

MAY 2009 Rs 30

# harmony

celebrate age

## Bicycle diaries

Silver cyclists share  
their journeys

## Signposts of faith

Exploring Sufi *dargah*  
in Srinagar

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Sharmila Tagore

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# TAKE CONTROL

For silvers, and those committed to their well-being, 11 April—observed by the World Health Organisation as ‘World Parkinson’s Day’—is very significant. And, fittingly, this was the day we chose to launch the ‘Total Parkinson’s Disease Care Programme’ at Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai.

Named after British doctor James Parkinson who first observed the condition in 1812, Parkinson’s disease is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system characterised by tremors and impaired muscular coordination. It afflicts 1 per cent of the adult population—the prevalence of the disease in the West is estimated at 120 per 100,000 while in India it is about 50 per 100,000. And while it can affect younger people in the form of Young Onset Parkinson’s Disease, Parkinson’s commonly strikes silvers.

It is unfortunate that Parkinson’s is not a curable or preventable condition. But once the disease is diagnosed, modern medicine can offer great relief to patients in terms of a sustainable regimen of medication, therapy and, if necessary, surgery. The key is greater sensitivity to the condition and

what it entails to dispel any psychological or social stigma, and more awareness among patients and their caregivers themselves. It may not be possible to wipe Parkinson’s disease from your life, but you can certainly learn to manage it and not let it get in the way of a happy, active and fruitful life.

That’s the aim of the comprehensive ‘Total Parkinson’s Disease Care Programme’, the first of its kind in India (see ‘Health Bytes’) that offers the patient maximum benefit in a single visit. Underlined by the hospital’s professional expertise and state-of-the-art equipment, it seeks to help the patient overcome the physical, social and emotional challenges posed by Parkinson’s disease—from motor coordination and mobility to diet, speech and coping mechanisms. And in order to reach the maximum number of people, the programme is highly subsidised and available three days a week. I hope this is a beginning for others to start similar programmes across the country to reach a larger number of silvers.

Indeed, everyone deserves access to the best healthcare—a prerequisite to live your best life. Another



DONALD WOODROW

essential to bring quality to your life is information. Since 2004, our website [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org) has brought the silver world in all its facets to your computer screens. Like the magazine, the website has continually evolved to become more user-friendly and relevant to its constituency. This month, on the eve of the fifth anniversary of Harmony for Silvers Foundation, the website has undergone a comprehensive design makeover—it’s brighter, bolder, more contemporary. Just like the silvers it is proud to represent. Happy surfing!

Tina Ambani

## A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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### Healing touch

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Visit [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org) and check out this month's stories!



### Brave heart

Ram Chandra Swami talks about  
his helpline for the poor

Cover photograph  
by **SHIVAY BHANDARI**

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## column one

Looking good has a lot to do with staying active. An efficacious mind, agile body and perky outlook to life can take a decade off your face. No wonder Sharmila Tagore doesn't look a day over 50. Films, television, social work, a gregarious public life and a fulfilling family life keep the yesteryears' sensation in fine feather. On *Harmony's* cover this month, the actor, in a candid interview with Assistant Editor Arati Rajan Menon, is at her forthright best. Read "The Tagore Effect" for her views on cinema, filmmakers, actors, and changing times.

Sharing the limelight with Tagore are silver cyclists in "Bicycle Diaries". On borrowed hand-me-downs and brand-new wheels, with a resolve that would put teenagers to shame, they have trekked strange roads for an identity that steels them against the unknown odds of life. What are these silvers looking for? *Harmony* of body, mind and soul. And as much as our spirited pedalers, we are proud of these targets. Next month, *Harmony* will turn five and so will its promise of this agreement. Helping us do that this issue are some regular and exclusive writers. Jane Barratt, Secretary General of the International Federation on Ageing, presents a global perspective on caregiving; feminist writer Vrinda Nabar reviews cinema centred on ageing; and Humra Quraishi goes on a spiritual journey to Sufi *dargah* in and around Srinagar.

The promise will continue well into the future and pose new challenges and possibilities.

—Meeta Bhatti



I was introduced to *Harmony* by a friend and enjoyed reading every bit of it. Then I subscribed to the magazine—I now wait for

my copy every month. I have been a teacher for the past 20 years. In my youth, my ambition was to become a doctor and serve poor villagers in rural India but my dream remained unfulfilled owing to pressures from a conservative family and financial problems. Though it was not easy giving up on my dreams, over the years, I realised that there were other wonderful ways to serve the society. My love for children drew me towards teaching. After marriage, with my husband's cooperation, I completed a diploma in teacher's training in Kolkata.

Every second of my teaching career has been enjoyable and satisfying. The teacher in me became a learner too. My students have broadened my mind in many ways. Later, when we moved to Secunderabad, I became the head of the primary section in an ICSE school, a landmark for the Bohra community. Further, the teaching experience aroused the poet and writer in me. I composed many poems and plays for school programmes. After getting my two sons married, I enrolled in a B Ed programme. It was difficult with responsibilities at home and school but I managed it, covering a total of 16 subjects. Later I also completed my master's in English through distance education from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

While I was studying for my master's, my health failed me owing to high blood sugar and I was hospitalised for a severe dysfunction in the heart. My doctor advised total bed rest for three months. But school and children were always on my mind and it was difficult to keep away from my daily routine. On my request, the doctor allowed me to visit school for a couple of hours after three weeks. The atmosphere and the good wishes of my colleagues and students rejuvenated me and I was on my feet by the end of a month. My desire to continue my studies became even stronger and I completed my master's with flying colours. Today, I am deeply satisfied that I achieved what I had willed by the grace of Allah. My third son is married too and the fourth is still studying. I completed my studies at the age of 55. But I am still teaching and hope to keep on learning.

**KHADIJA MOIZ GANDHI**

*Via email*



*The letter of the month wins music CDs from Big Music*



In 'Connect' in the March 2009 issue of *Harmony* ("Health is wealth"), where Tina Ambani writes about the launch of the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai, she correctly points out that no goal means anything without good health. I was privileged enough to visit this excellent institution recently and came away impressed by the state-of-the-art technology and facilities employed for the treatment of patients. It was indeed a great pleasure to walk into the warm and welcoming lobby, which gives one a clear indication of the spirit of friendliness and caring that awaits patients in all sections at the hospital. A special example of this was the cheerful and colourful children's ward, which is sure to delight young visitors and put them at ease.

**NAUKA M KOTHARI**

*Mumbai*

In your January 2009 cover feature, "Get on Your Feet", you had carried a section on acupressure. It succinctly explained how the technique stimulates various points in the body, releases muscular tension, promotes blood circulation, and neutralises and mobilises toxic build-up in the muscle tissue that

causes stiffness in the body. After reading the article, our resident welfare association in Paschim Vihar, New Delhi, decided to take the initiative to build an acupressure track in one corner of our park. Many residents in the neighbourhood now walk everyday for five minutes or so barefoot on this track. They report that their body feels lighter and they feel more energised after this exercise.

Thank you *Harmony*!

**H C KHURANA**

*New Delhi*

It's unfortunate that the Union Finance Ministry is not taking care of salaried employees and senior citizens. With respect to income tax on salaried employees, nothing has been done after P Chidambaram left the Finance Ministry to take over as home minister. He passed on the finance portfolio to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who then handed it over to Pranab Mukherjee as he had to undergo bypass surgery. For his part, all Mukherjee did was present an interim budget according to statutory requirements that made no mention of salaried employees or senior citizens. The interest on postal deposits has not been changed for more than three

years except for cutting existing interest rates. In the present circumstances, all retired senior citizens are completely dependent on the postal department as it represents a safe avenue of investment. This is hard-earned money and the Centre must do what it can to help them maximise their gains. I hope more silvers raise a voice against the government's negligent attitude towards the elderly.

**T T VARADARAJAN**

*Chennai*

While ECS facility is available for credit of interest on the Monthly Income Scheme at the Post Office, it is not extended to the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme for credit of interest that is paid quarterly. I don't understand the reason for this. In the absence of this facility, senior citizens have to stand in queue for hours together and have to take the risk of collecting and counting the cash and carrying it home. I request *Harmony* to take up the matter with the Reserve Bank of India and the postal authorities so that the ECS facility can be extended to the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme too.

**AMALENDU BHATTACHARJEE**

*Kolkata*

## AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

We are looking for contributions from our readers. Write to us if...

- You had an experience related to money or finance
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren

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## NEWSWORTHY



Courtesy, SCCD

### ONE WORLD

We've spoken time and again about the universality of the silver experience. Fresh proof of this is the **visit of a 12-member delegation of the Senior Citizens' Council of Mauritius to New Delhi** from 19-29 March, upon the invitation of the Senior Citizens' Council of Delhi. To coincide with this visit, the Delhi body organised a seminar in association with HelpAge India and the National Institute of Social Defence on 'Ageing Issues Concerning Senior Citizens in India'. Members from both the Mauritian

and Delhi organisations spoke on the possibilities of developing social and economic partnerships to improve the lives of silvers in both countries. This sentiment was echoed by other dignitaries at the seminar, including Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Meira Kumar and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Apart from visiting the offices of various senior citizens' organisations in the capital, the Mauritian delegation also made time for a little sightseeing—they visited Akshardham Temple and the Mughal Gardens in Rashtrapati Bhavan.



## ANALYSE THIS

### BRAIN DRAIN

This is a bit of a blow. **Old age begins at 27**, say researchers at the University of Virginia. According to them, our mental abilities peak at the age of 22 before beginning to deteriorate just five years later. During the seven-year study, 2,000 men and women, aged from 18 to 60, were asked to solve visual puzzles, recall words and spot patterns in letters and symbols. In nine out of 12 tests, the average age at which the top performance was achieved was 22. The first age at which performance was signifi-



cantly lower than the peak scores was 27—for tests of reasoning, speed of thought and spatial visualisation. Memory was shown to decline from the average age of 37. In the other tests, poorer results were shown by the age of 42.

There's some good news though: abilities based on accumulated knowledge, like vocabulary or general information, increased until at the age of 60. "Results converge on a conclusion that some aspects of age-related cognitive decline begin in healthy, educated adults when they are in their 20s and 30s," writes lead researcher Professor Timothy Salthouse in the journal *Neurobiology of Ageing*. "Thus, therapies designed to prevent age-related conditions may need to start earlier, long before people become pensioners."

**From Singapore, with love:** Here's the latest initiative from the Singapore government: a free book to help silvers prepare for old age. *Adding Life to Years - Happy, Healthy & Active Seniors* lists steps that older Singaporeans can take for a balanced and healthy life in the spheres of work, money, health, lifestyle and legal issues. "We hope to motivate Singaporeans to prepare early," says Lim Boon Heng, chairman of the country's Ministerial Committee on Ageing." You can download the book at [www.mcys.gov.sg/addinglifetoyears](http://www.mcys.gov.sg/addinglifetoyears)

### CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Longevity runs in the family. That's the conclusion of researchers from the Boston University School of Medicine's New England Centenarian Study. They found that **children of centenarians have a 120 per cent lower mortality rate than children of non-centenarians**, experience delays in the onset of heart disease and diabetes, and display traits related to active ageing like extroversion and less neuroticism.

"Interestingly, whereas men and women differ substantially in their personality characteristics, the male and female offspring of centenarians tended to be similar, which speaks to the importance of these traits for healthy ageing and longevity," writes senior study author Thomas Perls in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. "The reason they also live longer may lie in the way they handle stress. For example,



people who are lower in neuroticism are able to manage stressful situations effectively. Similarly, high extroversion levels have been associated with establishing friendships and looking after yourself." The team's next challenge: to discover if these traits are genetic or the product of an enabling environment.

## TRENDS

### HOME, SMALL HOME

In an America reeling from recession, small is in. And homes for silvers are no exception. Faced with clients that are looking for value in what may be the last house they buy, developers and designers are now focusing on homes that are energy-efficient

and maximise space, reports The Associated Press. **"The trend toward smaller homes in the 50-plus market** has been apparent for about a year," says Doug Van Lerberghe, an architect with Colorado-based Kephart Community Planning Architecture, which designs 'adult communities'.

"I've seen floor plans shrink by about 250 to 300 sq ft on average." According to him, design modifications include more windows, which make smaller homes feel larger and save on heating and electricity bills, and replacing bathtubs with flat-floored showers that take up less space and are safer for silvers.



Michigan-based Pulte Homes has also added a series of flexible home designs for the 55-and-over market with its Del Webb brand. "The new designs allow seniors to choose less expensive kitchen appliances, or eliminate granite countertops," explains Melanie Hearsch, a spokeswoman for the company. And Californian builder KB Homes has launched The Open Series, which offers more single-storey designs, greater energy efficiency and more flexibility on room sizes. Silvers have responded enthusiastically, as Jeffrey Mezger, chief executive of the company says. "People who would have bought a larger home with frills because they could afford it but didn't need it, now will only buy what they need."

## OVERHEARD

"The body sends a number of messages to you as you get older and you do get a sense of your mortality. You know, occasionally there's a stab of pain or an ache and you remember that this is not going to go on forever. But I would love to hear myself sing well into the future, another 10 years at least!

—Canadian poet, novelist and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, 74, who recently completed a concert tour of North America, in an interview to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation





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## MEDIA WATCH

### THE NEW 50

Take pride in each year rather than deny the passage of time. That's the message of feminist author Suzanne Braun Levine's book, *50 is the New Fifty* (Viking). The first editor of *Ms* magazine, Levine captures the voices of myriad women who have discovered their worth over time and are now taking control of their destinies. Their insights underline the practical advice that the author serves up on confronting change and redrafting the unwritten contracts of our relationships. "Fifty is an exciting stage of life where women are feeling more full of hope and energy than they felt in their 30s," says Levine in an interview with *TIME* magazine. "In terms of life experience, women are finding that their 50s and 60s and even their 70s are a very exciting time."



**Money's tight:** Nearly one in four older people in London skip meals to save money, according to a survey by Age Concern and Help the Aged. The survey also shows that silvers in the city are cutting back on electricity (45 per cent) and gas (40 per cent).

### CHERI

"I'm happy to play my age on screen," Michelle Pfeiffer tells *The Scotsman*. Fabulous at 50, she's referring to her role as Lea, an ageing courtesan who has an affair with a younger man, in *Cheri, a film set in Paris at the turn of the 20th century*. Directed by Stephen Frears and based on a book by French novelist Colette, the film shifts heart-breakingly from romantic frolic between Lea and her beau (played by Rupert Friend) to melancholy as he is forced into marriage with a woman his own age while she grapples with heartache. Unlike her contemporaries, Pfeiffer has no real complaints about growing older. "The roles may be fewer but the older you get, the more interesting they become," she says. "I'm at a point when I don't want to work all the time." *Cheri* released on 27 March in the US and Europe.



### STYLE FILE

Paula Reed's chic quotient is sky high. And now the style director at UK's influential *Grazia* magazine is hoping some of it will rub off on you with her new book, *Style Clinic: How to Look Fabulous All the Time, at Any Age, for Any Occasion* (Harper-Collins). Sharing secrets of the successful shopper, Reed warns you against the two mortal sins: "Young women dressed old and older women clinging to the fripperies of youth". Not that she's advocating that silvers turn wallflowers. "Just as a 60 year-

old in ruffles is not charming, a grandmother with a great body in shapeless tweed is under-selling her elegance.... If you've still got it, why not flaunt it?"





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## H PEOPLE

### CAMERAWOMAN

In the early 1940s, photography—like most other professions in India—was a male bastion. But **Homai Vyarawalla** (featured in the March 2006 issue of *Harmony*) didn't let that stop her. Teaming up with her husband, photographer Maneckshaw Vyarawalla, she captured key moments of Indian history at the height of the freedom struggle. Now the Gujarat government plans to make an official record of Vyarawalla's works as part of the Gujarat State Archives. A series of interviews will be conducted with her to document the experiences and challenges she faced as India's first woman photographer.

In her long rich career, Vyarawalla's works appeared regularly in *The Onlooker*, *The Bombay Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. Her portfolio is studded with famous faces—Jawaharlal Nehru, Queen Elizabeth II, Jacqueline Kennedy and



Vijayalakshmi Pandit to name a few. Today the 94 year-old, who lives alone in Navsari in Gujarat, continues to lead an active life. She doesn't keep domestic help and till recently, drove around in her Fiat. Now she has sold it and booked a Nano. Averse to even having a phone at home, she has recently bought a mobile phone for emergency situations. Friend and documentary filmmaker Sabeena Gadihoke taught her to sms. Her first message to Gadihoke: "Call you later".

## VISITOR



—Indian-American doctor, writer and new-age guru **Deepak Chopra**, 62, at a spiritual session in New Delhi in March

"Our perceptions can change the whole world. Our thoughts give the answers to what we want and how we want that to happen. Imagine a rose, where is the picture kept? If you look inside your brain, will you see the rose? If it's not there, where is it? The energy radiated from the mind has unlimited dimensions. Learn to ask for what you want. It will be yours."

## IN PASSING

Economist **Raja J Chelliah** was best known for his tax reforms in the 1990s in India following liberalisation. Winner of the Padma Bhushan and a former fiscal advisor in the Union Finance Ministry, Chelliah passed away on 7 April in Chennai after a brief illness. He was 86.

**Shakti Samanta**, director of memorable Hindi films like *Howrah Bridge*, *Kashmir ki Kali*, *Kati Patang*, *An Evening in Paris* and *Amar Prem*, died in Mumbai on 9 April. Samanta, who was recovering from a stroke, was 83.

## BIRTHDAYS

- Hollywood great **Marlon Brando** turned 85 on 3 April
- American poet and writer **Maya Angelou** turned 81 on 4 April
- Former US secretary of state **Colin Powell** turned 72 on 5 April
- Sitar maestro **Pandit Ravi Shankar** turned 89 on 7 April
- Actor **Jaya Bachchan** turned 61 on 9 April
- Actor **Rohini Hattangady** turned 54 on 11 April
- American actor **Shirley MacLaine** turned 75 on 24 April



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## FACE OFF

### FACE THE FAT

Don't fight the fat—at least when it comes to your face. According to a study by Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, USA, **having more fat on your face as you get older makes you look younger.** However, the opposite applies to those under the age of 40. The researchers studied 186 pairs of identical twins as they are genetically programmed to age the same. In those sets of twins who were less than 40 years of age, the heavier twin (whose body mass index or BMI was at least four points higher) was perceived as being older, while in those groups over 40 years of age, the heavier twin appeared younger. To maintain a youthful appearance as ageing continued, even more weight was needed on the face. For instance, from age 55 and over the twin with a BMI eight points higher looked younger. The study is published in the April edition of journal *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*.



### GENE TO THE RESCUE



An innocuous sounding gene called **CTIP2** may have the power to combat skin diseases and prevent or reverse premature skin ageing. Researchers from

Oregon State University in the US have discovered that loss of CTIP2 may be involved in skin disorders, such as eczema and psoriasis. What's more, it may be possible to rejuvenate the skin by boosting the expression of the gene. "We found that CTIP2 helps control different levels of skin development, including the final phase of a protective barrier formation," writes Arup Indra, assistant professor of pharmacy at Oregon State University, in the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*. "It also seems particularly important in lipid biosynthesis, which is relevant not only to certain skin diseases but also wrinkling and premature skin ageing." The research team is now looking for ways to control the gene.

## OFFBEAT

### OH GOD!

A group of silvers in Ranchi are counting on divine intervention for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. In late March, about 50 retired employees of the city-based Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC) performed a **yagna** to pray for good candidates to represent them. "We've



left everything to God now," Mukhtar Singh, president of the HEC Retired Employees Federation, tells media. "Only He can save us from the evils these

politicians practise after being elected to office on our precious votes." Following the **yagna**, the silvers took an oath before a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the city's Gandhi Ashram to weed out corrupt politicians from the state. No one would comment on how exactly they planned to do this.

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## LOVE THAT

### MAN ON A MISSION

Give Zhang Shihe a computer and the 55 year-old marketing expert turns crusader. For the past year-and-a-half, he has used his blog 24 Hours Online ([24hour.blogbus.com](http://24hour.blogbus.com)) to **draw attention to the plight of the hundreds of homeless people in Qianmen**, a historic precinct in Beijing. As *The New York Times* reports, Zhang began his campaign after he saw a makeshift



building assembled from rubble by a group of 32 squatters and christened the 'Stars Hotel'. Impressed by their chutzpah, he started sending out regular posts about the group, whom he called the 'drifter tribe', and their activities. By the time the municipal authorities demolished 'Stars Hotel' in late 2008, Zhang had raised donations in cash and kind through his blog to help the group. The money helped them rent a row of rooms with stone floors in an old building in the neighbourhood while the bedding and furniture sent in by fellow do-gooders have furnished the rooms. Now, he's encouraging his drifter tribe to earn a living by hawking books and simple wind-up toys to the thousands of visitors who throng the area. "We are trying to give these vagrants a home and helping them change their form of living," he says. "The irony is that we are using a medium that they don't even understand to represent their needs. That alone manifests a certain injustice."



**Gerontology first:** The discipline of gerontology needs to be popularised in India if we are to take care of our silvers. That was the takeaway of a seminar held in Kolkata this April, organised by NGO Thikana. "With modernisation, age-related problems will increase," said Indrani Chakravarty, director, Calcutta Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology. "The challenge is to better the lives of the elderly by involving trained professionals in the field."

### STORMING THE BASTION

Meet the **first women to join the ranks of the 'Chelsea pensioners'**:

Dorothy Hughes, 85, who was a gunner in the British Army, and Winifred Phillips, 82, a former Auxiliary Territorial Service member. They will live with more than 300 male war veterans at the famed Royal Chelsea Hospital (see picture) in London, which was established in 1682 for the "succour and relief of veterans broken by age and war". The criteria for membership



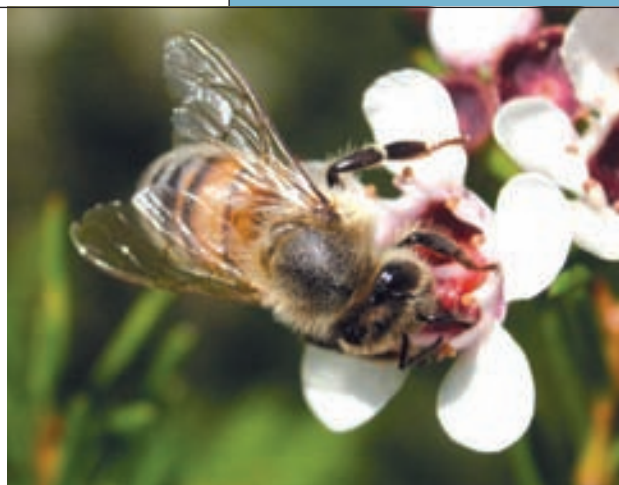
today: being over the age of 65, being free of a dependent spouse and receiving an Army pension. In a ceremony held in March, the two women, clad in the resplendent red coat that is the hallmark of Chelsea pensioners, were welcomed to their new home. "I raised the question of why women were not allowed to become members a decade ago," Phillips tells the BBC. "Now, my wish has come true. It's just like being in the Army all over again but you don't have so much to do."



## WILD SILVER

### THE BUZZ ON AGEING

Scientists at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the UK have bees on their brain. They have been awarded a £ 500,000 grant from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) to investigate **what happens in bumble bee colonies as the queens age.** The three-year study, which will be led by Professor Andrew Bourke of the UEA's School of Biological Sciences, will be run jointly with the University of Southampton. "As queen bees age, they produce fewer offspring, which provokes conflict over the inheritance of resources," explains Bourke to London newspaper *The Times*. "As the social makeup of the hive changes, a tipping point occurs when queens should die and pass on the hive to her worker daughters. However, from the daughters' perspective, that point occurs earlier, creating a conflict over the inheritance of the resource. We think this will accelerate the queen's ageing and is also why workers sometimes kill their mother queen." Dr Joel Parker of the University of Southampton will contribute to the



study by investigating how genes in the bees are switched on or off as family relations within the hive deteriorate with time. "Our research will be the first to test how social conflicts affect ageing," he says. "Simultaneously exploring the behaviour, biochemistry and genetics of these social insects can provide useful information on the ageing process in any animal that passes on resources to offspring, including humans."

## H RECOMMENDS



**Spread the word.** If you have stacks of old books cluttering up your home, don't bury them in cartons. Instead donate them to your neigh-

bourhood library. Silver residents of University Village, a retirement community near Cal Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California, recently donated over 250 books to the Book Bag, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting literacy and the love of reading. "I went through my shelves and picked out the books I figured I wouldn't read again," says 74 year-old Aimee Malloy. "So out went all the whodunits. But all the Harlequin romances stayed."

**Capture the moment.** Have fun with your cameras and take pictures of your friends—who knows, it could become a winning habit! In the UK, Age Concern Barnet, a chapter of the national charity for the elderly, has launched a photo competition in the borough for people over 55. It has invited entries by silvers, of silvers—depicted as fit, healthy and active. Prizes include gift vouchers to spend on photography equipment and tickets to the cinema. The winning photos will be featured in Age Concern Barnet's 2010 calendar, which will be on sale from October this year.



*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!*

## MARATHON BLUES



**Samjiskar: miles to conquer**

I have participated in the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon for the past seven years. Though I have managed to clock in a decent sprint every year, at the marathon held in January 2009, I came first in the 'Super Veterans 65 years and Above' category. Needless to mention, I was

elated. I ran a distance of 21 km from Azad Maidan to Worli and back, in 2 hours, 4 minutes and 59 seconds. Unfortunately, there was no one at the finishing line to record my entry. When I entered Azad Maidan, I saw many participants being felicitated in different categories. I waited till the end to hear my name being called out, but in vain.

I returned home dejected. Though I followed up with the organisers, I was told that the results for the seniors' category would be announced on the Internet. The results were finally declared online in the first week of March. Later, I received a cheque of

Rs 13,475 and a gold medal by courier. I am not hungry for publicity but I would have been happier if I had been felici-

**"No dream is too distant if we believe in ourselves"**

tated at the event itself. I believe that all senior citizens who participate in such events should be felicitated so that others can achieve similar feats.

Of course, I refuse to be disillusioned by this small setback. I am 66 years old and I am happy to say that

my life has never been more fulfilling than it is right now. A few years ago, I formed a group of serious walkers and athletes—people interested in participating in walkathons and marathons. From 14 enthusiasts, we have now grown to 70 members. Four years ago, I signed up for karate classes at the Japan Karate Academy in Mumbai. The enthusiasm of the other students—mostly children—spurs me to do better. In the past four years, I have won many medals and certificates at various karate championships. These days, I am busy working out to stay fit so I can participate in the Siachen Glacier Salto Ridge Trek scheduled in 2010.

The best way to beat ageing blues is to explore myriad avenues that life has to offer. No dream is too distant if we have will power and determination, and if we believe in ourselves.

—Mahadev B Samjiskar, Mumbai

## A MUSICAL LIFE

I have been playing the mouth organ for the past 54 years. The mouth organ not only creates soul-stirring music but also helps us to improve breathing. It works almost like *pranayama*; as you breathe out and in to play a melody, the muscles in your diaphragm are rigorously exercised.

I learnt the basics of playing the instrument from my schoolteachers, Pandit Janorikar and Pandit Phulambrikar, who used to play the harmonium. I then repeated the same notations on the mouth organ. In 1956, Shammi Kapoor's film *Tumsa Nahin Dekha* was released. The movie's title song was the first song that I managed to master fully on the mouth organ. Later, at a school gathering I played one of my favourite songs, *Yeh chand khila, yeh taare hase* from the movie *Anari*. In 1982, when Raj Kapoor was shooting for *Prem Rog* near Raj Baug in Loni, Pune, I went to the sets and played the song on my mouth organ. Kapoor *saab* was very appreciative and touched that a 26-year old song was still kept alive. Later, when I played Rishi Kapoor's song, *Dafli wale* from the film *Sargam*,



HEMANT PATIL

### Naik: serenading life

he was so happy he asked me to teach him to play the song on the harmonica.

There is a certain inexplicable charm to old Hindi film songs. I have won many awards at local competitions whenever I have played these songs.

I have performed English, Hindi and Marathi songs on various music programmes on TV and played for live audiences in various cities. In 1981-82 when I was visiting Baghdad on work (I am an architect and town planner), I played my mouth organ for three hours for a multicultural audience. Many of them recorded my performance on their music player.

Over the years, I have learnt to play about 150 songs—ranging from *Tumsa nahin dekha* to *Papa kehte hai, bada naam karega*. I am partial to old songs, as I think songs today lack melody and rhythm. However, regardless of the songs I play, my harmonica is both a stress buster and a source of boundless joy.

—Ashok Kumar Naik, Pune

### YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

If there is some truth in the saying that ageing fades away your memories, my uncle Gunanidi Das is a notable exception. Last Diwali, my brother and his wife joined us for Diwali at our ancestral home in Orissa. As we sat chatting, my brother recalled our childhood days, when we used to prepare our list of crackers and hand it over to our father—who would trim it according to his budget. As we recalled the good old days, we remembered our uncle and aunt, or *Mausa* and *Aye* as we address them in Oriya. We decided to pay them a visit the next morning. When we reached *Mausa's* house the next day, we noticed the old gate with its squeaky hook. Even the inevitable rusty clang was a throwback to our childhood. We heard *Mausa* calling out to *Aye* to check if a postman was at the door.

When they saw my brother and I at their doorstep, *Mausa* and *Aye* were stunned. We noticed that both had grown very old and frail. *Mausa* still seemed to ably manage the house, the tenants and the garden but *Aye* was not so fortunate—her back was badly bent. Her daily rigorous routine of household work and prayers had taken their toll on her health.

*Mausa* showed us photos of their grandchildren as he joyfully narrated the boisterous antics of their annual summer visits. He was a little concerned that I had taken up writing as a profession. He had retired from the accounts department of the state government. So I could not blame him for his apprehensions towards my rather 'uncertain' vocation. However, he felt more reassured by my brother's choice of career—that of a Class I gazetted officer.

We spent the day chatting and laughing over past episodes of familial bonhomie.

Before we bade goodbye, we went to the ground floor where we had lived earlier. Though some things had changed, some things remained the same. The mango tree no longer bore fruit and was replaced by smaller plants. We also did not find the beehive that *Mausa* used to check every day to see if there was enough honey for extraction. He believed that any delay in extraction would cause a feud in the hive and the queen would be driven away by her progeny.

We returned home after taking photographs of the couple and the old house. And I finally realised that though we may have come far from the sweet old days of our childhood, it's up to us to reach out and reclaim them.

—Suresh Kasuladev,  
Bhubaneswar

**"It's up to us to reach out and reclaim our childhood"**



Kasuladev's uncle and aunt

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# Promise TO CARE

Dr Jane Barratt believes that caregiving forges relationships and therefore shouldn't be perceived as a burden

Providing care to a loved one can be a difficult and physically demanding experience—a time that is emotionally and often financially taxing, and frequently at odds with work schedules and family responsibilities. As sure as the day is light and the night is dark, each of us will receive 'care' from or 'care' for someone or some people in our family or our community. In the next few issues of *Harmony*, I will share with you some of the most important global issues related to family caregivers. The reason for this focus is both personal and professional. As my father approaches surgery at the end of this month, I am conscious that my 'caregiving role' for both my father (John) and mother (Billy) is tempered by the tyranny of distance as they live in Australia and I in Canada. Does this mean that my love and support is any less? The answer is 'no'! But as a result of distance, I can't be involved in the practical tasks surrounding the surgery—such as transport to and from hospital—which are ably met by my mother. How then can I be of value and be part of a caregiving relationship? It's a question to ponder.

The importance of family caregivers globally has never been greater than today. There are many reasons for this increasing trend, including better life expectancy, lower fertility rate, increasing healthcare costs, urban migration and changing expectations of generations. In 2007, a Caregiving Summit was convened in Washington DC to identify gaps in caregiving research and to explore these areas across sociology, psychology, social work, gerontology and economics. There was consensus on six key areas:

## **Economic implications of caregivers' health**

A study at the Oregon Health and Science University in 2004 showed that the health of family caregivers

should be as much a priority as the health of the patients they are caring for. The study found that people caring for spouses with Parkinson's are at greater risk for deteriorating health. The investigators studied spouse-caregivers from early in the diagnosis of their spouses' condition and then a decade later. The goal was to identify early warning signs in families that would predict who is at greatest risk of caregiver strain, and the consequent effect on health.

## **Workforce implications underline caregiving**

The number of caregivers in the workforce has increased threefold in the past five years in developed countries and will continue to increase in the next 10 years. Many working caregivers have given up a job at a financial cost to be borne by them alone. Dr Gema Hernandez, former secretary of Florida-based Department of Elder Affairs, while speaking to magazine *Today's Caregiver*, said, "The rewards are there for companies that provide assistance to the working caregivers. This is an investment that, at the end, will save money and generate goodwill for all."

*Each of us will  
either be a  
caregiver or  
receive care  
during our life*

## **Intergenerational transfers and caregiving**

The importance of intergenerational exchanges and equity is shown by a multi-centre project, the Study on Ageing, Health, and Well-being (*Salud, Bienestar y Envejecimiento en América Latina, or Proyecto SABE*). The SABE study was carried out in 2000 in seven major cities of Latin America and the Caribbean: Bridgetown, Buenos Aires, Havana, Mexico City, Montevideo, Santiago, and São Paulo. According to it, intergenerational family transfers are more evident when an older person lives in the same household with an adult child. The co-residing elder gives about the same amount of aid as he or she receives from the

adult child and other younger members of the household. For elders who do not co-reside with their children, the degree of intergenerational transfers is much lower, but these elders are more likely to receive aid than give. The SABE data shows that the exchange is rarely strictly monetary. Silvers primarily receive from their children food and clothing, transportation, and such other services as help with house-keeping. They also provide help to younger generations, including caregiving for grandchildren, help with household chores, and some monetary aid.



Barratt's parents John and Billy

### Informal and formal caregiving

Formal caregivers may also be volunteers from a government or non-profit organisation. In developed countries the trend is towards using more formal care as, unlike the past, informal (or family) caregivers need to maintain paid employment to support their own families. These responsibilities often make it necessary to hire non-medical home care aides and help when the primary caregiver cannot be present. As adult day services have become more common, caregivers often pay for this form of formal caregiving to get rest or to allow for maintaining employment.

### Caregiving through life

In many countries, caregiving is a duty—one that is

uncommonly recognised in law. There is an existing argument to examine caregiving using a life-course approach. Using this approach, the role of a caregiver is interrelated with the other roles in the caregiver's life as well as that of his/her family. As our social structures change, caregiving could be thought of as a part of the overall life pattern woven into our roles in the workplace and families. The degree to which a person is embedded in the role is varied.

### The caregiving experience

Each caregiver has different needs, feelings, challenges and rewards. Each family member's relationship with the receiver is unique, influencing expectations and the overall experience. A growing body of research highlights the difference in these experiences. For example:

- Men tend to think about caregiving and, therefore, approach it differently than women.
- Husbands and wives differ from adult children or other relatives in what they do, how they do it, how long they do it, and when they let others help.
- Each of us forms personal expectations of ourselves as caregivers. These expectations are shaped by past experiences and observations, societal rules, our cultural heritage and our own family rules.
- Caregiving can cause changes in physical and emotional health, finances, and time available to participate in other family, social, work, leisure or community activities.
- People who perform the same task may have very different experiences. One person might feel very uncomfortable emptying a commode, while someone else may not give it a second thought. Caregivers also experience different types and levels of stress over a period of time.

Throughout our life we wear many labels—mother or father and sister or brother. The label we wear is not the essence of who we are. Each one of us will either be a caregiver or receive care from another person during our life. May this experience be one that is valued rather than one that is devalued! 🏡

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*Dr Jane Barratt is Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing*



# The Tagore effect

A master at the art of adaptation, Sharmila Tagore plays the many roles in her life—actor, aristocrat, parent, censor, cognoscente, goodwill ambassador with effortless élan. Her memories are vivid, her convictions strong, and her words eloquent, as **Arati Rajan Menon** discovers on a balmy afternoon in New Delhi

**THIS IS WHAT IT MUST FEEL** like to be so incredibly comfortable in your own skin. Sharmila Tagore at 62 in flip-flops, cropped pants and a paisley shirt, hair casually pulled back, not a trace of makeup on her glowing face. Looking out over a sun-dappled courtyard, her living room in South Delhi's fashionable Vasant Vihar echoes her effortless confidence with a muted elegance that reveals no telltale clues about its inhabitants. Beige walls and white sofas; miniatures punctuated by

works by Jamini Roy, Paresh Maity and Sachin Jaltare; silver and crystal bric-a-brac on the teak and marble-topped tables; the odd Diptyque candle. Amid this serenity sits Tagore, actor, aristocrat, a master at the art of adaptation.

An award-winning performer who began working at the age of 14 and never really stopped, she wrapped up three films in 2008 alone: Marathi film *Samantar* directed by and co-starring Amol Palekar; *Antaheen* directed by Aniruddha Raychowdhury, a casting coup that brings her together with Aparna Sen; and Nagesh Kukunoor's *8 x 10 Tasveer*, a thriller that released in April where she plays Akshay Kumar's mother. Further, she squeezed in time to play judge on reality music show *Dhoom Macha De* along with composer-singer Shankar Mahadevan and lyricist Prasoon Joshi—an experience she loved because "I could be myself". Tagore is also chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification, a post she has held since 2005, and a goodwill ambassador for UNICEF—she works with HIV/AIDS patients.

A person who is constantly "in evolution"; Tagore craves music, books, conversations, experiences, for they help her grow. "There's no real point when you know it all, is there?" she asks, eyes sparkling. What she does know, however, she believes in fervently. And communicates eloquently.



SHIVAY BHANDARI





#### IN HER WORDS:

**People keep clamouring for ‘different films’ but would rather support a *Singh is King* than a *Little Zizou* or *Firaq*.** Our industry and films are still male-dominated and people want very superficial entertainment. Even in a multiplex film, they would choose something like *Dev D* with more shock value. A film directed by a woman that has less violence and more nuance doesn’t get the same kind of support. The standard of critics in our country is also very poor. It’s like Oscar Wilde once said, “The play was a success but the audience was a damn failure!”

**After I saw *Dor* and *Iqbal*, I told Nagesh Kukunoor I’d like to work with him.** Then he offered me *8 x 10 Tasveer*. It’s a different genre, a thriller, but I enjoyed it. I also completed *Samantar* with Amol Palekar last year—he’d been wanting us to work together for a long time. It was a challenge because I had to speak in Marathi. It’s a very cultured language, like Bengali, and you need to get the diction right. The connection between the audience and the actor breaks instantly if you hit the wrong note.

**As an actor, I would describe myself as competent.** There’s no

end to being better. I played the ‘heroine’ consistently till 1980, after which I started doing character roles. But even while I was doing glamorous films like *An Evening in Paris*, I would also do more serious roles like *Anupama*. *Mausam* had some challenging elements in terms of doing a double role and playing a sex worker. I also enjoyed *Safar* because I played the role of an independent, professional woman [doctor]. Otherwise your reference point is always a man. Though I feel there’s more strength and naturalness towards the end of my career, the innocence in the early films also has its charm.



# THERE'S MORE STRENGTH AND NATURALNESS TOWARDS THE END OF MY CAREER, BUT THE INNOCENCE IN THE EARLY FILMS ALSO HAS ITS CHARM

**How can you go from Satyajit Ray to Shammi Kapoor?** That's what many Bengalis wondered when I moved to Bombay in 1963 to act in *Kashmir ki Kali*. They felt let down. But I was a floater—I just decided to explore a new avenue. Bombay was a culture shock. I struggled to lip-synch for my songs, grappled with dance steps, and tried awfully hard to look glamorous and sexy. Still, I never felt I was betraying my roots because I was secure in my own identity and had the support of my parents. I had abundant resources inside me to draw from.

**My Bengali core has always been very strong.** I am related from both sides of my family to Rabin-dranath Tagore. We lived in a joint family: my grandfather, his brother and their families. At any given time there were about 15 children in the house. We celebrated every festival along with the attendant rituals and cuisine; even the *alpana* would differ accordingly. We mingled with the adults a lot; we participated in their discussions, recited our poetry to them, and sang—I was the worst singer and hugely teased for it!

**As a Bengali—or any actor for that matter—you can't get a better debut than to work with Satyajit Ray.** I was only 14 when he directed me in *Apur Sansar*. For my first ever shot, I had to cross over

the threshold and enter a room. I never asked Manik *da* [Ray] if he actually intended it to be so symbolic! A year later, I did *Devi* with him. I was completely uninhibited in front of the camera because I was so young. Besides, I had no problems understanding the nuances of my characters. We were very different from teenagers today. We wore saris and carried ourselves with elegance. We were well read and precocious—I remember I would sit in front of the mirror and dream endlessly.

**I was a suspect when I first came to Bombay.** The norm for heroines in the industry was to wear white saris, be constantly chaperoned and never drink or smoke in public. But I lived on my own in hotels; did what I liked; wore hipsters. The film world reacted very strongly. Over time, I learnt that you can save yourself a lot of trouble by conforming and cultivating a certain public image. You have to choose your battles—every battle is not worth fighting for.

**It was as tough to conduct a romance in the public glare in the 1960s as it is today.** I met Tiger [Mansur Ali Khan, the Nawab of Pataudi] in 1965; we were engaged in 1967 and married in 1968. Though the media was not quite so intrusive, there were plenty of rags who would write distasteful things. People also made much of

the religious and cultural differences but there was really no dramatic transition. Tiger and I both came from old families who were equally feudal. We knew the arts of sharing, tolerance and diplomacy, so necessary in an extended family. The only adjustment was that in Tiger's household, they had to make rice—which they call *khushka*—especially for me. And I had to make my own fish curry!

**As you get older the price tag on your mistakes gets steeper.** That's something I try and tell my children. My instinct tells me when to keep quiet and when to assert myself with them. Although we can't impose our views on them, they are as confused as any generation and can benefit from our experience, learn from our mistakes. You don't have to touch fire to know it burns! But I guess they have to make their own mistakes too—experience pain, loss, humiliation even—and learn from them.

**Having Sharmila Tagore as a mother has been an advantage and a drawback for Saif and Soha.** They walked right into the industry. Imagine coming from a small town. How do you start? There are so many heartbreaks. But the problem for our children is that once they arrive, they have to live up to people's expectations. And that's very hard. As for Saba, she always wanted to become a [jewellery] designer so she went to art school. Tiger has also nominated her as *mutawalli* [chief trustee] of our estates and shrines in Bhopal—she's quite a religious girl and the most appropriate choice.

**I was the first mother-in-law to be in the labour room of Breach**

## A TIME LINE



### **Apur Sansar (1959)**

Tagore was only 14 when she played the role of the young, innocent bride in *Apur Sansar*. She went on to become one of Ray's favourite actors, essaying powerful roles in films like *Seemabaddha*, *Aranyer Din Ratri* and *Devi*.



### **Kashmir ki Kali (1964)**

Though she says she struggled to lip-synch and dance around trees initially, none of her discomfort was obvious in her first Hindi film *Kashmir ki Kali*.

**Candy Hospital in Bombay!** I was terrified to hold my granddaughter Sara when she was born; she was so tiny. Saif handled her like a pro though. Now, she's 13 and her brother Ibrahim is 8. Sadly, because of the distance—they live in Mumbai—and the divorce, we don't get to see them too often. With the children already dividing their time between their parents, it seems unfair to put more demands on them.

**Tiger and I share our silences very well.** After 40 years of marriage, words and gestures are not always necessary. Both of us enjoy our own company so we give each other plenty of space. We also enjoy our holidays together to England, or Pataudi, which is very healing because you are so cut off from everything. The greatest life-

lesson from marriage is that you can't 'fix' or change each other—there are certain things you've agreed upon, and what you've never agreed upon you never will. Know that and you're happy.

**Shooting in America for Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* was an empowering, and enlightening, experience.** The system was so efficient; as an actor the union would look after you. I got a check for \$ 800 after I returned to India with a polite note that it was for rehearsals and overtime! We all lived in a motel in Greenwood, Mississippi, and cooked in our rooms. With the 'per diem' I received, I bought myself a fridge, an ironing board and iron. The entire unit would get together in the evenings. It was so much fun. I also saw the flipside of the

American dream in Mississippi; the racial prejudice, poverty, illiteracy, the proliferation of encephalitis. They just sugar-coat their inequalities better.

**No filmmaker can work out of context from his environment.** Cinema's job is to uplift you and transcend reality. But if it can deliver a political comment without compromising on its aesthetic sensibility, like Picasso's *Guernica* [about the bombing of Guernica in Spain by Germany during the Spanish Civil War], that's even better. If your film can even touch one soul, it's a great thing. Our society has many closed doors that films and actors can try and open.

**Unfortunately, the industry has become an inward-looking club where people talk about their**



#### **8 x 10 Tasveer (2009)**

In the roles that she chooses now, Tagore looks for strength and substance more than glamour.



#### **Dhoom Mache De**

*Dhoom Mache De* marks Tagore's television debut as judge of NDTV Imagine's new musical reality show.

INDIAN EXPRESS

## IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOOK GOOD AS LONG AS YOU DON'T MAKE A CARICATURE OF YOURSELF. GROOM YOURSELF, BUT ACCEPT THAT AGEING IS INEVITABLE

**own films and play their own music at their own parties.** Things used to be different. I remember Ashok Kumar with his repertoire of jokes. Other stimulating conversationalists were Balraj Sahni and Motilal. Or Gulzar and Yusuf *saab* [Dilip Kumar]—the Punjabi they speak is almost lyrical. That era ended with actors like him and directors like Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Bimal Roy. The industry became self-obsessed. There's also no understanding among younger actors of what has gone before

them, no knowledge of the legacy of cinema. It's like Sehwag once asked, "Who's Vinoo Mankad?" You see the same attitude in the film industry.

**Even Aishwarya Rai would be considered old by today's standards.** And what of Madhuri Dixit? It's so sad. That's why you have a 'life stops at 30' syndrome where you take home whatever you can and then get married. I was fortunate enough to keep working—*Aradhana* was released

after my marriage; *Amar Prem* after Saif, *Mausam* after Saba, *Grihapravesha* after Soha. But as you get older, you don't get powerful roles. Those go to men like Om Puri or Anupam Kher. They are undoubtedly brilliant actors—but so is Waheeda Rehman. Still, the girls in films today are on a better wicket. In my time, the women were really exploited. Almost everyone had a male 'mentor' who would never marry you but had you at their beck and call. Today, you are your own person and not somebody's pleasure object.

**If you are 60, all the Botox in the world won't get you Deepika Padukone's roles, or even Juhi Chawla's.** In fact, looking your age might get you even more interesting roles. Just look at Zohra Sehgal! It's important to





look good as long as you don't make a caricature of yourself. Groom yourself well, colour your hair—whatever makes you feel good—but accept that ageing is inevitable. Instead of being stuck in a time warp, you can be more

attractive and interesting to younger people by expanding your own horizons.

**There's something very exotic about watching a film where you don't know the language.** I watch

## AS YOU GET OLDER THE PRICE TAG ON YOUR MISTAKES GET STEEPER—THAT'S WHAT I TELL MY CHILDREN

a lot of foreign films when I am in England—European, Chinese, Iranian. In music, I listen to everything from *qawwali* to jazz, Rabindra Sangeet to film songs. I loved Rahman's *Jodha Akbar* soundtrack and one song from *Delhi 6*—no, no, not *Masakalli*, the other slow one! Whenever I hear a song I like, I put it on my iPod.

**I am addicted to exercise.** Unless I'm travelling, I go to the gym everyday—an hour of cardio followed by stretches. I have no serious health problems, just some aches and pains, so I eat everything, albeit with less oil. I eat vegetarian during the day and non-vegetarian at dinner. When I put on weight, I give up my evening *phulka* for a while.

**I'm now planning to nest for a while.** Last year was extremely busy with my films, the reality show and my work with UNICEF. Now I am in spring-cleaning mode. It's been over 20 years since I sorted out our homes [in Delhi, Bhopal and Pataudi]. I need to sort out the children's things—they refuse to take their stuff! I'm also working on a garden in Pataudi on a plot of arid land. To create something out of nothingness, now that's a challenge—it consumes my thoughts these days. 🌱

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# BICYCLE DIARIES

As more cars roll into the market, the humble cycle is lagging behind. Or is it? **Rajashree Balam** meets five silvers who tell us why they love their (two) wheels

**I**n Netherlands, cycleways (network of paths dedicated to cycles) can be used to travel from one city to another. In the UK, the London Ambulance Service has introduced bicycle paramedics, who are able to reach the scene of a medical crisis faster than any ambulance. At the sprawling Mercedes-Benz factory in Sindelfingen in Germany, employees use bicycles to move around their expansive workplace. In Puducherry, cycling is still the favourite mode of transport while in Bengaluru, more and more software engineers are cycling to work. The Pune Municipal Corporation is drafting a proposal to impose tax on two-wheelers and parked vehicles that encroach on cycle tracks.

Indeed, though the cyclist is largely relegated to the margins in urban India, more and more people are slowly waking up to the benefits that cycling offers. It's not just the cheapest mode of transport but also a great way to stay healthy. Fitness experts worldwide recommend cycling as one of the best aerobic workouts to burn calories and keep your heart healthy. It also reduces pollution, which aggravates respiratory disorders like asthma and bronchitis.

Of course, the silvers we met insist that cycling is not just about fitness but a whole lot of fun and freedom. Who says you can't have it all?





## BHAGWATI OZA, VADODARA

A scuba diver, athlete, swimmer and cyclist, Bhagwati Oza clearly does not lead a dull life. In 2001, the 71 year-old gynaecologist was the only woman cyclist from Gujarat who participated in the rally conducted by Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI) from Pune to Ahmedabad. Oza found out about the rally through a local newspaper and decided to give it a shot. For the rally, she repaired her old cycle from her college days and rode through remote villages in Gujarat for three days, stopping along the way to educate rural women about child and personal healthcare.

Since then, Oza has manoeuvred the handlebars through some tough terrain. In the past seven years, she has cycled from Wagah to Agra (750 km), Pune to Bengaluru (850 km) and Bhubaneswar to Kolkata (550 km). In 2002, she sold her car and now only uses her cycle to get around the city. Incidentally, in 2005, she even won a Hero cycle as a prize for winning a walkathon.

Oza believes age doesn't matter much when you have zeal on your side. On rallies, the energetic spinster shouts environmental slogans as enthusiastically as she cycles. She often chides her friends who drive their car to the local park for their morning walk. "Cycling is healthy for us and healthy for our planet. When will we understand that?"

Now that the summer vacations have begun, Oza is busy conducting cycling picnics for children. "Every other week, we pack a lunch, cycle to the outskirts of Vadodara and have a great time," she says. When asked if onlookers pass unsavoury remarks when they see her cycling at her age, the self-proclaimed rebel simply shrugs: "*Kuch to log kahenge, logon ka kaam hai kehna* [people will talk, they can't help it]."

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The Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI) conducts rallies to promote health awareness on issues like anaemia and safe motherhood. Contact Dr Shirish Patwardhan on (0)9422009847 for details.









### **BRIAN D'SOUZA, MUMBAI**

Brian D'Souza refuses to let even his son touch his BSA. "I don't think anyone can treat it as lovingly as I do," says the 70 year-old, who has had his wheels for the past 40 years. D'Souza does all his daily errands on his bicycle. "If I don't cycle for even four days, I feel lethargic." Though the family owns a car and a bike, D'Souza preferred cycling even when he was assistant general manager at Air India—he used to cycle 8 km everyday to Santacruz airport where he worked. "I have been cycling for as long as I can remember," says D'Souza, who lost his right eye in a stray shooting accident at the age of five. His impaired vision, however, does not stop him from participating in cycling rallies and expeditions. He rode from Mumbai to Pune—180 km—twice. Though he does it mostly to stay fit, the whippet-thin silver cheerfully admits cycling is also the best way to indulge in healthy escapism. At the same time, D'Souza rues the callous treatment doled out to cyclists in India. "I wish we had dedicated cycling pathways like they do in the West," he says.

He remembers his college days in Pune, when one needed a cycling license. "It was mandatory to fix lamps on our cycle...I miss those kerosene lamps," he says wistfully. D'Souza is part of an online cycling forum, [www.cyclists.in](http://www.cyclists.in), and contributes generously with both comments and camaraderie. The group meets up every week in Shivaji Park in Mumbai. "I enjoy the enthusiasm and the energy of the youngsters," he says.

On 28 March, he participated in the Critical Mass cycling rally held in Mumbai where 80 cyclists gathered to ride from Bandra to Worli. The occasional rally apart, D'Souza is mostly a lone rider. "When I am feeling blue, I ride over to the beach and watch the waves come in. It's the best feeling in the whole world."

**Critical Mass is a monthly cycling rally held in Mumbai on the last Saturday of every month. To know more, write to Anoop Ranjan at [criticalmass.mumbai@gmail.com](mailto:criticalmass.mumbai@gmail.com) or call (0)9821423074.**



## SHANTANU KUMAR AND SURENDRA GUPTA, DELHI

Shantanu Kumar and Surendra Gupta have been friends for 25 years now. Both are adventure enthusiasts who met through a trekking group. Kumar (*right*) and Gupta (*left*) also enjoy playing tennis everyday. So when the two heard of the rent-a-cycle service launched by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, it was only natural for them to start cycling together—they began just two months ago. “We hire a cycle from the Indraprastha station and ride about 15 km all over Delhi,” says 67 year-old Gupta. At present, as they cycle only twice a month, hiring a cycle seems more practical. But Kumar is planning to buy a set of wheels soon. As both are working, they set out early at 8 am and cycle across India Gate, Shanti Nagar and other such less crowded areas.

“Cycling has helped reduce the swelling in my feet that usually settles in at the end of the day owing to my sedentary desk job,” says the 59 year-old Kumar, a businessman. Gupta works as an administration officer at a private company. Both enjoy the activity as it offers them a chance to stay fit as well as catch up on each other’s lives.

The duo is now trying to get other friends to join up. One of Kumar’s friend had to be hospitalised after a cycling accident recently and both admit that most silvers are often deterred by the thought of a mishap. “There is a certain amount of risk,” concedes Gupta. “But we should live each moment fully and not let anything stop us.” Kumar agrees with his friend’s never-say-die philosophy. The two are planning to cycle more often and take off on a long distance expedition some day soon.

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation offers cycles on hire to help you reach your destination from select metro stations. Available at: Vishwavidyalaya, Pragati Maidan, Indraprastha and Patel Chowk stations; fee: Rs 10 for four hours; timings: 6 am to 11 pm.







## NIRUPAMA BHAVE, PUNE

Nirupama Bhave looks every bit the mathematics professor she is—stern, no-nonsense and sharp. But the 61 year-old brims with more daredevilry and spirit than a teenager. Bhave is just back from an arduous trek through Mansarovar. Before that she participated in the Enduro India fitness challenge, a 100-km punishing routine that involved cross country running, rappelling, river-crossing, cycling and other stamina-busting activities.

Bhave was inspired to take up cycling when a friend visited her house on a cycle. “He could not stop talking about the virtues of cycling and by the end of the evening I had bought his spiel,” says Bhave with a chuckle. She repaired her niece’s old cycle and started cycling around the city. Initially, she lost her balance but soon she was cycling alone to Katraj Ghat, Bhore and Mahabaleshwar. Bhave is also part of the Pune Cycle Prathisthan and is a regular at their monthly rally. “Cycling has opened the world for me,” she says. “I have made so many new friends and discovered roads that I would not have otherwise.” Bhave feels one should not give into the initial trepidation when one stumbles while cycling: “There is always a first time for everything. The trick is to follow the voice in your heart and not the ones around you.”

Bhave’s inner voice has taken her far: from Pune to Kolkata, Chennai, Rajasthan and Leh. Her husband who was initially apprehensive about her pursuit now encourages her. A couple of years ago, she bought a Trek bicycle for Rs 17,000. Now, she is planning a cycling trip to Goa with her friend’s 15 year-old nephew.

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Pune Cycle Prathisthan (PCP) is a Pune-based NGO that conducts two cycling rides every month—one on the first Sunday and the other on the third Sunday of every month. Contact Dilip Sarda on (0)9823041533 or Nirupama Bhave on (0)9421017263 for more details.











## DEEPA MOHAN, BENGALURU

Four years ago, Deepa Mohan gave up driving the family car. "I realised we could do a world of good for our environment and for ourselves if we stop spewing noxious petrol fumes needlessly," says the freelance writer and art critic. The 55 year-old is often seen weaving her way through Bengaluru's snarling traffic perched on her Ladybird.

Mohan and her husband discovered the benefits of cycling when he had a heart attack at the age of 38. "We both decided to take up some form of exercise to stay fit," says Mohan. "We chose cycling because we knew we would stick to it as we both enjoyed it." While her husband bought a TI cycle, she spruced up her daughter's long-neglected bicycle. Initially she only pedalled modest rounds around the bylanes near her house. Today, Mohan uses the cycle to get everywhere—pay the telephone bills; catch a play at the theatre; shop for groceries; and to participate in environmental rallies. On an average, she cycles 10 km everyday and is also an avid swimmer. Her only daughter, who is also a keen cyclist, is now expecting her first baby. "Some day my grandchild and I will cycle together," she says, breaking into infectious laughter. At present, Mohan is battling a cramp in her calves owing to a muscular condition and has been advised to stay off the cycle for a month. "I can't wait to feel the wind in my hair all over again," she says. For silvers planning to take up cycling, Mohan has just one advice: do it carefully but enthusiastically.

## GET GOING!

### CYCLING GROUPS

#### Delhi Cycling Club

C/o ITDP-India I I/I, Jangpura Road  
New Delhi-110014  
Tel: (0)9711557480

#### Tamil Nadu Cycling Association

No-9 Lakshmana Nagar  
Paper Mills Road, Peravallur  
Chennai-600082. Tel: 044-26713008

#### Bangalore Bikers Club

Email: [bangalore-bikers@  
googlegroups.com](mailto:bangalore-bikers@googlegroups.com)

### DESIGN A CYCLE TRAIL

Does the journey excite you as much as the destination? A design workshop will be conducted in Auroville, Pondicherry from 18 May to 17 June 2009. The aim of the workshop is to explore and design a cycle trail prototype including paths, stands, shelters, signage, lighting and accessories. For more information, contact (0)948848313 or write to [bikescape@gmail.com](mailto:bikescape@gmail.com)

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Bhuleshwar	22408890, 22413642	Kandivali (W)	29673361, 29671125	Vasai (W)	95250-2340321, 2340839		

OYSTERS/GB/04/2009



# Cool *spread*

Beat the heat wave with **Dr Pushpesh Pant's** recipes

When the summer arrives with scorching gusts of wind, the appetite slackens and we pine for respite. The problem is even more distressing for those who have to live with dietary

restrictions. Dilruba, a unique delicacy of lentils, helps cope with the challenge enjoyably. And to tickle the sweet tooth there is an exceptional peachy delight—refreshingly light and full of goodness!

## DILRUBA

**Preparation time:** 35 minutes

**Cooking time:** 20 minutes

**Serves:** 2

### INGREDIENTS

- Moong dal (yellow, husked): 100 gm
- Cumin powder (*jeera*): 1/2 tsp

- Coriander powder: 1/2 tsp
- Turmeric powder: 1/4 tsp
- Clove powder: 1/4 tsp
- Pepper powder: 1/4 tsp; freshly ground
- Dried ginger powder: 1/4 tsp
- Royal cumin seeds (whole): 1/4 tsp
- Dried unripe mango powder (*amchur*): 1/4 tsp
- A small pinch of asafoetida (*hing*): 1/4 tsp
- A small pinch of low sodium salt
- Green chillies: two; slit, deseeded and chopped fine
- Fresh ginger: one-inch piece; scraped and diced
- Nutralite: 1 tsp

### METHOD

Pick and wash lentils. Soak in water for 30 minutes. Drain and reserve. Boil a cup of water in a pan. Add *moong dal* along with all the powdered spices and salt. Cook on medium heat for about 10 minutes. Remove scum that rises to surface and mash with the back of a ladle to porridge-like consistency. Heat Nutralite and add *hing*. When it dissolves, add cumin seeds and pour immediately over the *dal*. Garnish with chopped chillies and ginger.



# ARHOO KI KISHTI

**Preparation time:** 5 minutes

**Serves:** 2

## INGREDIENTS

- Peach halves: Two; fresh or canned in syrup
- Banana: one; peeled and sliced
- A small bunch of fresh seedless grapes
- Raisins: 1 tsp
- Walnut kernels: 4; halved

- Thick unsweetened yogurt: 2 tbsp

- Dark bitter chocolate (optional): 1 tsp; grated

## METHOD

In case you are using canned peaches, drain the syrup and rinse the fruit at least twice in water to remove sugar residue. Place on a platter, pack with equal quantities

of sliced banana, grapes, raisins and walnut kernels. Streak with yogurt and sprinkle chocolate. ■



*Dr Pushpesh Pant, our culinary expert, is a documentary producer, author and die-hard foodie*



VILAS KALGUTKER; Food styling: ANITA SARIN



# Metabolism REGULATOR

Undiagnosed thyroid problems can lead to serious health issues, warns **Swati Amar**

**T**he thyroid—a butterfly-shaped gland located below the Adam's apple—produces thyroid hormones that regulate the speed of metabolism and the consequent consumption of energy. Any anomaly in the production of thyroid hormones (lower or higher than normal levels) causes hypothyroidism (underactive gland) and hyperthyroidism (overactive gland). Thyroid problems are among the most common and under-diagnosed health conditions.

## INCREASING INCIDENCE

Nearly 40 million Indians—mostly women—suffer from hypo or hyperthyroidism. “Both hypo and hyperthyroidism can develop at any age,” says Dr Usha Sriram, a leading endocrinologist from Chennai currently based in the US. “However, the conditions become more prevalent as people get older, particularly women. Both hypo and hyperthyroidism are mostly autoimmune disorders (where our body makes antibodies against our own glands) and post-menopausal women are more prone to hypothyroidism.”

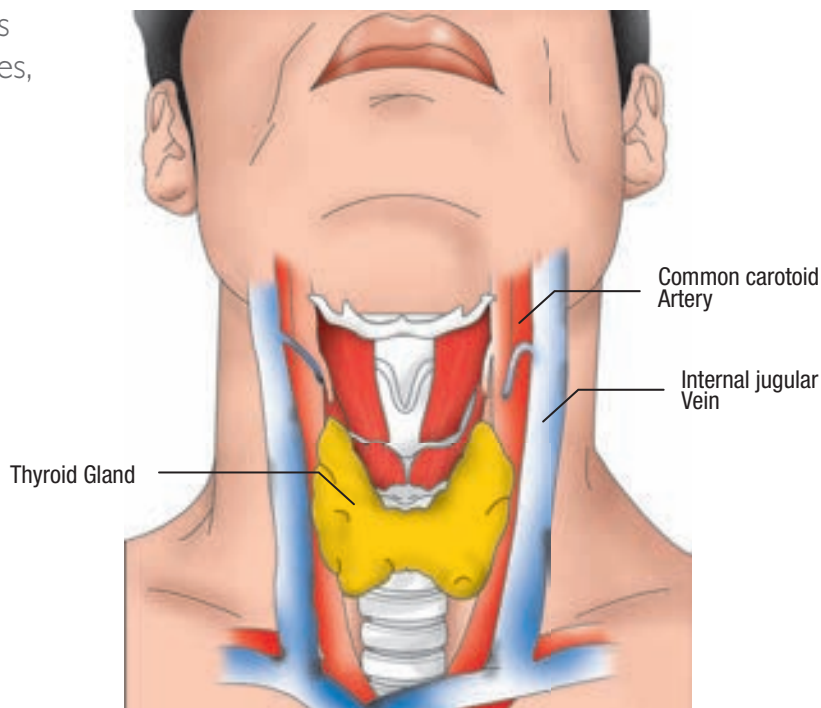
“Thyroid dysfunction is not uncommon in the elderly,” agrees Dr Shriram Mahadevan, consultant endocrinologist, Associates in Clinical Endocrinology, Education

and Research (ACEER), Chennai. Both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism occur in old age, the former being more common. Swelling of the thyroid may be more common in elderly and would need careful evaluation.

“Worldwide, hypothyroidism is the more common thyroid problem among senior citizens, as it occurs because of thyroid surgery, radioactive iodine treatment, inflammatory conditions and some medications,” says Dr A G Unnikrishnan, professor of endocrinology, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, Kochi. “Occurring rarely, hyperthyroidism is difficult to recognise among the elderly as it's often present in a subtle manner. In elderly

patients, swellings of the thyroid gland (commonly called goitre) may also occur.”

Dr Vageesh Ayyar S, associate professor of endocrinology, St John's Medical College & Hospital, Bengaluru, and faculty at Indian Thyroid Society, lays stress on the importance of detecting symptoms of thyroid dysfunction among the elderly. Higher prevalence of hypothyroidism and the paucity of classical signs and symptoms make it essential for including thyroid disorder in the differential diagnosis of every elderly patient's problems. “Routine thyroid screening should be a part of the periodic medical evaluation of the elderly,” says



Dr Ayyar. Early treatment of abnormal thyroid function can help avoid complications that may result from the otherwise treatable problem.

### DIFFICULT DETECTION

However, this is often easier said than done. According to Dr Mahadevan, high degree of suspicion is required to diagnose thyroid dysfunction in the elderly. "For example, tremors, increased appetite, diarrhoea, excessive sweating, palpitation and irritability are typical of thyrotoxic state (symptoms of thyroid excess) in the young and may not occur in the elderly," he says. "Instead, they may present vague symptoms of depression, low appetite and constipation which are referred to as apathetic thyrotoxicosis. It is also important to diagnose and treat sub-clinical thyrotoxicosis (mildly overactive thyroid) as it may aggravate osteoporosis, angina or arrhythmias (heart rhythm abnormalities)."

In thyroid dysfunction, there are classic symptoms that raise suspicion. For instance, hypothyroidism usually causes fatigue, poor appetite, weight gain, body swelling (oedema), muscle cramps, slowing of speech, decreased memory, sleepiness and constipation. It tends to make silvers more sensitive to drugs for insomnia and other medications, and can cause drowsiness, anaesthesia and cold temperature. They may also suffer from severe dryness of skin. Left untreated, hypothyroidism can lead to high blood pressure, slowing of the heart, and collection of fluid around the heart.

In Dr Sriram's opinion, the elderly are likely to have other medical

problems such as diabetes, hypertension, heart conditions, dementia and osteoporosis. Some of these symptoms can be mistaken for normal ageing and hence diagnosis is delayed. Though dementia is an important problem associated with hypothyroidism, it is one of the few reversible causes according to Dr Unnikrishnan. Prompt diagnosis and therapy can improve memory remarkably.

Hypothyroidism can raise cholesterol level. Women after menopause are also vulnerable to osteoporosis. This bone loss worsens with coexisting hyperthyroidism.

Hyperthyroidism may cause weight loss, increased appetite, palpitations, sleeplessness, diarrhoea and tremors. There may be a swelling of the thyroid and bulging of eyes. The condition may be present with the usual symptoms or as apathetic hyperthyroidism. In this case, the elderly typically suffer from depression, poor appetite, weight loss and constipation. It may also manifest as irregular heartbeats (atrial fibrillation), congestive heart failure or heart attack. In people above 50, hyperthyroidism can increase the heart rate to dangerously high levels.

### TREATMENT

As most thyroid diseases are easily curable, Dr Unnikrishnan advises promptness in therapy. Hypothyroidism can be treated with levothyroxine (an orally used form of the thyroid hormone). It is treated by anti-thyroid drugs, thyroid surgery or radioactive iodine. Swellings of the thyroid glands may be benign or malignant. Thyroid malignancies are among the most easily treatable forms of

### SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHYROIDISM

- Fatigue and sleepiness
- Weight gain
- Poor appetite
- Constipation
- Muscle cramps
- Reduced memory
- Slowed speech
- Dry skin and body itching
- Anaemia

### SYMPTOMS OF HYPERTHYROIDISM

- Weight loss
- Increased appetite
- Anxiety and sleeplessness
- Tremors
- Diarrhoea
- Prominence of the eyes
- Increased heartbeat

cancers with most being curable if detected early.

"Awareness of the symptoms and blood tests help diagnose thyroid dysfunction," says Dr Sriram. According to him, it is advisable to start treatment for hypothyroidism with a low dose of thyroxine and gradually change the dosage based on clinical status and thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) blood tests. As pre-existing conditions like heart disease, arthritis and diabetes and use of multiple medications tend to be common in the elderly, extra caution is required for managing the thyroid problem. Any mismanagement could worsen lipid abnormalities and endanger the heart. Also, both osteoporosis and dementia may be aggravated if the level of thyroxine treatment is not monitored or high doses are prescribed. ■





# Smile please!

Dental implants have many benefits, says **Dr Rajeev Narvekar**

**Q** I need to get a diseased tooth extracted. What are the various replacement options?

**A** As we age, some of us lose teeth owing to disease, injury or wear and tear. Traditionally, a lost tooth was replaced with a fixed (non-removable) dental bridge. Bridges are made of metal subframes with tooth-coloured porcelain to approximate the natural colour of teeth. These bridges are usually cemented to adjacent, healthy teeth that serve as an abutment (support).

Typically, conventional bridges require part of the healthy teeth adjacent to a missing tooth to be cut down. The bridge is then placed on these reshaped teeth. The goal of the bridge is to restore chewing function and achieve an aesthetic outcome.

**Q** Are there any disadvantages of using a dental bridge?

**A** Preparing (cutting) functional healthy teeth is the main disadvantage of a bridge. In addition, bridgework is connected to the adjacent teeth, making flossing more challenging.

**Q** Are dental implants a better alternative to a dental bridge?

**A** Dental implants work better than dental bridges. They eliminate the need to grind down healthy teeth. They are small metal screws designed specifically to replace a natural tooth root. Manufactured from titanium, dental implants provide a highly biocompatible surface, TiUnite, encouraging bone to attach to the implant during the healing process to ensure long-term results. These implants provide stimulation to the underlying bone. The all-ceramic components (Procera crown and abutment)

of an implant can give a more natural-looking tooth, just like the rest of your teeth.

**Q** What are the advantages of dental implants? Is there surgery involved?

**A** Implants preserve your healthy teeth as the process does not require any grinding of adjacent teeth. A minor surgical procedure is involved in placing dental implants into the jawbone. These serve the function of a root of a tooth and support the crown (replacement for a missing tooth). Implants have a success rate of 97-98 per cent. Some brands, like Nobel, come with a guarantee.

**Q** Are dental implants very new in our country or have they been around for some time?

**A** More and more people are benefiting from dental implants. Implants have a wide application, from replacement of a single tooth and multiple missing teeth to complete dentures. They have been in the country for at least 15 to 20 years, but their acceptance is growing as patients see the advantages of this procedure.

**Q** Is the procedure painful? Would you recommend dental implants for an older person?

**A** The process requires a minor surgical procedure, a healing period and finally a restorative phase to place the prosthesis on the implant or implants. There is some discomfort after the surgical phase but it rarely lasts beyond a day or two after surgery. Today, minimally invasive (keyhole) surgery carried out with NobelGuide (computer guided surgery) allows us to place the implants with no swelling or postoperative pain and with a fixed solution available at the time of surgery (immediate loading). The procedure is equally applicable to older and younger people.

---

*Dr Rajeev Narvekar is consultant prosthodontist at Jaslok Hospital and head of the Centre for Advanced Dentistry at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai*

# ATTENTION SENIOR CITIZENS



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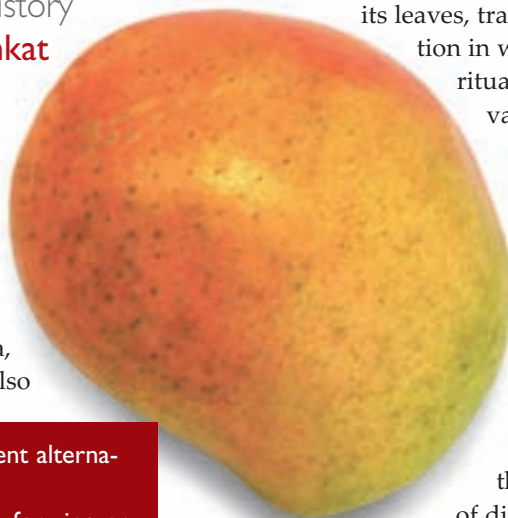
# WINNING DUO

Mangoes and garlic are rich in history and benefits, says **Dr Vijaya Venkat**

## MANGO

No fruit has as rich a historical record of being worshiped, celebrated and loved as the mango. It is a fruit that is said to measure a king's wealth, one that even gods and demons fought over. A universal favourite, mango is grown in many tropical regions. In India, the demand is not just for the fruit but also

- Dried mango (*aam papad*) is an excellent alternative to sweets
- Mango powder (*amchur*) is a substitute for vinegar



its leaves, traditionally used for decoration in weddings and religious rituals. With over a thousand varieties, each characterised by its unique flavour, fragrance, size, shape, colour and texture, around 30 to 35 varieties of the fruit are cultivated commercially.

Low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium, the mango is a good source of dietary fibre—an average-sized fruit contains up to 40 per cent of

## GARLIC

In use for more than 5,000 years in China, Egypt, India, Greece and Rome, garlic is recorded as a panacea—a cure all. Although nutritional analysis (RDA) reveals zero value, early healers knew better! Used for culinary and medicinal purposes, its distinctive pungent flavour mellows significantly with cooking.

Though born into an orthodox Brahmin family, I remember my grandmother dish out a compulsory

40-day garlic treatment to my pregnant aunt, and extend it to the newborn. Garlic massages, garlic infusions, garlic to drive away the spirits, garlic to eat. As I grew up and studied nutrition charts, my own research revealed that it was allicin (an anti-bacterial component) and alliin (an amino acid) that make garlic 'nature's antibiotic'. In fact, the dependence of the Red Army on garlic resulted in it being called the Russian penicillin.

The doctrine of signatures was a popular theory in the late Middle Ages. Nature was the green-print for human health and the physical resemblance of plants with human body parts decided their benefits for specific organs. The garlic plant has a hollow stem, so it was said to benefit afflictions of the wind pipe (asthma, bronchial problems). Its overall heart-like shape decided its benefits for heart ailments. Though relegated to herbal history, the principles still hold true.

After World War I, soldiers suffering from gangrene, septic poisoning and wound infections recovered with the use of garlic. Research has traced garlic's antiseptic properties to sulphur—33 sulphur compounds have been discovered in a single pod. With



the daily fibre requirement. Also rich in Vitamins A and C, it has traces of Vitamins E, B and K. A good source of minerals like copper and potassium, the 'king of fruits' can replenish lost potassium in physically active people. Raw mango contains starch which gets converted into sugar as the fruit ripens. These sugars are very useful for weight gain when consumed with milk. Enzymes with stomach-soothing properties similar to papain found in papayas make the mango a digestive aid.

The mango contains a mixture of phytochemicals and nutrients that would classify it as a 'model superfruit'—a term now used to highlight potential beneficial health values of certain fruits. Highly nourishing, wholesome and restorative, the mango is a body builder, purifier and vitaliser and traditionally used for treating disorders of the stomach, liver and eyes and bacterial infections. Go ahead, indulge without guilt!

- Garlic paste and water solution makes an effective pesticide
- Face pack or scrub with garlic paste is a natural beauty aid

no toxic after-effects, garlic is invaluable for anaemia, asthma, regulating sugar, blood clotting, hypertension and chest and heart conditions.

Garlic is best eaten raw as cooking destroys its anti-bacterial properties. Besides containing multiple anti-cancer compounds and antioxidants that boost the immune system, it is valuable as a curative and preventive medicine. In addition, it is a good home remedy for flatulence, hoarseness, cough, colds and congestion.



*Dr Vijaya Venkat, Mumbai-based nutritionist and health activist, is founder and head of the Health Awareness Centre. If you have any questions for her, write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*

## ? Weight WATCH

**Dr Joe Lewis** answers your questions on diet, weight and exercise

**Q** Of late, I have been feeling very unfit. What is the best way to incorporate physical activity in my daily routine?

**A** Earlier, physical activity was interwoven into our daily routine, so we did not have to plan to be active. New attractions, mostly sedentary, now claim our time—TV viewing, Internet surfing and emailing, and shopping at malls. However, with age, exercise becomes important. Inactivity leads to an inevitable loss of muscle, the most vital body tissue. The more inactive we are, the more muscle we lose.

Getting into exercise need not take much planning or motivation. It calls for sneaking in physical activity, however small, into everyday life and building up momentum—the key is 'momentum', not will power. So, either walk down to buy your daily groceries or climb a flight of stairs instead of taking the lift; even a short walk after dinner will help. There are many other things to do during the day. Be self-reliant with some household chores. You could hand wash some clothes, exaggerating your movements to feel your muscles contract. Reach out for your bookshelf or filing cabinet, clean it, rearrange it and keep a regular schedule. Not everything should be done in a day; spread it out through the week.

Discover tasks you have not done for years—polishing the silver or cleaning mirrors, with hands moving in a circular fashion to flex your muscles in arms and shoulders. Everyday chores can be made much more productive when done in an exercise fashion. With a bit of planning and a will to change, bring activity back into your life.



*Dr Joe Lewis is head of research and development at Kaya Life, a chain of professional weight-control centres (SMS Life to 54646). If you have a question for him, write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## 2 ASK THE EXPERT

**Dr Anjali Mukerjee** answers your questions on nutrition, fitness and health

**Q** My mother is 84. She can't digest normal food and often suffers from diarrhoea. She also experiences frequent thirst and urination. Please suggest an appropriate diet plan.

**A** The body's digestive process undergoes radical change in later years as a result of inadequate digestive enzymes, difficulty in chewing and loss of appetite. We would need to understand your mother's medical history before chalking out a plan. The fact that she experiences frequent thirst and urination highlights the need for detailed investigations of her haemoglobin, blood sugar, liver function and lipid profile. Based on the few symptoms pointed out by you, I suggest the following dietary guidelines:

- Eliminate milk and milk products like cheese from her diet. Usually, people with weak digestion are found to be deficient in lactose (the enzyme that digests the sugar in milk). Undigested lactose ferments in the gut and causes bloating, pain, cramps and even diarrhoea. She may continue having buttermilk or yoghurt and calcium supplements to meet her daily calcium needs.
- If the main symptom is diarrhoea, eating ripe banana, apple, yoghurt and puréed vegetables can be helpful. These contain soluble fibre that helps combat diarrhoea; pectin in apples and carrots is known to possess stool binding properties.
- Eating slowly and chewing properly aids digestion. Eat small, frequent meals rather than two big meals.
- Give her soft and easily chewable foods like *khichdee*, vegetable broth, *dal* soup, curd, boiled vegetables, fruit juice, mashed potatoes and broken wheat porridge.
- Half a cup of aloe vera juice consumed on an empty stomach improves digestion and reduces acidity, gas and bloating.

- Some people internalise stress, which in turn affects their digestion and gastrointestinal tract. Learning to relax, de-stressing through *pranayama*, deep breathing exercises and meditation can be of great help.

**Q** I have no health problems other than heartburn and indigestion after dinner. I usually skip breakfast, grab a small bite for lunch but drink a lot of coffee, and eat a large dinner. Please advise me.

**A** Heart burn or acid indigestion can become chronic if adequate preventive measures are not taken. Water helps wash out acid wastes in the body. Begin your day with four glasses of water, but avoid drinking it along with meals to reduce bloating. Avoid foods containing caffeine, refined and processed food, sour fruits (and juices) like orange, sweet lime and grape fruit, and hot spices, chocolate, alcohol and fried food. If you are overweight, lose the extra kilos. Large meals eaten quickly or going to bed soon after eating may also cause heartburn. Avoid skipping breakfast and keeping long gaps in between meals. Drink a glass of *dudhillauki* (bottlegourd) juice twice a day. It is alkaline in nature and helps prevent heartburn. Eat a bowl of papaya or pineapple for breakfast. The enzymes in these fruits aid digestion and prevent heartburn.

**Q** A vegetarian, I eat three regular meals but suffer from gas. What should I do?

**A** In a vegetarian diet, most fried foods, aubergine (eggplant), refined flour, coconut, cucumber, cabbage, cauliflower, soybean, yeast, milk, whole *dal* like *channa* and *rajma*, green peas, radish and nuts may produce gas. Eliminate them one at a time to see which one is the culprit. Drinking herb tea made from peppermint leaves after meals helps combat acidity, gas and bloating. Adopt correct eating habits, avoid tobacco and caffeine, exercise regularly and get adequate sleep.



*Nutritionist Dr Anjali Mukerjee is the founder of Health Total, a nutrition counselling centre. If you have a question for her, write to [query@health-total.com](mailto:query@health-total.com) Website: [www.health-total.com](http://www.health-total.com)*

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# Happy kidneys

Keep them fit and functional with yoga, says **Shameem Akthar**

Some systems in our body are silent but important workers in preserving the vitality of our life. The pair of kidneys located at our

middle back belongs to this category. Except in congenital or genetically created ailments, the health of our kidneys has little to do with age and everything to do with diligent maintenance. Simple tricks to keep our kidneys happy include maintaining a healthy body weight (as this affects blood pressure), eating healthy and physical activity of at least 30 minutes a day, as well as avoiding cigarettes, processed foods and too many soft drinks.

Overkill of painkillers and certain medications and an excessively protein, salt or cholesterol-rich diet can slowly ruin our kidneys. Also, lifestyle diseases like hypertension, anaemia, diabetes, arteriosclerosis and circulatory problems are linked to kidney woes.

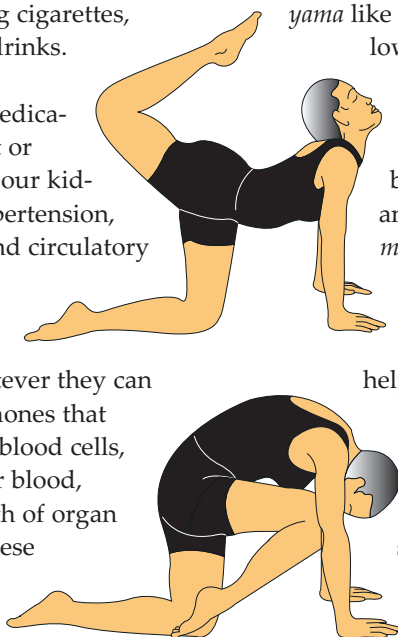
After all, the main function of the kidneys is to filter our blood, removing waste and saving up whatever they can for recycling. They also release hormones that regulate blood pressure, help create blood cells, maintain the chemical balance of our blood, and power bone health. So, the health of organ systems that are involved with all these functions also directly affects kidney health.

Despite advances in medicine, kidney problems can still reach an acute stage largely because they do not complain with symptoms as other systems do. When kidneys collapse, they do so suddenly after long-term degeneration, making repair and treatment difficult. They also hit all the other systems we spoke of, including the heart. And when the collapse happens, it usually hits both kidneys together.

A regular yoga programme along with dietary modification can assure kidney health. *Asana* and practices that work on the abdomen strongly are advised. These include breathing practices or *pranayama* like the skull-cleanser (*kapalabhati*) and bel-

lows breath (*bhastrika*); simple poses like the cat (*marjariasana*) and lion-roaring pose (*vyaghrasana*); supine poses like the lying thunderbolt (*supta vajrasana*); back-bends like the camel (*ushtrasana*); and twists like the half-spinal twist (*ardha matysendrasana*) and triangle (*trikonasana*).

Stomach locks like the upward flying practice (*uddiyana bandha*) and metabolic fire practice (*agnisara kriya*) also help tone the entire abdomen. The cleansing, toning sun salutation sequence (*surya namaskar*) is also recommended. It's important to remember that these practices are intended to strengthen the kidneys. For acute kidney problems, the programme has to be modified to individual needs. ■



## Yogic moves

### Lion-roaring pose (*vyaghrasana*)

Get down on your fours, on your knees, palms flat on ground. Inhale. Exhaling, move your right knee towards the face, while simultaneously bending the head down as if to make contact between either chin or nose and the knee. This may not happen in the first few attempts but

is usually possible after regular practice. Inhale, lift head back. This is one round. Do up to five rounds for the right leg. Repeat for the left leg.

**Benefits:** This pose tones all the organ systems at the abdomen, including the kidneys, and makes the spine flexible. It helps you lose fat owing to pressure on the thyroid gland, and keeps the face young.

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



**TOWARDS RECOVERY**

Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH), Mumbai, initiated the **Total Parkinson's Disease Care Programme** to mark World Parkinson's Day on

11 April. The first of its kind in the country, the programme offers maximum benefit to Parkinson's patients during a single half-day visit. "Parkinson's is not hereditary," says Dr Mohit Bhatt, psy-

chologist and movement disorder expert at KDAH, speaking to *Harmony*. "In India, 50 out of 100,000 persons are diagnosed with this disease, which can neither be cured nor prevented." He goes on to explain that treatment for Parkinson's in cities usually begins and ends with medication. However, in this time-tested programme, Dr Bhatt first assesses the patient and then advises medication. The patient also goes through a series of rehabilitation exercises for improving motor control and balance. Diet and speech—two common problems—are addressed separately by a dietician and speech therapist. "Within three hours, a patient has consultations with four specialists, based on the severity of the problem," adds Dr Bhatt. In order to benefit the maximum number of patients, this facility is available thrice a week at the subsidised rate of Rs 1,500.

**RESTLESS IN SLEEP**

According to the latest findings, about 10 per cent of people aged between 30 and 79 years across the world face problems sleeping at night owing to restlessness. Described as **Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)**, the condition causes sleep disturbance along with an aching painful sensation in the legs. While no one actually knows how chronic this neurological disorder is, about one-third of those affected experience symptoms at least twice a week, and suffer moderate to severe distress leading to daytime drowsiness. According to Richard P Allen of the World Association of Sleep Medicine, who has conducted research related to RLS for over 30 years, there are still misconceptions about the need for neurological attention like any other mental ailment. "The percentage analysed by researchers of this study is overestimated in the Indian context," says Dr Manoj Rajani, neurologist at Bhakti Vedant Hospital in Mumbai, speaking to *Harmony*. "Around 5 per cent of elderly

people suffer from this neuropsychological disorder, which requires timely diagnosis. Medicines with dopamine, like Levodopa and Pramipexole, provide relief but should be taken only after consulting a medical practitioner." Log on to [www.rlsunderthecovers.com](http://www.rlsunderthecovers.com) to learn more about research and treatment.





## SUGAR CONTROL

**Diabetes accentuates the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease** and can accelerate dementia. For a long time, researchers have been studying how the damage to vessels supplying blood to the brain may start revealing itself much before a patient is diagnosed with full blown diabetes. It is suspected that the patient gradually loses the ability to regulate blood sugar levels that can lead to 'vascular dementia', which is more aggressive than Alzheimer's. Uncontrolled vascular conditions provide enough reasons to fight diabetes and thus save the brain. According to Dr Yaakov Stern, Alzheimer's specialist at Columbia University Medical Centre, specialists can't do much about the pathology (sticky plaques that clog the brain) of Alzheimer's, but controlling vascular conditions could delay the disease. "About 5 per cent of diabetics are prone to Alzheimer's and vascular dementia," Dr Chakravarthi, neurosurgeon at Bharathi Raja Hospital in Chennai, tells *Harmony*. "People aged 65 to 70 should have periodical check-ups."

## GO VEG!

Consuming five portions of fruits and vegetables a day can help lower risk of cancer and other diseases. After studying 52,700 men and women aged between 20 and 89 years, experts from the University of Oxford conclude that **non meat eaters are at a lower risk of getting cancer** compared to meat eaters. Segregated into

three categories—vegetarians, meat eaters and fish eaters—the study highlights that the incidence of cancer in vegetarian and fish eating participants is significantly lower.

Speaking to *Harmony*, Dr Bindhu Joseph, consultant at Manipal Hospital in Bengaluru, says the findings are only indicative as the study was conducted in the West. "The research is associated with dietary habits of people with five regular, non-vegetarian meals," she explains. "In India, people usually

have non-vegetarian food twice or thrice a week, which is important for nutrition. A non-vegetarian diet in moderation is also helpful for the elderly, who are at risk of developing osteoporosis. Vegetarians who smoke and have caffeine and alcohol regularly are at a higher risk of developing cancer."



## ADVANTAGE BYPASS!

Compared to angioplasty, **heart bypass surgery could be less fatal for diabetics aged between 65 and 70 years**. The research—conducted by Stanford University in California, after studying the records of more than 7,800 patients—focuses on deciphering the difference between bypass surgery (implanting a vein to direct the blood vessel around the prime artery leading to the heart) and angioplasty (stretching, cleaning or opening the blocked artery with a webbed tube called a stent). Speaking to *Lancet Medical Journal*, study author Mark



Hlatky reports that 15-16 per cent of patients died because of either procedure. But diabetic patients were 30 per cent less likely to die with bypass surgery. "Patients with diabetes, and older patients, might have a significant survival advantage if treated with bypass," he says.

Patients under 55 were 25 per cent more likely to die with bypass than angioplasty. "Degree of severity and other conditions like blood pressure and sugar levels decide the treatment for elderly diabetic patients," Dr R K Caroli, consultant, Kalra Hospital, New Delhi, tells *Harmony*.



**SMART LIVING**

A new study suggests strong links between cognitive ability and longevity. According to lead researcher Dr David Batty of Medical Research Council's Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow, **people with higher IQ levels are likely to live to a healthy old age.** For the study, the medical history of about 1 million Swedish Army personnel was observed and links between intellect and mortality discovered. Batty confirms "a strong link between cognitive ability and lower mortality. People with higher IQ test scores tend to have a range of better behaviours that may partly explain the lower risk." Another study co-authored by Batty based on medical records of 4,000 US personnel comes to the same conclusion. And the *Daily Telegraph* reports that people with lower IQ levels could suffer from cardiovascular diseases, suicide and fatal accidents. Talking to *Harmony*, Dr P Raghurami Reddy, consultant, Asha Hospital, Hyderabad, says that the study based on IQ levels of westerners could not be fully applicable to Indians.

"However, parameters like healthy diet, medical facilities, neglect, lack of self awareness and information can have adverse affects during old age and, hence, longevity."



Max Hospital has launched a **Home Care Programme for Silvers in Delhi** and adjoining towns. Available every day from 8 am to 8 pm, the service includes a doctor's visit, nursing, caretakers, home oxygen, ECG, physiotherapy, sample collection, report dispatch, medicine delivery, ambulance and general procedures like dressing and suture removal. The **24-hour helpline number is 99997 77754.**

**PUSH THE CLOCK**

Researchers from Auckland University have discovered a viable **treatment for patients suffering from chronic sleeplessness.** Experts suggest spending less time in bed can help insomnia patients get adequate sleep. The major cause for lack of sleep is the tendency to hit the bed whenever one feels like it. The study participants were told to maintain a diary of the time spent awake in bed trying to sleep and, later, reduce the time in bed accordingly. After a couple



of weeks, it was observed that patients started getting tired keep-

ing records, which helped them sleep better. About 80-90 per cent showed improvement. "The advice to use the bed only for sleeping can actually help people from tossing and turning," agrees Dr Deepak Raheja, director, Hope Foundation, New Delhi. "Insomniacs who try to get some sleep at any point of the day can develop fear or anxiety, which could form a vicious cycle. This study is very relevant for the subcontinent and will help insomnia patients if they use the bed only for sleeping."



# Keeping the faith

The land influences religion, says **Dominique-Sila Khan**

**T**he 'Indianisation' (or rather re-Indianisation) of the Roman Church has been debated since Independence.

It may sound surprising, but many followers in Kerala find it difficult to accept the idea that Christianity is 'foreign' to India. Recall, for instance, Jose Anthony [a local acquaintance of the author], who sincerely believed that St George had manifested himself in Kerala and that all other St Georges were only 'duplicates'. To most of us, he may sound naïve. But these beliefs are not as simple as they seem.

Dempsey [author of *Kerala Sainthood*] has shown that most Malayali Christians like their Christs and their Holy Virgins to be blue-eyed and fair-skinned, like northern and western Europeans. She writes about a street vendor who could not sell recently introduced holy images because the figures had dark eyes and a dark complexion. Evidently, the current representations of the Christian Holy Family are very far from what the 'originals' may have been. Some scholars have even shown that, logically, Jesus must have had rather short hair, light brown skin and dark eyes. In fact, everybody knows that Christianity was imported to Europe and to the other continents, and that it is, historically speaking, not a 'foreign religion' only in Palestine, where ironically Christians are only a minority.

Jose Anthony had told me about his elder brother who was lucky enough to have joined a party of Catholics travelling to Rome. 'My brother told me that there people did not remove their shoes while

going inside the church.... So "un-Christian"! But of course they have one excuse: they live in a cold country.' On the other hand, one of my European friends was extremely surprised and annoyed when I told him that he had to remove his shoes before entering the St Sebastian Church: "How curious! Of course, this is all borrowed from Hinduism...." 'It may be so,' I had retorted. 'But you do not seem to be very familiar with the history of Christianity. In the olden times, Christians, like Jews, always entered their shrines barefoot. Have you forgotten the story of Moses and the burning bush: "Remove your sandals, Moses," said Elohim, "because you are treading a sacred soil."' "

To put it in a nutshell, if one envisions the historical process through which Christianity and other religions traversed before becoming what they are, it would be obvious that the issue of what should be regarded as 'foreign' in a given tradition is not so simple. Gilles Tarabout has shown how easy it is to misunderstand certain phenomena. Hearing about a

Nestorian ceremony, a swami affiliated to the Bharatiya Janata Party wrongly concluded that the representatives of that particular church had made a first step towards 'Hinduisation'. In fact, the Christians who had organised the festival had practised this type of ceremony for a very long time and certainly never meant it to be a 'Hinduised' version of a Christian ritual.

**Everywhere  
religions tend  
to transform  
themselves in an  
organic way**

Everywhere religions tend to develop and transform themselves—like languages—in an organic way. Religious leaders and reformers are comparable to the members of a literary academy; they artificially interfere with a natural process that often refuses to be fettered by dogmas or Cartesian logic. ■

*Excerpt from Sacred Kerala (Penguin Books; Rs 275; 231 pages). Dominique Sila Khan is an associate fellow of the Institute of Rajasthan Studies, Jaipur. She has a PhD in anthropology and has spent many years studying the interaction between Hinduism and Islam*



# Commanding respect

**MAJ GEN BASANT SINGH, 63**  
**WAS: Major General in the army**  
**IS: Administrator of a residential school in Dehradun**

I was born and brought up in Dehradun, which is a prominent military station. I sat for the National Defence Academy exam in 1962 and went on to join the Army. I retired in 2004, receiving an AVSM and YSM during my active service years. I was offered the post of a director in the Army for reemployed officers but my hometown beckoned. Om Pathak, a former colleague and dear friend, convinced me to take on the responsibility of administration at SelaQui World School, Dehradun, of which he is the founder chairman.

Both my son and daughter live in Canada, so I moved into the school to soak in some of the bubbling enthusiasm for life that youngsters have. The void of not being with my children and grandchildren was quite palpable. Hence I was on a lookout for an occupation that provided me with a set routine. A residential school was just the place.

The school has over 250 students from all over the world. In my capacity as the administrative head I spend a lot of time inculcating discipline among the staff and students, accompanying children for hack rides and attempting to provide for the needs of the boarders. I often sit with children to discuss the menu, striking the right



Singh shares an outstanding rapport with his students



## Call of the wild

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement



**After years in a sedentary job, I would now like to do something that involves working outdoors. I am interested in nature. Please advise me.**

You could join an organisation working to protect the environment or conserve wildlife. In recent years, interest in travel has seen a visible increase among the silver generation. If you have good networking and organisational capabilities, you could start a business venture specialising in nature tours to wildlife reserves, hill stations and beaches. Joining an existing outfit would provide hands-on experience and help you earn a commission by bringing in new clients. Though financial investment is minimal, investment

in terms of time for networking is enormous. Finalising itineraries and making travel, accommodation and food arrangements would be your responsibility.

—Raja Chatterjee

*Chatterjee is secretary of Jungles, an NGO for wildlife conservation, and owner of Out-Orbitors, a nature tour company in Kolkata*



**I was a teacher for over three decades. Now, after retirement, I plan to produce instructional audio tapes for educational institutions. Do you think it is a good idea?**

You have not specified what kind of instructional tapes you would like to produce. Many schools, col-



Courtesy: MAJOR GENERAL BASANT SINGH

balance between nutrition and flavour. I have also supervised the establishment of a state-of-the-art laundry in the premises and expanded the arboreal culture here. The campus displays bright flowers at the onset of every season. As the director, besides the financial and administrative portfolios, I am also trying to bring in automation. My staff has already switched from registers to computers. I also plan to create a healthy work culture by setting up a gymnasium and squash courts where everyone can exercise and unwind. I foresee inviting spiritual gurus for discourses as well.

I feel I have always belonged here. I want to witness the school blossom and evolve into one of the finest in the world.

—As told to Natasha Pathak

leges and business schools use audio and audiovisual teaching material. While most use the audio-video technique, some prefer e-learning modules that contain animation and instructional text. First, you need to do ample research on the need for educational material at different state and national levels.

To produce good quality audio material, you would also require the necessary infrastructure in terms of a studio and post-production facilities, unless you plan to outsource. The market for such products is not very strong at present and it would be advisable to network with a few institutions before investing. There are several educational CD-Rom products on the market—Navneet, Edurite, Eduocean, Apple Tree, Beanstalk Learning—that you may like to check out first. Three decades is a very long stint and your teaching experience would definitely prove to be a vital asset.

—Radha Choubey

*Mumbai-based Choubey has been a consultant for audio-visual educational material for almost a decade*



**Starting an eatery after retirement has always interested me. As a restaurant requires too much investment, perhaps I can begin with a food outlet. What are your suggestions?**

Investing in a restaurant is an expensive proposition. A food outlet is a much better idea. A franchise can lower the risk associated with operating your own business. However, the investment can be more than starting your own venture. Besides giving the franchiser a fee and a part of the profits, the rental and overheads are higher, especially if the outlet is in a mall. Governed by the rules of the agreement, you can only stock their merchandise. If it's your own outlet you can club different kinds of food together and also display products of other vendors. Though having an assistant helps, personal involvement is essential to control quality, pilferage and other losses.

—Kin Rathore

*Rathore owns a bakery outlet in Pune*

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# SIGNPOSTS OF FAITH

**Humra Quraishi** explores the Sufi *dargah*  
in and around Srinagar

**K**ashmir is a land that has—perhaps justifiably—generated stereotypes that refuse to go away. While newspapers scream a constant refrain of violence and death, tourist brochures continue to harp on sylvan gardens, *shikara* and pony rides, and cherry-picking. But

there is another intriguing aspect to the Valley: its legacy of Sufism.

The mystical dimension of Islam that advocates a life of austerity, love, tolerance and service to humanity, Sufism was introduced in Kashmir in the early 14th century when Bulbul Shah, a Muslim

Sufi saint from Turkistan arrived in the Valley. With the chains of the caste system among Kashmiris unshackled by Mahayana Buddhism, the new faith was eagerly embraced. As more and more Sufis came to Kashmir from Persia and Central Asia, preferring to settle down here owing to the similarity in climatic conditions, Kashmir, like Delhi and Ajmer, became a vibrant centre of Sufism. Indeed the 14th and the 15th centuries in its history are marked by the teachings of Sufi saints, revered by both Hindus and Muslims.



Though first built in 1395, the Shah-i-Hamdaan *dargah* was rebuilt several times later. Hamdaan moved to the Valley to escape the brutality of Timur in Persia



Even today, the *dargah* (shrines) dedicated to many of these saints stand proud in the Valley, weathered by time but holding their own against the elements. Whenever I visit Srinagar, I make it a point to visit at least some of them. Constructed almost entirely of wood, these *dargah* have a distinct architectural style—sloping roofs rising in tiers to form a pyramid, gables, overhanging eaves—that borrows variously from the pagodas of the East, the chalets of the Austrian Tyrol and the wooden churches of Scandinavia. While

some are laced with intricate wooden carvings, others are almost Spartan—punctuated by vivid slashes of colour from the threads tied by benediction-seeking visitors. Unless there is a curfew, you will always find many Kashmiris in these *dargah* rapt in prayer or contemplation, perhaps looking forward to less turbulent, happier times.

For instance, close to Nowhatta Chowk in the old city, on the banks of Jhelum, you'll find the *dargah* of Mir Sayyid Ali Hama-

dani, also known as the Shah-i-Hamdaan (king of Hamdaan). According to legend, he left the small Persian town of Hamdaan to escape the brutality of Timur and moved to Kashmir with 700 followers during the reign of King Shahabuddin in 1372 AD. Though the Shah-i-Hamdaan mosque was first built in 1395, it was rebuilt several times, and the present structure dates back to 1732. Built on an irregular foundation, its architecture stands out proudly against the backdrop of snow-clad mountains. It is particularly





## Unless there is a curfew you will find Kashmiris in these dargah, rapt in prayer

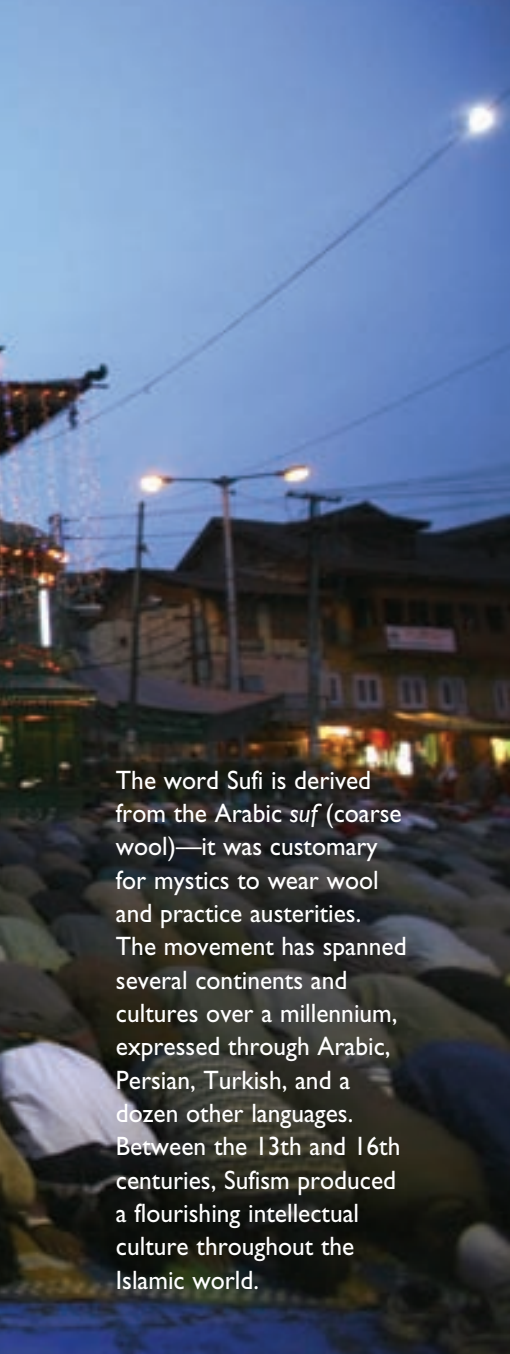
beautiful at nightfall when it is reflected in the flowing waters of the river Jhelum.

On the other side of Nowhatta Chowk, overlooking the main road is the *dargah* of Iraqi Sufi Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, popularly known as Dastgeer Sahib (one who shows the path). While some

believe he was one of the earliest Sufis to have come to Kashmir, as early as the 8th century, others insist it was his descendants who came and settled down in Srinagar to propagate Sufism. Further at the foot of Hari Parbat stands the *dargah* of Sheikh Hamza Makhdam, the 15th century Sufi scholar. This is beautifully laid out, with almond

trees all along the steps leading you up the slope to the shrine.

The most visited of them all, though, is the *dargah* of the patron saint of the valley, Sheikh Nuruddin Wali, at Charar-e-Sharif about 20 miles from Srinagar. This Kashmir-born Sufi was known among Hindus as Sahaj Nand, his original name, while Muslims called him Wali. It is said that he once showed up for a feast earlier than the appointed time dressed in tatters. Not recognising him, his



The word Sufi is derived from the Arabic *suf* (coarse wool)—it was customary for mystics to wear wool and practice austerities. The movement has spanned several continents and cultures over a millennium, expressed through Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and a dozen other languages. Between the 13th and 16th centuries, Sufism produced a flourishing intellectual culture throughout the Islamic world.

host's servants forbade him entry. He came back dressed in a flowing cloak and was given the seat of honour. When the time came to eat, he stretched forth his voluminous sleeves and put them on the table, saying: "The feast was not really for Nuruddin but for the long sleeves." His sayings—the *Nurnama*—are preserved at this shrine, which is now a popular pilgrimage destination.

A few kilometres ahead of Charare-Sharif is the scenic Pokhor Por,



Dusk and devotion cast a magical spell at the *dargah* of Iraqi Sufi Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani. One of the earliest Sufis to have arrived in the Valley, Jeelani is also remembered as Dastgeer Sahib



where you will find the *dargah* of Iraqi Sufi Syed Ali, whose power is still discussed in awed whispers. In fact, it is said that, even today, if a man looks in the direction of the graves of his family's womenfolk—situated on one side of the compound—he will turn blind.

Interestingly, women poets and mystics were also revered in the valley. Among them, the most noteworthy was Lal Ded, also known as Lalla Arifa, Lalla Maji, Laleshwari and Lalla Yogeshwari

variously. Born into a Hindu family in 1335 on the outskirts of Srinagar, she embraced Sufism following an unhappy marriage and devoted the rest of her life to spreading the message of peace through her poetry. Her inspiring *Vakhya* (words of mouth) in Kashmiri have even been translated into English. A popular one focuses on *sabr* (patience): *Patience, my son, is like a golden bowl/Being costly, none doth dare purchase it/Patience, my son, is a mixture of salt, pepper and cumin/*





Thousands of followers seeking redemption and peace flock to the Hamza Makhdum *dargah* at Hari Parbat. All his life, Sheikh Hamza Makhdum urged Kashmiris to abandon superstition



*It is bitter to taste, so who will savour it?*

Whether they were born in Kashmir, like Lalla Ded or Sheikh Nuruddin Wali, or came from foreign lands, Sufis found an unquestioned acceptance among the people in the Valley, who were won over by their selflessness and simplicity. In his memoirs, Mughal emperor Jehangir marvels, "Though they have no religious knowledge of any sort, they possess simplicity and are without

pretence. They abuse no one. They restrain the tongue of desire and the foot of seeking. They eat no flesh, they have no wives and always plant fruit-bearing trees so that men may benefit by them, themselves desiring no advantage...." Even more eloquent is Abu'l Fazl, vizier of Mughal emperor Akbar and author of the *Akbarnama*, when he records his meeting with Sufi saint Wahid: "Here an enlightened anchorite has come to my view. For 30 years he has, in an unnoticed corner,

been gathering happiness on an old mat...."

Further, the similarities between Sufism and other faiths in India helped the process of assimilation. For instance, many scholars have observed that there is not much difference between a *sanyasi* of Vedanta and a dervish (seeker) of Sufism. There are also many similarities between Buddhist philosophy and Sufi beliefs as both believe that the emancipation of the soul is not possible without the help of

## FACT FILE

### WHEN TO GO

April to June

### GETTING THERE

- By air: Srinagar's Sheikh ul Alam Airport is well connected to major cities of India. The other airport is Jammu, 295 km away.
- By train: Jammu Tawi, 305 km away, is the closest railway station to Srinagar.
- By road: Srinagar is linked to important cities like Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu, Leh, Kargil, Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Pahalgam by road. The main bus station is Lal Chowk.

### WHERE TO STAY:

- Apsara Hotel, Bishambar Nagar; Tel: 0194-2453182; Rs 600 upwards
- Broadway Hotel, Maulana Azad Road; Tel: 0194-2459001; Rs 5,000 upwards
- Hotel Premier, Residency Road; Tel: 0191-2543436, 2543731; Rs 1,200 upwards
- J & K Tourism Development Corporation Guest Houses; 0194-474060, 475915; Rs 2,000 upwards



knowledge. As historian G M D Sufi writes in *Kashir*, "...deeply imbued with Sufism of the age and country from which they emigrated, these Sayyids and their followers seem to have stimulated the tendency to mysticism for which Vedantism and Buddhism had already paved the way." Indeed, Mughal prince Dara Shukoh was so impressed by the faith that he constructed the Kas-i-Mah, a unique school of Sufism, the first of its kind in Asia, at the instance of his spiritual teacher Akhund

Mulla Mohammad Shah, who came from Badakshan, in present-day Afghanistan. Located close to the Chashme Shahi springs, you can still hear the echoes of grandeur in its dilapidated ruins.

Standing there, with the Dal Lake below and lofty mountains all around, I often wonder about the journey of the Sufis to the Valley and their assimilation here. In today's unsympathetic and materialistic times, these harbingers of harmony may well be labelled

'refugees' and marginalised, even ostracised. Even more disturbing is the fact that their message of love and peace—more relevant today than ever before—has been forgotten, lost in the din of violence and brinkmanship. Walk through these signposts of faith, though, and you will remember. ■

*Humra Quraishi is a writer-journalist and visiting professor at the Centre for Jawaharlal Nehru Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi*





## THE FLAUTISTS

For the Godkhindis, music is a family affair, reports Priya N

I was three years old when I picked up the flute and six when I first performed in public," says Bengaluru-based flautist Pravin Godkhindi. The 37 year-old was trained by his father Pandit Venkatesh Godkhindi, a well-known *bansuri* artiste and vocalist. At the age of 16, Pravin was awarded the title of 'Surmani' by the Sur Singar Samsad at the Kal Ke Kalakar Sammelan in Mumbai. "I am inspired by my father who is a self-taught artist," says the proud son. "Dad used to wait for a par-

### LEGACY

ticular programme to come on air and memorise the songs, as we couldn't afford a tape recorder in those days."

Pandit Godkhindi, now in his mid-60s, also worked at Akashwani (All India Radio) as a harmonium player. As part of his job, he travelled with many well-known vocalists and musicians all over the country on concerts. Over the years, Pandit Godkhindi continues

to follow his Kirana Gharana style, while Pravin has spread his wings to embrace Hindustani classical, Bollywood music and jazz. Pravin respects his father for not imposing any style constraints on him. "I hope to bring up my son in the same way," he says. His son Shadaj is only 7, and already refuses to be separated from his flute. Trained by his grandfather, he performed for an audience when he was just three years old. "He might not want to be a musician when he grows up," concedes

# MEMORIES AND MORE

Playwright **Purva Naresh** says she wrote *Afsane: Bai Se Bioscope Tak* as a tribute to her grandmother



Courtesy: PRAVIN GODKHANDI

Pravin. "While that will certainly sadden us, I also believe that his future is what he wants to make of it." In 2007, the three generations performed together in a state-wide tour of Karnataka.

Though Pravin is a qualified engineer, he can't think of a life beyond his flute. "When I see the pride in my father's eyes when I perform, I feel my life is complete. And when I see my son perform, I realise that so much of who we are is all in our genes."



## THEATRE

**What inspired you to write *Afsane: Bai Se Bioscope Tak*?**

My grandmother Beni Bai was a renowned *baithak* artist. She died a few years ago. Towards the end of her life, she was suffering from Alzheimer's syndrome. Often she would switch back to her youth and break into the mannerisms of a *baithak* artist and suddenly lapse into silence. Though she had lost her sense of 'self', the artist in her was still alive and vivid. It was both sad and amazing at the same time.

**The play has many elements from the bygone era. Did you speak to a lot of *baithak* artists as part of your research?**

My mother was working with

the Sangeet Natak Akademi. So I have grown up surrounded by performing artists. I spoke to both contemporary and old *nautanki* artists. I noticed that a lot of younger artists tend to be cynical of other entertainment like cinema and TV which is drawing audiences away from the theatre. But old artists are more benevolent. I guess with age, you learn to accept life gracefully.

**What's your next project?**

I have not started working on anything formally yet. But a lot of ideas spring forth over the weekends. I noticed that audiences everywhere liked my grandmother's character Beni Bai in *Bai Se Bioscope Tak*. So she is certainly going to be part of my future project [laughs].

***Afsane: Bai Se Bioscope Tak*** was among the top 10 plays short-listed for the Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards 2009. It's a part-scathing, part-humorous dialogue between two old *baithak* artists reminiscing about the days when entertainment in India was not 'corrupted' by cinema. The

play brims with live songs and Kathak.

**Directed by:** Akash Khurana

**Written by:** Purva Naresh

**Cast:** Trishla Patel, Tahira Nath, Dilshad Edibam, Purva Naresh and others

**Venue:** National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai

**Date:** 30 April





# The circle of life

Deepa Bhat Nair discovers how the past remains alive in all of us

Who knows what triggered the memory of my grandpa? Perhaps it was when someone amused my son with the same magic trick he played on us. *Ha dum dum dum dum*, he would go, as 14 of us watched spellbound; where did that coin disappear? Maybe it was news of a great uncle's heart attack or the article on Alzheimer's I came across recently in a local newspaper. It could have even been the charming film *Little Zizou*, where a little boy speaks regularly to a photo of his dead mother.

While a framed picture may be tangible, myriad memories in my mind are the intangible gems that keep him alive for me. I have vague floating memories of his face, his smile and touch, as well as concrete images—of him carrying a heavy bag laden with fresh vegetables from the market for us, or sounds of him singing the *Venkatesha Suprabhatam* (the Sanskrit hymn recited at dawn to rouse Lord Venkateshwara) at some unearthly hour while us cousins pulled the sheets closer over our ears. Some of my memories are like movies; I can see the entire *kake gubbachi* story he narrated. During balmy summer evenings spent at Dolithotta, his Mangalore-tiled home in the midst of a sprawling areca nut plantation in Puttur, Karnataka, we would beg for this story of the horrible crow that got into the sparrow's nest one rainy night and ate up all the fledglings, and he would oblige. *Badam buchi*, he would roar—that, you see, was the sound of the accompanying thunder in the story.

I vividly remember him marching into his garden with a long bamboo stick on a mission to bring down the juiciest *chickoo* for us. He planted these

trees when he moved into the house. They still remain but the *chickoo* are not so abundant or sweet anymore. I guess everything needs love and nurturing, or possibly happy memories are largely sweet. I remember his spectacular temper tantrums too, especially when lunch was not served by noon and dinner was not laid out by 7 pm. Today, my brother and I also get cranky when we do not eat on time. The truth is, my grandpa lives in us. He continues to survive through the *shloka* he taught us so patiently, the habits and mannerisms we inherited, even our little quirks, in overt and subtle ways. This is what they call the circle of life—it just took me a while to see it.

I never mourned him. Back then, I was young, raring to go. I made no effort to spend more time with him; the innocence of youth makes you believe that things will always stay the same. At 19, one has not used L'Oreal nor grappled with middle age. At 19, life seems permanent; at 37 you finally realise that nothing is forever. There were so many things I never asked him. What was it like to work with

**At 19, life seems permanent; at 37, you finally realise that nothing is forever**

the British? How did he cope with marriage at the age of 12? How did he ensure that the *dabba* were full of goodies when we went visiting? Did he enjoy travelling up north to meet us? Mom tells me the maundering of the *panda* of Haridwar disillusioned him. I never asked him more. I also never asked him how he managed to make each one of his 14 grandchildren feel special.

Don't get me wrong, this is not a litany of regret. Rather, it's about pausing in the midst of living to celebrate life and the people who have shaped us, defined us as individuals. In a sense, it's about the certainties in all the unknowns that surround us. Because though people's lives are transient, their light is eternal. ■

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Deepa Bhat Nair is a paediatric speech and language pathologist. She lives in Mumbai

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# Silver screen

Ageing is now in the spotlight, says **Vrinda Nabar**

**I**s the concern with ageing increasing globally? I believe it is, given the repeated focus on old age in recent cinema. The Jack

Nicholson movie *About Schmidt* (2002) had showcased a retired crank who finds himself marginalised, unloved, and unwanted by everyone including his daughter. Schmidt discovers that even his dead wife had been disloyal to him. Ndugu, the African orphan he had unthinkingly adopted, becomes his only form of human contact and he breaks down to learn that Ndugu cherishes his letters and looks forward to them. Placed as I was on the cusp of growing older, the movie's unredeemed darkness had depressed me but older friends had been unfazed, seeing Schmidt as the architect of his own ruin, his decline shaped by his own misdoings.

Thanks to *About Schmidt* I nearly didn't see *The Savages* (2007). When I did, the rueful laughter of the audience surprised me till I realised that the West had another take on not just old age but on children coping with geriatric parents.

Maybe this had something to do with the realities of their own lives. Ostensibly about old age, *The Savages* is really the story of Jon and Wendy Savage, two siblings trying to handle their messed-up personal lives when they find themselves having to assume responsibility for the abusive father they had long lost touch with. The movie's pathos, irony, self-analysis and humour arise from their conflicted reactions. Jon holds up a mirror to both of them, insisting that Wendy's concerns are not "about Dad... [but] about you and your guilt". Even as Jon reminds Wendy that "we're not in therapy now—we're in real life" they work to arrive at solutions that may not be perfect but incorporate more tolerance.

I thought of the Savages when I watched *Sunshine Cleaning* (2009) recently. "Real life" also informs Rose Lorkowski's problems: single parenthood, a hopeless affair, a sister and widowed father dependent on her. Their grim reality is considerably lightened by their reaching out not just to one another but to lives touched by tragedy. In doing the latter, both Rose and her father find a purpose that partially sublimates their own private heartaches and even makes for moments of unmistakable comedy.

Given my own gaining years, what moved me most was *Gran Torino* (2008) in which a gaunt Clint Eastwood transforms from a curmudgeonly Korean War veteran into someone who is drawn into protecting the Hmong family who are his neighbours. I think my response was because *Gran Torino* remains himself, intensely private, unwilling to become the social animal he never was, but his life has a new meaning because of his emotional bonding with these racially different people and his commitment to their safety and well-being. He even engineers his death in a way that ensures their victimisers are brought to justice.

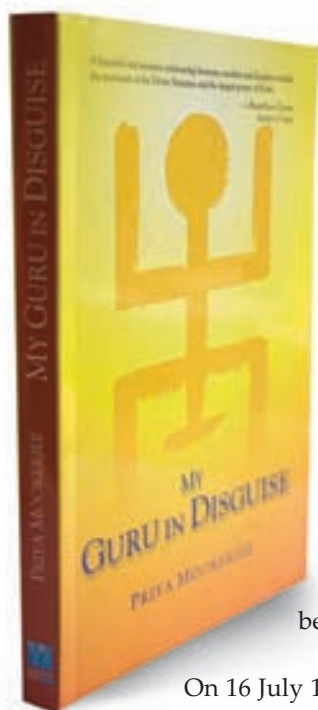
**The larger lesson urging one to reach out has a universal relevance**

Since Clint Eastwood had long been my poster boy his wrinkled gauntness was a reminder that I was no spring chicken, a fact reiterated when I saw a recent trailer showing yet another ageing poster boy Michael Caine as an eccentric grandfather bonding with his grandson in a magical mystery

tour, suggesting that the theme has not yet run its course but that there is a subtle shift from the bleakness of *About Schmidt*. The increased emphasis on the value of family and community is heartening given the context of Western individualism but the larger lesson, urging one to reach out and not withdraw with age, has a universal relevance, while on a purely personal note it's good to know that Eastwood and Caine remain major box-office draws. ■

*Vrinda Nabar, 61, is a feminist writer based in Mumbai*





# Mother, mystic

*My Guru in Disguise* by Priya Mookerjee

Wisdom Tree; Rs 245; 209 pages

At the best of times, the relationship between a mother and daughter is complicated; a coil of emotions and memories that binds two women irrevocably. And when one more strand insinuates itself into the skein—the mother's all-consuming quest for God—it all becomes very tangled.

On 16 July 1990, Sudha Mookerjee died at the age of 67 from severe burns—in the throes of a deep trance, she stood too close to the oil lamp at her altar and failed to react when her clothes caught fire. It marked the end of a tumultuous life in which the artistic and creative woman, who hailed from the family of Rabindranath Tagore, was perpetually torn between her need to explore the reaches of her spiritual being and the demands of her husband (renowned anthropologist Ajit Mookerjee) and two daughters. Now, almost two decades after her death, 61 year-old Priya, a graphic designer who lives in upstate New York, tells us what it was like to be her elder daughter—the agonies of her mother's absence and the delights of her presence that cast a spiritual glow that seeped into her life and ultimately impelled her to seek her own path to a higher consciousness.

So we travel from Calcutta to New Delhi, London to Hamburg and New York City living this family's life with them—the first blush of love, the arrival of the children, the degeneration of a marriage amid the pull of the divine, relationships redefined and re-forged. Mookerjee is unflinchingly honest in her remembrances with a candour that embraces not just the abiding joys and deep-rooted attachment but also the lost hopes, broken dreams and bitter conflicts. And it is this honesty that draws the reader in and elevates what is in essence a family chronicle to a book that is both moving and empowering.

—Arati Rajan Menon

## AUTHORSPEAK

### What prompted you to write this book?

I wrote this book for myself, as part of the healing process. It was a cathartic experience.

### Did it help let go of some of the anger you felt towards your mother for having neglected you?

Yes, writing did help my own feelings of anger. Perhaps the process of forgiveness began a long time ago. But if it did, I was not aware of it.

### How have your own spiritual journeys been informed by your mother's experiences?

As I grew older I realised that we are on this planet for a short time. So what we do with our lives and how we do it are important. Without a spiritual aspect—and by that I don't mean 'religious'—my life would not have any meaning.

### In what ways does your spiritual nature pervade your life in the 'real world'?

My spiritual life is a deeply internal matter and it affects everything I do. However, it is not something I do by not participating in regular life. It is something that includes everything.

### What lessons have you learnt from your mother that you'd like the readers of this book to absorb?

It is very simple, our connection to something greater that links us to the rest of humanity and everything that surrounds us. It is not just about being religious, but knowing that we are all part of something greater that is very close to our own heart.

### How do you view the process of ageing?

Very naturally. I know that we are more than just our bodies; we are also spirit.

## PASSAGES

# The inadequacy of the state

An extract from Sri Aurobindo's *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

Published in 1950 by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry

What, after all, is this State idea, this idea of the organised community to which the individual has to be immolated? Theoretically, it is the subordination of the individual to the good of all that is demanded; practically, it is his subordination to a collective egoism, political, military, economic, which seeks to satisfy certain collective aims and ambitions shaped and imposed on the great mass of the individuals by a smaller or larger number of ruling persons who are supposed in some way to represent the community. It is immaterial whether these belong to a governing class or emerge as in modern States from the mass partly by force of character, but much more by force of circumstances, nor does it make any essential difference that their aims and ideals are imposed nowadays more by the hypnotism of verbal persuasion than by overt and actual force. In either case, there is no guarantee that this ruling class or ruling body represents the best mind of the nation or its noblest aims or its higher instincts.

Nothing of the kind can be asserted of the modern politician in any part of the world; he does not represent the soul of a people or its aspirations. What he does usually represent is all the average pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception that is about him and these he represents well enough as well as a great deal of mental



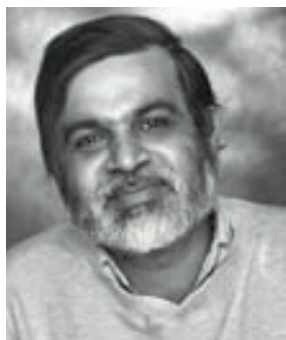
***Nature moves forward always in the midst of all stumblings and secures her aims in the end more often in spite of man's imperfect mentality than by its means***

incompetence and moral conventionality, timidity and pretence. Great issues often come to him for decision, but he does not deal with them greatly; high words and noble ideas are on his lips, but they become rapidly the claptrap of a party. The disease and falsehood of the modern political life is

patent in every country of the world and only the hypnotised acquiescence of all, even of the intellectual classes, in the great organised sham, cloaks and prolongs the malady, the acquiescence that men yield to everything that is habitual and makes the present atmosphere of their lives. Yet it is by such minds that the good of all has to be decided, to such hands that it has to be entrusted, to such an agency calling itself the State that the individual is being more and more called upon to give up the government of his activities. As a matter of fact, it is in no way the largest good of all that is thus secured, but a great deal of organised blundering and evil with a certain amount of good which makes for real progress, because Nature moves forward always in the midst of all stumblings and secures her aims in the end more often in spite of man's imperfect mentality than by its means.

But even if the governing instrument were constituted and of a higher mental and moral character, even if some way could be found to do what ancient civilisations by their enforcement of certain high ideals and disciplines tried to do with their ruling classes, still the State would not be what the State idea pretends that it is. Theoretically, it is the collective wisdom and force of the community made available and organised for the general good.





# Back home

*A Place Within: Rediscovering India* by M G Vassanji

Penguin Viking; Rs 599; 358 pages

Crowds, cattle, colour and chaos assault you every now and then from the pages of *A Place Within: Rediscovering India*. To

be fair to the East Africa born, Canada-based M G Vassanji, though, his observations of India are not clouded with the wonderment and dismay that so often defines writing from the Diaspora. As Vassanji shuffles his way through the teeming humanity of India, he offers us fresh insights into his much-adored homeland—almost like that childhood friend urging us to see what he has discovered on the other side of the lens of the kaleidoscope. As one peers at the images, beautiful new facets emerge from the old and familiar and what we once thought harmonious lies in spectacular disarray.

The book starts with the author's first trip to India in 1993, during the communal riots triggered by the destruction of the Babri Masjid—yet far from it—in Bhubaneswar. What makes the book so enjoyable is that it's not borne out of a hurried tour but patient explorations over 15 years and 10 visits. Vassanji walks us through Delhi, Gujarat, Kanyakumari, Shimla and Kerala at a leisurely pace, stopping to study shadows and sounds. Along the way, he shares many delightful stories from history—of Prithviraj Chauhan, Mahmud Ghazni, Amir Khusrau and Bene Israeli Jews. But finally what's more piercing is the author's despair at his own divided identity in the face of the communalism rending the nation: "...after all I did come here, saw it as a kind of return, could identify with so many things: so do I simply shun, reject as not mine, what I cannot cope with...? If my family had stayed here, what would I have become, a victim or a thug?"

— Rajashree Balaram

## AUTHORSPEAK

### Why this shift to non-fiction?

My homeland lived in my imagination till I first visited it in 1993. It was a defining period in my life. I knew that I had to write about it some day. But then India is a land that evokes a response from everyone. It's almost like it urges you to offer an account of yourself to the land of your ancestors. Initially I couldn't put my experiences on paper even after my frequent visits. I kept coming back, spurred by a quest to understand the people who live here.

### How have your life experiences informed your work?

The book focuses on the histories of my own family—members of the Khoja sect—and places like Delhi, Shimla, Gujarat and Kerala. I am inspired by places, people and life in general. My writing depends on what I have seen and of course what I can imagine and juice out of it!

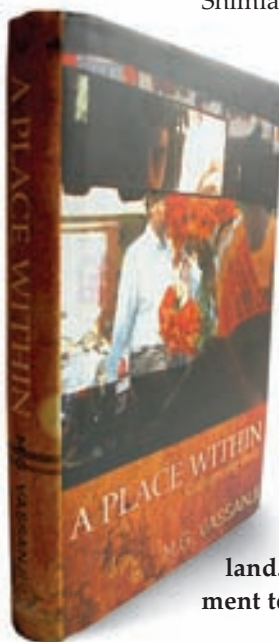
### How has age informed your writing? And how has that changing perspective found expression in your books?

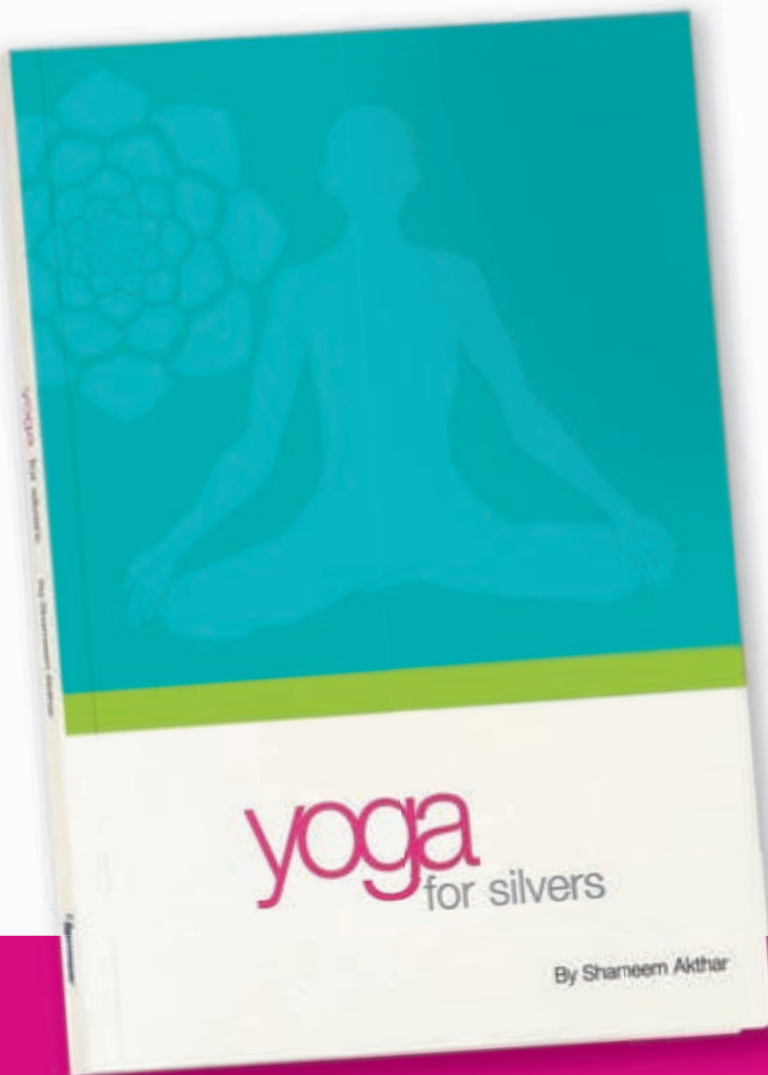
Ageing make things more urgent, as you know you don't have enough time to write all the books you may want to. Ageing has also brought maturity to the way I approach a subject. I tell stories in the most honest and interesting way that I can.

### Your book is in essence a quest for a homeland. Do you think rootlessness is a universal ailment today?

I know I am rootless and it makes me sad. Some people are very rooted and I am envious of them. But my rootlessness enables me to tell stories that may not have been told. Anyway, with today's rapid pace of life, everyone lives in their own cocoon.

*Vassanji was in conversation with Nitika Bajpayee*





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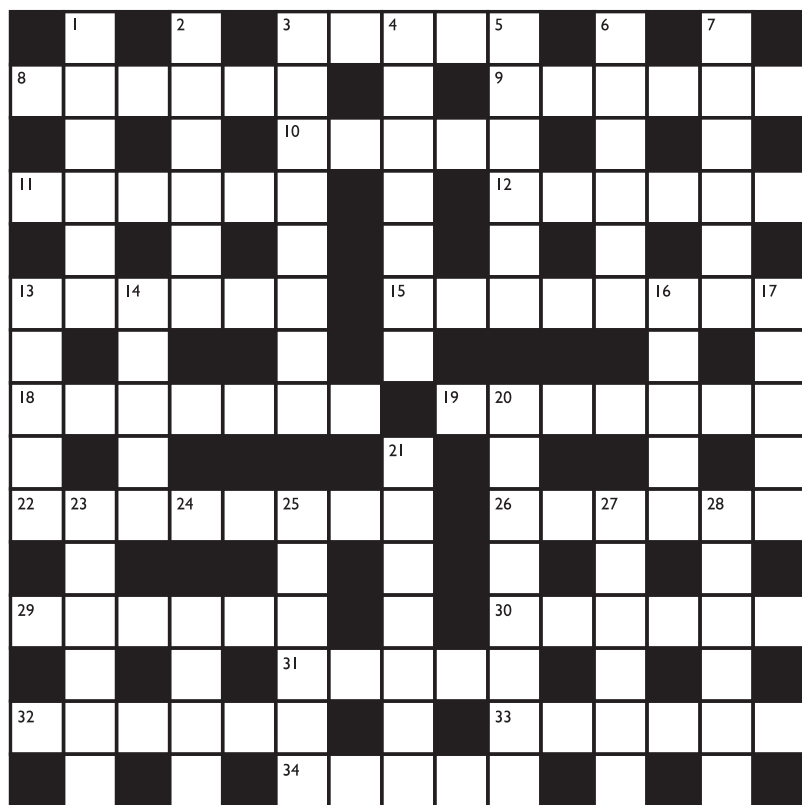
# LifeSAVER

Countless hearts are beating soundly across the world because of American Wilson Greatbatch—in 1959, he invented the implantable pacemaker. An internal or implantable pacemaker is a device that uses electrical signals to adjust, control, regulate and reproduce the heart pulse. Interestingly, Canadian electrical engineer John Hopps invented the first pacemaker in 1950—however, this external device was too large to be implanted inside the human body. Greatbatch's invention happened almost by accident in the laboratory of Cornell University when he was building an oscillator with a transistor to record heartbeat sounds. He incorporated the wrong transistor, which produced a pulse that mimicked the rhythm of a heart. Greatbatch licensed his invention to Medtronic Inc and the first pacemaker was implanted in a human in 1960. He upgraded his device with a lithium iodine battery for durability in 1970, and his invention has been saving lives ever since.



## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MAY 1959

- On **4 May 1959**, the first Grammy Awards are announced in the US.
- On **24 May 1959**, British Empire Day is renamed Commonwealth Day.
- On **28 May 1959**, Able, a seven-pound female rhesus monkey, and Miss Baker, a one-pound female squirrel monkey, become the first living beings to successfully return to Earth from space aboard Jupiter IRBM AM-18.



## EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 55

By Raju Bharatan

## ACROSS

- 3** Raag in which the 2009 IPL Theme Song should have been ideally composed? (5)  
**8** Let Lata Mangeshkar, as far as the celebrity tourney in South Africa is concerned (2 4)  
**9** Optical device suggesting what we Indians do, ever since Kapil Dev brought that coveted 1983 prize home (6)  
**10** Falling short of a hundred in South Africa isn't the done thing (3 2)  
**11** Take Patiala in-between the two words, here, and you have what Navjot Singh Sidhu shouldn't be losing (3 3)  
**12** IPL invite to the ace basketballer? (4 2)  
**13** Match situation in which to run the Biscuit Spot on TV? (6)  
**15** Kapil Dev's 1983 World Cup bat-in-hand 175 vs Zimbabwe was, for India, in the kind of 17-for-5 chilly setting in

which it came (8)

- 18** 'Do paste' style of Glamour Puss who would have held our eye even in the ultra-oomphy IPL (7)  
**19** Pet performer *vis-a-vis* that cute little girl featuring in the Hutch spot as the brightest one in the sky? (3 4)  
**22** By now, how you must have viewed more than one boundary-line catch being IPL-relayed (3-2-3)  
**26** Sounds like a fresh levy being imposed during the two IPL teams, in play, changing over? (6)  
**29** "Sorry for the break!" Shane Warne could say, as he viciously turns one, to capture a wicket with the last ball before such on-field refreshment (6)  
**30** Third-eye the keenly expected verdict on the neon-board? (3 3)  
**31** Which IPL-watching young lady isn't? (2-3)  
**32** Ha ha, Rs as core of icon TV figure? (6)

- 33** Chris Gayle's Windies-pattern comment on the grass-singeing four he hit? (1 5)  
**34** Just the Japanese species of female gossip bound to thrive in the IPL milieu? (5)

## DOWN

- 1** The BCCI's instinctive response to the once-possible idea of Shoaib Akhtar being part of this Lalit Modi show? (2 4)  
**2** In terms of runs, *King Solomon's Mines* is what we so expect from the likes of Viru Sehwaag in South Africa (2 4)  
**3** Yusuf Pathan is and isn't in this IPL (4 4)  
**4** The easy catch dropped is to any team vying for tourney supremacy right now (3-4)  
**5** This trouble (placing Tendulkar above Bradman) is something Sachin faced but recently (6)  
**6** How Gauti went for a run the moment the ball hit the bat? (3 3)  
**7** This ground getting to stage an important cricket match must sound the death-knell of the game (6)  
**13** Brand name embodying IPL? (5)  
**14** Such dogs are dangerous to encounter at the moment (5)  
**16** This big hitter would've given any team the 'Kiwillies' had he been part of the IPL (5)  
**17** Let's hope that, potentially, we get to view a number of them in South Africa (5)  
**20** One-time school textbook (Minoo Masani-authored) that could have made fine preparatory reading for M S Dhoni's one-day and five-day outfits alike (3 5)  
**21** He once hit a six over Third Man, upon the wicket-keeper's pronouncing the stroke to be a fluke, he repeated the shot next ball, Twenty20 style! (7)  
**23** 'Way out' for the opener is what the new-ball operator prepares by making this (6)  
**24** What the demand for an individual century becomes in Twenty20 Cricket (3 3)  
**25** Kumar exemplifying the athlete supreme in the game as it is being played right now (6)  
**27** How instantly 'appealing' Mahi could be in hold after hold, standing back (6)  
**28** Did it ever occur to you that this lefty celebrity suggests 'a gripey Jayaprakash'? (6)

For answers, see Page 79

Raju Bharatan is the originator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' crossword in *The Times of India*, where he set the first 1,500 puzzles

**TIPS FOR BEGINNERS:** A whole variety of clues goes into framing a cryptic puzzle. For instance, the anagram. The clue here could be: *Unresting opponent of authority* (*Unresting* being the 9 letters of *insurgent* rearranged). Another variety of clue is the palindrome—*DEIFIED*, when viewed backward or when viewed up in a Down clue, reads *DEIFIED* all the way. Next, there could be the clue (8-letter answer) reading: *Complete view of daughter sandwiched between parents*—*PANORAMA* (*PA/NORA/MA*). The 8-letter solution to the clue, *The framework of our constitution*, is *SKELETON*. At times, what looks straight could prove tricky. For example, the clue, *How we stand*—has *UNITED* for its 6-letter answer. The clue, *How we fall*, has *DIVIDED* for its 7-letter answer.



## SAY IT OUT LOUD



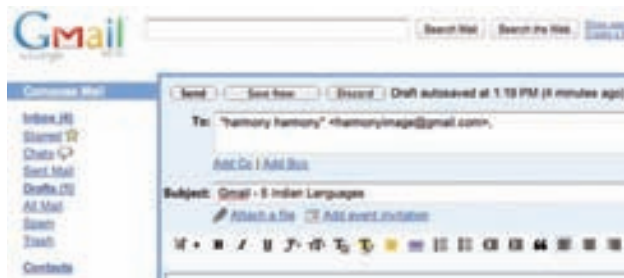
Many people lose the small joys in hope for the big happiness.

—American sinologist and author *Pearl S Buck* (1892-1973)

## THE BUZZ

### MAIL@INDIA

To mark the fifth anniversary of Gmail, its wildly popular email service, **Google has recently launched the service in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.** To send and receive emails in the language of your choice, sign into your Gmail account ([www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com); registration is free), and click on the link to 'Compose' your mail. Below the 'Subject' line, you'll find an icon with an Indian character—click on the arrow next to it to set your language. Of course, your keyboard needs to support the language of your choice. The feature is enabled by default for Gmail users living in India. If you can't see it on your computer, you can enable it manually by going to the 'Settings' page and choosing it as an option in the 'Language' section. With this addition, Gmail is now available across the world in 49 languages.



## THE WORD IS OUT

**sexting** *pp.* Sending a salacious text message. [Blend of *sex* and *texting*.] Also: **sext** *v., n.*, **sexter** *n.*

**Example:** But there's nothing quite like the image of your child on a registry of sex offenders to concentrate the parental mind. It now has a catchy new label, but **sexting** has been around, as a prank and a problem, for years: in 2004 a 15-year-old Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, girl was charged with sexual abuse of children and dissemination of child pornography when she posted nude pictures of herself online.

—Nancy Gibbs, "Second Thoughts about Kids and Cell Phones", *TIME*, 5 March 2009

**torch-and-pitchfork** *adj.* Relating to an angry, unruly mob, particularly one seeking vengeance. Also: **torches-and-pitchforks**; **fiery-torches-and-pitchforks**.

**Example:** Before the game was over, the howls had begun. That Delhomme was able to walk out of the stadium on his own two feet Sunday is the first testament to his resilience, since the **torch-and-pitchfork** crowd hadn't gotten him yet.

—Darin Gantt, "Bad night to have a bad night", *The Herald*, 12 January 2009

**Twitterverse** *n.* The Twitter social networking service and the people who use it. Also: **twitterverse**, **Twitter-verse**. [Blend of *Twitter* and *universe*]

**Example:** The **Twitterverse** is expanding. Twitter, that microblogging tool that caught on with teens and twentysomethings using it to tell loyal followers what they're doing at any given time—in 140 characters or less—is now becoming part of the business strategy for a wide range of brands to address customer service issues.

—Kim Hart, "Firms Take to the Tweetable Business Model", *The Washington Post*, 9 March 2009

**website** *n.* A website where a couple posts information about their upcoming or recent wedding. Also: **wed-site**, **wed site**. [Blend of *wedding* and *website*]

**Example:** FirstPhera is another name that thrives around the business of weddings, and is developed by Vikas Sabnani who started his venture a year ago in Ahmedabad. FirstPhera is into **wed sites**: websites

## BRAIN GYM

that are used by the couple to invite friends and relatives, post pictures, and blogs related to pre and post wedding events. These **wedsites** also help clients share stories, and view posted greetings from friends and relatives.

—“Yes, I do: The business of weddings”,  
*The Economic Times*, 7 November 2008

**ghost call** *n.* A silent phone call received from a person who has inadvertently dialled or selected the number on their mobile phone. —*v.* Also: **ghost calling** *pp.*, **ghost caller** *n.*

**Example:** One added problem for the emergency teams, particularly at this time of the year, is the inadvertent **ghost call** made on mobile phones. Supt Bell said: “... It’s easy when unlocked phones are in handbags or pockets to knock them and unwittingly make ‘999’ calls.”

—“Don’t be a 999 ninny during the New Year”,  
*Evening Gazette*, 30 December 2008

**economoms** *n.* Professional moms who opted out of the workforce to focus on their kids seeking work again. Also: **economommies**

**Example:** With the employment outlook turning bleaker by the day, she and many other white collar moms who opted out of the workforce to focus on their kids are scrambling back in. Meet the **economommies**.

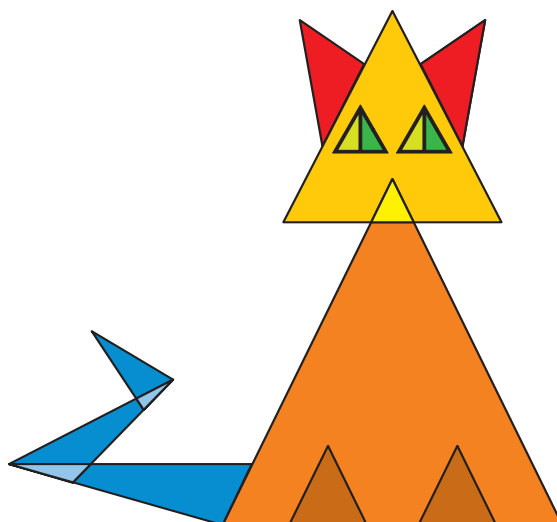
—“Cash Crunch Economoms”,  
*TIME*, 23 March 2009

**ubicomp** *n.* A computing model in which information technology is pervasively and seamlessly integrated into the objects and activities that people use in their daily lives. [From *ubiquitous computing*.]

**Example:** In our **ubicomp** (ubiquitous computing) future, cities and their inhabitants will be dotted with sensors and radio relays. The data from those devices will bombard each of us with more of the sights, sounds, smells, and vibrations we are trying to get away from.

—Mark Baard, “Personal tech”, *The Boston Globe*,  
14 January 2008

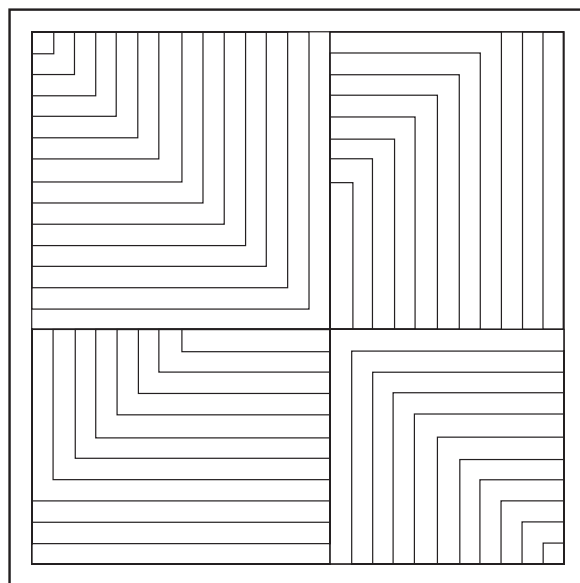
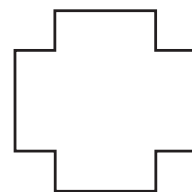
## THE CAT



How many different triangles can you count in the picture of the cat?

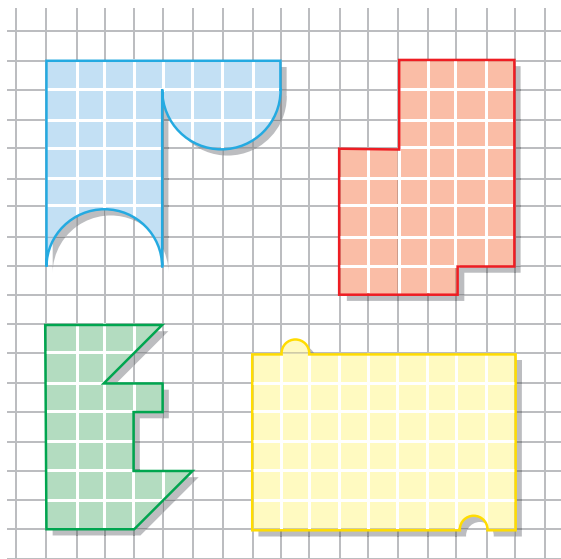
## FIND THE CROSS

The object of the puzzle is to find this shape in the large square below.



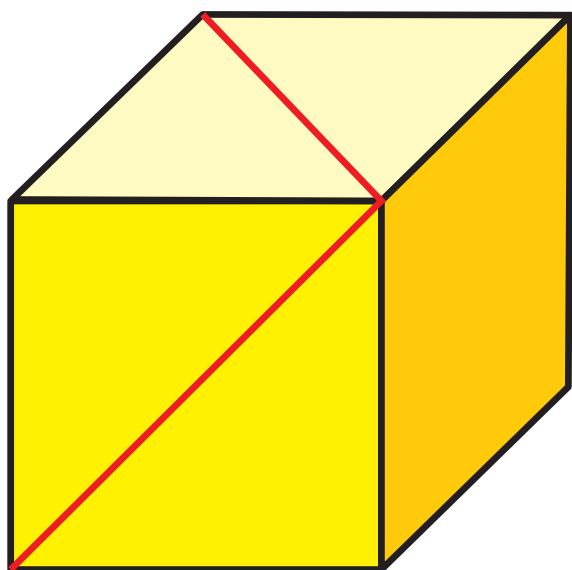


## CUT TO SIZE



Can you cut each of the four shapes above into two identical pieces?

## GUESS THE ANGLE



Can you say what angle is made by the two red lines drawn on the two sides of the cube as shown in the illustration?

## SUDOKU FOR YOU

					2	1		
8			4	6		7		
6			1		9		8	3
					5		4	6
	5		9		8		1	
7	1		6					
5	8		2		1			4
		4		5	7			2
		9	3					

Choose a number from 1 to 9, and place it in the grid. Every digit from 1 to 9 must appear once, and only once, in each of the columns, rows and in each of the sets of nine boxes.

## KOFFEE WITH KAKURO

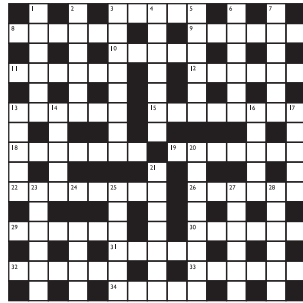
			5	28		11	10	44	
	19	39	8		14				
37					16				
15			12			11			7
16			28			25	9		
	13		7						
9					9				18
36					17			10	
8			14	8			14		
	37						9		
	10				9				

The object of a Kakuro is to insert digits from 1 to 9 into the white cells to total the clue associated with it. However, no digit can be duplicated in an entry. For example, to total 6, you could have 1 and 5, 2 and 4 but not 3 and 3. You may, however, use a number again in the same row or column.

## SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 55

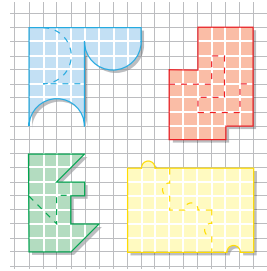
**ACROSS:** 3 Lalit; 8 Go solo; 9 Eyecup (*Eye/Cup*); 10 Not on (*No/ton*); 11 Leg peg (*Patiala* between leg & peg); 12 Drop in; 13 Crunch; 15 Windfall; 18 (Rosanna) Podesta (*Do paste*, the 7 letters of Podesta rearranged); 19 Dog Star (*Sirius*); 22 Air-to-air; 26 Recess (*re-cess*, fresh levy); 29 Drinks (interval); 30 Not Out; 31 He-mad; 32 HARSHA (*Ha/Rs/ha: Rs as core of Ha ha*); 33 I shear; 34 Yenta (*Yen/ta*, a female gossip is what yenta means)

**DOWN:** 1 No fear; 2 (*King Solomon's Mines*) To Open; 3 Long shot; 4 Let-down; 5 Tendon (*Ten/Don*); 6 Set off; 7 Burial (*ground*); 13 CIPLA (*C/IPL/A*); 14 Under(dogs); 16 (Nathan) Astle; 17 Laras; 20 *Our India*; 21 (Sir Donald) Bradman; 23 Inroad (*In/road*); 24 Ton ask; 25 Akshay (Kumar); 27 Catchy; 28 SOURAV (*Sour/A V/ Jayaprakash*)



75

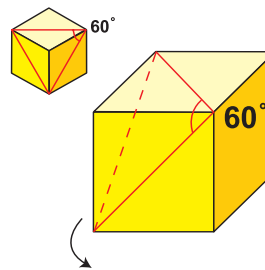
Cut to size



78

The result is shown in the illustration.

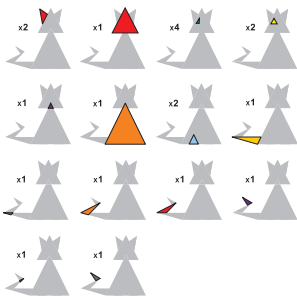
Guess the angle



The angle made by the two lines is  $60^\circ$ . When we join the ends of both lines with another line, we get a triangle which has three sides equal to the diagonal of the cube's side as shown in the illustration. Thus, we get an equilateral triangle. As far as each angle in an equilateral triangle is equal to  $60^\circ$ , it means the angle between the two lines is  $60^\circ$ .

## SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

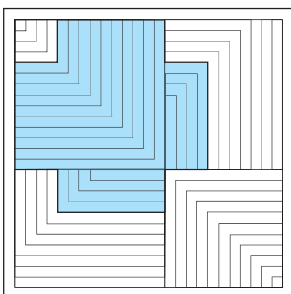
The cat



77

There are 20 triangles in the cat as shown in the diagram.

Find the cross



The hidden cross is shown in the illustration.

## SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

3	4	7	5	8	2	1	6	9
8	9	1	4	6	3	7	2	5
6	2	5	1	7	9	4	8	3
9	3	8	7	1	5	2	4	6
4	5	6	9	2	8	3	1	7
7	1	2	6	3	4	5	9	8
5	8	3	2	9	1	6	7	4
1	6	4	8	5	7	9	3	2
2	7	9	3	4	6	8	5	1

## SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

				5	28		11	10	44	
	19	39		3	5		14	5	3	6
37	4	1	2	3	5	6	7	9		7
15	8	7		12	9	3		11	8	3
16	7	9		28	2	8	5	6	3	4
	13	3	2	8		9	4	3	2	18
36	6	8	5	1	9	7		10	4	6
8	3	8		14	8	6	2		14	5
	37	4	9	5	2	1	6	7	3	
	10	2	5	3		9	6	3		



## Mumbai-based Kulin Vora, 76, inculcates values in children through his calendar



TEXT BINDI MEHTA PHOTO: VILAS KALGUTKER

**“No one can match the power and potential of a child. It’s up to us to nurture that spark and make sure it is not extinguished.”**

In 2007, former journalist **Kulin Vora** conducted a survey of 500 people (in the age group of 15-30 years) while editing *Borivali Profile*, an area profile revolving around Borivali in suburban Mumbai. Among the 66 questions that were part of the questionnaire, he laid special focus on one: ‘Who is your icon?’ Vora was dismayed when no literary, scientific or cultural stalwarts emerged in the answers and was struck by the lack of vision among the younger generation. As a small step to set this right, in January 2009, the 76 year-old launched the *Butterfly* monthly calendars for children. Each day on the calendar features an interactive story with a powerful message. The 12-set calendar, priced at Rs 1,200, is available through subscription and he has already found 150 subscribers. Vora, who also runs a family counselling centre since 2000, feels these calendars can play the role that parents and grandparents once did—that of narrating simple stories that carry valuable life-lessons. His success story doesn’t end here. Soon, he plans to travel all over the world and collate stories that young mothers in different countries narrate to their children. He also intends to print calendars in Devnagari script to reach out to anganwadi and schools in rural areas. Though funds are a problem, well-wishers have helped him get this far and he is hoping more people will help him take the cause forward.

Stories from readers are more than welcome. Interested people can contact Kulin Vora at 022-64524089.

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Now it's  
your  
**home's**  
turn.



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On Premium paid, Tax exemptions under Sec 80C and Tax Free Maturity proceeds/ Death Benefits under Sec10(10d) of Income tax Act, 1961.

### Sahara India Life Insurance Company Limited

Corporate Office : Sahara India Centre, 2, Kapoorthala Complex, Lucknow-226 024.

Ph. : 0522-2337777, Fax : 0522-2332683

Toll-Free No. : 1800 180 9000, Website : [www.saharalife.com](http://www.saharalife.com)

IRDA Registration No. : 127



#### Risk Factor & Warning :

1. Unit Linked Life Insurance products are different from the traditional insurance products and are subject to the risk factors.
2. The premium paid in Unit Linked Life Insurance policies are subject to investment risks associated with capital markets and the NAVs of the units may go up or down based on the performance of fund and factors influencing the capital market and the insured is responsible for his/her decisions.
3. Sahara India Life Insurance Company Limited is only the name of the Insurance Company and Sahara Samarth is only the name of the unit linked life insurance contract and does not in any way indicate the quality of the contract, its future prospects or returns.

\* Conditions apply. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions please read the sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.  
Tax benefits shall be subject to modification as per prevailing tax laws and statutory provisions from time to time.

*Insurance is the subject matter of solicitation.*