; £52 (about ₹ 5,000); www.origins.co.uk

- **Elemis Pro Collagen Neck and Décolleté Balm:** Claims to deeply moisturise and, over time, help firm and tone the skin; £ 49 (about ₹ 4,800); www.elemis.com
- **NIOD Neck Elasticity Catalyst:** Claims to be non-greasy yet help restore elasticity in the chest and neck area; £ 50 (about ₹ 4,900); www.victoriahealth.com
- **Skinesis Neck and Chest Rejuvenating Complex:** Claims to be fast-absorbing with antioxidants to target pigmentation and collagen breakdown; £ 54.50; (about ₹ 5,300); www.sarahchapman.net



Home-grown

bio
bengaluru

Pharma company Cipla Ltd has launched a '5 in 1' anti-ageing skincare product, *Cutisera™*, developed by Bengaluru-based stem cell company *Stempeutics*. A media release informs us that *Cutisera* has been developed using bioactive factors derived from human adult stem cells to enhance the rejuvenation of ageing skin. "We are excited to launch *Cutisera™*, the next-generation bio-engineered skin care product," says Chandru Chawla, head of Cipla New Ventures. "As we age and get exposed to environmental stressors, the production of human growth factors within skin is depleted, giving rise to features of ageing skin. By reintroducing these factors through daily application of *Cutisera™*, damaged skin cells are repaired resulting in rejuvenation of the skin."



On autopilot

A silvering Japan is looking to keep itself mobile with **self-driving cars**. As the *Wall Street Journal* tells us, researchers from Kanazawa University have developed a self-driving Prius and are working with officials in the city of Suzu to test its use among silver drivers. The Japanese government has reportedly allocated about ¥2 billion (\$ 16.3 million) a year in funding to develop autonomous vehicle technologies. In fact, self-driving cars are the wave of the future—in addition to Google's self-driving Lexus (see July 2014 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*), companies such as Toyota, Tesla, Honda, Nissan and Apple are all working on prototypes. And in January, at the big-ticket Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, tech major Nvidia unveiled the Nvidia Drive PX 2, a liquid-cooled supercomputer with 12 CPU cores and four Pascal GPU chips (offering the power of 150 MacBook Pro laptops) to enable self-driving cars.



Photographs by iStock

WISE CHOICE

In a marketing move that's all kinds of clever, **US company WiseWear has hired 94 year-old fashion icon Iris Apfel as brand ambassador for its new 'wearable technology' range.** The range comprises luxury bracelets with sensors that monitor heart rate, breathing and metabolism; they are also connected to the wearers' mobile device, enabling them to receive texts, emails and event alerts. While wearable health monitors are now ubiquitous, WiseWear's emphasis on the fashion quotient is sure to lure more customers. And in terms of appeal to the silver demographic, hiring Apfel—interior designer, fashion collector, and all-round fashionista—is a masterstroke. The bracelets cost \$ 395 (about ₹ 27,000). See more of the products (and Apfel) at wisewear.com

Courtesy: WiseWear





Photographs courtesy: VES College of Law

Future watch

At a seminar titled 'Gerontology: An Indian Perspective', conducted by Mumbai's Vivekananda Education Society (VES) College of Law on 4 February, the alarm rang loud: by 2025, the number of people over 65 years in India will surpass the number of children under five. With the current focus on the 18-25 age group, will India be ready to accommodate her growing number of silvers?

Following the keynote address by retired Bombay High Court justice R Y Ganoo, the first session was chaired by Dr Rashmi Oza, head of the Department of Law at Mumbai University. The presentations were made by Dr Anil Variath from Mumbai Law University, who highlighted the sociological implications of ageing; lawyer and social activist Sangeeta Punekar, who pointed out that even though schemes for silver healthcare were in place, beneficiaries have problems availing of them owing to a low literacy rate or something as basic as not having enough money to get to the hospital; and Kranti Bhillare of the Family Welfare Agency, Mumbai, who presented two case studies that illustrated the ground reality of dependent silvers in the city. Dr Sujata Madhwani, a medical doctor,

addressed how the longevity of policies and schemes can go a long way to help silvers while Dr Nidhi Gupta of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences highlighted the ironic feminism of ageing (with a ratio of 1,033 women per 1,000 men in the age bracket of 60 years). This was reiterated in a passionate speech by VES law student Vivien Tulzapurkar, who spoke about the double barriers—of age and gender—facing elderly women in the country.

The second session of the day was chaired by Dr Jhanavi Kedare, associate professor at Nair Hospital, where assistant professors and students of various colleges presented their views on the issue.

The takeaway: with the breakdown of the joint family, the fate of silvers is being rapidly redefined. In coming generations, silvers can no longer expect to be taken care of by their children. Instead, current generations have to prepare to be independent caretakers of themselves, by using their youth to enable their silver years. This may be a new and rather drastic phenomenon for India's silvers, but it is a growing trend world over. And if we open our minds to such a life, we will all be the better for it.

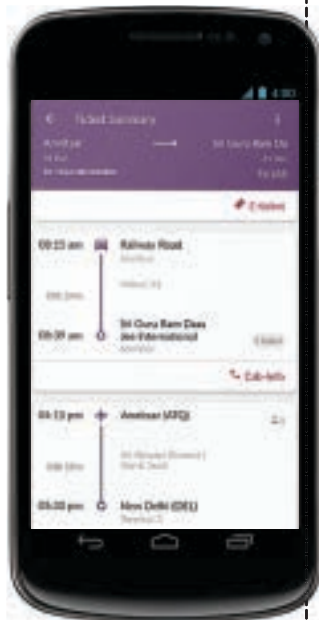


ROUTOFY APP

Available for: Android 4.1 and up

What it does:

Planning any trip can be tedious and confusing considering the plethora of travel options (from trains to taxis) and routes. Now, there's a one-stop solution. An Indian start-up by IIT alumni Rohit Gupta and Abhishek Aggarwal, Routofy allows customers to book multimode transport across a single interface. You just need to enter the starting and end point of your travel plan and dates. The app will then give you the best options available across different modes of transport.



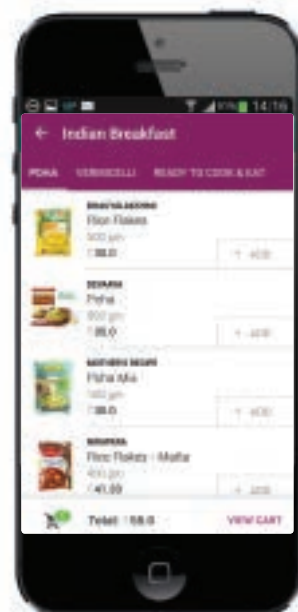
After installation: Once installed, the app asks you to register through Facebook or Google or sign up. At the home page, you feed in the starting and end point, along with departure and return date, number of travellers, and train and flight class. The app will then give you a list of available travel options via bus, train, cab and flight, across time, duration and costs. Once you choose your options, the next step will be to choose a pickup location and your choice of travel from the pickup location. For example, on a journey from Mumbai to Pune, if you have chosen to fly from Chhatrapati Shivaji Airport, the app will give you the option of travelling by bus or taxi from your home to the airport, at a suitable time. If you choose a cab to reach a certain destination, the app gives you the option of a normal cab or Uber and then prompts you to enter the details of the pickup location and time. After sorting out your travel options, the app asks you for your personal details like contact number, email id, name and age. Then, you just need to pay—you can choose a 'wallet' (see November 2015 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*), credit or debit card or Net banking.

Ever come back empty-handed from the hospital because of non-availability of medicines? The Delhi government gets it. After beginning a scheme to provide free medicines on prescription at state-run hospitals, it will launch a mobile app where users can report the non-availability of medicines. Once you upload the image of the prescription and your complaint, you will instantly receive a message or call telling you when to expect your meds.

GROFERS

Available for: Android 4.0 and up, iOS7.0 or later

What it does: Another app developed by IIT alumni—Albinder Dhindsa and Saurabh Kumar—this one makes grocery shopping a breeze. Grofers enables you to get not just groceries but fresh fruits, vegetables, bakery products, cosmetics, mobiles and accessories, electronics and even pet food at your doorstep—in smart cardboard boxes! Just select a store in your neighbourhood and choose from the products available. One big advantage is the money back offer; if a product doesn't meet your expectations or if something is missing from your order, the delivery boys give your money back instantly, without any hassle of calling customer care. The app is available in 17 cities: Agra, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Kanpur, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Surat and Vadodara.



After installation: The app asks you to set up a profile, where you feed in your name, address and other details. It then takes you to a list of general stores near your location. There are different tabs for each product genre; choose the genre to get the list of the products and stores. Once you choose a store to order from, the store will give you a list of products available with prices according to quantity. After finalising your shopping list, the app takes you to the checkout section. Here, it first confirms your total bill and address and asks for a delivery time, after which it will take you to payment options; these include credit card, debit card, Net banking, wallet, or cash on delivery. You can keep track on the progress of your order and the exact location of the delivery guy on GPS.

Learn a language. *Hola!* It's time for that Spanish class you've always dreamed about but never got around to taking. According to new research from the University of Edinburgh, other than imparting knowledge and cultural understanding, learning a second language can boost thinking skills, improve mental agility, and delay the ageing of the brain. And now, with free online tutorials in a host of languages, taking the plunge is cheaper and easier than ever before. So what are you waiting for?



iStock

Then: Coconut shell Now: Coconut *diya*



RECYCLING FACTS

- Coconut shell powder is used as a filler in the manufacture of thermostat moulding powders.
- Replacing synthetic fibre with husk reduces consumption of petroleum by 2-4 million barrels and prevents 450,000 tonne of carbon dioxide emission each year.

The next time you use a coconut in the kitchen, don't throw away the shell—use both halves to make a pair of rustic and durable *diya*. All you need, besides the shell, is wax cubes, wicks, sandpaper, an aluminium/tin can, knife, a deep pan, water and fragrance cubes if you want your candles to be aromatic.

First, remove the fibre from your two shell halves and clean thoroughly. Wash the coconut with hot water; smoothen and shape the surface with sandpaper. Insert a wick in each shell and keep aside. Now, it's time to prepare the wax. Boil

water in a deep pan; place the aluminium can containing the wax cubes inside the pan and use a knife to stir the wax. Add the fragrance cubes in melting wax if desired. After the wax has melted completely, don't allow it to cool. Taking care not to spill the wax or burn yourself, slowly pour the melted wax into each prepared shell, securing the wick in the middle. Do not fill to the brim; leave half the wick visible. Allow the wax to settle and cool down and the *diya* are ready. And if you find brown too boring, feel free to jazz up the shells with paint and embellishments like sequins, thread and rope.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. COIR (THE FIBRE OF THE HUSK) CAN BE USED FOR MAKING ROPE, MATS, BRUSHES, SACKS, CAULKING FOR BOATS AND STUFFING FOR MATTRESSES.
2. COCONUT SHELLS CAN BE USED TO MAKE SERVING BOWLS AND JEWELLERY BOXES—YOU JUST NEED TO CLEAN THE SHELL AND APPLY VARNISH TO ENSURE IT DOESN'T CATCH FUNGUS.

SKIN SENSE: Additives to keep you healthy? It sounds strange but researchers from the University of Arizona have found that a **food additive—annatto, also known as achiote—might help prevent skin cancer.** *Annatto* is a common ingredient in Latin American cooking. In the study, mice were injected with bixin, a compound found in *annatto*, and exposed to ultraviolet radiation. Researchers found that the bixin prevented ultraviolet damage from inside out by inducing cells to make antioxidants and repair factors and prevent the formation of cancer cells. The study was published in journal *Free Radical Biology & Medicine*.



The weight loss-dementia link

Those dipping numbers on your scale may not be all good news. A study by scientists from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota has found that **people with a history of dwindling appetite and weight loss in middle age, also called ‘anorexia of ageing,’ had a 24-per-cent increased risk of mild cognitive impairment,** often an early sign of Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia. The researchers studied 1,895 people aged 70 or older with no signs of dementia, looking into their history of weight loss as well, and then reassessed them four years later. Those who developed mild cognitive impairment had lost an average 2 kg per decade, compared to just 1.2 kg for those who retained their cognitive power. The study was published in journal *JAMA Neurology*.

anorexia
of ageing



Black magic

If you’re shopping around for fruit, as one should, be sure to put some **black raspberries** in your basket. Fresh research by the University of Agriculture in Krakow, Poland, has found that they could be a **new superfood.** Black raspberries, especially those grown in Central Europe, apparently contain three times as many antioxidants as the average berry—and 1,000 per cent more phenolics and anthocyanins, chemical compounds that help keep you healthy. The study has been published in journal *Open Chemistry*.



Photographs by iStock

Vitamin B + Omega-3 = improved memory



Photographs by iStock

Take your Vitamin B, eat your salmon, and you could keep your brain healthy longer. Researchers working on the Oxford Project to Investigate Memory and Ageing (OPTIMA) have found that **Vitamin B supplements could improve learning memory in silvers over 70, when paired with high levels of Omega-3 fatty acids.** The team studied over 250 patients with mild cognitive impairment. Half were given the supplements and the other half a placebo; the former showed slower declines of cognition. The study was published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*. Researchers are now trying to figure out if this combination could help people with Alzheimer's.

ANCIENT REMEDY Turns out that when Chinese scientist Tu Youyou was given the 2015 Nobel Prize in Medicine for her discovery of *artemisinin*, an herb to treat malaria, she had stumbled upon something much bigger—the ancient Chinese herbal remedy may also help prevent bowel cancer. Early trials by researchers from St George's, University of London, show that participants who took the drug for two weeks before surgery were six times less likely to have a recurrence of the cancer than those who took a placebo. The sample size is now being expanded to verify the results.

Ayurveda vs. Alzheimer's

Ayurveda may well have provided a possible breakthrough in the battle against Alzheimer's disease. A team at the **Centre for Neuroscience at the Indian Institute of Social Sciences in Bengaluru** is using an extract of the *ashwagandha* root on mice with Alzheimer's, with promising preliminary results. What's interesting is the way the root seems to be working. The extract does not work on the brain directly; rather, it enhances a protein in the liver, which then acts as a 'sink' for plaque-forming amyloids in the brain. Amyloids are proteins that the body produces normally. In healthy individuals, these fragments are broken down and elimi-



nated whereas in Alzheimer's patients, they accumulate in the brain and are associated with the most recognisable symptom of the disease: memory loss.



Cap it!

A cap that uses a silicon cooling system to help reduce hair loss in breast cancer patients has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The cooling cap—called Dignitana DigniCap Cooling System, manufactured by Dignitana Inc, Sweden—was studied in 122 Stage I and Stage II breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. A significant reduction in hair loss was reported in more than 66 per cent of participants. Patients strapped on the cap 30 minutes before their chemo session began so that the cooling constricted blood vessels, reducing the amount of chemotherapy that reached their hair follicles. They continued to wear the cap for 90 minutes after the chemo session, when blood levels of the cancer-fighting drugs dropped. Possible side-effects, however, include cold-induced headaches, neck and shoulder discomfort, chills and pain.



Are you at risk for kidney disease? Ahead of World Kidney Day on 10 March, Dr Niranjana S Kulkarni, consultant nephrologist at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani

Hospital, discusses the warning signs, and how to spot them

What are the most common causes and symptoms of kidney disease and kidney failure?

Diabetes is, by far, the most common cause of kidney failure and kidney disease, followed by high blood pressure or hypertension—they are both very common in Indians and among silvers. Common symptoms of kidney disease are swelling of the leg or face. In the advanced stage, the individual may suffer loss of appetite, weakness, lethargy, inability to concentrate, nausea and reduced urine flow. If one has a swelling on the leg, one should get tested immediately. Some basic tests like a simple urine examination or a simple blood test will check serum creatinine and blood sugar levels. A physical examination is also in order to check blood pressure levels. In 60-70 per cent of cases, kidney failure is caused by diabetes or hypertension. Other causes could be glomerulonephritis (acute inflammation of the kidney, typically caused by an immune response) or even hereditary factors.

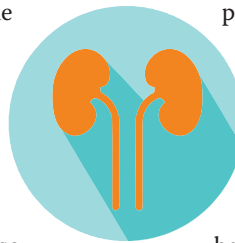
What precautions can one take?

Individuals who suffer from diabetes or high blood pressure should have regular checkups. The most essential thing is to keep sugar levels and blood pressure under control; do regular urine tests; and check for early indicators of one's kidneys being affected owing to diabetes or high blood pressure. One should also not slip up or stop taking one's medication for

diabetes or hypertension. Also, avoid taking medicines that might be harmful to the kidney. If you already have a kidney problem and if it is in the early stages, taking such medication will worsen your kidney function. Whenever you visit a doctor for anything, make sure you tell them your kidney function is slightly impaired so they prescribe accordingly.

What should one do if one suffers from kidney disease?

There are two types of kidney problems. Acute kidney failure happens all of a sudden and usually relates to infections, medication, malaria or dengue. When we treat the primary cause, the kidney is expected to recover. Chronic kidney disease, on the other hand, is a long-standing kidney problem and largely relates to diabetes and hypertension. This is not reversible. All one can do is reduce the rate at which kidney function is impaired by keeping diabetes, blood pressure and diet under control, and making sure one does not take any medication that can harm the kidney. This reduces the load on the kidney. However, if one's condition worsens, some form of replacement therapy may be required like dialysis or transplantation. Bear in mind that dialysis will not help you recover kidney function; all it does is remove toxins from your body, which is the main function of the kidney. Hence, it is called 'renal replacement therapy'. Dialysis needs to be performed three times a week, with each session lasting four hours.





Anupam Kher



Dolly Thakore



O N V Kurup



Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan

BIRTHDAYS

Actor **Anupam Kher** turns 61 on 7 March.

Former Attorney General of India **Soli Sorabjee** turns 86 on 9 March.

Theatre actor and casting director **Dolly Thakore** turns 73 on 10 March.

Former Canadian prime minister **Kim Campbell** turns 69 on 10 March.

Media mogul **Rupert Murdoch** turns 85 on 11 March.

English actor and author **Sir Michael Caine** turns 83 on 14 March.

Actor **Shashi Kapoor** turns 78 on 18 March.

IN PASSING

Cartoonist **Sudhir Tailang** died on 6 February in Gurgaon owing to a brain tumour. He was 55.

Urdu poet and Bollywood lyricist **Nida Fazli** died from a heart attack in Mumbai on 8 February. He was 78.

Contemporary Malayali poet and Jnanpith-winner **Ottapalakkal Neelakandan Velu Kurup** passed away on 13 February in Thiruvananthapuram. He was 84.

Former West Indies and Trinidad & Tobago wicketkeeper-batsman **Andy Ganteaume** passed away on 17 February in Santa Margarita, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. He was 95.

Veteran Hindustani classical singer **Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan** died in Kolkata on 18 February. He was 107.

MILESTONES

➤ Sarangi maestro **Pandit Ram Narayan** was selected for the prestigious Bharat Ratna Pandit Bhimsen Joshi Classical Music Award for 2015-2016 on 3 February.

➤ Persons of Indian origin, physics professor **Chennupati Jagadish**, ophthalmologist **Dr Jay Chandra** and dentist **Dr Sajeev Koshy**, were honoured with the Order of Australia, the country's highest civilian honour.

➤ Indian lawyer **Henri Tiphagne** was selected for the 8th Human Rights Award by Amnesty International Germany.

OVERHEARD

"If I have a mantra in my life, if I aspire to anything, it's to learn from nature and be part of nature—and do the best with the nature I have. 'Use what exists,' my acting teacher Sandy Meisner used to say. That means many things, but one of the things it can mean is not fighting the ageing process. My hair used to be dark, and now it's salt and pepper. I like the way it looks. Luckily it's still mostly there, so this is easy for me to say, but I would hope that if I lose my hair, I'll just roll with it. I think when nature changes your face—especially if you live a clean life—your body is designed so it all looks right together. When you try to be youthful, it only makes you look older."

—American actor **Jeff Goldblum**, 63, in *GQ* magazine



Dinodia Photo Library

was held in the land of the TAJ,
in the historic city of Agra on 4th - 6th January, 2016
at ITC Mughal Hotel, Agra.

Hence, the State of Uttar Pradesh has proposed to celebrate "**U.P. Pravasi Diwas**" annually to provide an opportunity to NRIs to interact and connect with their roots and contribute in the growth story of Uttar Pradesh. With the establishment of new NRI department, the focus is on establishing connect with the Indian Diaspora at large and Uttar Pradesh NRIs/PIOs in particular. The Pravasi Diwas is a platform to discuss and resolve concerns of the NRIs/PIOs and to celebrate the success of four brothers and sisters who have made U.P. proud globally.

For more details, please visit www.upnri.com



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.

RETIRE, DON'T RETREAT

Peals of laughter break the serenity that holds Nachinola village near Mapusa in Goa in its warm embrace. A closer look reveals a group of seniors having a rollicking time. An even closer look reveals the cause of the amusement: a short, hilarious play performed by a noted Konkani actor. A louder roar fills the air when the next activity follows. Welcome to Bougainvilla Hermitage, a retirement 'village' that has 60 apartments housing retired CEOs, businessmen and women, bankers and ex-Army personnel, all under one roof.

There is always something happening here. One day, it's a barbeque by the swimming pool or cake mixing; the next day it's singing and waltzing or doing the salsa in the community hall; and the next, it could be yoga, origami and other hobby classes. Just the other day, I visited my 65 year-old aunt Perpetua Gonsalves here and I was so

happy to see her all bright and jolly. "I love it here," she said, deftly crossing her crochet needles. "This crochet tablecloth is for the centre table."

Bougainvilla Hermitage boasts senior-friendly design and amenities, and the residents have dressed it up with tastefully furnished interiors. But, as beautiful as the ambience is, the residents are far from complacent and many are involved in philanthropic activities. Some have taken to teaching English and mathematics to the children of the staff and the neighbourhood.

The silvers here often visit a neighbouring retirement home, where sing-song sessions accompanied by guitar and keyboard bring cheer. The former often shower the latter with gifts and surprises. They organise painting and *rangoli* competitions for children in the neighbourhood and, during Christmas, they host carol singing events that bring people of the surrounding villages together.

Gonsalves lives a fulfilling life at Bougainvilla Hermitage



Calling the project his 'baby', 65 year-old developer and resident of the retirement village Michael Lobo says that when he and his wife came to settle in their ancestral home in Goa more than 24 years ago, he survived a heart attack at the age of 47. "This got me thinking about developing a retirement village where people could spend their active twilight years in peace, in harmony with nature and with dignity," he shares. "Goa had nothing to offer this segment of society. So we decided to create a vibrant environment of our own, where like-minded seniors could interact and celebrate their well-earned retirement." One more thing. "We are happy to mention that the first marriage here took place in March 2014, between a 90 year-old gentleman and a 73 year-old lady," he reveals. Evidently, Bougainvilla Hermitage lives up to its motto, 'Independent but Not Alone'.

—Zarine Ahmed, Goa

STUDENT FOR LIFE

As I sit on my favourite couch, I am surrounded by certificates and plaques, testimony to many years of learning after my career in the Army. I was born in a village near Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, to a farming family. I was the first doctor in our entire clan and joined the Army as a short-service commission officer in 1967. After 25 years with the Army Medical Corps, I sought voluntary retirement in 1992. Shortly after that, I got a job with Medinova Diagnostics, a diagnostics institute, where my second series of educational achievements began, all in the field of medicine, in the city of Hyderabad.

I was chief general manager for all four branches of the company in different cities. But I still found the time to take 14 courses in medicine. This earned me an entry in the *India Book of Records* (2013) for the highest number of study courses done by anyone after the age of 65. After 14 years with Medinova, I quit and joined ambulance service Emergency Management and Research Institute (EMRI) in 2006. Among the many courses I studied were geriatric medicine, basic life support, advanced cardiac life support and international trauma life support. I also taught these courses to those in EMRI's paramedical services.

In 1967, I had completed a course in quality control for ISO 9001 from the University of Portsmouth, UK, which had set up a centre in Hyderabad to conduct the tests. This allowed me to check hospitals for hygiene and cleanliness. In 2005, I wrote the exam to become a member of the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare (NABH). These two qualifications added to my scope and, very soon, I became a technical examiner and auditor for all the hospitals in the city.

Although I had been working and studying very hard, I did not give up my love for theatre. This passion can be traced back to my childhood, when there were all kinds of plays staged in my village. Whenever they needed a small boy, I would be roped in! I thus developed an abiding love for the arc lights. Even during my medical studies, I did not give up on theatre and, on graduation, I was recognised as the 'Best Outgoing Actor'.

I am a people person at heart and naturally reach out to people who are vulnerable. This was probably why, when I was with Medinova, some patients would check with me for a second opinion. I guess it was easier to talk to me rather than to their consulting physicians who are always overworked. Indeed, my motto has always been to help others. My knowledge of geriatric medicine helps me counsel older patients at the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Service, where I volunteer twice a week. I also volunteer my services at the Vegesna School for the Disabled, run by my friend and philanthropist Vamsi Rama Raju.



Shyamola Khanna

Dr Reddy completed 14 medical courses after retirement

Among my many precious memories is one from the year 1995, when I was gifted an autobiographical book, *Rama Katha: Sai Sudha*, by eminent Telugu writer Dr G V Subrahmanyam. He came to my office and opened a page that mentioned an incident that had happened a few years earlier. Dr Subrahmanyam had been speaking at a function when he had a heart attack. I was in the audience and when I realised he was suffering a cardiac seizure, I stabilised him and had him sent to hospital. In his book, he mentions that it was 'as if God had sent' me to his rescue. I remain humbled by his appreciation; I only did it because I was there!

I have developed two teaching models to help train paramedical helpers and have patents for each one. And although I have slowed down a little owing to my age, I continue to work as a consultant with EMRI for the training of paramedical staff.

—Col (retd) Dr Krishna Bhaskar Reddy, Hyderabad

But naturally

DEEPAK DALAL, 56
PUNE



Courtesy: Deepak Dalal

We are so defined by our work and career paths that we often start our interactions with people with by asking them, 'What do you do?' We also often measure success by our work and judge others by what they do for a living. Yet, sometimes, we find our calling in the second chapter of our productive lives.

When I stepped into the world of work, I was a qualified chemical engineer with degrees I had earned in

India and the US. I soon got down to the serious business of earning a living and worked in the family business. I was competent at it and may even have spent a lifetime running a factory, except that I always found my heart wandering to the great outdoors.

As life in Mumbai was too fast-paced and mechanical, my wife and I moved to Pune in 1988. But, after a while, even that began to pall. For me, carving out my place in the sun literally meant being outdoors, exploring

the wonders of nature and encouraging others to do so. I longed to write and be able to tell children's stories about our incredible wildlife and the beauty of nature but I did not quite know how.

It was on a family vacation to the Lakshadweep Islands that I gathered the material for my first book, *Lakshadweep Adventure*. I wrote the book moonlighting while I put in regular hours at the factory. It was published in 1997, while I was still working. My love for reading

I was wasting precious time doing something that would not bring me any great joy. I was certain that I belonged with books and wildlife and educating children about their beautiful country and heritage

naturally tilted me towards a career in writing. The books I read moved me so much that they kindled in me a passion for wanting to write stories of similar calibre. Constructing exciting adventure narratives came naturally to me. But I had to learn the delivery or the craft of writing. I attended a children's writers' workshop in the US and I am still learning by reading the best children's books.

It was only while I wrote my second book in 2000, at the age of 40, that I quit the family business. By then, I was convinced I was in the wrong place and wasting precious time doing something that would not bring me any great joy. I was certain that I belonged with books and wildlife and educating children about their beautiful country and heritage through stories. My heart was there; not in a factory or office.

My family has my deepest respect and no one stopped me from following my dreams. In fact, the stable financial support I had from my family helped me pursue them more fearlessly. Yet I was apprehensive. It is not easy pulling the plug on the source that supports your lifestyle. My responsibilities suddenly multiplied. I had to perform and prove myself. So I started dabbling in the stock market as well. I continue to do that and it frees me up financially, to write the stories I want to tell.

Publishing books is no cakewalk. I have struggled, been rejected and have been asked to do things differently. I have even walked away and found other avenues to take my stories to the world. Eventually, I started my own publishing company, Tarini Publishing (named after my daughter), so I could tell stories

exactly as I wanted to tell them. I work with a close-knit team of people who understand what I am trying to do and they are extremely supportive of my vision.

Since the year 2000, I have taken to writing children's novels full time. I also spend considerable time visiting schools for talks on my books, environmental matters, conservation and creative writing. In 2008-2009, I spent a year teaching at an international school (School of the Nations) in Macau, China.

I love talking to children and sparking a sense of adventure and discovery in them. My stories are typically rooted in natural history and are premised on creating a connection between children and wildlife. My family is very supportive and my daughters have found their passions that are very different from mine or my wife's. Living life my way has not just brought me joy and made for a better quality of life for us as a family; it has also empowered each member of our family to follow their heart.

I have picked up some awards and accolades along the way. I was selected to attend the Highlights Children's Writers' Conference 2003 in the US, based on my Andaman novels. I was honoured by *Sanctuary* magazine in 2004, for increasing awareness among Indian children about wildlife and ecological issues. My two Sahyadri adventure books were shortlisted for the Vodafone Crossword Book Award for the Best Children's Book of 2011.

It took me 15 years to switch paths, and I am happy I did. Should not our careers, which span almost our entire adult lives, be a thing of joy?

—As told to Suchismita Pai

I recently retired from the Navy and want to open a book store. However, I know book stores are vanishing quickly and one needs good business skills to run any store. How can I go about it?

It's true that owing to development and digitisation, book stores are fast losing ground. Opening a book store can be a challenge in metro cities, but in small Indian cities, they are still a paradise for book lovers and the knowledge-hungry.

The starting point is to figure out a place, its size and how many books you will stock. You must ensure some place for storage. List out the genres and sections and the classics you wish to store. This will come in handy when you start contacting publishers. You could do with an assistant; managing a book store on your own can become tedious.

To make your bookstore more successful in the modern age, you should incorporate a library-cum-coffee shop. This would ensure more footfalls from the younger generation as well as silvers. The fallout may be more noise. The solution would be to divide the store into parts: a bookstore-cum-library, and a coffee shop. You might want to get a franchise for the coffee shop, which could require more people to operate it and a seating arrangement for those who love to read with a cup in their hand.

Once this is in place, you need to spread the word. And perhaps offer visitors some incentives, such as discounts on popular books.

—Santosh Narkar runs a second-hand bookstore in Goa



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR



Your inner warrior

Yoga and martial arts

Even Western medicine is baffled by the miraculous aspect of power and energy flow in the martial arts. Not surprisingly, yoga is also related to the same flow of energy which, depending on the location, region and type of art, is called *chi*, *ki* or *qi*. In yoga, it is called *prana*. Though translated simplistically to mean breath, it is much more. Breath is just an

aspect of it. It is regarded as the energy of the universe and a martial artist taps it to power his move.

Celebrated incidents are well-documented on how a shao-lin warrior can block a lance from piercing him with just the right focus and channelling of this energy. This channelling is said to concentrate the energy into sharp focus,

like a laser beam. Similar channelling of energy is what makes yoga's healing so miraculous.

Though a large proportion of yoga practitioners see their practice as physical exercise, it is clearly more than that. The physical poses (*asana*) are said to clear the pathways of the energy. Breathing exercises (*pranayama*) are said to direct the energy through these pathways. Essentially, the whole practice is based on the principle of tapping into the cosmic energy, just like a martial artist.

The last column discussed how yoga works on activating acupressure points. These are the same points in all eastern streams of health and fitness, including martial arts and massages. Only the names vary. The power of an eastern warrior power comes from the limbs. The elasticity of these tools comes from poses that are yogic. Most preparatory poses and practices of healing in martial arts are yoga-based. So the next time you do your practice, remember to exult in the fact that your moves are very similar to that of a magnificent warrior with magical prowess!

"The serpents, *indriyas* (sense organs), which are hissing again and again, should be slain in the seat of the mind with the rod of firm discrimination, just as Indra reduced to dust the mountains through his irresistible *vajra* (thunderbolt)."

*From Laghu Yoga Vasistha
by Sage Vasistha,
translated into English by
K Narayanaswami Aiyer*

When I started on my journey of exploring yoga, this book was one of the most exciting that decoded the entire experience for me. It was full of serendipitous moments of sparkling intuition. It used very tough language for the spiritually lazy, such as "ass"! It looped and meandered into stories... as if you were looking down a kaleidoscope where patterns sparkled, shifted, and yet retained a structure that made so much sense. That way it removed the esoteric or abstruse aspects of the yogic journey and broke it down into a language that included the novice. It is one of those yoga books that must be read to connect to what yoga really means.



YOGIC MOVES

Standing wide angle pose (*prasarita padottanasana*)

Stand with your feet a metre apart, feet pointed ahead. Raise both arms overhead. Inhale deeply. Exhaling, drop your palms down to the ground. Look between the palms. Keep your elbows bent. Lower your head to the ground or close to it. Hold for a few seconds. Exit the pose by raising your arms back. Do a few times. Wind up with a backbend as a counter pose.

Caution: Ensure your legs are straight. Do not rest your body weight on the ground even if the head touches it. The pressure should shift to the legs and buttocks if holding for long. **Benefits:** This pose offers complete body flexibility and an overall workout. It has similar benefits as the headstand; it makes the facial skin glow and calms the mind.

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



MONEY MATTERS BY PRIYA DESAI

Take the bull by the horns: The fear of risk should not keep silvers away from investing in the stock market

I was walking past the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in Mumbai's Fort area recently with a friend, when he noticed the massive bull sculpture in front of the building. "Just like the Nandi outside a Shiva temple, what is the bull doing here?" he asked, rather mischievously.

Animal farm terminology

Animal farm terminology such as bulls and bears, pigs and chickens, is common in stock exchange parlance. Once you start investing in the stock/equity market, you undoubtedly hear about the market being in the grip of bulls or bears. A bull in the stock market is an optimistic investor who expects stock prices to move in the upward direction. Favourable factors for a bullish market are a high growth rate of the economy, growing investment and profitability in the corporate sector, good monsoons, and controlled inflation. These result in a positive sentiment in the share market, with stock prices seeing a rapid upward move. As witnessed recently, the bull phase may not necessarily last long.

With increased integration of the Indian and global economies, international factors weigh in majorly on our stock markets. The sharp slide in oil prices, debt problems in European economies, and slow growth in America and China recently have brought a massive slide in our stock prices. Analysts have now started talking of a bear market phase.

My 64 year-old friend had a pertinent doubt. "Do you think that at my age I should invest in the stock market, and to what extent?"

Investing in the stock market

The rule of thumb decrees that equity investment of silvers should not exceed the difference between 100 and their age. For example, if your age is 70 years, your equity investment should be limited to 30 per cent of your total assets. This rule no more holds water as the financial world and the outlook of silvers have undergone a sea change during the past two decades.

With increased integration of the Indian and global economies, international factors weigh in majorly on our stock markets. Analysts have now started talking of a bear market phase

Silvers are more open to diversifying their asset base now. As investments in fixed deposits and bonds earn a fixed annual income with no change in the capital invested, they become a low-reward, low-risk financial instrument. On the other hand, stocks continuously change hands in the stock market during working hours (9 am to 3.30 pm), with prices fluctuating daily. Equities, called stocks or shares in popular parlance, are important investment instruments.

An investment in equity means investing in a company that is listed on the stock exchanges. Our major stock exchanges are the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the BSE.

Buying and selling equities needs to be preceded with opening a Demat account with brokerage houses, their franchisees, nationalised banks and private-sector banks.

When a stock is dematted, it loses its physical form, and selling and buying is done through this account by way of credit and debit. The financial credit or debit can be passed through the bank account linked to the Demat account. This virtual system has eased the process of buying and selling of stocks.

Computer-savvy silvers can carry on share market transactions independently, sitting in the quiet comfort of their homes. They simply need to register for electronic trading (e-trading) with a brokerage house and use netbanking for payment and receipt of money by linking their trading account to a bank account. The brokerage charges for e-trading accounts are significantly lower.

The movements in stock prices during business hours can be monitored on channels such as CNBC18, ET Now, Bloomberg, Zee Business, etc. For additional information, financial newspapers can be checked.

Gain and loss

Fluctuations in the buy and sell prices of shares open up many windows of opportunities, with a chance to earn money. For instance, when a stock is bought at ₹ 100 and sold at a higher rate of ₹ 150, an investor earns ₹ 50 per share. If he has invested ₹ 10,000 in buying 100 shares, he makes a profit of ₹ 5,000 in the period of buy and sell. Brokers charge brokerage per share, along with the taxes. You gain the rest of the profit.



iStock

The reverse also holds true. A loss occurs when the buying price of a share is higher than the sale price.

In a nutshell, any investment in the stock market intrinsically involves risk and/or reward. The result depends upon the investor's

understanding of the ebb and tide, knowledge of the factors that affect a market at a point in time and that particular stock, and the strategy adopted as well as the timing.

For one, I find Benjamin Franklin's advice apt: "When it comes to invest-

ing, nothing will pay off more than educating yourself. Do the necessary research, study and analysis before making any investment decision."

It is said that there is no place for emotions in the stock market; it may peak and trough based on senti-

ment, but an investor will have to be cool-headed. One must also develop patience and wait for an opportune time to maximise gain and minimise loss. A successful investor in the stock market is one whose total gain is larger than the total loss. Rare is an investor who has always made only gain or only loss; gain and loss are the two sides of the coin every investor has to face some time or the other.

Holding shares

A variety of listed stocks—large, medium and small caps—is available for investors. The market is generally affected by the movement in large cap stocks, as these stocks have a major weight in the stock indices like BSE (Sensex) and NSE (Nifty) index which are an aggregate indicator of movement in stock prices.

The stocks included in the calculation of Sensex and Nifty are termed index stocks and keep changing depending on market capitalisation. Movement in the prices of these stocks measures the movement of indices. But during a rally in the stock market, the prices of medium and small stocks move faster than even the large caps.

Investors can hold stocks for the long, medium or even the short term. When a stock is held for a year or over, it is called long term and gains and losses from buy-sell operations of such a stock are termed as long-term gains or losses. Medium and short-term cover a period of less than a year. Gains or losses arising from stocks held for less than a year are called short-term gains and losses.

Tax implications

This differentiation of short and long-term is important for tax calculation. While filing tax returns, short-term

gains are taxed at 15 per cent, while long-term gains are tax-free. Therefore, long-term capital gains are a useful tax avoidance instrument. Losses can be offset against gains and tax payment can be reduced to that extent. Investors use this provision to minimise tax payment on short-term gains.

An investor can build a portfolio of long, medium and short-term stocks depending upon holding capacity. It is also observed that conservative

It is said that there is no place for emotions in the stock market; it may peak and trough based on sentiment, but an investor will have to be cool-headed

investors prefer to hold stocks for a long term, extending even up to 20 years or more. On the other hand, enterprising investors keep restructuring their portfolio on a regular basis to take advantage of fluctuations in the market. Brokerage houses, too, suggest portfolio-restructuring strategies to investors.

Timing purchase and sell

There is no single mantra that offers clear-cut guidelines on the level at which buying and selling should be done. Stock markets are influenced by many factors. Developments in the domestic market are relatively easy to understand and keep track of.

- For example, as the Budget is announced in February, it results

in wide gyrations in the market on a daily basis during the month.

- Fluctuations are intensified when global events create positive or negative sentiments.
- Adding fuel to the fire are the quarterly results of listed companies that make markets move in an erratic manner.
- Whenever there is a rise in issues related to European countries' debt problems and the possibility of a break-up of the European Union, our stock markets dip heavily.
- If the Federal Reserve of the US increases interest rates, the markets tumble.
- When China's stock markets had to be closed on account of their internal problems, our markets experienced a free fall of 1,600 points in the Sensex in just a single day.

There is no clear consensus as to why a stock market rises and falls. Till a couple of months ago, we witnessed signs of a bullish market. However, we now seem to be in the grip of a bearish market. Even the most seasoned analysts seem to go wrong by a wide margin in their predictions about the stock market.

"What goes up comes down," says a popular adage. Simply put, when you feel there is a fair margin of profits, sell the stocks you are holding and buy them again at prices where the risk is limited. Just as loss is possible, so is profit. Warren Buffet puts it succinctly: "I will tell you how to become rich. Close the door. Be fearful when others are greedy. Be greedy when others are fearful."

The author is an economist based in Mumbai

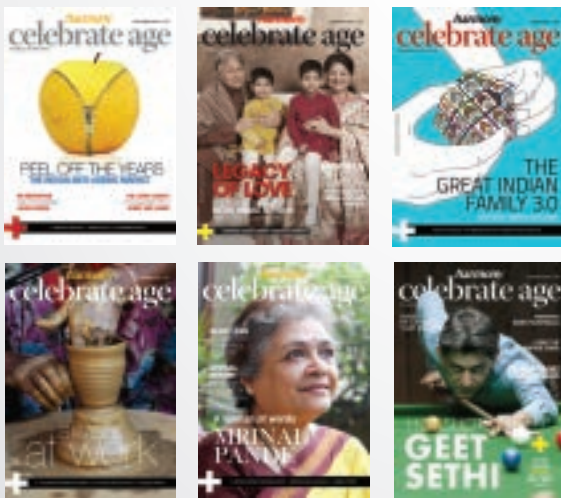


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HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

An engaging series about silvers who believe nurturing the body and mind is the key to joy

The vegan way

Pramoda Chitrabhanu • MUMBAI

Just listening to Pramodaben seems like a spiritual experience. She has found her life's calling in promoting veganism as a non-violent way of life. The softly spoken words she utters have the power to transform hearts. Her recent cookbook, *Rainbow Food for the Vegan Palate*, is not only about innovative vegan recipes but is the distilled essence of all she believes in, laying the foundation for spiritual peace and joy nurtured through cooking and eating right. At 73, Pramoda Chitrabhanu is agile in mind and body, and is elegance personified. Her life partner and companion is none other than Shri Chitrabhanu, a spiritual master who has propagated the philosophy of Jainism to the masses.

Pranam Pramodaben. Congratulations on your new cookbook. What inspired you to conceptualise and publish this book?

I consider it my duty to make people aware of the fact that a vegan diet—a plant-based diet—can be nutritious, wholesome and delicious. Very often, people have asked me where one gets required nutrients without consuming dairy? Well, a plant-based diet is packed with nutrients, so we do not need to seek nutrition in meat, fish, poultry, eggs or dairy. Several disciples and students have often requested me to share my vegan recipes and so I decided to write this cookbook. It is a totally different

compilation from my first cookbook, *Foods of Earth: Tastes of Heaven*, which was a vegetarian cookbook.

What brought about the transformation from vegetarianism to veganism?

About 20 years ago in Las Vegas, a few American friends of one of our hosts brought to my notice how the calf is separated from its mother so her milk can be used for human consumption. One of them said that the dairy industry has become a milking

"A vegan diet is a non-violent diet. It is a diet that promotes a compassionate way of living where all life is considered sacred and precious"

machine. The cruelty imposed on animals is inhumane. She also said that most of us assume that just because cows are not being directly slaughtered for their milk, dairy products are somehow less inhumane. At that time, I did not realise how her words would have an impact on our lives. When we returned to our home in New York, I mentioned the discussion to Chitrabhanuji. He said he had also been thinking about this. One morning a few days later, he asked me for black tea and told me that he had decided not to consume any dairy products henceforth. Later in the day,

when I went grocery shopping, my mind subconsciously kept noting all the non-dairy options of milk available in the store. Upon my asking, the shopkeeper said these options had been around for over five years. I was amazed at the fact that I had never noticed them before. I brought back one carton. That, perhaps, was my moment of transition as I gradually gravitated towards veganism.

It is really commendable how the two of you have found a common vision which has culminated into a powerful mission in life. Are you both Jains by birth?

Yes, we are both Jains. Chitrabhanuji embraced monkhood in 1942. In 1970, he was invited to the Second Spiritual Summit Conference to be held in Geneva, Switzerland. But Jain monks are not permitted to travel overseas. He then renounced monkhood, but continued to spread the message of Ahimsa of Lord Mahavira across the seas.

Thank you for sharing this. How did your interest in religion develop?

I have always been inclined towards the spiritual path. As a child, I spent a lot of time with Jain nuns. My parents were religious, but my way of thinking was more spiritual than religious.

You have spent most of your life in the US....

Yes, we moved to New York in 1971 at the invitation of Harvard Divinity School. In 1973, Chitrabhanuji founded the Jain Meditation International Centre in Manhattan, New York City. We have lived in the US for almost 40 years.



Haresh Patel

What is your typical food at home?

We prefer Indian food—it is simple, nutritious and *sattvik*. We never really subscribed to fried or spicy food. Actually, I left India and went to the US when I was 28. Until then, I did not even know how to cook. At home, we always had a cook and my mother firmly believed I would learn when the need arose.

And yet, you are an accomplished cook today with two cookbooks to your credit.

Anything is possible when you have the right support and attitude. I was an introvert and quite a shy person. But Chitrabhanuji acknowledged my potential and inspired me. Initially, I was reticent but, over time, things change.

If you have to describe your relationship in one word, what would that be?

Kalyanmitra. We are spiritual companions. We are working on the same path without compromising or interfering with each other. The true purpose of any relationship is *sahad-harmachaar*, which means helping each other in rightful conduct. I tell



young couples that all the problems emerge when we live in conflict. If we learn to accept things, conflicts cease.

How well expressed! How did your cooking adventure take wings?

My American students always wondered how we got all the nutrients from vegetarian food. That is how I started conducting cooking classes back in the 1970s. We used to have

monthly retreats at our meditation centre. At that time, around 50 to 60 residents had to be fed. I cooked the food at my place with the help of a few students. There was much appreciation from them, which encouraged me further. We would make a salad and a one-pot dish which included dal and vegetables. My cooking classes became quite popular and, at that time, *The New York Times* gave me two-page coverage.

How would you define the mission of your life?

The purpose of our life is to set free the imprisoned splendour within oneself. The path to this is non-violence and non-accumulation. To release that splendour, one has to work towards it in a secular manner.

Kindly elaborate on what you mean by secular.



TOFU PUDDING (Soy paneer kheer)

This is a delicious and *sattvik kheer* with soy milk from Pramoda Chitrabhanu's cookbook, *Rainbow Food for the Vegan Palate*. A believer in a plant-based diet as a compassionate way of life, she constantly innovates to create recipes that are vegan, wholesome and tasty.

Ingredients

- Soy milk: 4½ cups
- Sugar: ¾ cup
- Water: ¾ cup
- Corn flour: 4-5 tsp
- Firm tofu: ½ cup; grated
- *Kewra* (essence): 2-3 drops
- Pistachios: 7-8; slivered
- Almonds: 8-10; slivered

Method

Boil milk and let it simmer on low heat for 10 minutes. Dissolve corn flour in ¼ cup of water and add it to milk, stirring continuously. Keep stirring for a few minutes until thick. Remove from fire. Mix sugar with ½ cup of water and cook until the sugar melts. Add grated tofu to the sugar and mix. Add this mixture to the milk. When cool, add *kewra* essence. Decorate with slivered nuts. Chill before serving.

When we see life in all living beings, we become aware of the sacredness of life. We then begin to minimise violence of any kind—thought, word or action. Our attitude becomes one of gratitude. Think for yourself, whatever we eat is not just a reward of our own merit, but a consequence of collective blessing. The sacred text states, "*Parasparopagraho Jivanam*" which can be translated as, "All life is bound together by mutual support and interdependence." That is why I speak of veganism, for I truly believe that a vegan diet is a non-violent diet. It is a diet that promotes a compassionate way of living where

all life is considered sacred and precious. I ask people: If you think it is difficult to be vegan, imagine how difficult it is for the animals when you are not vegan!

Your advice to youngsters....

Don't remain silent when you see wrong things around you. I always say: Be a whisper or be a scream, but be a voice for the voiceless being. It is not violence that we should fear as much as silence. The world suffers not because of those who commit violence, but because of those who remain silent.

We are not dogmatic, and sincerely believe religion should not divide but unite hearts. We have always invited spiritual leaders from other religions to our home, which led to having open discussions that were always very enlightening.

In the foreword of your cookbook, you have written, "Non-Violence is not a concept, but a conviction of the consciousness."

*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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Awareness after menopause

Postmenopausal bleeding may not be cause for panic but requires prompt attention, writes **Shivani Arora**

For women in their 50s and 60s, sudden spotting or bleeding after menopause is cause for concern. To ensure there is no major underlying reason for the sudden bleed, seeking a doctor's help at the right time is vital. **Dr Gita Arjun, director, E V Kalyani Medical Foundation** in Chennai, answers our queries on postmenopausal bleeding.

What are the common causes for bleeding after menopause?

Postmenopausal bleeding can be either from the vagina, the cervix (the mouth of the uterus), or from inside the uterus itself. After menopause, the lack of oestrogen causes the vaginal lining to become thin and fragile. Sometimes, this can lead to spontaneous bleeding from the vagina. This can happen some years after menopause. Bleeding from the cervix can be either owing to a malignancy or a benign polyp; the bleeding will stop as soon as the polyp is removed. If malignancy is suspected, a biopsy will be done. Bleeding from inside

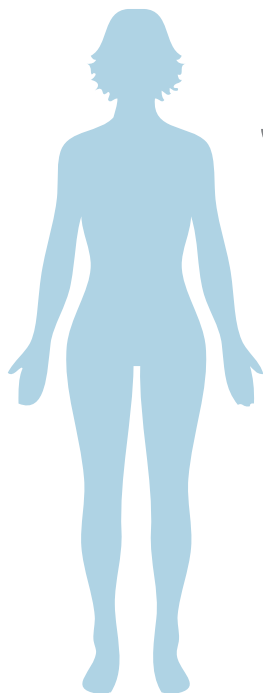
the uterus could commonly be owing to an endometrial polyp, which is a small benign growth on the lining of the uterus, or a small fibroid in the cavity of the uterus. However, cancer needs to be ruled out.

Generally, is bleeding after menopause a cause for concern?

No. Sometimes the bleed could just mean an occurrence of unexpected ovulation, but investigation is needed to ensure there is no other underlying health issue, especially cancer.

POSTMENOPAUSAL BLEEDING

When a woman stops having menstrual periods for a year, she is considered to have attained menopause



50

Most Indian women experience menopause around the age of 50

5-10%

of women can develop bleeding after menopause

12
months

The chances of developing bleeding are highest in the first 12 months after menopause; there are lesser chances as the years go by



Bleeding can be from the vagina, cervix or the uterine lining

90%

of bleeding is owing to non-cancerous (benign) causes

Reducing excess body fat by following a healthy diet and exercise regimen can reduce the risk of producing oestrogen after menopause

The good news is that 90 per cent of postmenopausal bleeding is owing to non-cancerous or benign conditions and only 10 per cent is owing to a malignancy.

What will the doctor do?

The doctor will initially question you on your medications because blood-thinning agents like aspirin could cause bleeding or spotting. Even hormones like oestrogen can cause unusual bleeding. The doctor will then inspect the external genitalia to make sure there is no reason for bleeding, after which the vagina and the cervix are inspected. The doctor will also examine the shape and size of the uterus. If there is no obvious reason for bleeding, you will need an ultrasound, which is the most important test to determine the cause of bleeding.

The ultrasound can help rule out cancer. An internal (vaginal) ultrasound is done to evaluate the thickness of the uterine lining. In postmenopausal women, if the lining of the uterus

is less than 5 mm in thickness, it will rule out cancer in 99 per cent of women. The initial risk of cancer comes down from 10 per cent to 1 per cent if the endometrial lining is thin. If the lining is more than 5 mm, the doctor has to determine if the thickening is benign or malignant. This is done through a minor surgical procedure called hysteroscopy in which a thin, lighted tube called a hysteroscope is inserted into the uterine cavity to look for any abnormalities. If there is a small polyp or fibroid, it will be removed. This will usually take care of the bleeding. However, if there is any suspicious or abnormal growth of tissue, it will be sent for testing to rule out or confirm cancer.

Why does cancer happen in the lining of the uterus?

After menopause, sometimes oestrogen is produced abnormally in the body owing to excess body fat which converts other hormones into oestrogen. The oestrogen keeps acting on the lining of the uterus and

makes it proliferate. This proliferation is called hyperplasia, which can later form atypical cells. Around 10 per cent of atypical hyperplasias can turn into cancer.

Is a hysterectomy always the answer to deal with the problem?

Postmenopausal bleeding by itself is not a reason to undergo a hysterectomy. You need a hysterectomy only when it has been proven by hysteroscopy that there are atypical or malignant cells.

How can we reduce the risk of postmenopausal bleeding?

Polyps and fibroids cannot be prevented or avoided. However, reducing excess body fat by following a healthy diet and exercise regimen can reduce the risk of producing oestrogen after menopause. If you are undergoing menopause or have already attained menopause, make sure you get fit, have a well-balanced diet, and exercise well to ensure a healthy future.



RIGHTING WRONGS

Pune-based investigative journalist and RTI crusader Vinita Deshmukh brings the mighty to their knees, reports **Suchismita Pai**

Vinita Deshmukh's third book is due to be published this month. A fictional novel that explores the life of a journalist is a big change for this activist and journalist, who is used to asking tough questions and making bold statements backed by hard facts.

An investigative journalist for over three decades and one who wielded the Right To Information (RTI) Act to devastating effect, Deshmukh has taken on the might of multinational corporations, left a positive impact on the environment and even questioned the loftiest office in the nation, that of the President of India.

"The primary duty of newspapers is to tell the common man about the scandals of the government, the taxpayer whose money is being played around with. The idea is to get citizens angry and act, to provoke them to vote, to invoke RTI and protest against injustice," says Deshmukh, who is currently consulting editor at *Moneylife* magazine, where she has a weekly column on RTI-based stories. She is also consulting editor of a business magazine called *Corporate Citizen*.

Our crusader confesses that she had always aspired to become a journalist. Born in Belgaum, in Karnataka, she soon moved to Odisha as her father worked as a public health engineer with the government there. She seems to have inherited her passion for writing from her father, who wrote for *Maharashtra Times* while in Odisha. After schooling in Berhampur, Odisha, Vinita moved to Pune, to enrol in journalism school but ended up getting a bachelor's degree in history from Fergusson College. She married young and with a baby soon after, she was determined not to give up on her dream. So she explored the option of writing from home. "I felt that the power of the pen is most formidable and it was very close to my heart. I always thought 'if only I can do my bit, if only I can make a change....' So I always wanted to be a journalist."

In 1987, Deshmukh started writing a weekly 'Market Watch' column for *Women's Herald*, a pullout publication of *Maharashtra Herald*, the English daily of the Sakal group. And when the Express Group launched a newspaper edition in Pune, she began writing a column for them too. Usha Somayaji, former editor of the *Herald*, recalls her three-decade-long association with Deshmukh with great pride and fondness. "Vinita was extremely eager and worked with immense conviction," she says. "She was curious, tenacious and hardworking, all of which are essential qualities for any journalist. She has demonstrated the power of information and the RTI in the arsenal of a journalist."

Deshmukh's tenacity saw her rise up the ranks quickly, evolving from a fledgling writer to taking charge of *Eve's Express*, *Midweek* and then *Citizen*, all erstwhile publications of the Express Group. "I think *Citizen* gave me my identity," she shares. "From exposing drug orgies in Koregaon Park to the environmental degradation of Mahabaleshwar and building violations there, we did a lot of impactful stories."

The Mahabaleshwar campaign went on for four years and was instrumental in getting the twin hill stations of Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani declared as eco-sensitive zones, reveals Deshmukh, who has twice won the prestigious Statesman Award for Rural Reporting.

These were pre-RTI days and the social crusader says the going was rough. "The Mahabaleshwar stories in the mid-1990s were much before the RTI Act came into being," she explains. "It was an arduous task to procure documents directly from government officers. Even as a journalist, you had to build credible contacts and only then would they oblige."

One of Deshmukh's early brushes with the power of the RTI Act came through a prisoner in Pune's Yerawada Jail. Harking back to 2003, in times of the Maharashtra

RTI Act, she says the prisoner was serving a life sentence in the open part of the prison owing to good behaviour. When he was abruptly shifted to the closed prison for spearheading an agitation against the substandard quality of food served to inmates, he filed an RTI application with the jail superintendent, seeking a copy of the Indian Prison Manual Act to know the section under which they had shifted him to the closed jail. His application was rejected. He then wrote to the resident editor of the Pune edition of *The Indian Express* on a plain inland letter, asking about his right as a citizen to get answers, even as a convicted criminal. Entrusted with the story, Deshmukh called up the jail superintendent, which led to a flurry of activity and a fresh RTI application from the prisoner. The inmate was given a copy of the prison manual within 24 hours. "It was an epiphany about the power of the RTI Act and how great a tool it was, especially for a journalist."

After a long stint of incisive journalism with *The Indian Express*, Pune, from 1987 to 2006, Deshmukh felt disheartened by the realisation that 'fashion' had replaced 'passion' in journalism. She wanted more. "I was not interacting with my readers and so I was not enjoying my work," she confesses. "I was depressed and wanted to quit." Thus, she brainstormed with her seniors at the *Express* and soon found herself at the helm of a weekly tabloid that aimed to take up issues directly affecting the citizens of that city. That's how, in January 2007, *Intelligent Pune* hit the stands.

With the newspaper as the platform and the RTI Act as her ally, Deshmukh took on Dow Chemicals, one of the largest manufacturers of chemicals in the US. She took up cudgels in March 2008 and with the help of the RTI, contested Dow Chemicals' claim that its ₹ 400-crore unit in Chakan, Pune, was not only an 'R&D facility' as the company had claimed but a full-fledged manufacturing unit using 20 hazardous chemicals that were polluting nearby rivers. Eventually, Dow Chemicals had to move out of Chakan. The sustained campaign, which ran for 10 months, earned Deshmukh the Chameli Devi Jain award for 'Outstanding Woman Media Person.'

Deshmukh was in the national news again in December 2009 for her book *To The Last Bullet*, which also made international headlines for telling Vinita Kamte's courageous story of taking on the establishment after her police officer husband, Additional Commissioner Ashok Kamte,

was killed in action in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack. The book, which she co-authored with Vinita Kamte, was based on disclosures under Section 6 and Section 4 of the RTI Act, and called up log records between the Mumbai Police Control Room and the officers on Ground Zero. It revealed that Kamte and two other police officers had lost their lives to alleged police negligence. It was Deshmukh's maiden book but it was appreciated for her skilful language and sensitive approach to the subject. Kamte says that, out of the blue, she had received a phone call from Deshmukh, who had asked to see the RTI work done on her late husband's death. "There is so much youthful passion in her voice when she speaks about the RTI and its power," says Kamte. "Unlike others, I did not have to explain anything to her. It was as if she read my mind about the next steps and came up with a book along the same lines as how I wanted to tell Ashok's story."

"Citizens must stand up for their rights. Most people come to me seeking help. Though honest and equipped with lots of helpful information, they seek anonymity. I tell them that they must rise above their fear, which is only a state of mind"

All this while, Deshmukh was still editor of *Intelligent Pune*, which eventually folded up in 2011. In its four illustrious years, the newspaper had exposed many issues pertaining to the city, for which her team of journalists consistently conducted inspection of files in government offices under Section 4 of the RTI Act. Apart from the ouster of Dow Chemicals, a 60-ft-wide road being carved out of the Aundh Botanical Garden was brought to an abrupt halt. Besides, spaces reserved as green zones in Balewadi, which were being illegally used for construction, also opened up.

In 2012, Deshmukh grabbed national headlines again. This time, she used the RTI Act to expose how the then President of India, Pratibha Patil, had grabbed a huge piece of Army land to build her post-retirement mansion. She wrote a series of 13 hard-hitting articles across several weeks, after which Patil returned the 260,000 sq ft of prime defence land on which she was building her home (as a former President, she was eligible only for 2,500 sq ft). This development led to Deshmukh's second RTI case study book, *The Mighty Fall* (2012).

Injustice comes in many shapes and sizes and, despite her high-profile victories, Deshmukh never turns her back on a battle begging to be fought. Through a column she writes in *Moneylife* magazine, she succeeded in getting the Pune Passport Office to streamline its functioning and has also taken on the might of the National Highways Authority of India through the power of the RTI.



Clockwise from left: With the Laadli Media Award for investigative journalism; as a guest speaker on a Marathi TV channel; in discussion with social activist Anna Hazare and fellow RTI activist Vijay Kumbhar

"I believe RTI is the best weapon for journalists as it ensures you have enough evidence to level charges. Citizens must stand up for their rights. Most people come to me seeking help. Though honest and equipped with lots of helpful information, they seek anonymity. I tell them that they must rise above their fear, which is only a state of mind. If they want a better country for future generations, they need to be environmentally, civically and socially conscientious," says Deshmukh, who has won the 2014 Laadli Media Award for investigative journalism as well as the Acharya Atre Award for her book, *The Mighty Fall*.

Prabhakar Karandikar, who retired as divisional commissioner of Pune, recalls his over decade-long professional association with Deshmukh when he was in government service and she was with *The Indian Express*. "She is a person of strong convictions with a never-say-die spirit," he affirms. "She would bring every issue she was following up to its logical end." When Karandikar was with the Industries Department of the Maharashtra government, Deshmukh sought clarifications from him on procedural aspects with regard to the Dow Chemicals row as well as other issues, with information she had secured through RTI and other sources. "I have high regard for her intellectual integrity and fighting spirit, even though we

did not always agree on everything," he adds. "She is a thorough professional and respects boundaries. She would not misquote or embarrass a source and built confidence in that aspect."

At the age of 57, Deshmukh is now a grandmother but the fire in her belly has not dimmed. She has formed an organisation called 'RTI Forum for Instant Information' (RFFII) and, along with other prominent RTI activists in Pune, conducts free workshops for citizens interested in learning about the use of Section 4 of the Act, which allows citizens to inspect files in government offices. Apart from this, she travels the world when invited to speak at conferences and summits, and is also guest faculty at various media institutes, where she lectures on the RTI Act.

Further, Deshmukh is part of the Pune Metro Jagruti Abhiyaan and the Green Pune Movement campaign, which is fighting to save the hills of Pune as the powers that be want to open these up for residential construction. "I have tried to follow my passion and urge everyone else to do the same," she emphasises. "It is our right as well as our duty to use all available resources for a better life for all. Just like a body part stays fit with exercise, good governance comes about through exercising our rights, and information is primary to exercising all other rights." ❀

Fatehpur Sikri

The citadel that an emperor built

Early in the morning, Fatehpur Sikri, 40 km southwest of Agra, is generally cloaked in a sad hush. Slowly, the ghost city and the former capital of Mughal Emperor Akbar comes to life as groups of tourists troop in, chattering like the noisy parrots that flit above in slashes of iridescent green.

The vast complex of flame-red buildings which was once the seat of the Mughal Empire climbs up a ridge that overlooks a vast plain. For 15 years in the 16th century, this is where Emperor Akbar had lived and loved but chose to abandon this beautiful citadel in 1585, some say because of shortage of water. Though the Emperor had everything any mortal could ask for, deep within his heart, he felt a lack, a heavy sadness – he did not have an heir. His wives had borne him many children but they had all died in infancy.



So Emperor Akbar travelled to a sleepy little village to seek divine intervention. He journeyed to see Sufi Saint Salim Chishti to seek his blessings. The saint predicted that the emperor would soon have three sons. Within a few days, one of his queens gave birth to a male child who was named Salim after the saint. (The boy would later grow up to become Emperor Jehangir). Later, two

more were born and the saint's prediction came to pass.

And Akbar said thank you as only an emperor can by building a great mosque that would transform forever the small hamlet of stone cutters and weavers. For it was here, in the embrace of Salim Chishti's grace that Akbar also decided to build the magnificent city of Fatehpur Sikri, which



Nirvana at Kushinagar

The Buddha is dead, he has attained nirvana. Long live his teachings! Kushinagar, in Uttar Pradesh, celebrated the passing away of the sage of enlightenment aeons ago, but his benevolent smile still lingers on in the holy pilgrim town. Yes, a hint of a smile plays on the 6.10 long statue of the Reclining Buddha sculpted out of a monolith block of red sandstone. Today, the image of the dying Buddha has been gilded and enshrined in the Mahaparinirvana Temple.

Visitors circle the idol in a clockwise direction, stopping at its crown and feet to pay homage and offer prayers to the Enlightened One. Scattered in the river of devotees are monks in orange robes, women in colourful saris, visitors from Japan, Thailand and other Asian countries and curious international and domestic tourists. Most are on a pilgrim's trail, which is punctuated with four important must-visit sites that are part of anyone on the Buddha itinerary.

The four sites are Lumbini in neighbouring Nepal where Buddha was born; Bodhgaya in Bihar where he attained enlightenment; Saravasti in Uttar Pradesh where he spent 25 of the 45 monsoons after attaining Buddhahood and Kushinagar where he discarded his earthly body at the age of 80.

would serve as his capital.

During its heyday, the palaces that dotted the new citadel were strewn with silk pillows and carpets. Perfumed water gurgled under the floor of the royal apartments to keep them cool. There were elaborate baths and formal gardens as also statehouses, public and private audience halls, delicate stone screens, and a treasury brimming with gold, silver and precious gems... The buildings were inlaid with marble and semi-precious stones which reflected the dying rays of the setting sun; a phenomenon that convinced the first Englishman to visit the complex that the entire city was up in flames.

Today, Fatehpur Sikri seems stark and austere and much of what Akbar had built is gone. However, what remains of the red sandstone bastion – the five-story Panch Mahal, Akbar's private audience chamber, the palaces of the queens, the treasury and the central courtyard – are still awe-inspiring. They take one back to the time when the Emperor was the only adult male allowed in the complex that housed his 5,000-strong harem.

The architectural synthesis of Hinduism and Islam is evident in carvings and arches and is a reminder of Akbar's tolerance of all religions. At Fatehpur Sikri,

Akbar was the focus, his imperial duties and personal enthusiasm dictated every aspect of the city's varied life. His energy was boundless (he slept for only three hours a day). Although illiterate, the emperor maintained a library stocked with around 24,000 manuscripts and had scholars read aloud to him. As a patron of the arts, he surrounded himself with all the available talent in the land and while most conquerors looted the treasures of the vanquished, Akbar stole the best minds and artists from his foes. Tansen, the fabled musician whose voice could squeeze tears from animals and rain from the sky, was brought to Akbar's court as a part of the settlement with the defeated Maharaja of Rewa. Yes, it was not hard to imagine the bard regaling the emperor with raga as they sat on a platform suspended over a pool of water in the central courtyard.

Yet for all his progressive views, Akbar was a prisoner of his times and his indulgences may seem barbaric by today's moral yardstick. He devised cruel ways to punish criminals: condemned men would be sown up in maggot-infested carcasses of donkeys. Yes, his justice was swift and effective.

Tourists browse the Emperor's legacy – the finely carved Hall of Private Audience, the palace of his favourite queen (Jodha-

factfile

- The nearest airport to Fatehpur Sikri is at Agra (40 km). It is also within striking distance from Delhi and Jaipur and a convenient journey for silvers.
- Amongst the few hotels in Fatehpur Sikri, the better known ones are UP Tourism's Gulistan Tourist Complex, Ajay Palace and Hotel Goverdhan, etc.

bai), the Pachisi Board on which Akbar used to play chess with slave girls, the Jami Masjid with its vast courtyard ... Within the courtyard are architectural marvels – the tombs of Salim Chisti and the emperor's advisor Islam Khan. At dusk, the dying sun kisses the fairy-tale contours of the Mughal capital as though in obeisance of its prodigal beauty. Fatehpur Sikri, ultimately, is the result of an emperor's king-sized passions and love for life itself.

–Gustasp & Jeroo Irani

factfile

- Kushinagar airport, which is serviced by small aircraft of most domestic airlines, is located 7 km away from the pilgrim town.
- Gorakpur, an important junction on the Indian Railway network, is the closest station (52 km).
- In addition to the UP Tourism-run Rahi Pathik Niwas, the town has a few private hotels and B&B options. While many of the international centres have accommodation for pilgrims from their country, a few like the Japanese Sri Lankan Buddhist Centre and the Tibetan Temple also welcome tourists in their dormitory-style rooms.
- There are two government-run hospitals, including an Ayurvedic one, and a number of private hospitals and clinics in town.

As pilgrims pour out of the Mahaparinirvana Temple and look back at the facade of the shrine they might well imagine that its sleek modern lines are almost alien in a town where time seems to stand still. And time did stand still in this ancient historic town for centuries. Once believed to be the capital of the Kosala kingdom and an important town in the dynasties that followed, it slipped into oblivion around the 12th century AD and much of it is buried under piles of rubble.

Kushinagar experienced a reincarnation of sorts when the main stupa and the statue of the Reclining Buddha were unearthed during an archaeological excavation undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1876. The excavation subsequently found other treasures dating back to the Buddha and his date with nirvana. These included the Ramabhar Stupa, also known as the Mukutbandhan Chaitya, which was built over the site where the mortal remains of the Buddha were cremated. The stupa is located 1.5 km from the main Mahaparinirvana Temple.

A large 10th century statue of the Buddha was also excavated and is now enshrined in the Matha Kuar Shrine – carved out of a single rock depicting the Enlightened One reaching down to touch the earth. In addition to the main pilgrim sites, the town has an international look and feel and this is because a number of nations have established a presence in this little town that seems to be adrift in the backwaters of time. A Japanese garden, a meditation park, lawns around monuments, temples and shrines... there is a sense of peace and calm that envelopes Kushinagar; almost as though the Buddha himself has blessed the town with his healing touch.

–Gustasp & Jeroo Irani



For more information visit
Uttar Pradesh Tourism at
<http://uptourism.gov.in>

Soul sister

Women's rights activist Renana Jhabvala discusses the status of women in the informal sector and more, in conversation with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**

There has been a sea change in the outlook of women in India in recent years, and women are finally beginning to follow their dreams. While that's reason enough to celebrate, this evolving mindset is yet to take root in the informal sector, says Renana Jhabvala, 63, who has spent four decades campaigning for women's rights and dignity in the unorganised sector in India.

As much as she is allergic to descriptors, there is no escaping the fact that Jhabvala has been a game-changer, who believes "equality for women is the responsibility of both men and women". Most recognised for her work with SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), Jhabvala began her journey with the Ahmedabad-based women's organisation and went on to become a role model for social workers across India.

The daughter of Booker-prize winning novelist and Oscar-winning screenwriter Ruth Praver Jhabvala and architect Cyrus Jhabvala, she inherited her calling in life from her grandfather, Shavaksha Hormasji Jhabvala, one of the founders of the Indian Trade Union movement, and her grandmother, Mehraben Jhabvala, an advocate for women. Interestingly, the decision to work for women in the unorganised sector was an unplanned one, taken by a youthful 25 year-old PhD student from the US, on holiday in India in 1977. Oblivious to the life-changing experience that awaited her, it was Jhabvala's inherent sensibilities of wanting "to do some good in the world" that made her spontaneously respond to India's "inequalities". She chose not to return to the US and, instead, joined SEWA that year.

"One of my first actions at SEWA was to form a cooperative of women stitchers. This brought them directly into the market

and raised their income, freeing them from the exploitation of middlemen," recalls Jhabvala, who had graduated in mathematics from Hindu College in 1972 before she pursued an additional degree in mathematics at Harvard University and enrolled for postgraduate studies in economics at Yale University. Over the years, her role at SEWA elevated the lives of countless *beedi* workers, agricultural workers, garment workers, street vendors, domestic workers as well as casual labourers as she grew and promoted the organisation across India. "When I joined [SEWA], it was still part of a large trade union—the Textile Labour Association—and we undertook many trade union actions on behalf of our members."

Jhabvala was one of the key drivers of SEWA Bharat, a national federation of SEWAs across nine states in India. She became the organisation's national coordinator and opened the national office in Delhi. Among her other path-breaking initiatives were founding the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust and pushing for microfinance for poor women through SEWA Bank. In 2007, working with women home-based workers, Jhabvala was instrumental in forming HomeNet South Asia, bringing together organisations in India, Pakistan,

Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan and is its incumbent chairperson. She is also one of the founders and incumbent chairperson of WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising).

The depth and breadth of Jhabvala's experience has seen her on many government committees and task forces that have formulated policies for unorganised workers. And apart from being published in journals and newspapers, she has co-authored seven books, the latest being *Basic Income: A Transformative Policy for India* (2014). In recognition of her pioneering ideas and commitment to women's



Suparna-Saraswati Puri

empowerment, Jhabvala has been honoured with several awards, including the Padma Shri in 1990. In her signature style, she remarks, "It is helpful because it makes people pay more attention to what one says." Acknowledging her contribution to a better understanding of women in the informal sector among policy makers, the unassuming and distinguished Jhabvala—on a recent visit to Chandigarh for a literary meet—talks about all that matters to her.

Career in social work: "I am not sure that social work should be a professional qualification. I wanted to do something for justice and felt that I should use my education for something useful. I felt very strongly that women were treated as possessions and as sexual victims. I wanted to fight for equal rights for women."

Journey with SEWA: "Titles and designations do not mean much, so please do not go by a title. The question is, 'What have you contributed?'

I have contributed to building many of the organisations of poor women from SEWA, as a trade union with 2 million members, to SEWA Microfinance, to SEWA all over India. I have also contributed to getting better statistics on poor women, hence making them visible in India and worldwide.

At present, a new big idea for women's welfare is that of basic income, which means unconditional regular cash transfers. I am keen to experiment and take this forward and have already done a book on it. Another new venture I have just started is the SEWA housing finance company called Grih Rin, which aims to provide loans for houses for poor women that will help create assets in their [women's] names."

Women in India: "There has been a lot of change in the position of women in India. However, we still lag behind many countries in Europe, the US, Latin America and East Asia. In India, women are still not seen as equals. For women, the main thing is not to be fearful. Women are made fearful all their lives. They have to get past their fear and lack of confidence in themselves. Women are often made to feel ashamed of their bodies. They must get past the shame and realise that those who make them feel so are the ones who are at fault. I believe that although there is a gradual acceptance of the fact that men can also take care of housework and women's education is taken for granted (with women in the informal sector also gaining education), sadly, it is women's careers that are needed for personal development. This continues to be overshadowed by societal influences and compulsions. Things may be changing for most middle-class Indian women but

in the segment with which I engage, the idea for self-development [usually enhanced and necessitated through a profession or career choice] is still a dream."

Changing times: "When I was a college student, for most of us, marriage was the next step after primary education. But in recent years, one has seen a generational change, pushing girls to follow their own aspirations. This has also happened because today's young women have a better understanding of their parents' choices vis-à-vis pursuing a career. Hence, they feel the need to choose a vocation rather than simply getting married after completing their education. However, this generational change has yet to take root with women in the informal sector. Coming together physically or on social media gives women strength. Portrayals of strong, independent women in the media are important too."

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: "Our mother taught us to love books and read a lot. She was also disciplined in her work and a loving parent."

Ageing: "Yes, of course, energy levels decrease. However, one's familial responsibilities become much less considering that one's children have grown, ageing parents have passed on and so, I am able to devote much more time and energy to my work."

Relaxation: "I meditate every day and I like walking but it is reading that truly relaxes me. I read a lot and am a fast reader. While unwell recently, I finished three books in three days. I enjoy crime fiction but it is not the literary aspect of a book that engages me; it should be readable. Of late, I read Robert Galbraith aka J K Rowling's crime series, Nandan Nilekani's *Rebooting India: Realising a Billion Aspirations* and Eric Hobsbawm's *Uncommon People*."

Family: "My husband, Harish Khare, is a journalist and, at present, editor-in-chief of *The Tribune*. Our son, Uday Jhabvala Khare, a lawyer, was working with the International Finance Corporation and is now with a law firm. I have two sisters, Ava Wood, an architect in the UK, and Firoza Jhabvala, a teacher in the US.

Disappointments: "I did not complete my PhD but it is not the designation of being addressed as 'Dr' that matters; it is the rigour of learning that I regret having missed had I pursued the degree. But then, again, had I not visited India in 1977 and stepped into SEWA, I wonder which one would have been a bigger regret!" ❀



Walking down
memory lane holds
little interest for
Anjolie Ela Menon.
Busy and engaged with
her art, the 76 year-old
continues to see each
day as a possibility for
self-expression, each
tomorrow as a new
adventure, discovers
Arati Rajan Menon

flying!”

:: cover feature ::

“I’m still

Art is not linear; you go back and forth in time, you revisit things you’ve done a long time ago, you break new ground. You have to punctuate your journey with digressions.” It’s indeed been a remarkable journey for one of India’s finest and most successful contemporary artists, who has never shied away from pushing the envelope with her pioneering foray into computer-assisted art or her experiments with kitsch and painted objects. But Anjolie Ela Menon doesn’t indulge in flights of nostalgia—while others follow her trodden path, she moves on. On the heels of an installation for the Mumbai International Airport and acclaimed solo shows in Delhi and Mumbai last year, she’s just back from the Uttarayan Art Centre near Vadodara, where she enjoyed her first experience of creating sculpture. She’s going back soon. “I’m making a maze in Baroda,” she says, her expressive eyes afire. “The walls will, perhaps, have some graffiti; the dead ends will have pieces of art. I’m going to look for some young graffiti artists for the project.”

We are in the study in the jewel of a home she shares with her husband Raja, a strategic analyst who retired from the Indian Navy as an admiral, and her elder son, architect Rajaraja and his family. The books and maritime memorabilia around us are a distinct contrast to the whimsy and magic of the rest of the art-studded rooms, where Ninja the cat and Chloe the dog brush past each other with nonchalance. Elegant and stately in her trademark *bindi* and vibrant checked sari, she is quick to dispel any ‘lady of the manor’ stereotypes that may spring to mind—it is in her studio in nearby Nizamuddin *basti*, she assures you, that she is truly in her element. “Going to the studio every day is like *riyaaz*,” says the 76 year-old Padma Shri. “Nothing interrupts that.” She has tried, though. “After my last exhibition, I told myself I would be like a lady for

a month—do lunch, go shop, catch a dinner and a movie...but after five days, I was so bored that I ran back to my filthy clothes and my studio!”

Excerpts from an interview

Last year, you held a solo exhibition in Mumbai featuring recent works after a gap of nine years; for Delhi, it was a gap of five. Have there been any creative changes or transitions in your work?

After a hiatus of a few years owing to an illness in the family that occupied me totally, and the execution of some large works for public spaces, 2015 saw a re-emergence of my oil on masonite paintings. So much so that I had two major exhibitions in one year: one in Delhi at Vadehra Art Gallery and one in Mumbai at Art Musings.

The *Divine Mother* series has captured the nuances and magic of motherhood. In fact, women and *shakti* are recurrent themes in your work. How do you see the status of Indian women today? Isn't it ironic that on the one hand, women are breaking new ground, while on the other, they are still victims of sexism, regression and violence?

I have always engaged with the subject of parent and child and this led to the *Divine Mother* series—for all the Gods that are idolised there are the mothers who share in their divinity. I think it is wonderful material for an artist. I've done *Parvati and Ganesh*; *Yashoda-Krishna*, *Jesus-Mary*, etc. The place of the Divine Mother has always

been important throughout history and it's doubly important in the context of what's happening today in India. There's a dichotomy in the baffling events that have taken place in the recent past. On one hand we are the country that worships the Devi the most, whether it is Saraswati, Durga or Mary; yet look at the way women are being treated today. So there doesn't seem to be a coherent connection

between belief and practice; women are definitely treated as lesser beings. If the women of our myths find their rightful place, we further the interests of all women. But these paintings also show a connection to the past that have led to the present situation. For instance, in *Parvati and Ganesh*, Parvati has just experienced a terrible event—Shiva cutting the head of her baby. But her expression remains one of acceptance. This acceptance has dominated our discourse on gender for more than a thousand years. However we see that now; finally, we have begun to rebel against that.

Though you have said you are not particularly religious, you visit subjects of sacrifice and pilgrimage time and again. Why?

I have always been fascinated by the aesthetics and magnificence of religious art, whether it is early Christian art, the power of Islamic art, Buddhist art that pervaded the world for centuries and the monuments, sculpture and frescoes of Hindu traditions. I wept when the Bamiyan Buddhas were destroyed and that had nothing to do with my being religious! The collective devotion of millions is moving, as at the Kumbh Mela where crores of people worship in harmony.

You've mentioned your desire to transition from private paintings to public art. How has the experience proven? Tell us about some of your projects and the experience of executing them, such as your recent work for the Mumbai airport. Going forward, what are the larger benefits of a greater prevalence of public art?

So much of my work has virtually disappeared into private collections, never to be seen again, that I now aspire to do much more in the public domain if given the opportunity. It is the airports, hotels, corporations and train stations that are the purveyors of art today. Fifteen years ago, I did a mural in the Esplanade metro station in Kolkata; I've done murals in the LIC building, in hotels, at the T3 terminal in Delhi airport.... In fact, I've done a little installation at our own roundabout in Nizamuddin; I didn't charge any money for it. I'm sure many of us artists would be happy to do projects like this. We have a long way to go in spreading awareness of art but art in a public space engages thousands more people, educating them by osmosis. Public art needs much more patronage.

For the Mumbai airport, I collaborated with a wonderful Australian photographer, Robyn Beeche. We did huge panels where the photographs look like

“There doesn't seem to be a coherent connection between belief and practice; women are definitely treated as lesser beings. If the women of our myths find their rightful place, we further the interests of all women”



Photographs courtesy: Anjolie Ela Menon

Menon with her installation at T3 terminal, Delhi airport; (inset) working on a mural at the Chennai Hyatt

paintings and the paintings look like photographs. We worked together for two years and finished the project. Sadly, soon after, we lost her to cancer. When we hung up the work, she wasn't there to share it with me.

You've said that you're not a 'didactic artist' and don't do message art. Having said that, don't you believe that any form of creativity has an inherent message? And further, do you believe artists can and should use their medium to shed light on many issues of concern?

No, not necessarily. In the making of didactic art, we must first ask who the message is aimed at and whether they are likely to be art viewers. The correct vehicle for conveying important messages is clearly TV and the electronic media, not art.

You were awarded by the Delhi Government a couple of years ago. Does the city still inspire you? In fact, in an interview with us in 2007, you stated, "Idyllic places like mountains paralyse me. I need the urban stimulus to work." Are urban spaces still your muse?

Cities always inspire me. The city street continues to be full of source material. Of course, Delhi has evolved from a glorified village to being a real city. However, I have to admit it is Mumbai where art finds its moment. Modern Indian art is truly rooted there. Here we are but latter day 'art immigrants'. I was very lucky to be a part of the Delhi that was. I went to university at Miranda House. In those days, we used to ride horses down Akbar Road and ride bicycles all over town. I was very lucky to grow up in Lutyen's Delhi

at 5 Motilal Nehru Marg with seven acres of garden around us. I feel we took that for granted at the time; we didn't realise how privileged we were. But I've always been more of an urban creature. I also like to get away to Bangalore [where younger son Aditya, a software engineer, lives]. I need very much to be in the South; you know how Delhi can really get to you at times!

In 2007, you had also shared that your grandchildren Indeera and Madhavi [Rajaraja's daughters] were starting to develop as artists. That was on the heels of your 'family show' *Menon-ji-tis*. Please tell us more about them today, and your other grandchildren and family.

Yes, Madhavi is now at NID - Ahmedabad studying design; Indeera



Menon with husband Raja; with young artists at her studio

is still making very cartoon-like miniatures; Avanti [Aditya's daughter] is appearing for A levels with art as a major subject; and Rajaraja is continuing to 'create iconic buildings.' Everyone in our house is drawing or painting all the time! Meanwhile, my grandson Vir [Aditya's son] is a tabla player and an award-winning sailor!

We believe the faces of your own grandchildren and those of the dwellers of Nizamuddin *basti*, where you paint, find their way unbidden into your work....

I think it's all very interactive. Yes, there are the faces that recur again and again in my paintings, those of my family and all my *basti* 'grandchildren' and close friends. However, I am distressed at what's happening in the *basti*—so many of the young children I've seen grow up have grown up into young alcoholic men. We lost one of them recently.

Looking back, what, according to you, are the highlights or significant phases of your extensive career?

That's an impossible question; so many events, landmarks, stumbling blocks, triumphs and disappointments, but I am still too busy to visit the past. I'm still flying; when I stop, I'll land on my feet and perhaps I'll have time to look back on the past. The rocking chair will probably come but it would be lovely to die with one's boots on!

Do you work much with younger artists?

I like to meet younger artists. I'm part of a *guru shishya parampara* for SPIC MACAY [a voluntary youth organisation that promotes cultural heritage]. Once a year, students come to my studio and work with me for a month. It is quite rewarding. I also like to go to art camps sometimes and meet the younger lot of artists to see what they're thinking, how they're doing. The perception is that many of them are not as interested in technique as in ideology, in making a statement.

How has the Indian art scenario evolved over the years, both in terms of the market and the multiplicity of creative expression?

When I was a young painter, there were about 200 of us in India. Today, there are lakhs and lakhs. It's a vibrant but often treacherous art scene for those who venture into this arena now. There are hundreds of dealers, galleries, genres, styles, ideologies and everyone seeking a place in the sun.

Today, do you feel creativity has taken a backseat to commercialisation?

It depends on the individual. Some people have gone into art thinking it's a fast way to make money. I fear they will be in for a bit of a disappointment. You can only be an artist if you are driven to paint in spite of all odds. I have been in circumstances where it has been almost impossible to paint but I had to paint every day. It is as important to me as eating or sleeping. I've lived in places like Vladivostok at a time when there were no paints available; I've even had an exhibition there in 1968. That's how motivated you have to be because art's not a career, it's a vocation. The very premise of art as a career is wrong.

Please share a typical day in your life. And a weekend!

I go to the studio in the mornings till 2.30 pm. I work on several paintings at a time because each layer takes time to dry. I use these very thin pigments and each layer has to dry before I can go on to the next. But I do go to the studio every day. One's life is so full of events, children, grandchildren, and friends; but when I go to the studio, that's my

time, it's absolutely my time. In the evenings, I stay at home to think about the next phase and to make maquettes and sketches for my future work. After lunch, I spend time with the grandchildren till 5 pm and then meet people who want conversations or interviews. Shop in a street market for produce and cook something nice for supper. Read in bed after supper or watch cricket if India is playing or a cooking show sometimes. Sleep late after making written lists for the next day. Weekends are always spent at our small place in Ghata village. I dress down, do some outdoor cooking, read the Sunday papers and do the crossword, come back home to eat momos for supper and sort out all the farm produce we bring back.

You've said that if you weren't a painter, you would be a chef. Tell us a little more about your passion for cooking.

I really love cooking and inventing different combinations. I often plan a sit-down dinner with several courses chosen from different parts of India and the world. I was thrilled to win a cooking contest recently! I'm sharing my recipe for a cold cucumber soup with you [see box].

What's your next destination?

Who knows? Perhaps New York is on the cards at the end of the year. But I really don't know. It's always a big question!

Has age affected your pace of work? Is it easier to find inspiration and stay motivated or harder?

Physically, it may be a bit harder but at 76, I am still climbing ladders and working on 20-ft-high



Cold cucumber soup (serves 4)

Pressure-cook the following ingredients:

- 1 *katori* (cup) *dhuli masoor dal*
- 1 onion; chopped and fried till golden brown
- 2 cups water
- Half a cucumber
- 2 vegetable soup cubes (Maggi)
- Salt

Blend it with 1½ cups of milk; grate the other half of the cucumber into the soup and chill. Garnish with coriander. Serve on ice cubes.

scaffoldings. I am probably a bit wobbly but last year I worked 10 hours a day to finish two exhibitions and a large body of work for the new Mumbai airport, between swallowing pills and taking four injections of insulin daily! It's all in the mind.

Today, many elders are revisiting their passion for painting—something they couldn't pursue in their younger days. What is your message for them?

What a great idea! But it's always hard to start. I advise novices to begin by painting an object—it could be a chair or an old cupboard or a tin trunk. That will get them started before they move to paper or canvas. A wonderful therapy for mind and spirit! 🌸





Wading through the rugged terrain
of the Western Ghats



Coffee County

With luscious plantations and breathtaking views, Sakleshpur lingers on like the aftertaste of coffee, brewed lovingly

❖ 📷 **Susheela Nair**

We are on our way to Sakleshpur—a hill station known for its coffee plantations—a smooth six-hour drive from Bengaluru. The last stretch is a dirt track, with the tarmac ending and natural terrain taking over. The bumpy estate road winds and turns as our vehicle slowly manoeuvres its way lower and lower into the valley.

Our destination is Tusk and Dawn, a resort nestled deep in the Shola forest range. After a quick check-in, we are ushered into our cottage. I have a stunning view of the lush, dense jungle in the backyard from the huge window in my room. The bathroom has a cute fern garden. I am amused to see a tiny board announcing, 'The bugs that accompany you through your stay are friendly.'



Clockwise from top left: Manjunatha temple at Dharmasthala, a pilgrim centre near Sakleshpur; the temple town of Kukke Subrahmanya; polished coffee stumps for sale on the National Highway; local women working on coffee stumps
Opposite page: The legendary Sakaleswara temple

The architecture reflects the green philosophy of the place. The *gol ghar*—open-on-all-sides gazebo—doubles up as dining hall and multipurpose common area. The nip in the air whips up my appetite, as I relish the warmth and flavour of home-cooked delicious Malnad-style lunch comprising *akki roti* (rice pancake), honey, spicy curries, steaming hot rice and *midigai* (tender mango) pickle. After a short siesta, I climb up a *machan* (platform on a tree) on an adjacent hill. Twittering winged beauties keep me company while I take in the stunning view of the rolling hills juxtaposed with thick green Shola forest cover.

As evening sets in, I gear up for adventure and set off along with others on an off-road driving experience to the neighbouring hills. The drive, up a steep rugged terrain, is gruelling. This ride definitely is not for the faint-hearted! We scream and cling on to the ropes provided and sides of the vehicle, ducking thorny jungle bushes to ward off being tossed off by swerves and jerks. I can hear the tyres

grinding the dry mud and heave a sigh of relief as the drive finally ends! We stop at a high vantage point to take in the view of the undulating hills, wild flowering trees and magnificent valleys clothed in luscious coffee and tea plantations.

While returning, we follow the gurgle of a stream that forms limpid pools and milky-white cascades here and there. A descending pathway, lined by towering trees entwined with creepers, leads us to the icy cold water of a nearby waterfall. The mineral-rich water sparkles as it tumbles down, working wonders on our jaded nerves.

Later, we sit by the crackling fire, listening attentively to Vikram, an excellent raconteur, wildlife enthusiast, coffee planter and eco-conservationist all rolled into one, narrating tales of his jaunts into the Bisle forest, an extremely picturesque destination within driving distance from the resort. Sakleshpur lies bang in the midst of the Western



Sakleshpur lies bang in the midst of the Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot and a place of immense scenic beauty. A descending pathway leads us to the icy cold water of a nearby waterfall. The mineral-rich water sparkles as it tumbles down, working wonders on our jaded nerves

Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot and a place of immense scenic beauty. Having lived all his life in the region, Vikram knows every yard of the forest and every aspect of these ranges, from trekking and rare flora and fauna to wildlife photography and bird watching.

Next morning, we head to EKA resort, an enticing getaway tucked in a verdant coffee plantation in Sakleshpur. Rows of coffee bushes drenched in sparkling white blossoms and studded with red berries greet us, while their exquisite fragrance envelopes the air. It is a heady experience walking through the coffee plantations at blossom time. A guide takes me around explaining the coffee bean's journey from the plant to the cup. "The picking of coffee berries starts in December and goes on till the end of February. Then, the berries are cleaned; the pulp also needs cleaning and soaking to maintain quality. This takes two to three months." Later, sitting in the balcony, I watch some workers spreading coffee beans to dry in the courtyard.

While EKA is an ideal destination to wallow in languor, it also provides an excellent base from which to explore the delights of the Western Ghats. There are innumerable trekking and birdwatching opportunities for the adventure enthusiast. The diverse habitat of Bisle reserve forest, one of the country's most magnificent rainforests, is home to an amazing selection of fauna such as the endangered lion-tailed macaque and slender loris. At Bisle Betta, with the green mountain ranges touching the sky, we clamber up an observation tower at the highest point to feast on the serene beauty of the region. Watching the snow-white clouds kiss Kumara Parvatha is a delightful experience.

No trip to Sakleshpur is complete without a visit to the Sakaleswara temple—a marvel of Hoysala architecture—at the entrance of town. The Hoysala dynasty ruled this region from 11th to 14th century AD. Legends claim that the Hoysalas found a broken Shiva *lingam* and promptly named the town Sakleshwar (which later came to be known as Sakleshpur). There is, however, another school



The 18th century Manjarabad Fort

factfile

LOCATION

Sakleshpur town is in Hassan district and lies between Coorg and Chikmagalur at an elevation of 3,100 ft.

WHEN TO GO

September to March is usually considered the best time to visit. If you want to see coffee blossoms, January–March is ideal.

GETTING THERE

By road: It is 240 km from Bengaluru and 150 km from Mangalore. One can use the Bengaluru–Mangalore highway (NH 48).

By air: The nearest airport is at Mangalore.

ACCOMMODATION

EKA Resort

Tel: (0) 9480891918

Tusk and Dawn

Tel: (0) 98455 03354

WHAT TO SHOP

Besides coffee and spices, one can pick up decorative coffee stump furniture on the National Highway.

GETAWAYS

Dharmasthala: For a divine experience, head to Dharmasthala, 70 km from Sakleshpur, the most visited pilgrim centre in Karnataka. It is famed for the Manjunatha temple, an incarnation of Shiva and a multitude of Jain *basadi*. A 39-ft statue of Lord Bahubali carved out of a single stone is just a hop, skip, and jump away. Other interesting attractions in close proximity are Manjusha Art Museum, a veritable treasure trove of ancient manuscripts and artefacts, and the Car Museum with an amazing collection of vintage cars.

Kukke Subrahmanya:

Nestling at the base of the Western Ghats, on the banks of the river Kumaradhara, is the temple town of Kukke Subrahmanya, 39 km from Sakleshpur. Special *naga* puja is undertaken here. Close by is the Adi Subrahmanya temple with an enormous anthill.

of thought that claims that the town was so named because it was *sakala-aishwarya-pura*, meaning it was blessed with all kinds of wealth.

Taking a detour, we reach the last stop in our itinerary—the star-shaped Manjarabad Fort—located in off the busy Bengaluru–Mangalore road. As we enter, an eerie silence greets us. This unique architectural site resonates with history and is believed to have been built during the reign of Tipu Sultan in 1792, to ward off enemies who could infiltrate from Madikeri and Mangalore. The fort is nestled 3,240 ft above sea level and a climb to its ramparts offers a scenic view of the ghats.

I am intrigued by the unusual architecture—eight angular limbs stretching in eight directions. Ambling in the premises, I find a plus-shaped well at the exact geometric centre of the fort. Besides it are two other wells, meant for preparing and storing gunpowder. Along the inner flanks of the fort are many rooms that would have served as stables, guard quarters, food stores and so on in the past.

Indeed, with its quiet plantations, good coffee, great views and pleasurable diversions such as this one, Sakleshpur lingers on like the aftertaste of coffee, brewed lovingly. ☘



Illustration by Hareesh Patel

music

Melodic mode

Doing away with age-old radio transmitters, All India Radio (AIR) recently launched its first 24-hour Internet radio channel Raagam, dedicated to Indian classical music. "Raagam offers a veritable feast of music featuring an array of recordings of eminent artists collected and scheduled from the rich repository of AIR besides programmes contributed by various stations across its

network," says F Sheheryar, director-general of AIR. From the lilting sounds of Begum Akhtar and M S Subbulakshmi to rare recordings with Pandit Omkarnath Thakur and Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Raagam has indeed opened up a treasure trove for music aficionados. Log onto allindiaradio.gov.in or download the All India Radio Mobile App (for Windows, Android and iPhone users).

Soulful strings

Pure strains of Carnatic music filled the air as veteran veena exponent Bagyalakshmi Chandrasekharan displayed her dexterity while playing intricate *gamaka* and delightful *swara* patterns on the string instrument. She recently performed at the three-day Ekavyakti Manodharma concert series at Shimoga in Karnataka, where individual musicians were given the opportunity to display their virtuosity innovatively. Chandrasekharan was the only instrumentalist to perform, that too without the support of musical accompaniments.



Courtesy: Bagyalakshmi Chandrasekharan

"It was a beautiful experience. I did not feel the absence of the mridangam or ghatam, the conventional

accompanying instruments of veena," she shares. "I enjoyed playing the instrument at my own pace."

music

instrumental

Science of sound

Animal rights and environmental activists will love this. Breaking away from the traditional method of making a mridangam using cow, goat or buffalo skin, jackfruit wood and other natural materials, a synthetic mridangam called the SRI (Synthetic Rhythmic-Indian) mridangam was invented recently by Bengaluru-based scientist-musician Dr K Varadarangan, 58.

Weighing a mere 5 kg, about half the weight of the standard percussion

instrument, the body of the mridangam is made of a durable fibreglass shell onto which a three-membrane polyester film is clamped. The *karane* (inner black circle) is chemically bonded to the drumhead membrane so it does not fall off or wither away.

A performer himself, Dr Varadarangan combines his extensive knowledge of Carnatic music with the science of sound. "I have always had a dual interest in physics and music; when I was doing my PhD in mi-

crowave antenna technology at IIT-Chennai I started dabbling with *swara*, pitch and frequency," shares Dr Varadarangan, who has spent his entire academic career studying the relationship between music and mathematics.

About six years ago, he learned that young cows were killed specifically to make the mridangam heads. "The hypocrisy of presenting divine music while contributing to the killing of innocent animals struck a chord with me and I was overcome by guilt. So I decided to do something about it," he confesses.

With the intent to create a purely synthetic mridangam that could accurately produce the Carnatic tonal rhythm, Dr Varadarangan started experimenting. "Several materials I tried initially met with failure; there were a multitude of problems concerning tone, consistency and pitch variation with temperature. I arrived at the perfect combination of materials after many sleepless nights," he declares. "I was able to get a good sound with the synthetic skins in about one-and-a-half years, but it involved extensive tests and multiple iterations to create a manufacturable product."

As a Grade-A artist of All India Radio, Chandrasekharan is well-known for the traditional *gayaka-vainika* style where, very often, the veena sounds like a human voice. Her musical journey began at the age of six under the tutelage of Mudikondan Narayanaswami Iyer who taught her vocal music. But frequent bouts of tonsillitis forced her to give up singing at the age of nine and she was introduced to the veena by her guru. Since then, the veena has become an intrinsic part of her life, giving expression to her music. "Playing the veena brings me peace of mind and tranquillity," she expresses.

A sought-after guru for advanced-level students, she believes the major challenge faced by the teachers of classical music today is the lack

of interest and perseverance in the younger generation. "Students want only 'quickies'—they have no patience for the eight to 10 years of rigorous practice required to gain real knowledge in music," she rues. "As a result, there is a paucity of good percussionists and such accompanying artists."

As a purist, she regrets the fact that the essence of classical music is being diluted by "so-called" fusion music. "Fusion spells confusion," she says with a small smile. "I am not against innovation or experimenting, provided it happens within the perimeters of traditional classical music."

Among her many achievements, Chandrasekharan is proud of the

step-by-step music lessons DVD that she recorded, with an emphasis on the *alankara*; she has donated the proceeds to Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai. "I would like to follow it up with lessons on *geetham* and *varnam* but this project requires a generous sponsor."

Among her dream projects is presenting a concert with advanced students, featuring *varnam* with different *kaalam* and *kalpana swara*. "In front of a discerning audience, I would also love to play—instead of the usual bouquet of eight to 10 items every *kutcheri* or concert offers—just one or two main ragas where I can delve into their depths, explore their nuances and unfurl the beauty of the rich resonance the veena offers."

—Asha Nambisan

innovations



Vinay Narayanaswamy

From successfully producing the harmonic overtones first identified by Sir C V Raman, in this case without the use of wood and animal skin, to the chemical bonding between the rubber material and polyester film without the use of adhesive, it took around six years to finally launch the SRI mridangam. Since then, Dr Varadarangan has been busy conducting field trials.

"The sounds of the SRI mridangam are very similar to the traditional instrument, although there are minor tonal differences that a trained ear can make out. The challenge is to address the genuine concerns of artists by continuously innovating," says Varadarangan, who has already tested his invention with reputed musicians of the country.

—Natasha Rego

The SRI mridangam comes in two variants: the C pitch and the G pitch. Priced at around ₹ 8,000, you can order yours by emailing Dr Varadarangan at kvrangan@karunyamusicals.com

Family DRAMA

Last month, actor Paresh Rawal-starrer *Dear Father*—a Hindi play directed by Dinkar Jani, written by Dr Vivek Bede and translated by Uttam Gada from the Marathi original play, *Katkon Trikon*—had the audience in splits when it was staged at Shilpakala Vedika, Hyderabad. The story revolves around Manubhai Mankad (Rawal), a widower in his 60s, who lives with his lawyer son Ajay (Chetan Dhanani) and daughter-in-law Alka (Mrinmayee Godbole), a math professor. When Manubhai falls off the balcony, the police tries to determine whether it is an attempted murder, suicide or just an accident. Inter-

theatre

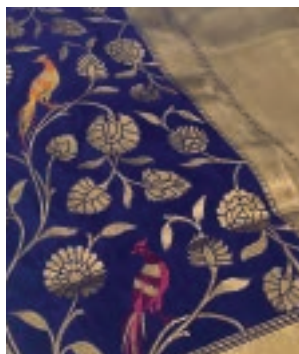
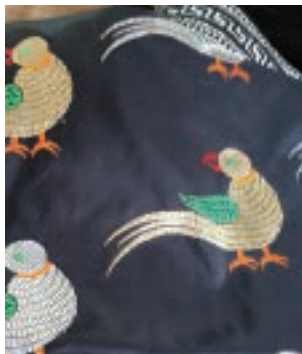
persing daily happenings with dark humour, *Dear Father* is carried forward in deep mystery. “I made very serious attempts to understand and appreciate my parents with whom I was living for the longest time,” Jani tells us. “Through

Dear Father, I wanted to convey the message that when different generations live together, they need to make some adjustments, or it leaves them vulnerable to misunderstandings.”

—Shyamola Khanna



Courtesy: Aangikam Productions



Courtesy: Kashi Wafta

Of weaves and **weavers**

With a history of silk and brocade manufacturing that finds mention in Vedic scriptures, Benarasi weaves are rich, heavily patterned and varied. Using *katan* silk, linen, muslin and cotton to create intricate weaves such as the jacquard, *jangla*, *kaduwa* and *tanchoi*, Benarasi weavers have enjoyed worldwide fame for years. Tapping into their potential and to promote traditional weaves, Varanasi-based Praneet Bawa, 52, and her Delhi-based friend Mina Singh, 54, have been producing a collection of apparel under the brand name Kashi Wafta since 2013. “As army officers’ children, our love for the traditional arts was cultivated during our

childhood as our parents frequently shifted base to different parts of the country,” says Bawa. “I’ve been working with the local master weavers since the time I moved to Varanasi three decades ago. I draw inspiration from architecture, carvings and old furniture around me. You will find these designs in our saris, *lehenga*, *dupatta* and suits.” Together with Singh, Bawa travels across the country setting up stalls at handloom exhibitions where they sell their products. They were recently at Artisans’ in Mumbai, where they exhibited their exquisite collection of *farshi* pyjamas, *ghagra*, long *kameez* and saris.

House of Kathak

In an endeavour to preserve his roots, Pandit Birju Maharaj, India's foremost exponent of Kathak, has transformed his ancestral home into a museum. The ancestral *haveli* Kalka Bindadeen Dheori was a gift to Maharaj's family from the last Nawab of Awadh Wazid Ali Shah in the 19th century. Saddened by its dilapidated state, Maharaj expressed his desire to restore the house and convert it into a museum dedicated to Kathak; in April 2014, the Uttar Pradesh government set up the Kalka Bindadeen Dheori Culture Division to look into the restoration project. The museum, inaugurated last month, will house 5,000 *thumri* compositions by Maharaj's ancestors as well as put on display costumes, photographs, musical instruments, and documents belonging to the first family of Kathak. "The history of the Maharaj family is the history of the Lucknow *gharana* of Kathak. While we have maintained the original character of the house, the gap between what remained of the house and what Maharaj remembers from his childhood has been bridged," says Anuradha Goyal, joint director in the Uttar Pradesh Department of Culture.



Photographs by Kanu Gandhi / ©The Estate of Kanu Gandhi

MAN BEHIND THE MAHATMA

Reading a letter, interacting with his wife, tending to a newborn calf, speaking on the phone and taking his last meal before a fast—these are some personal moments of Mahatma Gandhi captured by photographer Kanu Gandhi, grandnephew of the Father of the Nation. Best known as Mahatma Gandhi's photographer, Kanu observed his granduncle from an unobtrusive distance for 10 years till his death in 1948 while fulfilling three conditions—no flash, no posing and no remuneration—as laid down by the senior Gandhi. A collection of these photographs, obtained from Kanu's daughter Gita Mehta and his wife Abha Gandhi, was recently published by Delhi-based Nazar Foundation in a photo-book called *Kanu's Gandhi* (Nazar Photography Monographs; ₹ 3,000; 150 pages). "Kanu observed Gandhi with a fresh eye, unburdened by the rules of composition and light. In the past 10 years when these photographs were taken, what is revealed is a quiet, introspective side of Gandhi. He captures the man behind the Mahatma," says Prashant Panjiar, co-founder of Nazar Foundation. An exhibition of some of these photographs was on at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad last month; it will travel to Mumbai, Kolkata and Wardha in coming months.

photography



craft

Block beauty

Holding its own against the onslaught of industrialisation and globalisation, this ancient craft has created a distinct visual identity for the country. In her new book, ***Block Printed Textiles of India: Imprints of Culture*** (Niyogi; ₹ 3,800; 376 pages), **Dr Eiluned Edwards**, a scholar in Indian textile studies, features the people and processes involved, exploring the rich social, cultural and economic context in which this antique craft finds a unique place in present times. Presenting a visual journey....





Clockwise from top: A brass stencil and wooden plunger known as *sancha* used in *rogan* printing (Photo © James Marvin); chisels used for block carving at Pilakhuwa, Uttar Pradesh; Bodhi design block printed with discharge paste

Opposite page: (Top) A block wet with alum paste; a block printer in Ahmedabad working on *matani pachedi*, a printing technique known as *kalamkari* of Gujarat



Photographs courtesy: Niyogi



Top: *Kalamkari* depicting Krishna drawn by National Craft Awardee Talisetty Mohan (right) at Srikalahasti. Cotton, painted and mordant- and resist-dyed (private collection)

Above: Shilp Guru Ali Mohammed Baig, a *sozni* master, embroidering a *jamawar* shawl; details of the design printed on a shawl



Clockwise from above: Decorated roof at the Amber Palace, Rajasthan; a *limai* design skirt worn by a tribal woman in Banni, Kachchh; *ajrakh* print featured in Péro Autumn-Winter Collection 2011 (photo courtesy: Aneeth Arora)





Joie de vivre

Silvers in the US embrace life with passion and are fiercely protective about their privacy, writes **Kamla Mankekar**

It is 16 years since I made the United States my home; but friends still ask me why I moved to this country. "It seems you were quite well-settled in your home in Delhi," they observe. And I reply, "Because my children were all here; I was alone in Delhi."

Was that the only reason I left my country to make my home in another? Not really. I surely missed my son and daughters, who over a span of two decades had opted for the US as their home country. I visited them off and on, or they came to Delhi for short vacations. I had come to terms with the fact that none of them would return to 'live' with me in India.

After my husband passed away in 1986, I lived by myself for 14 years. To fill the void, I immersed myself in work; I read for pleasure, served on committees and commissions, attended seminars and lectures, participated in discussions, virtually did all that I had little time to do during the last years of my husband's failing health.

I lived in a neighbourhood developed for media persons, many of whom had been my colleagues and my husband's co-workers. I had a comfortable house and dependable domestic help. After a period of grieving, I had adjusted to living by myself. Almost imperceptibly, over the years, changes were creeping in and around my life. Things, as one would put it, were not the same.

My friends, who were like extended family and whose company and advice I had sought during my years alone, were disappearing one by one. Residents of Gulmohar Park, where I lived, were journalists who came from different parts of the country: Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Bengal, and so on. As they retired, they moved back to their 'native homes'. Senior colleagues

and mentors passed away one by one. I felt alone. Delhi Gymkhana Club, where my husband and I had spent many a quiet, relaxing evening, exchanging political gossip with friends from the press fraternity, and listening to suave and knowledgeable members of the civil service, was now swarmed by loud, back-thumping crowds who did not hesitate to corrupt servers with tips (forbidden by club rules) to receive undue service in the bar and dining room. Sunday lunches on the club lawns became a *mela* where newly enrolled members fought over chairs to seat hordes of their non-member friends, who in turn were duly awed by the grandeur of the club's colonial building and vast

grounds. Decades old and out-of-print precious volumes in the club library were being reported missing as the bewildered Panditji, who had served as librarian for the past 40 years, watched helplessly. I felt an intruder in my old haunt.

Those of Gulmohar Park who moved away from Delhi sold their houses to the highest bidders, mostly non-media persons. Later, to meet the rising cost of living, retired journalists sold their property to builders who constructed multi-storied apartments and made millions selling flats to neo-rich business-

men. The character of Gulmohar Park, which once was an ideal housing destination, changed. The new residents came with retinues of servants: chauffeurs, *ayah*, cooks and watchmen. Domestic helpers, on whom one had depended for years, deserted old patrons to seek jobs with new employers on fancy salaries. Even storekeepers in the colony hiked prices! One could not compete with the 'filthy rich' newcomers.

Delhi too was changing; violence at all levels labelled the city the Crime Capital of the country. It was becoming unsafe for a woman to live alone. My daughter Purnima

My American friends marvel at how my son-in-law and daughter have accepted me as part of their life. I am in their social circle, joining their friends at dinners and luncheons, discussing world events

and son-in-law Akhil, professors at University of California, Los Angeles, suggested I move to Bangalore. They were spending two months there every year and liked its temperate climate and friendly people. They found a house in a beautiful complex. However, it is not easy to strike fresh friendships or locate suitable medical assistance when you are in your 70s, nor to run a household when you do not speak the local language. My option was to move with them to the US.

America, it is believed, is a country for the young; yes, that is so if one is seeking to build a career and get a job. There are few, if any, opportunities for an older immigrant in the job market. Business and professional institutions want young people, preferably with US education and capacity



to work from 8 am to 6 pm without absence. It is a different scenario if your children sponsor you and the government gives you the coveted Green Card and ultimately accepts you as a citizen. Seniors in the US are well taken care of by the state with provisions of financial assistance, medical aid and numerous welfare programmes.

Americans are fiercely protective of their personal independence and privacy. I had missed Dorothy, she was nearing 80, in the exercise class at the senior centre; she surfaced after a fortnight looking tired and frail. Dorothy explained she had undergone abdominal surgery and was in hospital for a week and was recuperating now at

home. I asked her who was taking care of her daily needs. "Oh," she replied, "I am managing fine." Neighbours were helping with grocery shopping, a volunteer came twice a week to clean the place and do her laundry, and she was getting food from Meals on Wheels, a voluntary organisation that provides freshly cooked lunches daily to sick and needy silvers. Dorothy had a son living in the city and he had offered to be with her. But she did not want him to be "meddling around", she said.

Silvers here retain a healthy zest for life; I was embarrassed when Lucy, a friend from my memoir writing group, offered to introduce me to her retired cousin. "You are so pretty, and young enough for romance," she remarked.

I was then 73. My 82 year-old writer-friend finds it difficult to believe that I never considered having a boyfriend. "Your husband passed away when you were only 58, young enough to remarry," she said. "And you did not consider having even a boyfriend!" I keep on explaining that for Hindu women, marriage is a lifelong commitment; that in widowhood too we stay faithful to the memory of our deceased spouse.

My American friends marvel at how my son-in-law and daughter have accepted me as part of their life. I am in their social circle, joining their friends at dinners and luncheons, discussing world events and recalling my experiences of the past eight decades of my life. "I can't ever imagine moving in with any of my children and sharing their life," my friend Angela has confided in me.

She was a venture capitalist and is the mother of two loving daughters and a

highly successful businessman son. She is 65 and is looking at retirement housing, another name for homes for silvers.

Life can be lonely and hard when widowed mothers in their sunset years come to live with a son or daughter. As the young couple go to work—a single income is rarely enough to meet the expenses of a growing family—older women are left to mind the house, care for babies and face the bumptious teenage grandchildren. They are the pram-pushers, popping in painkillers and rubbing arthritic joints with soothing gel.

Life then is no fun.

Mankekar is the author of Breaking News: A Woman in a Man's World, which chronicles her experiences as one of the first women journalists in India



An officer and gentleman

Always the one to lead from the front, Col S P Wahi put his leadership skills to good use at many public-sector undertakings including ONGC, writes **Raj Kanwar**

In the history of India's public-sector enterprises, there have not been many managers like Col SP Wahi. His was a long odyssey that commenced in 1943 from an obscure town, which is part of Pakistan now. Journeying through myriad educational and professional institutions, he finally reached Banaras Hindu University, earning the distinction of an engineering degree.

The Army was his next stop; he was commissioned in the Corps of EME in December 1950. In his 22 year-long career in the Army, Col Wahi acquired many new skills and technologies. More important, it was in the Army that he imbibed those sterling qualities of leadership that later came in handy in the corporate world. It was there that he learnt the meaning of self-respect and the importance of walking with one's head held high.

It was in the last lap of his Army career that Col Wahi had his first taste of the public sector in November 1969 when he was sent on a short deputation to the then under-construction Bokaro Steel Plant. That short deputation lasted nearly five years, taking him to the Soviet Union on numerous occasions in order to ensure the timely completion of the plant. That was the beginning of Wahi's second innings. Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) and the Cement Corporation of India were other public-sector undertakings where Col Wahi left his indelible stamp. It was, however, at Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (ONGC) that Col Wahi earned much name and fame and created a unique niche for himself that only a very few of his successors were to match.

My first meeting with Col Wahi happened by sheer chance one day in 1981. I had an appointment with a senior ONGC executive at his plush office in Dehra Dun. As I gently pushed the slightly ajar door, I noticed a well-dressed gentleman seated there. Noticing my hesitation,

the executive called me in. Introducing the gentleman, he said, "Meet Col SP Wahi, the future chairman of ONGC." Col Wahi's reputation as a dynamic corporate honcho at BHEL in the Haridwar plant and the Cement Corporation of India had preceded him. A broad forehead rested atop an intense face and sparkling eyes; long sideburns and a handlebar-type moustache stood out. I was introduced as the chairman of a company representing several foreign oilfield equipment manufacturers in India. The officer also mentioned that I was ONGC's first public relations officer.

Col Wahi stood up, firmly shook my hand and after exchanging a few courtesies, he left.

Wahi was known for his hands-on approach and believed in leading from the front. I have had the rare privilege of witnessing Col Wahi inject a new sense of enthusiasm in ONGC

Wahi joined ONGC as 'officer on special duty' nearly four months prior to formally taking over in October 1981 as its ninth chairman. He spent those months learning about the various facets of the complex oil industry. He visited as many laboratories and work centres as possible, picking the brains of young and old engineers, scientists, drillers and the lot. Much later he told me, "Kanwar, learning is a lifelong

process and one is never too old to learn." It was that short stint as a 'student' that helped Col Wahi untie ONGC's knotty and complex issues. Many innovative practices introduced by him in ONGC have stood the test of time.

Fortuitously, Col Wahi was the right choice as ONGC's head honcho at that time. Earlier, N B Prasad, during his four-year tenure as ONGC's chairman, had put the prolific Bombay High field on an even keel. Wahi gave a bigger boost to offshore operations, virtually doubling production by the time his tenure ended. His achievements very often featured in the evening news bulletins on Doordarshan, the only television channel of the time.

Wahi was known for his hands-on approach and believed in leading from the front. Incidentally, *Leading from*

the Front is also the title of his memoirs. I have had the rare privilege of witnessing Col Wahi inject a new sense of enthusiasm in ONGC. By introducing time-bound promotions, Wahi boosted the morale of the personnel manning the organisation. However, the most spectacular of his efforts was his prompt and effective tackling of the disastrous blowout on the jack-up drilling rig Sagar Vikas on 30 July 1982. Col Wahi was then 1,100 km away in New Delhi and was planning to retire for the night when he received a message from Anil Malhotra, then member-in-charge of offshore operations. Immediately, he took the first flight to Bombay. The next morning, he was at Sagar Pragati, another jack-up that then operated just about 5 km away from the ill-fated Sagar Vikas. His troubleshooting ability was at its best that day. In no time, a contact was established with the legendary oil-well fire-fighting expert Red Adair in far-off Houston, Texas. Messages were also flashed worldwide to find out the availability and locations of semi-submersible rigs, fire-fighting vessels and multi-support vessels so that their services could be acquired without delay. The rest is history and well documented in *Upstream India*, the official history of ONGC written by me.

The blowout had become big news and reporters vied with one another in getting scoops. Kumud C Khanna, the late venerated editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* rang me up, "Raj, you are the only person who can give me a write up on Sagar Vikas in 24 hours." Though I had taken up business full-time and had not done any significant writing for 10 years or so, I did not wish to disappoint my friend. Somehow, I managed to station myself at the ONGC radio room in Maker Towers in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai, and was able to piece together a credible sequence of events leading to the disastrous blowout and its aftermath. My article, "Sagar Vikas Blowout – A Blow by Blow Account", appeared the following week in the weekly and was greatly appreciated for its accuracy and technical finesse.

Another important aspect of Col Wahi's stewardship was the role played by Shobhana, his wife of 59 years. The Wahis' bungalow on Tel Bhawan campus in Dehra Dun would become an open house during Diwali. In a unique practice, they would gift packets of sweets to all those who called on them with Diwali wishes. In fact, a part of the credit of Col Wahi's great popularity among ONGCians

goes to Shobhana. In no time, she became friendly with the wives of ONGCians and freely interacted with them. It was at her initiative that a women's polytechnic was set up in Dehra Dun on 27 June 1987 that today offers a variety of courses in interior design and decoration, textile design, fashion design, modern office management and secretarial practice, computer applications, garment technology, etc.

During the eight years Col Wahi helmed ONGC, my relations with him remained broadly formal, though warm. I greatly respected him for his uprightness and the dignity with which he conducted himself. We shared courtesies by sending greeting cards. Wahi was courteous to a fault and punctilious in keeping appointments. Once when I visited him at his Delhi office with a prior appointment, even though another visitor was sitting with him at that time, he came out to apologise and speak with me. In the 1970s and 1980s, my business flourished not because of any favours bestowed or concessions given but because of my professional business approach. We then represented some of the top American companies and got substantial orders on pure merit.



Courtesy: Raj Kanwar

Col Wahi received a standing ovation in March last year when Finance Minister Arun Jaitley presented him with the prestigious URJA Award for his outstanding contribution to the Indian oil and gas industry. In his long and distinguished career, he has been the recipient of numerous awards

including the coveted Padma Bhushan in 1988. Though he is a year older than me, he is still very active, indulging in numerous voluntary activities.

Once Wahi retired, our relationship turned into friendship. We became close when I met him several times over while writing the official history of ONGC. In recent years, my respect for him has gone up several notches. He, too, I dare believe, has discovered another side to me. I also become very friendly with his older brother, the late O P Wahi who ran Dehra Dun's Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and his older sister Pushpa Mehta, a well-known social worker. I greatly admired Mehta for her compassion and kindness. Our last meeting took place in September 2015 when Col Wahi came to Dehra Dun as a grief-stricken brother at the sudden demise of Mehta. I sat with him for a long time, holding his hand and mumbling meaningless words of empathy and consolation.

The writer is a veteran journalist based in Dehradun



Phenomenal woman

In her ode to womanhood, **Maya Angelou (1928-2014)** attacks gender stereotypes and paradigms of beauty

*Pretty women wonder where my
secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion
model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*

*I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,*

*A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*


*Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,*

*The grace of my style.
I'm a woman.*

*Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*

*Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.*

American author, poet and civil rights activist, Angelou (1928-2014) is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences

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, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress. They are both smiling and splashing water. The background is a calm pond with some reeds in the distance.

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Much is expected from **Kunal Basu**, the acclaimed author of *The Japanese Wife*. However, his latest offering, **KALKATTA** (Picador India; ₹ 599; 312 pages), fails to enthuse. In his description of life in the decrepit Number 14, Zakaria Street, Basu reveals the substructure of the city comprising timid *zari* workers, contriving gem traders, passport forgers, reluctant gigolos, aspiring gangsters and eager bookies. Jami, the protagonist who lives the secret life of a gigolo,



unexpectedly grows fond of Pablo, the terminally ill son of an old colleague Mandira, a single, struggling mother. While he tries to find meaning and purpose in caring for Pablo, life closes in on him. Jami discovers that his Kalkatta is made of quicksand. Though Basu delivers some gripping revelations about the underbelly of Kolkata, the narrative is not convincing enough and the reader fails to empathise with Jami. While it is a quick read, this one is nowhere near Basu's best.



History is replete with instances when fratricidal and patricidal wars determined the course of a dynasty. IAS officer-turned-author **Srinivas Rao Adige's** debut **THE MUGHAL HIGH NOON: THE ASCENT OF AURANGZEB** (Rupa; ₹ 195; 183 pages) takes a close peek at the fratricidal war between the sons of Shah Jahan for the Peacock Throne. The ailing Mughal Emperor's sons—the liberal but indecisive Dara Shikoh, the impulsive Shuja, the cold but calculative Aurangzeb and the insolent, overindulgent, hot-headed Murad—are

locked in a fierce struggle for succession. In this atmosphere of palace intrigue and chicanery, akin to a game of chess, the stage is set for the most capable but unscrupulous player—Aurangzeb—to manipulate people and situations to his advantage and gain a head-start, before taking on his enemies on the battlefield. The temperaments and motivations of the primary players as well as those of the seemingly insignificant ones—like eunuchs and nautch girls, who populated the harems of the Mughal kings—are well fleshed out.

Also on stands



Mahabharata (Indian Art Series)
Giampaolo Tomassetti and Krishna Dharma
Niyogi Books; ₹ 1,200; 124 pages

In this rendition of the ancient Hindu epic, Italian artist Tomassetti, who began his career by making reproductions of works in European museums, uses bold colours and large paintings to narrate the struggle for sovereignty between the feuding Kauravas and Pandavas.

A Wonderful Wife
Virendra Kapoor
Bloomsbury; ₹ 350; 291 pages

Kapoor explores the pivotal role of women in nurturing families, with a peek into the lives of 12 couples from different backgrounds.



The Turbulent Years: 1980-1996
Pranab Mukherjee
Rupa Publications; ₹ 595; 243 pages

An insider account of the momentous political and economic events that helped shape modern India, the second volume of the President's autobiography—the earlier one was *The Dramatic Decade: The Indira Gandhi Years*—examines his years in both power and the wilderness.

The world as a comic strip

For those hit by wanderlust, picking up bags and hitting the road may not be feasible all the time. On occasions like these, armchair travelling can bring some respite. Making it the first of its kind, *Ladakh: A Photo Travelogue* (Niyogi Books; ₹ 750; 96 pages) takes the reader through mountainous Himalayan terrain in a comic-strip format. Narrated and visualised by photojournalist **Sohini Sen**, this graphic novel featuring 414 photographs and a map follows the adventures of two lady travellers in Ladakh and Leh.

Sen, who enjoyed her earlier stints as assistant editor with *The Telegraph* and senior manager with Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS), is currently a full-time travel writer and photographer. “Instead of chasing deadlines”, Sen admits that these days she is chased by “camera-shy yaks”. She counts among her numerous proud adventures a

brush with three *Rafflesia* flowers—the largest flowers in the world with 30-inch diameters—in bloom, and being ceremoniously kissed by a dolphin!

authorspeak

The Talking Table and Other Stories, a book of short stories penned by Sen for children, was published in 2012 by Shishu Sahitya Samsad, and *Yatra Pathe Rabi*, a collection of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore’s poems accompanied by photographs taken by her, was published in 2014 by Ananda Publishers. Sen, who is currently working on her fourth book, “which will be a serious travelogue”, shares her passion for Asterix comics, Daphne Du Maurier’s writing style and childlike enthusiasm for the universe with **Srirekha Pillai**. Excerpts from the interview:

How did the idea of creating a travelogue in comic format take shape?

The mass and majesty of Ladakh’s mountain ranges simply bowled me over. I ended up taking 4,500 photos during my trip to Ladakh, even without the slightest idea of creating a book later. It was while sifting through the photographs after the trip that I thought of sharing my experience. I felt that a mere textual narrative, or a collection of photographs straddling double-spreads in a coffee-table book, would not do justice to the awesomeness of Ladakh. I was searching for a format that would combine text and photographs in equal measure and as a harmonious whole. The comic-strip layout seemed apt for this. It is a format that is familiar to readers of all ages, and suits all attention spans. I have been a fan of Asterix comics for years now. I tried to use a humorous writing style while sharing interesting bits about Ladakh’s history, customs, flora and fauna.

Who is your target audience?

I would say travellers who have been to Ladakh and wish to relive that experience, couch potatoes who love armchair travelling, and those not too comfortable with the idea of braving Ladakh’s tough terrain.

Are you a great fan of the comic format?

I am not so fond of the comic format per se. For example, I find the format of Tintin comics a little too staid. The same format does not always work in all graphic novels. The format in Asterix comics, however, is more free-flowing.



Sumita Rakshit

As your twin loves are travelling and writing, will we see more destinations covered in the comic format?

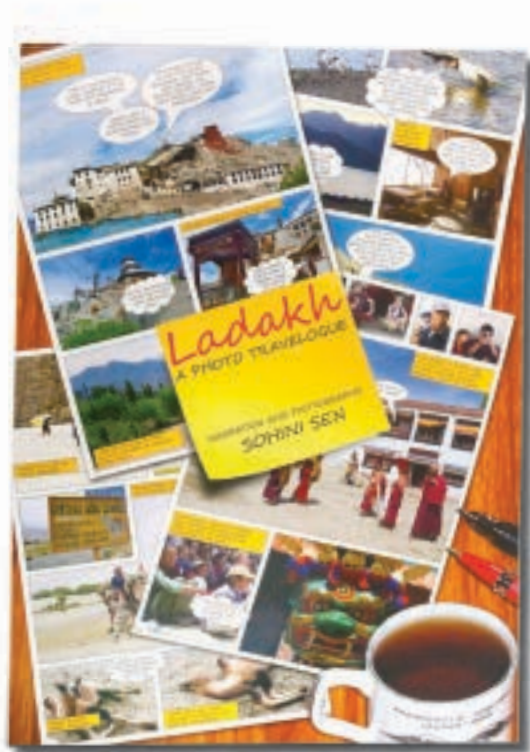
It would totally depend on how well readers receive *Ladakh: A Photo Travelogue*. So far, the feedback has been quite encouraging. I was on a tour of western and central Bhutan last November, and returned with a sack full of anecdotes and 32 GB worth of photographs. So yes, my readers and publisher willing, I am raring to go at it again!

Your earlier book *The Talking Table and Other Stories* was written for kids. Even the current travelogue displays a childlike curiosity. What keeps you in tune with the inner child?

Well, I have just turned 50, and physically I do not feel age in my bones. Not yet. But yes, I do have a connect with the child in me. I guess it is because I still have an absurd enthusiasm, a childlike wonder about this beautiful planet, and a great sense of contentment. Travelling to the mountains—I have been travelling along the Himalayan foothills, in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh for the past eight years or more—has taught me to do with less, to live simply. Whenever I am on the mountains, I realise that my existence in relation to this universe is absolutely insignificant. But a dollop of humour, often directed at myself, helps me live with this insignificance. To quote Mark Twain, “Wrinkles should merely indicate where the smiles have been.”

You are an avowed bibliophile. Which are your all-time favourite books?

There are far too many. But let me try naming some of them for you under different heads.



“I have just turned 50, and physically I do not feel age in my bones. Not yet. I do have a connect with the child in me. I guess it is because I still have an absurd enthusiasm, a childlike wonder about this beautiful planet, and a great sense of contentment”

All-time comfort books:
The Little Prince by Antoine De Saint-Exupéry, *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, *Lekhan* by Rabindranath Tagore, *The Complete Tales and Poems of Winnie-the-Pooh* by A A Milne with illustrations by Ernest H Shepard, and *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Pleasurable re-reads:
The King's General by Daphne Du Maurier, *Far Pavilions* by M M Kaye, *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell, and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams.

Favourite travel books:
The Time Machine by H G Wells, *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer, *Chasing the Monsoon* by Alexander Frater, *My Quest for the Yeti: Confronting the Himalayas' Deepest Mystery* by Reinhold Messner, *Have Pen, Will Travel* by M J Akbar, and travelogues in Bengali by Umaprasad Mukhopadhyay.

Whose writing has influenced you the most?

I have had a collage of influences. It is difficult to name

one author. The very first books I read, at the age of three or thereabouts, were Soviet books for children translated into Bengali. They would have just one line of text on a page, accompanying a full-page illustration. These books taught me to imagine, to tell a story about little things. Even a mushroom could be the main character in such a book. I do not even remember the names of those authors, nor the translators, but those books had a great impact. I still have a couple of these books, and read them with great delight. I have always loved Daphne Du Maurier's writing style, her capacity to create an ambience. She has been a great influence.

Besides reading and travelling, what excites you?

Photography. Mostly landscapes, some portraits.

What's age got to do with it?

The adventures and misadventures of women in their prime are just as worth telling as those of the young, says **Liz Byrski**

I have always wanted to be old. Weird? Probably—and certainly neither cool nor fashionable; for that I would need to be a Grumpy Old Woman, whingeing because things aren't what they used to be, and confirming all the assumptions about old women as discontented, obsessed with trivia and generally off their trolleys. And I would need to engage in the 'fight against ageing' to make myself look twenty years younger. But I'm happy to look the age I am, happy to be the age I am. I want to enjoy it, strip-mine it for all it has to offer. I want to live and work with it, not fight it.

But we live in a society in denial about ageing; a denial fuelled by an obsession with image and style, with youth and physical beauty, and the illusion that we can keep making ourselves over to hold old age at bay. And although we are not all obsessed with the desire to stay young, resistance is frequently interpreted as deviance or failure. But there is nothing shameful about ageing; it comes to us all if we are lucky enough to be here to greet it and to deny our age is to pretend to be less than we are in much more than just years.

When I look in the mirror I can see my ageing in the lines, the sagging skin, the extra rolls of fat, the age spots. I can also feel it in my muscles and my joints, the effort of my breath at exercise, the loss of the ability to sit cross-legged, the fact that I have four pairs of glasses but frequently can't find any of them, and that I occasionally discover my misplaced wallet packed in the fridge with the shopping. I creak and puff, I droop and sag. I have given up shoes with heels and the effort to hold in my stomach, and I am working hard on not caring about how I appear to others (although the latter is still a work in progress).

I feel my age through my need to make the most of every moment and every day, love more and better, write

more and better, learn more, read more. I value family and friends more and more thoughtfully, feel grief more sharply and outrage more passionately. And I relish my age in the pure wonder of having arrived here, two years from seventy, and to be living every day as a bonus and an adventure.

It was the absence of interesting and realistic older women as the central characters in Australian women's fiction that led me, ten years ago, to start writing novels that

feature these characters. I had been searching the shelves of libraries and bookshops for novels that featured women of fifty plus; I wanted to read about women like me. I was in my late fifties then, and surrounded by friends and colleagues of a similar age and older who were living dynamic, useful and rewarding lives. They were, and still are, starting new businesses, enrolling at university, playing the stock market, surfing the waves and the Internet, travelling, retraining and falling in and out of love. I regularly interviewed ageing women who held powerful positions in government and business, who excelled in the sciences, the arts and in sport, who had raised money

to fund women's scholarships, overseas orphanages, or support services for women and children in crisis. They were doing all this in spite of, as well as, and way beyond menopause. It seemed to me that these women's stories were just as worth telling in fiction and drama as the stories of young women setting out in pursuit of careers and Mr Right offered by chick-lit and rom-coms.

Quite a few people laughed when I spoke of writing novels about older women; quite a few more, particularly those in the media, sucked in their breath, shook their heads, and told me unequivocally that no one would want to read about older women. Now, six best-selling novels later, I am delighted to have proved them wrong.



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Extract from Getting On: Some Thoughts on Women and Ageing (2012). Byrski is an award-winning Australian journalist and a prolific writer

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Long before copious tears of joy and jaw-dropping astonishment became the signature statement of Indian beauty pageant winners, Reita Faria Powell quietly walked the ramp in a black swimsuit to stake her claim to the Miss World crown in London's Albert Hall way back in 1966. Defeating 51 beauty queens from across the world, Faria became not just the first Indian, but the first Asian to win the coveted crown. Standing tall at 5 ft 8 inches, this beauty with brains won the approval of the British audience, who cheered for her wholeheartedly. With Faria's historic win, and Indira Gandhi taking over the reins of the country as the first woman prime minister, 1966 turned out to be a year of female resurgence for India.

A medical doctor by profession, Faria was 23 when she participated in the pageant. After winning the Miss Mumbai crown earlier that year, she also won the *Eve's Weekly* Miss India contest, before participating in the Miss World contest. When Faria landed in London for the competition with a borrowed swimsuit and flat shoes, she was rudely ordered to buy heels. Unlike international beauty pageant winners now, who go on to become movie stars and sign lucrative modelling contracts, Faria turned down invitations from the glamour

industry, choosing to focus on medical studies. In an interview, she said, "I knew after a few months of this Miss World title that it wasn't for me. The title was such a fleeting moment that I wasn't prepared to let it change my life. It wasn't what I wanted out of life. I wanted to help people." She went on to complete her medical studies at Grant Medical College in Mumbai, and later at King's College Hospital, London. Currently settled in Dublin, Ireland, with her doctor-husband David Powell, Faria is a grandmother of five.

Faria was instrumental in putting India on the world fashion map. Ever since, the country, which seems to have perfected the art of tailoring 'the perfect 10', has gone on to produce four Miss Worlds—Aishwarya Rai, Diana Hayden, Yukta Mookhey and Priyanka Chopra—and two Miss Universes, Sushmita Sen and Lara Dutta, and made a significant impact at other international pageants.

However, what made Faria's feat remarkable was that she made it on her own, without the assistance of personal trainers, makeup men, nutritionists, dentists, cosmetic surgeons and speech therapists—an entire retinue that helps title aspirants crack the pageant code these days.



Illustration by Jit Ray

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MARCH 1966

- On 10 March, Crown Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands married German diplomat Claus von Amsberg amid angry protests, as the latter had served as a soldier in the German Army during World War II.
- On 11 March, a military coup led by General Suharto broke out in Indonesia. It ended with Suharto being proclaimed president on 18 March.
- On 12 March, after nearly two years of excavation, Paradip Port was opened in Odisha, on the east coast of India.
- On 31 March, the Soviet Union launched Luna 10, a robotic spacecraft mission, on a three-day journey to be the first to place a manmade object into orbit around the Moon.

FOOD SWAMP

n. An area that has an abundance of fast-food restaurants and other low-nutrition food options.

Example: With its plethora of densely packed food stores, Toronto's Leslieville scored well. Because of its density many parts of Toronto's downtown did better in the **food swamp** index.

—May Warren, "Are you living in an unhealthy food swamp?"; The Toronto Star, 10 November 2015

Stepford app

n. A software program with a conformist, stereotypical, or thoughtless design.

Example: Why are applications like Siri designed to be women? Is that how artificial voices and to some extent intelligence stand out in majorly male-dominated environments? Why are these voices cold? Being on a railway station will never be the same. Why are there **Stepford apps**?

—dagannalena, "I liked...", Instagram, 24 December 2015

Bio-banding

n. The grouping of young athletes into teams or leagues based on physical maturity rather than age.

Example: "Early maturing boys appreciate **bio-banding** as well," Cumming explained. "In a bio-banded competition, they can't boss the game physically; they have to play a technical game and are forced to think faster, play as a team rather than doing it all themselves."

—Jamie Doward, "Bio-banding: How scientists can help late developers become sporting superstars", The Guardian (London), 19 December 2015

Teraproject

n. A massive project, particularly one that costs a trillion dollars or more.

Example: The problem, in the Age of the **Teraproject**, is that governments are still really, really bad at managing even mere billion-dollar projects.

—Doug Sanders, "Move over megaprojects, here come the teraprojects", The Globe and Mail, 2 January 2016

“For age is opportunity no less than youth itself, though in another dress, and as the evening twilight fades away, the sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

—US poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

Climatarian

n. A person whose diet consists primarily of foods that do not contribute to human-induced climate change.

Example: The **Climatarian** diet also recommends avoiding using air-freighted food and frozen produce, instead only purchasing local, seasonal and fresh produce.

—“Climatarian: The new way to cut carbon emissions from your diet”, edie, 16 July 2015

Compassion fade

n. The decrease in compassion felt for the unfortunate as their numbers increase.

Example: Similarly, technology connects us to more and more of the world's suffering, of which there's an essentially infinite amount, until feeling steamrollered by it becomes structurally inevitable—not a sign that life's getting worse. And the consequences go beyond glumness. They include **compassion fade**, the well-studied effect whereby our urge to help the unfortunate declines as their numbers increase.

—Oliver Burkeman, "Is less news good news?", The Guardian (London), 15 January 2016



Vivek Gupta

BUZZ

Secret sounds and spaces

A gig doesn't get more intimate than this—independent musicians playing to a committed audience in living rooms and closed space. This acoustic experience shrouded in mystery (the venue and lineup of artists is revealed only a day before) is a chance for you to host gigs in your living room, perform your original compositions or just be in attendance, all free of charge. Age, gender and genre no bar, the criteria to participate are few but strict. If you want to host, your hall must accommodate a band, basic sound equipment and a small audience; if you want to perform, the quality of your music must meet standard guidelines set by a worldwide jury; or if you just want to show up and listen, nothing short of committed attendance is expected once you've signed up. Started in 2009 in London, these secret gigs are being conducted by Sofar – Songs From a Room in living rooms across the world. After successfully working with the independent music scene in Bengaluru, Sofar is looking to invade living rooms in other major cities in the country. If you'd like to be a part of it, sign up on their website www.sofarsounds.com or write to bangaloresofar@gmail.com.

January feeling

n. An emotional state characterised by feelings of optimism and possibility, particularly at the start of a new year.

Example: Behind the seductive lure of "New Year, New You" lies another kind of mistake, too: the idea that what we require, in order finally to change, is one last push of willpower. (Presumably, the hope is that the **January feeling** of fresh starts and clean slates will provide it.)

—Oliver Burkeman, "New year, new you? Forget it", *The Guardian*, 1 January 2016

Winterregnum

n. A pause or interruption in a continuous activity during winter or caused by winter weather.

Example: The period between Christmas and New Year should be called **Winterregnum**. I'm getting this in early this year.

—Geraint Griffith, "The period...", Twitter, 9 December 2015

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I, Dharmendra Bhandari, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

For Harmony for Silvers Foundation
Sd/- Dharmendra Bhandari
Printer & Publisher

Dated March 1, 2016

“All they need and crave is companionship”

Gailing Begg, 69, Bengaluru, cares for silvers and the destitute



Aadrika Maya

Running errands for silvers, indulging in small talk with them, and penning letters for their family and friends are all part of a normal day for **Gailing Begg**, who keeps darting from one old-age home to another. And no, she doesn't complain. Not content with what she does, the sprightly 69 year-old, who used to run a flower shop, even makes time for ladies from various old age homes in Bengaluru, whom she treats to lunch once a week. If need be, she chaperones them to beauty parlours for a quick facial or haircut. Service, Begg insists, runs in her family. Her mother was a nurse, while her aunt used to run a home for the destitute. "I've always been attuned to the needs of silvers," says Begg, who feels that with the disintegration of the joint family system in India, and the changes in our value system, silvers are "a marginalised lot". For her part, she makes sure to offer a willing ear to anybody who wants to talk to her. "With their own busy families dropping by only to replenish

supplies, all these silvers crave is someone to talk to," she says. It was after losing her mother in 1993 that Begg decided to join Ashvasan, a voluntary service organisation that reaches out to silvers. Today, as the secretary of the organisation, she arranges get-togethers and medical checkups for silvers, besides medicines and blankets. During festivals, sweets are distributed in old-age homes. Begg also managed to get Titan to sponsor midday meals for silvers living in slums around the city. With her daughters well settled, and her husband no more, Begg also pitches in for Home of Hope, a hospice taking care of ailing destitute in the city. Run by 'Auto' Raja, it caters to those who are mentally and physically challenged, orphans and rape victims, and the terminally ill. Begg ensures that the hospice's monthly supply of medicines, tea, coffee and spices are taken care of. As she says, "The joy we spread has a way of finding its way back to us!"

—Meghna Khanna

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