

# harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

MAY 2013 ₹ 30

## DIARY 100

INDIAN ARMY'S  
FIRST CITIZEN  
LT COL SINGH

## AT LARGE

AMIT DASGUPTA  
ON STORIES  
WAITING TO  
BE TOLD

# On SONG

KAVITA KRISHNAMURTI  
SUBRAMANIAM

ANCIENT TEMPLES OF BELUR-HALEBID • UP THE COOL QUOTIENT THIS SUMMER

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॥ “पबम बभ्य गिविबक कैलाम्नु।  
भदा जहाँ भिव उमा निवाम्नु॥” ॥



HOLY

# KAILASH MANSAROVAR

ॐ

PILGRIMAGE

- The Uttarakhand government gives Rs. 25,000 grant to Kailash Mansarovar pilgrims, original residents of Uttarakhand, who are having domicile of the state.
- The grant, as per existing norms will be applicable to the pilgrims who have completed the Kailash Mansarovar Pilgrimage of the Government of India.
- The amount of the financial grant will be reimbursable on completion of the Pilgrimage.



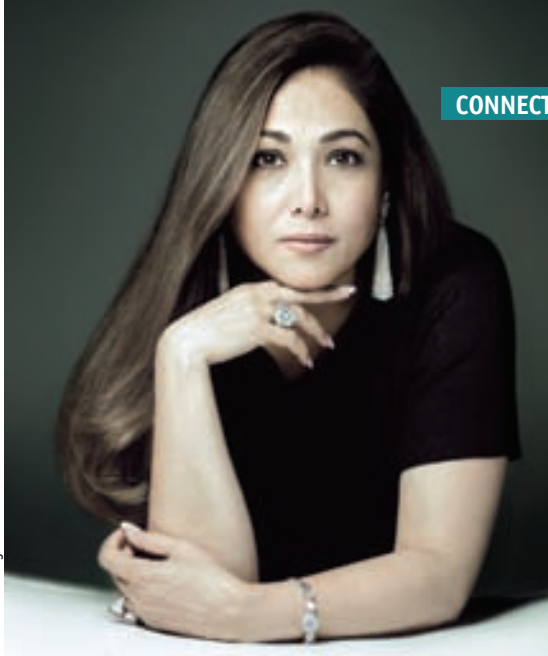
# A glimmer OF HOPE

Sometimes, even through the most oppressive darkness, a glimmer of light shines through.

As a country, our track record on women's rights continues to nosedive most appallingly. But while India—and the rest of the world—continues to reel from the news of another horrific sexual assault in the capital, a report of an initiative that seeks to empower women has found its way to some newspapers. Even more heart-warming is the fact that it is the brainchild of a group of committed silvers.

Launched in the presence of Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Kumari Selja by the Chandigarh Senior Citizens' Association (CSCA) as part of their 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, Project Kalpana—named after astronaut Kalpana Chawla—aims to help girls from weaker sections of society pursue higher education. And in what is a novel intergenerational approach, the catalyst will be a *dadi*! Here's how it works: each girl who is part of the project will be assigned her very own silver mentor, a woman preferably from her own neighbourhood with the qualifications, aptitude and time to guide her in the selection of an appropriate curriculum, help with her studies, and counsel her with regard to career choices and opportunities. CSCA is currently in the process of gathering volunteers for the project. When implemented, Project Kalpana intends to fulfil a dual objective: it will give deserving young women a chance at a better

Suresh Natarajan



life while enabling silvers to use their considerable experience constructively and pay it forward.

With this venture still at the starting block, it is hard for us to predict its final outcome. However, if it is executed diligently as envisaged by CSCA, such a project has the potential to be a game changer. It only goes to prove that innovative ideas are not the preserve of scientists and technocrats with a string of degrees; they can be birthed by ordinary men and women with their hearts in their right place and an urge to make a difference.

Indeed, the ability to craft real, sustainable social change ultimately hinges on us as a people. It is all too easy to sink in a miasma of despair when we see the sheer quantum of work required to right the wrongs against the most vulnerable among us—children, women, silvers. Instead, let us choose hope, the promise of a better tomorrow. And let us understand that the power to build it, one tiny brick at a time, lies in our hands. Yours and mine.

*Pina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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### **A CUT ABOVE**

*For Jaishree Pankaj, 64, creator of miniature paper cuttings, Sanjhi is a form of prayer*

### **PROVING HIS METAL**

*Dhokra artist Subhash Arora, 54, preserves the ancient craft while exploring new ideas*



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Cover photograph by Jatin Kampani

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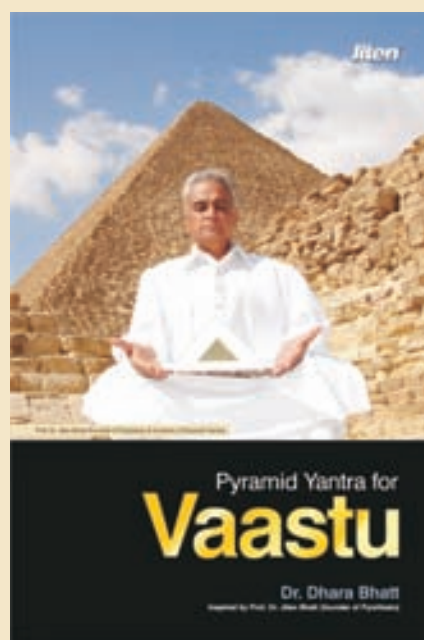
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# column one

Hers is “The Voice”—and it sounds better than ever. Confident in her talent and enriched by the musical exposure that has come with marriage to renowned violinist Dr L Subramaniam, Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam has a new album on the way. Not for her any regrets about leaving the film industry when she ruled the roost, she knew then—as we do now—that her best, personal and professional, was still to come.

She shares her courage of conviction with our ‘Trendsetters,’ five silvers following their own paths to self-actualisation—bartender and mixologist Shatbhi Basu, drummer Nondon Baghchi, granny-biker Pintueli Gajjar, folk-rock singer Geetu Hinduja and belly dance beginner Jyoti Sharma raise our cool quotient sky-high this sizzling May.

Speaking of heights, few have reached the pinnacle of success and longevity achieved by Lt Col (retd) Kartar Singh, First Citizen of the Indian Army; share his journey in ‘Diary 100’. And, Sahitya Akademi Award winning author Aruna Chakravarti sheds light on her book on the Tagores in ‘Authorspeak’, while diplomat Amit Dasgupta, our columnist ‘At Large’, dwells upon the charm of storytelling.

While we love great escapes of the tourist kind—we recommend the ancient Hoysala temples of Belur and Halebid in Karnataka in ‘Destination’—the cornerstone of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is advice that keeps you grounded. This month, economist Priya Desai urges you to “Get Financially Literate”, while wellness expert and celebrity nutritionist Namita Jain serves up ‘Food Facts’ in a new column. Dig in!

—Arati Rajan Menon



Fauja Singh, the ‘Turbaned Tornado’, has already accomplished an impressive feat of will and strength despite having retired at 102 from the marathon. His interview “Feet Accompli” in the March 2013 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* made for highly interesting reading material laced with human emotions and triumph against all odds by a man who started competitive running at the age of 89. There are late bloomers and then there is Singh. Despite the support of his fans and his undeniable dedication, *Guinness Book of World Records* has been reluctant to grant Singh the official title of the

world’s oldest marathon runner. The problem: ‘no birth certificate’. Fame was never his goal anyway. It would have been great had Singh revealed the secret of his longevity. Nevertheless it’s an inspiring interview, especially for couch potatoes.

**Rajesh V Gaur**  
Mumbai

## ERRATA

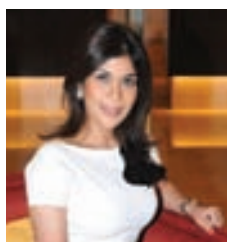
**In the ‘Orbit - People’ section of the April 2013 issue, we inadvertently printed a wrong photograph of the late Carnatic musician Dr Sripada Pinakapani.**

**In the ‘Proactive’ section of the April 2013 issue, the name of V Balakrishnan’s wife was inadvertently mentioned as Sunganthi instead of Sumathi.**

**We regret the errors.**

—Editors

## CONTRIBUTORS



*Harmony-Celebrate Age* welcomes Namita Jain’s new column ‘Food Facts’. A leading wellness expert and celebrity nutritionist, **Namita Jain** studied nutrition in the US. For the past 20 years, she has been associated with Bombay Hospital as a nutrition expert. Besides being a fitness mentor to film celebrities, she has written eight bestsellers on the subject. Jain is a regular ‘Diet & Fitness’ columnist for the *Times of India*, *The Hindu* and leading

magazines like *Elle*, *GQ* and *Vogue*. She recently released her latest book *Sexy @ Sixty* endorsed by Hema Malini. Jain was also associated with Femina Miss India 2012 as a diet and fitness expert and played a key role in monitoring and personalising diets for the top 20 contestants.

**Amit Dasgupta** is an Indian diplomat who has served in various capacities in Cairo, Brussels, Kathmandu, Berlin, Sydney and New Delhi. At present, he is posted in Manila as the Indian ambassador to the Philippines. Dasgupta has authored and edited a number of books, including *Indian by Choice* and *India for a Billion Reasons*.





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**Dr. K. Srivastava, MBBS, MD (Gold Medalist), Varanasi**

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**Yovesh Suri, New Delhi**

" Mr. D C Srivastava is my old patient of Hypertension. He was diagnosed with high Blood Sugar levels in June 2011 and advised to take two OHA's, later Fenfuro was added in BID dosage. All OHA's were withdrawn after six months & only Fenfuro was advised to continue. Regular monitoring of his blood glucose level has revealed that even after 15 months of withdrawal of all OHA's his blood sugar level are normal with only Fenfuro. His energy level is also increased "

I congratulate Chemical Resources for getting National Award for outstanding Research work on 3rd April 2013."

**Dr. Navneet Jaipuria - MD, DM, Gorakhpur**

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INSIDE

**P30: Male menopause**

**P32: Chin up**

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## Get on her bike

**A**lpha males aren't going to like the sound of this but all **silver cyclists have been urged to switch to women's bikes for their safety.** A new study by the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute recommends that the use of women's bikes, which have a low crossbar, can considerably reduce accidents incurred when mounting and dismounting. Their research shows that 40 per cent of people killed or seriously injured in single-vehicle bike accidents are over the age of 65; the most common injuries are to the hip, caused while getting on or off.



# The Facebook edge

**I**t may be time to open that Facebook account. Other than the social and entertainment benefits of networking, **using social networking sites could offer you a boost in cognitive function.** Researcher Janelle Wohltmann from the University of Arizona discovered that after learning to operate Facebook, silvers performed about 25 per cent better on tasks designed to measure their ability to continuously monitor and quickly add or delete the contents of their working memory. The technical term for this function is 'updating'. As a media release from the University of Arizona tells us, Wohltmann recruited three groups of 14 silvers each, ranging between 68 and 91 years of age, who were unfamiliar with social networking. The first group was trained to use Facebook, instructed to become 'friends' with those in their training group and asked to post on the site at least once a day. The second group was



taught instead to use an online diary site with private entries, with no social sharing; they too had to make at least one brief entry a day, on similar lines as typical Facebook posts. The third group was told they were on a waiting list for Facebook training, which they never actually completed. After eight weeks, while the first group performed about 25 per cent better on 'updating' tasks than at the start of the study, the participants in the other groups saw no significant change in performance. "The study suggests a strong link between social engagement and cognitive performance," says Wohltmann. "Thus, social networking sites could be a potential alternative to online games marketed to older people to help boost mental acuity." She ends with a note of caution, though. "It's also important to understand and know about some of the aspects of Facebook that people have concerns about, like how to keep your profile secure."

**VIRAL CONCERN:** SILVERS WITH INFECTIONS SUCH AS THE HERPES COLD SORE VIRUS MAY HAVE POORER THINKING AND MEMORY ABILITIES THAN THEIR PEERS, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY BY THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, PUBLISHED IN THE 26 MARCH ISSUE OF JOURNAL *NEUROLOGY*.

# Bone up

**I**t might seem pretty obvious but now there is a quantifiable **link between activity levels during youth and bone health in later years.** Researchers at Skane University Hospital in Malmo, Sweden, have established that physically active children will be at a lower risk of fractures when they grow older. In a two-part study, the team first studied over 2,300 Swedish children ranging from seven to nine years of age; while

half the children received 40 minutes of daily physical education, the other half received 60 minutes of physical education per week. After monitoring their skeletal development for five years, they found that the boys and girls in the daily exercise group had greater bone mineral density than the children in the other group. Then, they compared the rates of fractures and bone density loss of about 700 former male athletes with

an average age of 69 with those of nearly 1,400 non-athletes of the same age. To their surprise, they found that the bone mineral density of the former athletes was only minimally lower to the first group of children, while that of the second group was considerably lower than both groups of children. The study was presented in April at the annual conference of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine in Chicago.







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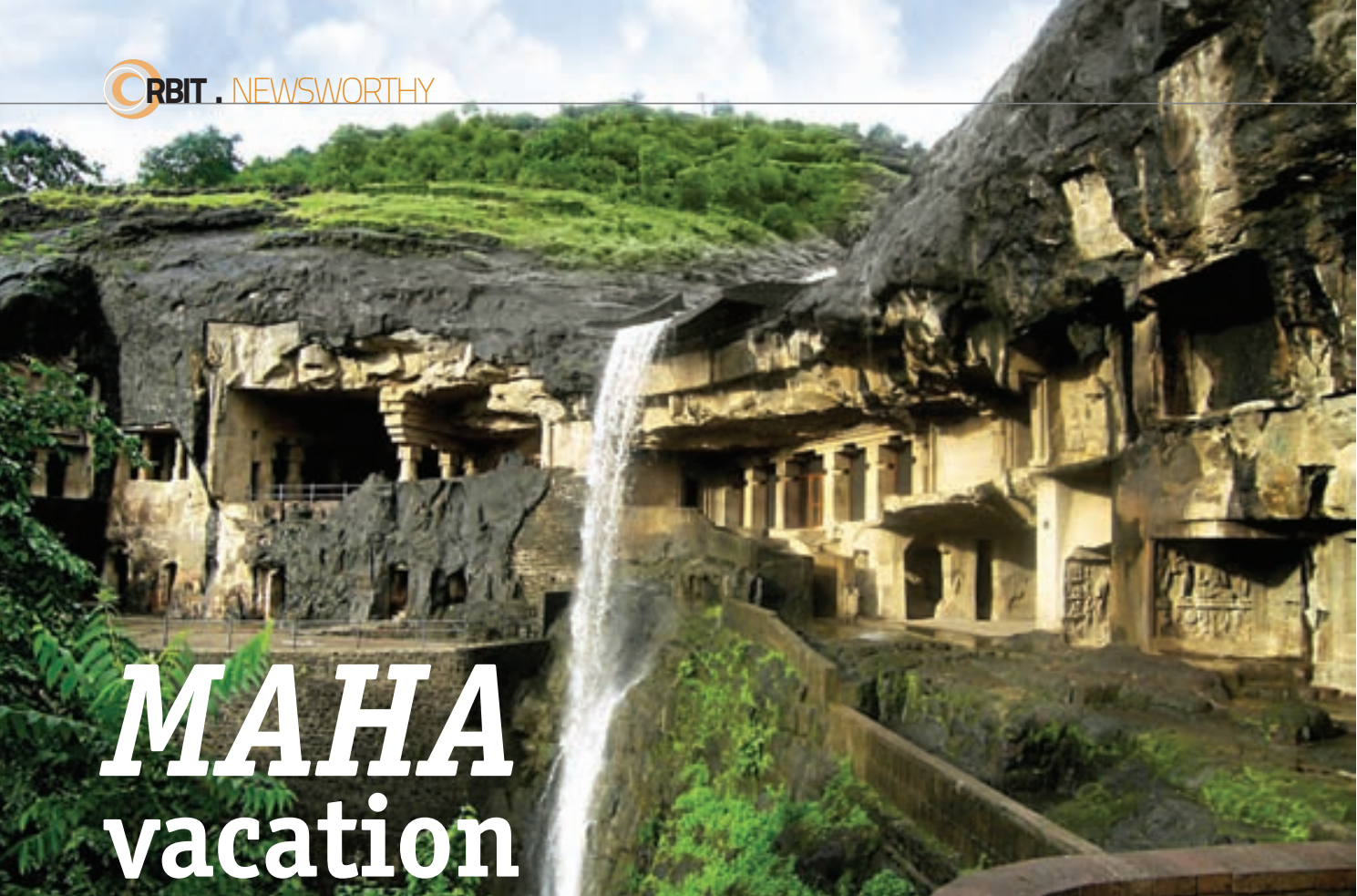


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# MAHA vacation

**I**f you're looking for a good holiday this year, go west! The **Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC)** is offering **silvers over the age of 65 a 20 per cent concession on room rates at its tourist resorts** at 19 destinations. This includes hot spots in the Konkan region and hill stations; Ganpatipule, Mahabaleshwar, Matheran, Harihareshwar, Tarkarli, Malshej

Ghat, Panshet, Karla, Nagpur, Titwala are all on the list. Just provide proof of age (senior citizens' identity card, passport, election card or Aadhar card) when you book. The only catch: the concession is only available from Mondays to Thursdays; weekends are full rate. For more information or online booking, go to [www.maharashtra-tourism.gov.in](http://www.maharashtra-tourism.gov.in) or call toll-free at 1800-229930.

## A pill for many ills

**A**n inexpensive supplement could well turn out to be a mega disease-buster. A popular dietary aid also used by athletes to delay muscle fatigue, **carnosine could help protect against diseases ranging from diabetes to Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and even cancer**, contend researchers from Aston University, Birmingham, in the UK. Classified as a dipeptide (a compound of two amino acid molecules), the substance is found naturally in the body's muscle tissue and brain. "Carnosine is already a popular supplement but now we have woken up to its potential as an anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant," writes lead researcher Roslyn Bill in *Chemistry Central Journal*. "If it could be targeted more specifically, there could be much more benefit in the longer term."



**A SPEEDY VERDICT?**  
**PRIME MINISTER MANMOHAN SINGH RECENTLY ANNOUNCED TO MEDIA THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL SET UP FAST-TRACK COURTS TO TRY CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN, ELDERLY AND CHILDREN.**





### WELCOME GESTURE:

AFTER TWO MONTHS OF UNCERTAINTY, INDIA HAS FINALLY STARTED A 'VISA-ON-ARRIVAL' FACILITY FOR PAKISTANI SILVERS OVER THE AGE OF 65 ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS. THE SINGLE-ENTRY VISA, AVAILABLE AT THE ATTARI/WAGAH CHECK POST, WILL BE VALID FOR 45 DAYS.



Your ride in God's Own Country just got easier—well, slightly. The **Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC)** has doubled the seats reserved for silvers from four to eight in its ordinary and 'limited stop' services. And four of these will now be reserved for silver women. While the move has been welcomed across the state, private bus operators are refusing to follow suit when it comes to the new category. Their argument: they already reserve seats for women.

## Daytime destination



A vacant floor on the third floor of a hospital in Nagpur will soon resound with the sound of hope and joy. **Golden Bliss Paradise, located at Sadar's Prestige Nursing Home, is designed as a short stay home-cum-recreation centre for silvers.** The brainchild of Dr Anil Jain and his wife Dr Abha, owners of the hospital, and executed with the help of their son, Dr Ankur Jain, this space offers silvers a place to call their own (people can stay up to 15 days), quick access to medical checkups and a variety of activities, from meditation and *puja* to reading and games. It's also elder-friendly, with anti-skid floors, breakable doors with opaque glasses, call bells everywhere, railings and ramps. "This is not about sad stories but creating happy moments," the younger Jain tells media. "Sometimes, the elders in the family may not be up for an outing that the younger ones are keen on or may just want to be on their own for a while, doing things they enjoy. Golden Bliss Paradise gives them the option. We want to remove the stigma associated with such a facility."



# Lonely in LONDON

Loneliness isn't just an emotional concern but a physical one. And as new research suggests, more than a third of silvers in the UK are at risk. According to a study of over 6,500 British silvers by University College London published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, there is a **disturbing correlation between social isolation and higher risk of death in older people**. "Both social isolation and loneliness are associated with increased mortality, with the rate going up by up to 10 per

cent," writes lead author Andrew Steptoe. "Thus, we should make every effort to try to alleviate the loneliness of older people. At the same time, we need to make sure that people maintain their social contacts. That might be just as important." What's more, calling London the "loneliest place in the world for old people", the study pointed to a 'loneliness epidemic' in the UK, with 18 per cent of people over the age of 75 staying alone for long periods and spending days without speaking to another soul.

## The silver market

If the consumer is king, silvers are monarchs. That's the takeaway from *Understanding the Needs and Consequences of the Ageing Consumer*, a report by the US-based

Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) and consultants A T Kearney that urges the consumer goods industry to address changing consumer demographics globally. Noting that there

will be 2 billion 'mature' consumers (over the age of 60) worldwide by 2047—a demographic "agequake"—the report points out that mature citizens control much of the wealth in developed societies and provides recommendations for companies to meet the needs of mature consumers. "This demographic earthquake requires us to rethink the nature of our social contracts and our pension and health systems, not to mention the way we design our products and our stores, the way we hire and train and educate people, and the way we think of our careers, our family structures and our communities," Mike Moriarty, a partner at A T Kearney, says in a media release. You can read and download the entire report at [bit.ly/AgeingConsumerReport](http://bit.ly/AgeingConsumerReport) and [www.theconsumergoodsforum.com](http://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com)







## TWIST in the tale

Fairy tales typically end frozen in time, their characters preserved almost wax-like, stripped of the spirit and animation that kept us enthralled as their stories played out. Finnish artist Riitta Ikonen and Norwegian photographer Karoline Hjorth wanted to break the mould. In a bid to explore what happens “when fairy tales end happily ever after”, they revisited their favourite mythical characters post-retirement in ***Eyes as Big as Plates***, an exciting photo exhibition that ran last month in New York. As website [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com) reports, the images featured elderly immigrants in New York enveloped in organic, scavenged material; resplendent in their new setting but deeply connected to their distant roots. “This blending of figure and ground recalls the way in which folk narratives animate the natural world through a personification of nature,” the artists said in a statement to media. “The slippage of elderly figures into the landscapes suggests a return to the earth, a celebration of lives lived, reinforcing the link between humanity and the natural world.” To view these stunning images, go to [www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/29/-fairy-tales-captured-eyes-as-big-as-plates-karoline-hjorth-and-riitta-ikonen\\_n\\_2970771.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/29/-fairy-tales-captured-eyes-as-big-as-plates-karoline-hjorth-and-riitta-ikonen_n_2970771.html)

## Welcome HOME

The need for universal design is a common refrain among silver advocates—including *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Architect Deborah Pierce’s book, ***The Accessible Home: Designing for All Ages & Abilities*** (Taunton Press; 224 pages), elevates this refrain to a lyrical ode. She deftly guides readers through the concept of universal design—accessibility, safety, security, sustainability—and its components, from safer baths and more convenient kitchens to garages and outdoor spaces, while showcasing 25 beautiful and diverse homes across the US that embody this philosophy. From apartments to bungalows, ranches and mountain retreats, this is a grand tour that gives readers a host of ideas for their home, irrespective of size and genre. More important, it rids universal design of its ‘fuddy-duddy’ aura, proving that accessibility and style can, indeed, live together quite harmoniously.



## In good company

As seen recently in *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *Quartet*, the ‘silver ensemble’ is proving to be a winner for filmmakers. Now, 76 year-old silver fox **Robert Redford** is betting on the same formula for his latest film, ***The Company You Keep***. The dashing actor-turned-independent filmmaker leads a cast of elder actors in this political thriller. Redford plays a recently widowed and single father whose history as a left-wing militant in a radical organisation catches up with him when he is wrongfully implicated in robbery and murder. While he fights to clear his name, he and his former militant brethren must deal with the baggage from their past. While the film premiered on the European festival circuit in late 2012, it released worldwide in April 2013.





# Serenity ahead

Fram Petit

**S**outhern India will soon be home to a series of ‘**Serene Retirement Communities**’, a joint venture between US-based **Signature Senior Living** and Coimbatore-based **Covai Properties**. According to media reports, Signature is investing \$ 2.5 million to build a facility in Chennai with 50 units that will be ready for occupation by year-end. Going forward, the partners will build similar homes in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Coimbatore, where

Covai Properties already holds land. “There are more than 10 million Indians in America and we are getting mails asking what we can do for their parents in India, because they are not coming back for a while and their parents do not want to move there,” Steven Vick, chief executive of Signature Living, tells one Indian newspaper. “We will tailor-make our concept to India the same way brands like Subway or McDonalds have done so successfully.”

## Flats in FRISCO

**IN AMERICA**, the land of opportunity, there are still many who face the brunt of adversity. Take the case of gay-lesbian-bisexual-transgender (GLBT) silvers. Recent studies have shown that not only are they poorer than their straight counterparts and two-thirds as likely to live alone but face widespread prejudice in retirement homes and are much more likely to face eviction. With this in mind, **non-profit organisation Open House**



**has launched the first affordable GLBT senior housing development in San Francisco.** The complex, 55 Laguna, features 110 units

(including singles and doubles), a recreation room, library and health centre. Most important, of course, is what it doesn't have: discrimination.

# The Hobbit

**D**on't mistake it for the fantasy flick your grandkids dragged you to see in their last vacation. Developed by six European universities led by the University of Vienna and funded by the European Union, **the Hobbit is an easy-to-use robot to help silvers with their daily activities.**

"Falling at home is one of the biggest problems when getting older," project leader Dr Markus Vincze, a professor in automation and robotics at the University of Vienna, tells news agency AFP. "To tackle that, we wanted to have a solution that is mobile, not attached to the person. But developing technology simple enough for technophobes to use was definitely a challenge. We want Hobbit to be so easy that an older person can naturally, intuitively use it. And technically, we wanted a user interface that combines speech-audio with gestures and a touch screen. Hobbit will have full functionality; it can navigate between different rooms, remember places, remember objects and grasp them." The first prototype, expected by the end of 2013, will cost \$ 6,500 (about ₹ 355,000).



## REVVING AHEAD

**H**eute für Morgen. That's German for 'today for tomorrow'. It's also the name of an innovative and carefully crafted project by German auto-maker **BMW to prepare itself for an older workforce in the future.** In 2007, to mirror the workforce it expected to employ in 2017, it started a production line for workers with an average age of 47 at one of its plants in Dingolfing in Lower Bavaria and invited labourers, representatives from work councils and technical experts to brainstorm about how to make the facility better for the older worker. As news agency Reuters reports, the project threw up a host of ideas, ranging from safer floors, special ergonomic chairs and shoes to easier-to-read computer screens, greater shift rotations and even the presence of physical trainers on site and a recreation and exercise area to offer workers an escape. Remarkably, six years into the project, BMW has implemented these concepts on most of its assembly lines in Germany and around the world. Wunderbar!



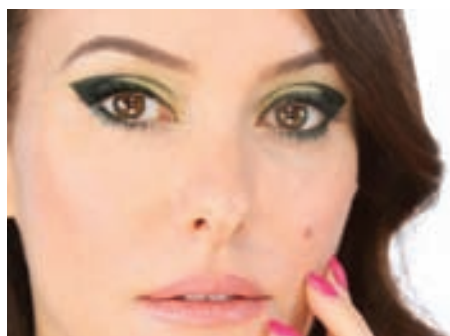
**SMART STUFF: FRENCH COMPANY KAPSYS HAS LAUNCHED SMARTPHONES FOR SILVERS AND THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED—SMARTCONNECT AND SMARTVISION—AS WELL AS KAPTEN MOBILITY, A VOICE-CONTROLLABLE PORTABLE NAVIGATION DEVICE TO ASSIST PEOPLE WITH A VISUAL HANDICAP. ALL DEVICES HAVE LARGE KEYS, USER-FRIENDLY INTERFACES AND VOICE-ACTIVATED SUPPORT FOR FUNCTIONS. GO TO [WWW.KAPSYS.COM](http://WWW.KAPSYS.COM) FOR DETAILS.**





# GLAM CLASS

Every day, the Internet works overtime to make Andy Warhol's 15-minutes-of-fame theory a reality. Currently basking in her sunshine time is Lisa Eldridge. Her **makeup tutorial, *Glowing, Youthful Day Makeup Look for Mature Skin***, has become a runaway hit since it was posted on YouTube with over half a million views (and counting). The British makeup artist, who has worked behind the scenes for over 20 years with actors (Kate Winslet, Keira Knightley), models (Kate Moss)



## Worried by WRINKLES

Sadly, for many women, the mirror becomes a foe with the passage of time. According to a new poll of 2,000 Americans by US magazine *Allure*, **women are under much more pressure to look younger than men.** "The survey shows that ageing, when we are talking about appearance, is a real emotional touch point for both men and women, no matter whether they are 20, 40, 60," Kristin Perrotta, the executive editor of *Allure* magazine, tells *New York Daily News*. Here are some more findings of the poll:

- On average, men are considered 'old' four years later than women.
- 90 per cent of Americans believe ageing is tougher for women.
- Nearly double the number of 50 to 59 year-old women than men in the same age group feel a need to

look young in order to remain successful at work.

- Nearly 70 per cent of African American women are not concerned about the signs of ageing at all, more than any other race.
- Women are more open to the idea of using cosmetic surgery than men (42 per cent versus 18 per cent)—but one-third say they would keep their treatment a secret.
- When asked to name celebrities who have aged well, actor George Clooney was the top choice among both sexes and all ethnic groups, ahead of Sean Connery, former US President Bill Clinton and actors Brad Pitt and Richard Gere.
- The top choice among women was less clear cut, but actors Meryl Streep, Jamie Lee Curtis and Julia Roberts all ranked high.

and even royalty (Sarah Ferguson, Princess Beatrice), has now come front and centre with her video. In fact, buoyed by the response, she has posted a further series of videos on her own website [lisaeldridge.com](http://lisaeldridge.com) that address silver-specific skin and concerns.

"My video has become viral largely owing to the lack of resources online for women over 50," she tells *The Daily Mail*. "Makeup is unfortunately considered a young person's game. My video was inspired by real women with real problems. There are so many women in their 50s, 60s or 70s saying, 'I'm scared of makeup, I haven't worn it for years. What should I do?' This video was made for them." See it for yourself at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-SZA1tkViU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-SZA1tkViU)



## Seeds of beauty

From a staple food to superfood status and beauty must-have, it's been quite a journey for the chia seed, or *salvia hispanica*. Packed with Omega 3 fatty acids and nutrients, the seeds, from the same family as mint, were once worshipped by Aztecs and are widely cultivated as a staple food in South America. Last year, they were hailed for their dietary benefits; this year, **chia seeds are being feted as the wonder ingredient in a variety of anti-ageing serums**. For instance, US clinical dermatologist Nicholas Perricone has made them the star of his latest anti-ageing product, Chia Serum, available for £59.95 (about ₹ 5,000) at [perriconemd.co.uk](http://perriconemd.co.uk). Similarly One Love Organics has launched both the Chia Whip Foam Cleanser and Supercritical Chia Organic Omega-3 Oil, both available at [beingcontent.com](http://beingcontent.com) for £ 23 (about ₹ 1,900)



and £ 39 (about ₹ 3,300) respectively. "As a dermatologist, I believe essential fatty acids are vitally important to beautiful skin," says Dr Perricone in a media release for his product. "Chia seeds are one of the richest vegetable sources of essential fatty acids and can keep the skin soft, supple, hydrated and youthful."



## Compare and contrast

While wrinkles may be an obvious giveaway, there's another, more subtle **way to decipher a person's age: the contrast between the facial features and surrounding skin**. According to a study by CERES, an independent research foundation established by French cosmetic and fashion house Chanel, in collaboration with American psychology professor Richard Russell, as the face ages, the difference in redness

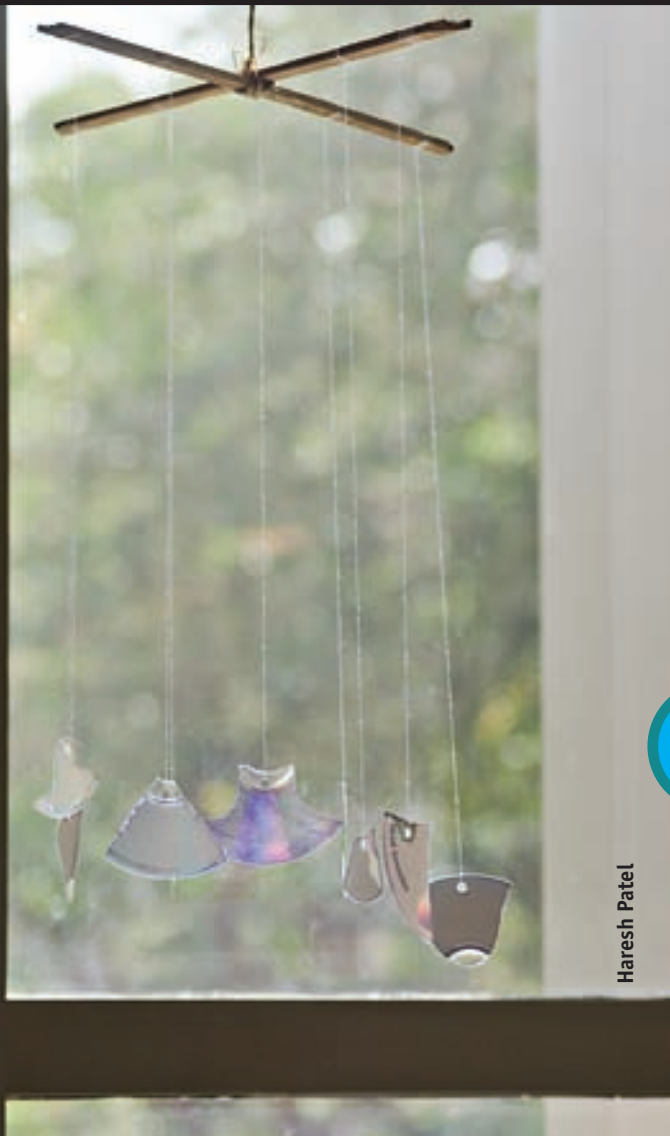
between the lips and the surrounding skin decreases, as does the luminance difference between the eyebrow and the forehead. "Unlike with wrinkles, none of us are consciously aware that we're using this cue, even though it stares us in the face every day," Russell says in a media release. "The discovery of this cue to facial age perception may partly explain why cosmetics are worn the way they are, to increase aspects of facial contrast."

## Diamonds are forever?



It's perhaps appropriate that the price of this product is as other-worldly as its star ingredient. Developed by British plastic surgeon Y Alexandrides in collaboration with scientists from NASA (really!), **111 Skin Celestial Black Diamond Cream contains diamond dust particles from space that penetrate the skin** to 'transport' age-busting goodies like collagen and hyaluronic acid. Available at the uber swank Harrods department store in London or online at [www.111skin.com](http://www.111skin.com), the cream also claims to brighten the skin and zap age spots and pigmentation. Its USP: its ingredients have actually been used by astronauts in extreme space conditions to combat accelerated ageing. The price: £ 599 (about ₹ 50,000) for 50 mL. Now, that's far out.

**Make home your gym.** Silvers new to physical activity can benefit a great deal from home-based fitness DVD exercise programmes, according to a new study by the University of Illinois in the US. "These programmes enable elders to exercise gently at their own pace with no fear of embarrassment," says Edward McAuley, a professor of kinesiology at the university. "But, of course, any new regimen should be vetted by your doctor."



Haresh Patel

## Then: Old CDs Now: Wind chime

Transform old and unwanted CDs into a colourful and melodious wind chime for your home.

Break the CDs in random shapes, paint them in different colours and keep them aside to dry. Meanwhile, get two chopsticks or gather two sturdy tree stems that can hold the weight. Tie the sticks in a cross using a thick thread. Use the same thread to tie a knot on all four ends of the stick and let loose same length of thread on each side.

Take the dried CD pieces; using a sharp item, punch a hole on the corner of each piece. Take the thread through the holes and tie a firm knot to keep the pieces tied to the thread. Add as many pieces you want using the length of the thread.

Hang your chime on your window pane or in the breeziest corner of the house to enjoy the music!



### FACTS

- » In 1983, when CDs were introduced in the United States, 800,000 discs were sold. By 1990, this number had grown to close to 1 billion.
- » Over 5.5 million boxes of software go to landfills and incinerators; also, people throw away millions of music CDs each year. Every month approximately 100,000 pounds of CDs become obsolete (outdated, useless, or unwanted).

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. KEEP THE CDs FULL SIZE TO MAKE A BIGGER WIND CHIME. YOU CAN ALSO USE OTHER MATERIALS LIKE WOOD STEMS, PENCILS, TEST TUBES OR CLAY POTS INSTEAD OF CDs, DEPENDING ON THE SOUND YOU LIKE.
2. OLD CDs CAN ALSO BE USED AS PHOTO FRAMES BY STICKING PICTURES ON THEM.





# The mummy returns

It's not every day that you run into a group of silvers giggling, holding hands and looking wide-eyed at a world of new possibilities unfolding before them. Little wonder then, that the members from the Harmony Interactive Centre in Mumbai, who were recently on a trip to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya to take a peek at a 3,000 year-old Egyptian mummy, were referred to as the 'Harmony school' by their guide.

Resembling a group of hyperactive students, they huddled around the mummies on display, including that of Nesperennub, a high priest in the temple of Karnak, a village on the bank of the Nile. Amazed, they hung on to every word of the guide as he took them through the complex process of mummification. The high point of the evening was the screening of a 3-D film on the mummy, evoking squeals and gasps from the audience.

While the exhibition dealt with the preservation of the physical body after death, a session on Past Life Regression (PLR) therapy at the Harmony Interactive Centre discussed the journey of the soul after death. "Scientifically, it has been proven that energy just changes form and does not perish. The soul, being a form of energy, does not cease to exist but



Photographs by Haresh Patel

**(Top)** At the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya;  
**(above)** Dr Manjiri Gokhale sheds light on past life regression therapy

undergoes a transformation," said Dr Manjiri Gokhale, a PLR and Reiki therapist, tracing the origin of the therapy to psychotherapy sessions in the West, where it has developed as an alternative form of healing.

"I used to suffer stomach ache every time I ate or drank. This continued for years, with none of the doctors I consulted being able to find a satisfactory explanation or cure," said Dr Gokhale, recalling how she became a convert to PLR therapy, "During PLR therapy, I discovered that I had been stabbed in my stomach during a previous lifetime. The acceptance and awareness

of that incident healed me. I don't suffer from stomach aches any longer."

Saying that past life regression therapy could help explain cases that are not medically clear and resolve phobias and psychological disorders, Dr Gokhale said, "The soul keeps on taking rebirths to learn certain lessons. The patterns will keep recurring over lifetimes till the time we learn from them. The learning could continue across not just lifetimes, but genders, countries and religions."

Whether you're a believer or not, it was definitely 'soul-stirring' stuff!





# Stay TALL

**A** one-of-its-kind study reveals that **our life choices indicate whether we lose height in old age.** The study was conducted by three universities—the University of Southern California, USA; Harvard University, USA; and Peking University, China. Between June 2011 and March 2012, researchers collected height data from 17,708 adults above the age of 45. In addition, objective measurements like blood tests were also done. The process is being repeated every two years. From whatever little is known of the results, it has been revealed that the choices we make throughout our life influence our shrinking in older age. Members of the study group losing the most height also failed general tests displaying cognitive health such as short-term memory; they are, sometimes, also unable to perform basic mathematics. Many factors are being considered while observing the study group—height loss is also dependent on gender and educational background of a person. John Strauss, professor of Economics at USC and lead investigator of the study, lays stress on the fact that both early life events and health decisions made later in life have a role to play in the shrinking of our height.

JASLOK HOSPITAL IN MUMBAI HAS INTRODUCED A **MAGNETIC RESONANCE GUIDED FOCUSED ULTRASOUND (MRGFUS) FACILITY**, WHICH WILL MAKE IT EASIER TO PERFORM NON-SURGICAL TREATMENTS FOR DISEASES LIKE UTERINE FIBROIDS, PROSTATE CANCER, BONE METASTASIS AND ADENOMYOSIS (ALL OFTEN SEEN IN OLDER ADULTS). MRGFUS USES A COMBINATION OF HIGH-INTENSITY ULTRASOUND WAVES AND MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING TO PROVIDE A NOVEL TREATMENT ALTERNATIVE FOR TUMOURS. IT FOCUSES THE ULTRASOUND ENERGY TO A SMALL SPOT ABOUT THE SIZE OF A PEANUT INSIDE THE TUMOUR AND HEATS THAT SPOT SUFFICIENTLY TO CAUSE CELL DEATH. THIS PROCEDURE IS A NON-INVASIVE ALTERNATIVE TO SURGERY OR HORMONAL TREATMENTS AND IS BEING WIDELY ACCEPTED SINCE ITS INCEPTION.

# PROTEIN CUT

While on one hand the Obama administration is ready to announce a \$ 100 million brain mapping initiative in the US to curb the rising cases of Alzheimer's worldwide, a recent study could help prevent the disease altogether. A Los Angeles-based study claims that **a restricted protein diet can delay the onslaught of Alzheimer's**. The study was conducted on mice that showed a human-like pattern of Alzheimer's—mice share many pathologies of the disease with humans. Mice



that were fed a protein-restricted diet showed improved cognitive abilities compared to those that weren't on the diet. The tests were conducted using a maze and the ability of the mice to move around inside. It was proved that a protein-less diet had fewer neurons that hold abnormal levels of a damaged protein called 'tau'; this is the protein that accumulates in the brain and can further lead to Alzheimer's disease. This study has provided a platform for another study that will be conducted by University of Southern California's Davis School of Gerontology to observe the same techniques on humans; it will further examine the effects of dietary restrictions in the cases of cancer, diabetes and other cardiac diseases.



## It's safe

The heart-lung machine was first used on humans in 1953; it revolutionised the way doctors operated on a heart—it enabled them to operate on a still heart for 60 minutes or more as opposed to previous techniques that allowed only 15 minutes. Soon after, there were numerous studies that claimed a direct connection between the heart-lung machine and cognitive decline in patients. The condition was notoriously referred to as 'pump-head'. Recent research, though, has claimed that **the heart-lung machine has no link whatsoever with cognitive decline**; and a new study has gone a step ahead in proving it. Conducted at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, the study randomly chose 4,752 people from 19 countries and assigned them to bypass surgeries with or without heart pumps. After observing the two sets for a year, it didn't notice any perceptible differences. There was no difference in death



rate, heart attacks, kidney failures and even strokes in both the sets after operations through the heart-lung machine. The only tiny difference noticed was that some people who used heart pumps in surgeries needed a follow-up procedure to open clogged arteries. Doctors, however, feel that this difference is so miniscule that it might not even have any connection with the heart-lung machine. The same study was repeated in Germany where the focus was entirely on elders (2,539 in number) above the age of 75—this is the age group that is most scared about going in for a surgery with a heart-lung machine. However, here too, it was established that it was equally safe for the elderly to use the heart-lung machine; the results were published online by *New England Journal of Medicine*.



# Folk legend

She never went to school, nor did she clear any exams. She did not engage in any formal training for creative writing either. Yet she grew up to become one of the most prolific and celebrated writers in Rajasthani. Recipient of many awards, Padmashri **Dr Laxmi Kumari Chundawat**'s latest honour is the Rajasthan Ratna Award, presented by the Rajasthan government in recognition of her contribution to Rajasthani literature. Chundawat is one of the seven recipients (four of them received the award posthumously) of the honour that has been initiated for the first time in Rajasthan.

Turning 97 on 24 June 2013, the legendary writer was born in the Deogarh *thikana* of Udaipur state to Rawat Vijay Singhji and Rani Nand Kunwar. She was fascinated by the written word from childhood but the *purdah* tradition of the times prevented her from receiving a formal education. However, she learnt her first alphabets at home. Devi Charanji taught her English; Pundit Panna Lalji Sanskrit and Munshi Zafar Ali Urdu. As a child, she started writing for popular literary Hindi magazines like *Saraswati* and *Chand*. Her father had a great penchant for stories so there would be long storytelling sessions at home in the evenings. Folk tales revolving around valour, warfare and galloping horses thrilled her no end.

At 18, when she got married to Rawat Tej Singh of *thikana* Rawatsar (Bikaner), she brought along her collection of books. "*Main to dahej me kitabon ki almari hi lekar aayi thi* (a cupboard full of books was part of my trousseau)," she says, going down memory lane. She continued to write after marriage. Her husband, then revenue and health secretary in Bikaner state, was a progressive and farsighted person.



Abha Sharma

Laxmi Kumari has penned nearly 40 books in Rajasthani and some in Hindi, including travelogues *Hindu-kush Ke Us Par* and *Shanti Ke Liye Sangharsh*. The former was also translated into Russian. Her Rajasthani folk tales have also been translated into English. And her research on *Devnarayan Bagdawat Mahagatha* is a great contribution to the folk tradition of the state. No one had ever documented the folk epic before. "I invited the *phad gayak* [folk narrator] to come and stay at my home for over a month to document it," she tells us. "My preface alone runs almost 50 pages."

The Chundawats moved to Jaipur when India became independent and her husband joined the civil services of the new state of Rajasthan. Laxmi Kumari's career, however, didn't remain confined to writing. She was destined to play a larger role in public life and be a role model for women her age. She was the first Rajput woman to take a plunge into politics way back in 1956, which meant abandoning the *purdah*. "It was shocking that a *rani* was giving up *purdah* to campaign,

and even more shocking that she was allied with the Congress, the party that was responsible for abolishing landed holding such as *thikana*," says her younger son Balbhadra Singh, a former director general of police. The result was her maiden defeat on home turf; but she went on to win the next two consecutive assembly elections from Deogarh.

Laxmi Kumari's memoir, *From Purdah to the People*, edited by Frances Taft, beautifully depicts her life and experiences. She represented India at many major events including the World Peace Conference, 1978 UN Disarmament Convention, and the Afro-Asian Writers conference. She received the Padmashri in 1984, and has to her credit several literary awards, including the Soviet Land Nehru Puraskar, Sahitya Mahopadhyaya and Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi Vishist Puraskar among others. As a Hindi writer, she would have perhaps reached a wider readership but she firmly believes that every language has a special taste and appeal.

—Abha Sharma



## BIRTHDAYS

● Three time Filmfare 'Best Villain' award winner **Sadashiv Amrapurkar** (right), known for stellar performances in Marathi and Hindi cinema, turns 62 on 11 May.



● Stage and film actor **Lillete Dubey** turns 51 on 13 May.



● More Indian than many Indians, author of British descent **Ruskin Bond** (left) turns 78 on 19 May.

● American singer-songwriter **Bob Dylan**, who won 11 Grammy awards and revolutionised folk music, turns 71 on 24 May.

● Multi-talented musician **Uttam Singh** turns 64 on 25 May.



● Award-winning actor **Paresh Rawal** (right) turns 62 on 30 May.

## IN PASSING

● **George Lowe** (right), 89, the last surviving climber from the team that made the first successful ascent of Mount Everest, died in Central England on 20 March.



● Father of African literature **Chinua Achebe**, 82, breathed his last in Boston, Massachusetts, on 22 March after a short illness.

● Veteran Malayalam actor **Sukumari** (left), 72, passed away on 26 March following cardiac arrest in Chennai.

● 'Iron Lady' **Margaret Thatcher** (right), who set Britain on a new course, died on 8 April at 87.



● Veteran playback singer **P B Sreenivas**, 82, died of a heart attack in Chennai on 14 April.

● Bangladeshi activist for Indian Independence **Binod Bihari Chowdhury**, 102, breathed his last on 10 April in Kolkata.

## MILESTONES

● Veteran actor **Pran** was awarded the Dadasaheb Phalke award in April for Lifetime Achievement in Indian cinema.



● Malayalam poet **Sugathakumari**, 79, (left) won the Saraswati Samman 2012 for her poetry collection *Manalezhuthu* (The Writing on the Sand). The award, constituted by the K K Birla Foundation, carries a cash reward of ₹ 1 million, a citation and a plaque.

● Legendary singer **Asha Bhosle** was presented with the Pandit Hridaynath Lifetime Achievement Award by her elder sister Lata Mangeshkar in Mumbai.

## OVERHEARD

"Today at 64, I firmly believe I am ageing victoriously, in large part owing to the positive examples set by those who are ageing in the spotlight. These are five lessons I think we can all benefit from:

1. **It is possible to get better with age**—just figure out what works for you.
2. **Don't underestimate the power of reinvention**—when we venture into unfamiliar territory, it's hard for our batteries not to be recharged.
3. **It's all about attitude**—if you approach life with the same energy and curiosity you had in your teens and 20s, your age will be nothing but a number.
4. **A rolling stone gathers no moss**—a body in motion tends to stay in motion so keep your calendars full.
5. **How you look impacts how you feel**—taking the time to get dressed and do our hair and makeup is a reminder to ourselves, and a message to others, that we care!"

—British singer, songwriter and performer **Lulu** in a column on [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk)



## 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.

### PACKING A PUNCH!

Perhaps it was boxing that taught me that nothing is really impossible or maybe it was my journey from a simple village lad to an international champion that helped me learn this lesson. Either way, sports teaches you that hard work and determination are a lethal combination, one that is good for the soul.

I was born to a middle-class family in a small village in East Sikkim in 1957. After schooling in my village, I eventually studied in Roorkee, Uttarakhand, and developed a keen interest in boxing at the age of 15.

I joined the Indian Army as a soldier in 1975 but pursued boxing even in the Service. The biggest two events I have ever participated in are the 1982 New Delhi Asian Games, where I bagged a bronze medal, and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. I also won a bronze at the Common-

wealth Games in Brisbane in 1981 and a gold medal at the IX Asian Boxing Championship in Seoul in 1982.

I am currently chief boxing coach for the Sikkim government, where I train youngsters who are passionate about the sport. I always tell my students to keep working hard just as I did throughout my boxing career.

Boxing is a neglected sport and is a poor cousin of cricket and even football. So, boxers find it especially uphill and it was even more difficult back then. But my determination was unwavering and the effort paid off. The Government of India honoured me with the ultimate sports honour, the Arjuna Award, in 1983, while the Indian Amateur Boxing Federation declared me Best Boxer of the Country for two years, 1981 and 1983. The Sikkim state government also awarded me the Khel Samman, a civil award, in May 2012.

During the earthquake of 2011, the boxing infrastructure in the state was severely damaged and we do not have even a boxing ring for practice sessions. But I am not one to give up. I met the chief minister to plead our case and he assured me that he would not only resolve the problem but set up a state boxing academy. Despite the constraints, in 2012-13, as part of the Sikkim Amateur Boxing Association, our children participated in men's and women's zonal and national championships and bagged 16 medals.

Considering the enthusiasm for the sport and the talent we could nurture professionally, it is laughable that the government does not think it fit to provide even the basic infrastructure to promote boxing. Despite this, we have produced champions and a legion of youngsters who could go far. I tell my students that it's going to be particularly difficult in this sport but to never get discouraged. All we need to do is look at Mary Kom to know that we pack a deadly punch!

—*Jas Lal Pradhan, Gangtok*

**Pradhan: Creating champions**







Anand K Soma

## A NEW CHAPTER

Those who believe retirement is the end of their career lack the courage to start all over again. And, believe me, I can barely contain my excitement. After two years with the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, I quit my job in 1977 to engage with fundamental and comprehensive geological work instead of restricting myself to oil exploration. That decision led to a 35-year stint with the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

My work involved the study of earth sciences, mineral exploration, remote-sensing and producing a variety of maps. This gave me an opportunity to view the geological landscape of the country through maps. I worked in the Himalaya for eight years, including the steep Eastern Himalaya, where it is very difficult to work. It was quite an experience! I finally retired as deputy director general with the GSI in October last year.

While with the GSI, I authored a book on water resource management (2004) and co-authored another one on disaster management (2012). The second book was released on my 60th birthday, which is perhaps not really a coincidence because I am determined to continue my love affair with earth sciences.

### Sarvothaman: Breaking new ground

My mission is to use my vast knowledge on the subject to generate awareness. Towards this end, I am planning to split up the book I co-authored on disaster management and write three separate volumes. While the original book addresses graduate and postgraduate students, the new volumes will be aimed at the common man and serve as library reference as well. I also intend to get these books incorporated into the school and college curricula.

Apart from these elaborate plans, I also edit *The Mining Engineer's Journal* and teach and support children—it is something very close to my heart. I am associated with the Vivekananda Educational Centre and we are assisting the Vivekananda Public School in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. As part of this initiative, people can adopt a child and fund his or her education. For my spiritual needs, I look to Rajyoga promoted by the Brahma Kumaris Iswariya Viswa Vidyalaya.

I believe life is very precious and retirement is only a phase in life. There are no time constraints after retirement making it easier to pursue one's interests. If you are blessed with fertility of thought, the sky is the limit.

—Dr H Sarvothaman, Hyderabad





# Growing pains

**VIJAYALAKSHMI RAO, 63, HYDERABAD**

**F**ive years ago, if someone told me that, one day, I would be growing organic vegetables, I would have probably laughed it off. Even though I have always been involved in life sciences and have taught all aspects of botany, for many years I could not imagine actually getting down on my hands and knees and coaxing vegetables to grow healthy and strong.

I was a student of botany and later enjoyed teaching at a high school in Zambia for five years, when my husband was based there. Then, when we returned to Hyderabad and I joined

Bhavan's College in Sainikpuri, I began to teach botany and went on to biogenetic engineering; in turn, that led to organic farming and all things related. I retired from active teaching in 2008. For a while, I wrote online content for a web portal. I wrote about the *Mahabharata*, biology, Indian mythology, history, metaphysical sciences and health issues.

Then, my daughter Bhavna, an agriculture expert, came up with the idea of a trial run of one of her experiments. She wanted me to run an organic farm in the space I have at home and I was to do it without any chemi-

cals. Her main purpose was to see if this could be a commercial success; only then could she convince small farmers to try it out. The process is called 'zero budget farming' as you incur very few costs in the process of growing vegetables. Farmers spend the maximum amount of money on chemical fertilisers and foliage sprays to keep away the insects. Here, we make our own spray and manure out of cow dung, thus keeping costs down. To conserve water, we use drip irrigation.

My daughter initiated the trial run in January 2012; in July, I got my first





Shyamola Khanna

crop of lettuce, eggplant and other leafy vegetables. I sold my first lot in July but it was tough trying to convince people to pay that little extra. I discovered there was no organic lettuce sold in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. So people had no idea of the prices. Why should anyone want to pay ₹ 20 for a head of lettuce when it cost just ₹ 5 in the supermarket? So growing vegetables was easier than trying to sell them! Then, I came across a viable option—Sahajaharam, an NGO based in Tarnaka. I found them very helpful as they were willing to buy all my produce every Saturday.

Over a period of time, and with a lot of help from the Net, I discovered a couple of other organisations that were promoting organic produce. Deccan Organics, a women farmer's cooperative, holds a Saturday bazaar where they sell your produce for a commission. Good Seeds organises a market on the first Sunday of every month in Banjara Hills, while Jiva Organics delivers the produce to your doorstep. I love my beds of lettuce and bok choy (Chinese cabbage) as these are the ones that are giving me money. As an offshoot of all my organic work, my fruit trees are flourishing. My lemon trees are full, while the mangoes and pomegranates are doing well too.

I cannot call myself a commercial success yet—I am just about breaking even. I have only 400 sq ft under cultivation and whatever money I get is put back in. The drip irrigation system costs me ₹ 15,000 alone and I pay for it from my profits. Plus it pays for all my delivery runs into town.

My civil engineer husband has been a great support. He regularly waters the plants. The fruit trees are his, while the vegetables are mine. His favourite place, of course, is the solar energy set-up which works as an inverter for us. He looks after it and ensures we are never without power in the midst of all the power cuts around us. My daughter and granddaughter are great promoters. My granddaughter told her school about it and we had some 90 kids from her school visiting us—it felt very nice having them over.

When I first started selling, the word spread through friends and acquaintances and, as a result, I have made quite a few new friends. I feel very happy when they tell me my vegetables have a fresh, crisp taste. Having said that, let me reiterate that growing vegetables is not just about pleasure but pain too—when there are no takers, the whole lot has to be scrapped. That is heartbreaking!

—As told to Shyamola Khanna

## PET PURSUIT

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

**I worked in the hotel industry for 45 years. I am very passionate about animals and have been an active volunteer in various organisations that work for animals. Now I am thinking of starting a pet hotel or shelter. How should I go about it? Also, I would like to earn some money with this initiative.**

The pet hotel industry is growing at a rapid scale. Pet owners today are looking for the same amount of luxury and comfort for their pets as they seek for their own family. The concept of a pet hotel is a luxurious one and you will have to focus on certain sections of society. The foremost thing would be to narrow in on an area that houses this section; it has to be the most high-end area of the city. Once you have finalised the location, you can start working on building up a place that is pet-friendly. There will be a lot of things to consider; for instance, slopes adjoining stairs for older pets, which would probably require wheelchairs. If you don't want to invest a lot, you could make a few changes in an already existing building to make it pet-friendly instead of building a new place altogether. Follow it up with legal procedures—the licence and permissions. Installing noise-proof walls will make it easier for you to get permissions from neighbouring residents. Once the place is set up, you have to constantly maintain hygiene, food standards and exercise facilities for pets. It's a flourishing business and you can expect a good income if you market and advertise it well.

—Rajendra Chopra is a manager at Delhi Dog Boarding, Gurgaon





## FOOD FACTS BY NAMITA JAIN

### Stay fit: Avoid emotional eating and keep your weight under check

I am a 60 year-old vegetarian and love to eat rich food. My recent reports indicate that my cholesterol levels have shot up. I started a daily exercise regimen a month ago and it has definitely helped me increase my stamina. Could you help me with an appropriate diet plan?

Congratulations on starting an exercise plan. The right diet, along with medications (if prescribed by your physician), can greatly improve your cholesterol levels.

#### Things to remember

**1. Monitor your weight.** Consume foods with high water content to fill you up and keep your weight under check. Choose from watermelon, oranges, sweet lime, grapefruit, pineapple, tomatoes and cucumber. On the other hand, starchy vegetables like corn and potatoes don't contain as much water and are harder to digest. Supplement your water quota by drinking an additional eight to 10 glasses a day. Avoid fried foods, oily foods, red meat and egg yolk.

**2. Relax your mind.** Do you binge when you are bored, angry or tense? Relax, breathe deeply several times and engage in interesting tasks that take your mind off food. This will help you distinguish between actual hunger and emotional eating.

**3. Walk daily for an hour.** Exercise is an important part of your life and writing it down in your daily planner will increase the chance that you keep the appointment.

**4. Eat light, eat right.** Rich gravies, creamy sauces and dressings are loaded with fat. Avoid them as much as possible. Dairy products—including milk, cream, cheese, yogurt, buttermilk, butter and ghee—are high on cholesterol and saturated fats. To cut down fat intake, simply switch to low-fat milk and milk products. To get low-fat milk, boil regular milk two to three times. Each time remove the cream that floats on top so you end up with low-fat or nearly fat-free milk. Or you could simply combine skimmed milk powder and water to get low-fat milk. Use this variant to prepare yogurt, buttermilk and *paneer*. Ice cream lovers can always try the low-fat, low-cal varieties available in the market. When it comes to oils, move away from traditional choices like coconut oil. Ghee, but-





#### READERS ASK

**What is the difference between calcium and Vitamin D? How do they affect each other? Please suggest some good sources for both of them.**

Vitamin D and calcium are often considered similar because they work closely together and are found in similar food items. They are structurally and functionally different, yet they complement each other's role in the human body. Vitamin D is a fat soluble pro-hormone. It is important for organ health. Calcium is a mineral; it is essential for health but your body cannot absorb it properly without the help of Vitamin D. Vitamin D enables the formation of calcitriol, a hormone that regulates levels of calcium in the body and bone growth. Calcitriol facilitates the absorption of calcium from the intestines. It also decreases the rate at which calcium is excreted in urine, thus helping raise calcium levels in the body.

The combination of calcium and Vitamin D helps strengthen bones and prevent osteoporosis. Food is the best source of calcium. Dairy products, such as low-fat and non-fat milk, yogurt and cheese are high in calcium. Certain green vegetables like broccoli and spinach and other foods contain calcium in smaller amounts. Sunlight and foods such as oily fish and nuts are sources of Vitamin D.

Do you binge when you are bored, angry or tense? Relax, breathe deeply several times and engage in interesting tasks that take your mind off food. This will help you distinguish between actual hunger and emotional eating

ter and palm kernel oil are best avoided as well. Switch to the much healthier olive, groundnut or canola oil. Opt for steaming, grilling or roasting rather than frying when cooking. Non-vegetarians, despair not. Instead of egg yolks try egg whites. Red meat is packed with cholesterol, so opt for white meat (chicken and fish). To be on the fast track to good health, include fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains in your diet.

#### Causes for high LDL

Consuming foods rich in saturated and trans-fats is the main cause. That's most of your comfort food—cheeses, pastries, ice creams, etc. Red meat, egg yolks and fried and processed foods are among the culprits as well. Being overweight is a minus, too. To put it in a nutshell, overweight people are often known to have higher LDL, lower HDL and higher triglycerides (fat present in your blood). Staying physically inactive is also detrimental—LDL favours lethargic people.

#### Recommended diet plan

- Start your day with a cup or two of herb tea and a bowl of papaya. You can also have oatmeal; this is one of the most cholesterol-lowering foods.

- Your mid-morning snack could be a slice of multigrain toast or chapatti wrap with *mung*.
- For lunch, have two chapattis (made from wheat, *jowar* or oatmeal) with one cup of any green vegetable, a cup of salad, and a bowl of yogurt or a glass of buttermilk (made from skimmed milk).
- In the evening, have a cup of herb tea or regular tea (use skimmed milk) with a couple of non-cream biscuits.
- For an evening snack, have a cup of *poha*, a vegetable sandwich or 2 *khakra* (use minimal oil).
- Dinner should be similar to lunch. You can start with a bowl of vegetable soup.

*Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit [www.dietmantra.in](http://www.dietmantra.in); [www.liveactive.com](http://www.liveactive.com). If you have a question for Jain, write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*





**SILVER LINING** BY V S NATARAJAN

## Andropause: Male menopause is not an aberration

'Black and white,' 'dawn and dusk,' 'sun and rain'... Mother Nature is admired for her contrasts. So when women experience menopause, why can't there be a menopause in men? Called 'andropause,' a sound evidence of its existence has already been proved by researchers.

Testosterone, the predominant male sexual hormone, starts getting secreted at the age of 17 or 18 in men. From then, it keeps increasing and peaks by 30 years, thereafter experiencing a gradual decline, falling by 10 per cent every 10 years of age. After 50 years, the decrease is more rapid. At around 70 years of age, the level falls to 10 per cent of that present in the adolescent period.

In the case of women, menopause corresponds to the phase when the feminine factory producing women's wonder hormone—the oestrogen—takes a 'break' forever.

When this occurs, the body of a woman is subjected to several changes that are considered physiological. Such a stage comes for men as well. With the onset of andropause, production of the masculine hormone testosterone slowly decreases and comes to a halt. It is purely a physiological phenomenon and anything physiological never needs to be worried about or feared.

The continuation of the human race is the major base of the secretion of respective hormones for men and women, starting at teenage and continuing till old age. The sexual hormones play a major role in enabling the human species to beget offspring. After 50 years of age, by which most couples would have completed their families, the secretion of hormones decreases, as there is no further role for them to play in the human body. This should be thought of as a beautiful physiological miracle.

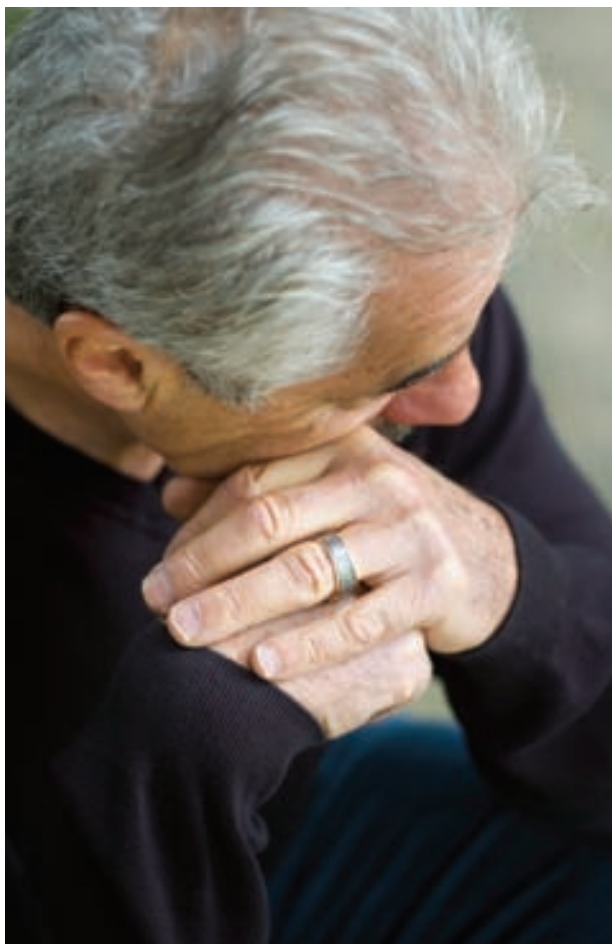
### Changes caused by andropause

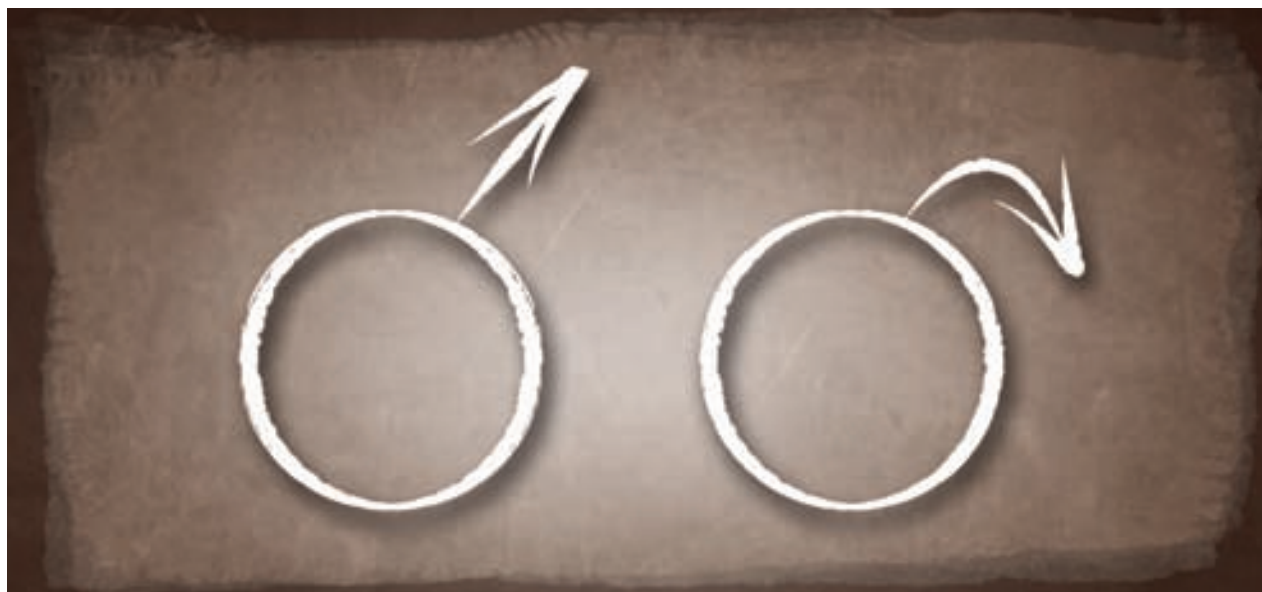
- Well-built and stronger muscles tend to get softer and smaller
- The body gets fatigued more frequently and easily
- Declining memory
- Decreased desire for sex
- Libido lessens and the erection of the penis is not effective
- Even if there is erection, there is delay in ejaculation
- Disturbances in focusing and attention
- Insomnia
- Palpitations
- Loss of lustre of skin and dryness of skin
- Depression
- Staggering gait and increased chances of falls

It is not a hard and fast rule that all these changes should occur in all elderly men. Individual body constitution, lifestyle and food habits are certain significant factors that determine the intensity of these changes. Similarly, the age at which andropause arrives is also variable. All men do not have to keep worrying about andropause, as it causes totally no discomfort in a significant percentage of the male population.

### Other factors causing andropause:

- **Drugs:** Drugs prescribed for gastric ulcer, such as Cimetidine, Omeprazole, Ranitidine; anti-fungal drugs like Ketoconazole; even treatment to fight cancer, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy.





With the onset of andropause, production of the masculine hormone testosterone slowly decreases and comes to a halt. It is purely a physiological phenomenon and anything physiological never needs to be worried about or feared

● **Pathological conditions:** Liver dysfunction; kidney failure; diabetes mellitus; tuberculosis; mental trauma resulting from complicated surgeries and extensive burns.

#### Diagnosing andropause

● A major check is to test falling testosterone levels in blood.

#### Treating andropause

Many a time, changes caused by ageing are confused as discomfort owing to andropause and vice-versa. Hormone therapy is never a 'do only good' method. It has its own adverse effects like any other drug. Hence, it is the prime duty of the physician to carefully choose patients before instituting testosterone therapy.

Testosterone can be administered through several routes.

- In the form of injectables
- As pills
- Trans-dermal patches (that can be stuck to skin)

As a result of testosterone therapy, sexual desire in men increases, muscles start taking a better shape, depression decreases and a sense of well-being appears. Despite these benefits, there are always chances of encountering adverse effects such as increasing breast tissue, occurrence of oedema (collection of fluid in subcutaneous tissues), and jaundice as a manifestation of liver destruction.

#### Contraindications for testosterone therapy

- Cancer of the prostate gland
- Silvers with prostate-specific antigens that shoot up in the blood
- Heart diseases
- Disorders of liver and kidney

All men do not necessarily need testosterone therapy. It is, therefore, advisable to avoid it as much as possible and to combat andropause and its discomforts with the help of more valiant soldiers such as meditation, *pranayama* and healthy lifestyle changes. It is better to start hormone therapy only for extreme cases, as the adverse effects of andropause are almost equal to its benefits.

To conclude, let us work on our awareness about andropause, but there is no need to panic. Some lifestyle corrections always have an upper hand compared to treatment with drugs.

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





YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

## Chin up: You can bust your double chin with yoga

Even the young can get a double chin. It happens when muscle tone at the neck, jaw and chin is lost. It also comes when we consume bad types of fat that require soft spots to deposit themselves. Body areas where there is not much movement invariably attract these unsightly deposits. So, the real culprit is a sedentary life-style not age—though that belief is what makes people give up fighting a sagging chin.

All poses that use the gravitational drag as a challenge can help bust a double chin. The upward-facing poses that tilt the chin up and strain the neck positively are ideal. These include the fish pose (*matysasana*); cobra (*bhujangasana*); bow (*dhanurasana*); cat (*marjariasana*) and all its variations; upward-facing dog (*urdhvamukhasvanasana*); lying thunderbolt (*supta vajrasana*); and all versions of the crescent (*ardha chandrasana*). All these are easy to negotiate and are basic or intermediate level poses. In the advanced level, the headstand (*sirsasana*) and scorpion (*vrschikasana*) work

powerfully because they are tough inversions that keep the entire body upside down against gravity.

However, even simple moves from yoga can help relieve you of these folds at the neck: these include all the variations of the neck rolls and the lion-roaring pose (*simhagarjasana*). For real impact however, you need daily practice. Most important, the challenge must be upped every few weeks. Otherwise, the muscles get used to a movement and will not offer tone. This is a crucial aspect to remember when you introduce yoga in your life to explore its aesthetic power. You can do this either by increasing the duration in the final pose, increasing the number of repetitions or simply trying a more advanced variation of the same pose. Some advanced variations, though they look tough, are often easier to negotiate once a comfort level is established with the basic poses.

### YOGIC MOVES

#### Crescent pose (*ardhachandrasana*)

Stand up straight with your feet together. Draw the right leg about a metre back. Keep the right foot flat or stay on your toes, lifting the heel up. Hold arms at shoulder level; then, draw the palms together. Lift them overhead. Bend from the hips, keeping the left knee bent, while the right leg curves along the thigh, as shown. Once you are firm in the pose, tilt the head up to look at your uplifted palms. Hold for five to 10 seconds, working up to 15 seconds or so. Your back must arch to accommodate the uplifted face, as if the whole body is curving into a crescent. Then, break

the pose to return to the starting point. Repeat the entire flow of movements for the other leg. Your breathing must be normal throughout. Avoid if you suffer from vertigo.

**Benefits:** This pose builds stamina, powers the breath, and tones the spine and limbs. The uplifted face works on the jaw line and chin to clear the fat deposits there.

**Model:** Chandrasen D Chavan,  
Harmony Interactive Centre  
**Photographer:** Haresh Patel

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

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## THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT RADHA RANI MEHRA, MUMBAI

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

By way of this column, I am delighted to learn about recipes that are three decades old. However, I never imagined that one day I would actually relish a pickle that was prepared more than three decades ago. I checked more than a dozen times before I began to believe it and, I must confess, I am still in a state of incredulity. *Nimbu ka aachaar*, or lemon pickle, prepared by Smt Radha Rani Mehra looked appetising despite its dark

colour owing to the time spent in the pickle vessel. It had a pleasantly rich sour taste; a simple preparation made with whole lemons marinated in salt and lemon juice for two to three weeks and then sun-dried. Made in many North Indian families, this pickle is an excellent digestive. Smt Mehra, aka *Chaaaji*, a term used to denote 'mother' in Punjabi, said that it also helps in nausea, diarrhoea and dysentery.

As our conversation proceeded, it became more and more linear, as every reply of hers was steeped in religiosity. Serenity and acceptance are her mantras, and she truly lives a life that reflects her faith in the dictum that 'every moment of life is chosen by the divine and hence one must live it with faith and surrender'. She is blessed with four children, 11 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.

**Pratibha Jain:** Namaste *Chaaaji*! Can we start from the beginning?

**Smt Mehra:** I was born in 1932 in Benaras in a good Punjabi family. My family was very affluent and we almost led a king-like life. But I lost my mother at the age of two and my father at the age of eight. I was the youngest among seven siblings.

**Who took care of you?**

My eldest sister was like a mother to me. We moved to Amritsar and she brought me up very lovingly. I had all the comforts and hardly did any work at home. It is from her that I learnt to believe in God and look upon every moment and event as His wish.

**When did you get married?**

I was married in 1947 [to Sudarshan Mehra] at the age of 15. Later, we went to Kashmir and then came back to Punjab. My husband was a businessman and took good care of me. He passed away in 2007.

**And what about your Guru? How did you meet him?**

In 1950, I met my Guru Maharaj of Anandpur. I was drawn to him and



Haresh Patel



Radhika Rajee

experienced many miracles. My husband did not initially believe in him. I remember one incident when he actually abused one of Guruji's disciples. I warned him saying that one can abuse God but never his disciples. At that time my husband got into some trouble but was saved. He started believing it was my prayers that saved him. Later, he too surrendered to my Guru.

**Your family speaks very warmly of you. Your daughter-in-law says she has learnt to love unconditionally from you.**

If you are firm on your chosen path, your heart is filled with nothing but love. I have always enjoyed my relationships. We are part of a large extended family, almost 400 members, and I share love and rapport with all of them. I have been blessed with very loving children. My daughter-in-law Meena takes such good care of me. At the age of 38, I experienced the joy of being a grandmother, and now I am a great-grandmother. Life is good.

**Meena (daughter-in-law):** I believe that the quality of love that exists in her life does not exist even in my generation. She gives so much love that

**"If you are firm on your chosen path, your heart is filled with nothing but love. I always share love with all family members"**

you have no choice but to reciprocate; and the link simply continues in life. When I was unwell a few years ago, my daughter-in-law quit her job to take care of me.

**That is wonderful. What is the one trait you really admire about your mother-in-law?**

**Meena:** Contentment. She has grown up in riches and lived lavishly. Yet she is content even in this small apartment of ours today. In fact, living with her has made me realise the power of contentment. Another thing is that she will never ever criticise anyone in public. If she has to tell any of us anything, she will do so in private. It is a lesson in dignity.

**These are indeed pearls of wisdom that hold a family together. How do you spend your days now?**

**Smt Mehra:** I have always found a lot of happiness in just being at home. I follow a simple routine, waking up at 5.30 am every day. After a bath, I sit down for my prayers for an hour. This is followed by a simple breakfast, after which I generally rest. Earlier, I used to do a lot of knitting and stitching. I enjoy listening to devotional talks and music on television. I also enjoy the monthly *satsang* with other women at our home.

**Your advice to youngsters?**

Do not try to fight or change destiny. Every time I tried to do that, I was taught a lesson by life. So accept things for what they are and keep fulfilling your karma.

## FROM RADHA RANI MEHRA'S KITCHEN

*Matar ka Parantha*

A delicious Punjabi recipe from Smt Radha Rani Mehra's kitchen; roasted in *desi* ghee for that special flavour



## Ingredients

- Wheat flour: 2 cups
- Ajwain: ¼ tsp
- Salt: a pinch
- Ghee: for roasting the *parantha*

## Stuffing

- Fresh green peas: 2 cups, shelled
- Cumin seeds: ¼ tsp
- Red chilli powder: ¼ tsp
- Coriander powder: 1 tsp
- Cumin powder: 1 tsp
- Dry mango powder (*amchur*): 1 tsp
- *Garam masala*: a pinch
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

## Method

Heat oil in a wok and sprinkle a few drops of water. This handy tip ensures that the mixture will not stick to the sides of the wok. Add cumin seeds; as they crackle, add the peas. Sprinkle

a few drops of water, cover with a lid and allow to steam-cook. Place a heavy weight on the lid to ensure the steam does not escape from the sides.

When the peas are cooked within a few minutes, add all the spice powders and press gently. Stir over low flame for 2-3 minutes. This stuffing should be soft but dry.

Make a soft dough with flour, *ajwain*, salt and as much water as required (about ¼ cup) in a broad-rimmed dish. Cover and set aside for at least 10 minutes. Place some remaining dry flour beside the dough. Divide the dough into 8-10 portions and roll into balls. Flatten one ball and dip into the dry flour. Using a rolling board and pin, roll into a disc of 4-inch diameter. Place about a tablespoon of stuffing on the disc and pack it in by pulling the edges together over it. Once sealed, dip into the dry flour and roll evenly into a *parantha* of 6-7 inch diameter.

Transfer the *parantha* onto a hot skillet over medium flame. Flip it over when small air bubbles appear on the surface. Smear up to ¼ tsp ghee on the surface, making sure not to leave any dry spots. Flip again and press gently with a flat spatula, moving the *parantha* on the skillet so that it does not stick. Smear ghee and flip once more. When dark golden spots appear on both sides, take it off the skillet. Repeat with the remaining portions of dough.

Serve the *parantha* hot with yoghurt and pickle.

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

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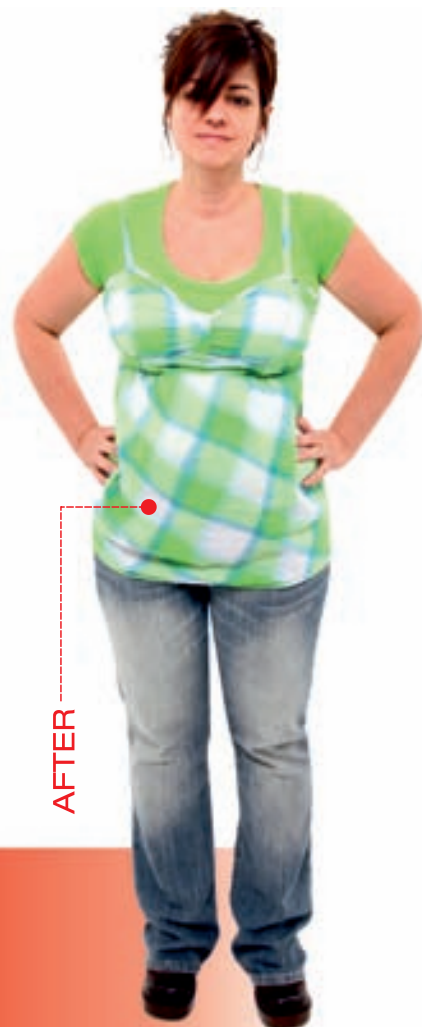
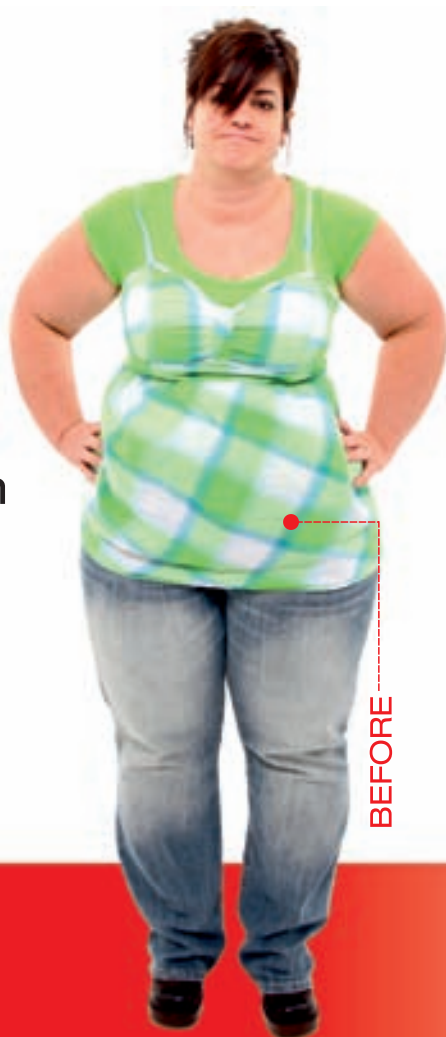
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Sanjay Kurl

# Fauji first

From witnessing history in the making to being elected *sarpanch* of his village, First Citizen of the Indian Army Lt Col (retd) Kartar Singh shares some precious memories with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**

**N**ot many centenarians, not even former Army officers, get a birthday present like the one Lt Col (retd) Kartar Singh received on 1 April. Exactly at the age of 100, this former Army officer was named First Citizen of the Indian Army and felicitated at a solemn ceremony by the Army brass, no less.

Seated on a sofa in the spacious living room in his daughter Rupinder Kaur's bungalow in Mohali, Kartar Singh readies for the interview but says, "*Gal-baat choti hi rakhna* (keep it short)." His faculties are fully alert and

his frail frame belies a man who has witnessed history firsthand.

Lt Col (retd) Kartar Singh joined the army under the British as a clerk, following in the footsteps of his father Dalip Singh, who retired as '*subedar major*'. "I was 24 years old; in those days, there was no *intezaam* to join the Army. Being the older son, the onus of following in my father's footsteps fell on me. My father personally escorted me to Lahore for this purpose. Even though the British were in charge of the military, there was no dissuasion as I was honouring a fam-

ily tradition," recalls the first Indian commanding officer of the 1 Mahar Regiment (1947-1951).

Commissioned into the Licters British Infantry Unit in 1937, Singh's formative training was special. "My father was in Quetta when written instructions that I be looked after and taken care of were sent by his battalion's commanding officer to Colonel Wilson, my superior in Lahore. Colonel Wilson took personal interest in my training and called out my name in a nice manner. I remember very vividly that I was treated well."

That seemingly insignificant gesture became a signature trait of Singh's own persona. "He was known as a leader who cared for his men," says Colonel Avinash Kaul, a family friend who served in the 6 Mahar (Borders) battalion also commanded by Singh, from 1956 to 1958. "We were made aware of the special position he held, and he still holds a place of reverence." An illustrious career is bound to hold tales of valour and Singh's 1 Mahar Regiment saw action during the 1947-48 Kashmir operations. Consequently, the battalion earned the first Maha Vir Chakra, the second highest wartime gallantry award of independent India.

However, Singh's maiden experience in combat came during World War II. "In 1940, I was nominated for service in Egypt and Sudan. It was my first visit overseas and our *jahaj* [ship] left from Bombay. There was no room for apprehension as it was a mission, and duty is duty," he says. Singh shares some of his special memories of a time when India was on the brink of independence from colonial rule. On the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, the then *naujawan* (youngster) recounts, "I was studying at Forman Christian College, Lahore when Bhagat Singh was hanged. I recollect hearing eyewitness accounts of his body being removed from its original place of rest to where his *samadhi* was later made. The atmosphere was charged with young students wanting to rebel against the British and bring about *kranti*. Although I never took part in protests or rallies, the campus was rife with discussion and debate on the treatment meted out to Indians by the colonists."

Partition is an emotional issue for every Indian, so what is Singh's take on this historic event? "*Desh da batwara siyaasi taur te zaruri sigaa* (Politically, Partition was inevitable)," he muses. "I had returned to Hindustan as *pal-tans* [battalions] had been split across the border. I had to travel from Peshawar, and trains loaded with mutilated

corpses travelled to and from both sides. We were thus redirected and a special train took us home. *Dekh ke bardasht karna peyaa!* (I had no choice but to stomach the carnage). Thankfully, I was home with my family on the night of 15 August 1947. I was a major then and there was rejoicing in the streets."

For someone who has straddled both sides of history in 1947, pre and post-colonial, Singh says many changes were ushered into the Army and they were all good. If there's one thing that saddens him, it's corruption and malpractices in the Forces. "We need more good officers but, nowadays, we rarely find men thinking about the nation first!"

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**Retirement is never easy for an Army man and 'taking it easy' was not an option for Singh. So he busied himself with the development of his village, Salempur near Jalandhar**

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Life changed eight years ago, when his wife Harbans Kaur passed away at the age of 91. His voice grows soft as he recalls, "She was the daughter of a well-educated family of Grewals from Ludhiana. Her father was a *lambar-dar* and her uncles were engineers, doctors and lawyers. I remember asking her about her educational qualifications, whether she had studied till BA or MA. She replied, 'I do not have a college education. *Baki tussi apne aap hisaab la lao* (Figure out the rest yourself).'" At this point, he laughs and adds, "She was an intelligent woman who tolerated me."

Retirement is never easy for an Army man and 'taking it easy' was not an option for Singh. So he busied himself

with the development of his village. He was a born leader and was elected *sarpanch* of Salempur near Jalandhar, and held the post for 25 years, from 1958 to 1983. "My father brought about tremendous improvement in his native village. He built roads, schools, dispensaries and other medical facilities for the villagers. To date, residents of Salempur are grateful to him for being able to lead a good life," says a proud Rupinder Kaur.

Instead of elaborating on his immense contribution, Singh rues the petty attitude of those who administered the village along with him. "Committee members would waste time asking questions about financial accountability. I would be amazed by repeated questions like, 'What has been done for our benefit?' I would reply, 'If you have any doubts, why don't you take my place?' Which, of course, never happened!"

The former army officer was also vice-president of the District Soldier Board (Zilla Sainik Board) in Jalandhar for eight years. "Members were *havaladar* and JCOs and had very poor knowledge of finance. They would invariably begin the meetings by asking, 'What about the money we have contributed?' I would reply, 'The tea served to you at these meetings, typing of letters, dispatch of letters intimating you about the meeting, making arrangements for the meeting and so forth... that's where your contributions went!'"

Except for a minor paralytic stroke that compromised his mobility somewhat a few years ago, the centenarian is in excellent health. He rises at 7 am and reads the newspaper with sugarless tea to avoid diabetes, which is followed by a light breakfast of either bread and milk or porridge. But before calling it a day at 9 pm or 10 pm, he makes sure he has his *nit-nem gehri* (daily drive) to a gurdwara with a relative or friend. "I lived a disciplined life in the Army and it helps me now as well." ❀



# Get financially literate

Priya Desai tells you how to safeguard your sunset years with appropriate financial measures

My friend Shalini and I got together recently and recalled our carefree college days. The conversation slowly and inevitably veered towards our personal lives and the desires that have remained largely unfulfilled in the sunset years of our lives. Like many women I know, Shalini is well-educated. A mathematics graduate, she had a cushy job at the Reserve Bank of India. After the birth of a child and a not-too-well-pondered decision to quit her job, she traversed the road of life at a fairly easy pace.

Today, at 73, she leads a reasonably comfortable life, but one laced with a tinge of regret. Her restlessness springs from an inability to understand and handle financial matters. I assured her that financial literacy can be imbibed, irrespective of age. I realised that hers is not an isolated case and that there are thousands of Shalinis in our country who are eager to grasp the basics of financial literacy in the autumn of their lives.

## Financial empowerment

Reading and writing are considered to be a normal part of our upbringing but somewhere along the way, understanding the modalities of managing our finances takes a back seat, with the result that the fear of financial concepts becomes a lifelong one. Broadly defined, financial literacy is 'the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial wellbeing'. The unfortunate part is that very few people actually invest time in it and end up being financial illiterates.

## Why is financial literacy critical?

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development conducted

a study on financial literacy. The survey reported that Canadian respondents found making an investment decision far more stressful than sitting in a dentist's chair. Strange as it may seem, it is an accurate reflection of the general discomfiture that most people harbour about dealing with financial issues. And this is why people eventually end up putting retirement savings on 'ignore mode'. It is presumed that pension, provident fund and other retirement benefits will cover all their needs. However, there are times when inflation and incidental expenses widen the income-

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**When it comes to anything remotely connected to finances, the key lies in leaving no questions unasked. Never leave money matters to chance**

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expenditure gap; that is when the alarm bells start ringing.

Being financially literate can save you all this stress and afford you the peace of mind you desire. Somehow, just savings are never sufficient to provide you with a financial cushion. Those savings need to be invested in a very prudent and consistent manner so that they will eventually multiply over time. If senior citizens are left clinging to a dream of financial security, it is because they are not financially literate. Not having any understanding of how finance works results in assuming financial risks. In recent years, various financial institutions and outfits have been enticing citi-

zens with offers of attractive returns against their gold. Some people give in largely owing to inflationary pressure. They either dip into their assets or obtain loans against them. It's only at the point of loan repayment that reality strikes.

More often than not, interest rates are tilted in favour of the lender and the repayment sum turns out to be a very hefty one. Decisions such as these can prove to be a speed ride with no brake in sight. Unsuspecting senior citizens are also wooed by banks with a variety of gold and platinum cards. The spotlight at this point is always on the benefits they offer and the facilities they proffer. Private banks employ agents on a commission basis and the latter will go to excessive lengths to sell as many cards as possible. Once the card has been issued, they do a classic Houdini and vanish into thin air. The gullible and money-illiterate customer is left holding a snazzy card and onerous financial obligations.

## The initiative quotient

When it comes to anything remotely connected to finances, the key lies in leaving no questions unasked and no information unsought. Never leave money matters to chance. Be inquisitive and take the initiative to understand the technicalities of your investments.

Take the case of Hirmani, who had been a mediclaim policy-holder for some time. In a classic case of ignorance, he had never bothered to read the fine print on his policy. It was only during a casual discussion with a friend that he became aware that the policy offers a free medical check-up for every four unused insurance years.

Another fact he wasn't aware of was that the expensive knee replacement surgery he was slated to undergo would not be covered at this point of time. In his case, acquiring the policy at the age of 64 made him eligible for the surgery cover only after four years. Expecting an insurance agent to volunteer this information was asking for the impossible to happen. In our country, the concepts of customer service and customer education are yet to evolve.

### Never say you can't

There is no disputing the fact that an early start in financial education is an essential aspect of life. Fisher-folk are generally perceived as being illiterate. But the finance-savvy community of fisherwomen in Mumbai is disproving this perception with aplomb. They are income-earners, well-versed with the concepts of saving and investing in gold and real estate and are able to handle their finances very efficiently.

You don't really need to be a number-crunching mathematician to understand the basics. Take one step at a time, find a foothold and then move forward. Is this easier said than done? The answer is no; it's not a Herculean task and there are several avenues that can be accessed to gain a better understanding about how money works. To start with, here are a few rudimentary questions you should be asking yourself:

- Do I not need monthly budgeting?
- Do I not need to save and invest for the future?
- Do I not need to buy a life insurance policy now?
- Do I not need to buy a house as a long-term shelter?



### Help is at hand

In the course of our lives we take a number of decisions that involve money. Financial education empowers you to take these decisions in a more informed manner, minimise the risks, maximise the rewards, be proactive to pitfalls and ensure your wealth grows. Efforts have been initiated by the government and financial institutions like the Reserve Bank of India, SEBI, BSE, IIFL (Initiative FLAME), various banks and NGOs to spread financial education among various groups, including senior citizens. All these programmes are not necessarily targeted at silvers, as the broader objective is to create general awareness.

However, institutions such as the Mumbai-based Moneylife Foundation organise workshops and seminars addressed specifically to the needs of silvers. Another source is the Internet, a treasure-house of information. The RBI has launched 'Project Financial Literacy', which has veritable open-source information. The US established the Financial Literacy and Education Commission way back in 2003. Countries such as India have a lot of catching up to do. But we are gradually getting there.

### Financial literacy is a shield; wield it

Financial literacy is a tool that will equip you to take control of your future. It is high time silvers started learning money matters. Learning is a lifelong process and being financially literate means warding off fraudsters who have the potential of stripping you of your life's savings overnight. I recall reading the book *The Double Life of Ramalinga Raju*, which is about the infamous Satyam ex-CEO who pulverised the post-retirement fortunes of

thousands of silvers, who had inadvertently invested in Satyam stocks. The company had falsified its accounts, leading to irretrievable losses for all its investors. Understanding the financial nitty-gritty will help you make wiser decisions.

### The Indian context

In India, husbands tend to manage their wives' finances, with the latter being perpetually at sea when it comes to the simplest of financial matters. In the event of the spouse passing away before the wife, handling assets and liabilities becomes an insurmountable task for senior women. It is important for men to prepare a will and educate their partners on the contents of the will and financial security. Instances of children defrauding their mothers are not isolated ones in a society that is becoming increasingly selfish and ruthless. The only way to avoid this is to take charge of your own finances. A will provides such a mechanism.

Attaining basic skills in financial literacy is now imminent and urgent. Financial inclusion of silvers is the need of the hour. So do not ignore, cower or give up. Forge ahead and arm yourself with the shield of financial literacy.

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*The writer is a Mumbai-based economist*





# the voice

She left the film industry at her professional peak as a playback singer to pursue personal happiness. And today, Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam's life and music are richer for it, as she tells **Tanmaya Kumar Nanda**

**B**ollywood is an intensely ageist industry. Worse, its ageism is also intensely sexist. For decades, heroines have been discarded simply because they got married, or hit 30, or were no longer young looking enough to play lead roles. Many a female actor has gone in a matter of years from playing the romantic lead opposite an actor to playing his mother or *bhabhi*, while the man continues to romance women half his age, sometimes even younger.

Evidently, that old line, *Age cannot wither her, not custom stale/ Her infinite variety*, is not one you are likely to come across in the histrionics department in India's leading film industry. Only a handful of female actors have been able to stick it out for long, and that too because they were smart enough to move on to scripts that were either more

challenging for an actor or roles that accurately reflected their changing years even as heroines kept getting younger. But like in everything else, the Indian film industry is not immune to the law of exceptions. In this case, if one were to look closely, it would be music. Music, fortunately, has played it the other way: our best composers and singers have been the ones who have sung well into their 40s, 50s, even 60s. Perhaps this is a function of music itself—the longer you are around, the more life experiences you are able to put into your music.

Indeed, Bollywood's music industry has consistently defied the ageism rampant in the acting system. Perhaps because they are hidden safely behind the soundtrack, in sound-proofed studios, cloaked in the purity of their art rather than just looks, some of our greatest music directors and singers have worked, and successfully, well into their 60s



# Thankfully.

*my mind has opened up a lot after my marriage to Dr Subramaniam. Everyone says I sound better today*

and 70s. While a quick count of these luminaries would sound like a roll call of honour, the latest to join this club of legends is Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam, 55, who is on the verge of releasing a new album later this year.

She makes the process sound wonderfully casual. “There were some songs lying in the *dabba*, and I asked my husband [renowned violinist Dr L Subramaniam], ‘Why don’t you finish this for me?’” she tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. “Finally, it has been completed; he has been mixing it. He hasn’t had the time to finish it. It’s a collaboration between us.”

The songs on the album, some recorded almost a decade ago, were re-recorded to make her voice sound like it does today. “You want the latest voice,” points out Krishnamurti, who began her Bollywood singing career 40 years ago. “Thankfully, my children and everyone say I sound better today, so that’s good,” she adds, breaking into a light, almost embarrassed giggle.

Of course, there is no cause whatsoever for embarrassment for Krishnamurti, who for long was held up as the next Lata Mangeshkar, and at one time was the film industry’s leading female playback singer. And just when everyone thought she had a good thing going, she upped and quit.

## the game changers

Krishnamurti, though, has never played to the script. She began learning Rabindra Sangeet in Delhi instead of Carnatic music, which at the time was considered *de rigueur* for most girls from conservative middle-class Tamilian families. Her own older sister was learning Bharatanatyam, incidentally in the same class as Hema Malini.

In fact, as Krishnamurti reveals, it was Hema Malini’s mother Jaya Chakravathy who would later put her in touch with music directors Laxmikant-Pyarelal, a meeting that would set the awkward Tamil girl from Delhi on course to becoming a celebrated playback singer. But intriguingly, the one person who is perhaps singlehand-

edly responsible for Krishnamurti’s success has no connect with the film industry, or music. Throughout our conversation, Krishnamurti keeps returning to the role her family friend—aunt, as it were—from Delhi, Protima Bhattacharya, played in her journey. They were neighbours in Delhi and Mrs Bhattacharya was like an older sister to Krishnamurti’s mother; at some point, she spotted talent in the young Kavita.

“She was the first one who said, ‘This girl’s voice is suited for the film industry,’ and she took it upon herself to realise that dream,” recalls Krishnamurti, who refers to her as nothing less than her own mother. It was Mrs Bhattacharya who first insisted she learn Rabindra Sangeet instead of any other form, and she who first reached out to Jaya Chakravathy. When the Krishnamurti family moved to a different part of Delhi, the Bhattacharyas gave up their spacious quarters to move together so they could remain close and ensure her singing career didn’t take a hit. “I was over at their place all the time; it was where I sneakily learnt to eat fish,” recalls Krishnamurti, giggling at her memories of illicit culinary pleasures.

When the time came for her to dip her toes into the film industry, her own family was fairly clueless about how to go about it, and how their daughter would manage alone in Mumbai. But Mrs Bhattacharya insisted she needed to be where the industry was; after some persuasion, the Krishnamurtis agreed to let her take admission in a college in Mumbai. What’s more, Mrs Bhattacharya herself moved to Mumbai to be her guardian in the new city. The older of the two slipped easily into the role of a mother, something Krishnamurti emphasises time and again. “She is the one who really helped me stay grounded; she made sure I went to college, to practice, came home on time,” she says. “Even after I became successful, she was the one who made sure I didn’t get any airs. I would go sing, record, all that, but when I came home, I was the person I had always been.”

Another person who made sure Krishnamurti remained true to her roots was the legendary singer Manna Dey. “He would tell me, ‘Make sure to carry your own things; don’t get a manager to carry your files for you,’” she remembers. “The beauty of Mannada was that he was such a gentle-





man and so humble; he would go to the market and buy his own vegetables, buy his own fish.” In fact, it was Manna Dey who assured her father that she would be safe in Mumbai. “Initially, there was a lot of apprehension about me moving to Mumbai; my father’s concern eased only after he met Mannada because he knew I was going to be in safe hands.” Indeed, she acknowledges that it were people like Manna Dey, singer Hemant Kumar and composers Laxmikant-Pyarelal (LP) and R D Burman who made her feel at home in the industry. “I’ve been fortunate to have been around people like them,” she says almost wistfully. “They are the reason I’ve been able to go through life with rose-coloured glasses.”



Another time, she went to audition for LP. “I must have sounded like a schoolgirl singing with my hands clenched tightly,” she says with a laugh. But through it all, she had Mrs Bhattacharya by her side, her rock, as it were. “She would go to music directors and tell them to give me a chance whenever Lataji was not available.”

## the ‘struggle’

Not surprisingly then, Krishnamurti’s story has only faint shades of resemblance to what has today become an integral part of success stories in the film industry: ‘The Struggle’. Today, you could well be forgiven for thinking that ‘struggling’ is a full-time profession for those looking for a break in the industry; those who do not have a family connection already, that is. The term has almost acquired a mythic aura, and no outsider fails to mention his or her ‘struggler days’ in media interviews or at awards functions.

When Krishnamurti speaks of her own struggle, then, by today’s stories of casting couches and lecherous talent spotters, it sounds like something of an anti-climax. Make no mistake, though, she has suffered her share of trials and tribulations, like the time composer C Ramachandra told her to come back after 10 years when her voice was more mature. “Some years later, when his office called me, I went to him and said, ‘Sir you’d said to come back after 10 years, here I am after only six,’” she recalls, laughing.

Initially, she would also sing at concerts or weddings, but these were places where singers usually did not get much respect. “Once there was some *filmi* concert and people were drinking,” she shares. “There was this one person who must have seen how uncomfortable I was, and he came up to me and said ‘Go home now’. It was Majrooh Sultanpuri.”

Krishnamurti got her first break in 1978, for a Yash Johar film—the song went *Baatli ko tod de, sharaab chhod de* (Smash the bottle, quit the boozing). It was a dubbing for a Lata Mangeshkar song to help with the shoot, and her rendition was not retained in the final film. But it was a start, and more dubs for Lata Mangeshkar’s voice followed. Eventually, she started getting songs in her own right but by her own admission, true recognition only came after the catchy *Hawa Hawaii* number in the Anil Kapoor-Sridevi blockbuster *Mr India*.

That was a golden period, so to speak, with the likes of Krishnamurti, Anuradha Paudwal, Kumar Sanu and Udit Narayan establishing themselves as the leading singers for a generation as technology from companies such as T-Series put audio cassettes and electronic audio players well within the reach of a slowly growing middle class, and even in the vast hinterlands of India.

The struggles were over, finally. R D Burman, or Panchamda as he is popularly known, remembered a promise he had made to her years ago. “At the time, he had himself admitted that his career was on a downhill slope but he promised that he would call me whenever he got a good film,” Krishnamurti recounts. He was true to his word, and called her to sing for him in 1942: *A Love Story*, a period romance set against the backdrop of India’s struggle for Independence, and for which she won her first National Award. Shortly after, she got her first Filmfare award for another blockbuster, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (HDDCS) in 1999.

# I am still here.

***I would love to do a Devdas or HDDCS but someone needs to write it for me***

"For me that was the big one, because Lataji was getting an award for Lifetime Achievement and on stage, in front of the entire industry, she said that she was very happy that a deserving singer had got the award," she recalls with emotion. "I had finally gotten my due."

## *the twist in the tale*

And then out of the blue, just like that, Krishnamurti quit the industry. "People were shocked; I had just done *HDDCS* and I left it all to get married and move to Bangalore," she says, laughing lightly. "I was at the peak of my career. A lot of people were very happy for me, but some said 'What will happen to her career?'"

But Krishnamurti knew exactly what she wanted. Dr Subramaniam, a widower, already had three kids from his first marriage. "The kids just took me in like I was family; there was absolutely no problem at all," she says. Today, she has no regrets about her decision. "Marrying him has not affected my career," says Krishnamurti very matter-of-factly. On the contrary, she credits Dr Subramaniam, one of the most famous fusion musicians to come out of India since Pandit Ravi Shankar, with introducing her to a new way of thinking about music. "My mind has opened up a lot," she iterates. "I've started appreciating how certain instruments are a personality of the artist himself. When I see George Duke playing the piano or Stanley Clark with the bass guitar, or my husband on his violin, the instrument speaks for their character, it speaks for their personalities; it's really an extension of their personalities."

Listening to new forms of music came after marriage, she admits candidly, unhesitatingly crediting her husband with opening her ears to new sounds, new interpretations, even a new way of looking at music. "Now I've started listening to instrumentalists, I've performed with some jazz artists," she says. "When you're in an orchestra, you look at the conductor and say, 'This is my cue, and then you've got to get the rhythm from there. So all these things, they've opened up a new world for me. And even when I sing now, the way I try to listen to my pitching, it's all different now, and the fine tuning has come from him. He's really helped me open up in music a lot."

Which is not to say they were always on the same page. "He's not a Bollywood composer, right? He's a classical musician and he's been into fusion, he's mainly worked with instrumentalists and sometimes with vocalists, and he doesn't look at Hindi the same way that I look at Hindi as a language," she points out. "He is more familiar with English and Tamil. He's never lived in the North; he lived in Madras and went straight to the US, so his approach, most of it, is a crossover approach."

## *then and now*

Now, equally comfortable in her personal life—"He's the calm one, I'm the panicky one"—as she is straddling many musical worlds, she is able to address Bollywood's obsession with youth with equanimity.

"I haven't pulled back from the industry, I'm still here, but I sing less because I don't get good songs," she says candidly. "I would still love to do a *Devdas* or *HDDCS* but someone needs to write it for me. My assessment is that most actors are very young, sometimes in their teens, and I feel that some of the older actors also probably want a younger image. So why have a singer of my generation? It might make them sound older." Krishnamurti stays attuned to the times by using technology as a tool to communicate with her fans, whether it is Kavita KS, a free app available on the Apple Store and Google Play, or her Facebook fan page, on which she is quite active.

Sadly, as pop culture morphs, the demand for a singer of Krishnamurti's style has decreased, giving way to songs that are peppy alright, but also easily forgettable and replaceable. The *Munni-Sheila-Jalebi-Fevicol* assembly line has claimed its victims to the point where Udit Narayan must sing *Ratti-patti* to stay relevant. "If you are too much of a trained singer, is the audience ready to accept someone who is very well-trained?" she asks, raising a pertinent question about not just the quality of singers but as much about the quality of audiences. And now, instead of asking what kind of music should be produced for generations to come, the dominant question is what kind of album will sell. "We need to have a commitment to listeners, to lift up the standards of the listeners as well." ❀



# POETRY in stone

The intricate carvings at the ancient Hoysala temples of Belur and Halebid speak of myth, legend and history

◆ 📷 Susheela Nair



**B**ucolic charm was on full display as we cruised past the scenic Karnataka countryside on the Bangalore-Hassan National Highway, riding past silvery fronds of sugarcane, banana plantations and coconut groves. Green fields of paddy and ginger, plantations of rust-brown mature *ragi*, carpets of yellow sunflower and vast vistas of orange marigold loomed into view, as if laying out a lush carpet to welcome us. We were on a heritage sojourn to marvel at the architectural extravagance of the Hoysala temples of Belur and Halebid in Hassan district.

Hailed as the Taj of southern India for its ethereal quality, the Chennakesava Temple in Belur is an art connoisseur's delight. While gazing at its intricate carvings, we completely lost track of time. Legend has it that the temple, commemorating the victory of the Hoysalas over the Cholas in the great Battle of Talakad, took 103 years to complete. Incidentally, it is the only Hoysala temple still in active worship. Located on the banks of the river Yagachi, Belur was the capital of a mighty empire ruled by the Yadav kings. There is an interesting tale about how the Hoysala Dynasty got its name. It is believed that *Hoy Sala*, meaning 'strike Sala', were the words called out to Sala, the



legendary head of the dynasty when he was involved in an armed combat with a tiger. Sala immortalised himself and the tiger by singlehandedly killing the beast. This tale became the royal emblem of the dynasty and can be seen at the entrance of most of the temples built by the Hoysalas.

As we entered the huge walled courtyard where the star-shaped Chennakesava stands surrounded by smaller shrines and columned *mandapa* hallways, we were bewildered at the sight of the towering ornamental *gopuram* of the temple. Greeting us was the winged figure of Garuda, Lord Vishnu's carrier, at the entrance, palms touching in



The star-shaped Hoysala temple in Belur; the towering *gopura* of Chennakesava temple

homage while facing the temple. Also remarkable is a tall stone pillar in the temple courtyard, with nothing to balance it but its own centre of gravity. As we approached the temple, the friezes of marching elephants, each different from the other, mythological figures, military scenes, dancers and musicians, and elaborate decorative motifs appeared before us.

Every inch of the wall, covered with carvings depicting scenes from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, pays microscopic attention to detail. The carvings on the plinth and lower walls, in successive and continuous bands, begin at the bottom, with depictions of 650 elephants, each one in a different configuration. They seem to hold the rest of the sculptures on their shoulders, which include arches with lion heads, stylised vegetation with dancing figures and seated *yaksha* or spirits and miniature pillars alternated with female figures getting dressed up or dancing. Some of the temple towers are interspersed with dancers. The sculptures also depict the lifestyle and other leisure activities of the people of that era.

The beautiful *madanika* or celestial nymphs are depicted singing, dancing and beautifying themselves. A wealth of





The carvings on the plinth and lower walls, in successive and continuous bands, begin at the bottom, with depictions of 650 elephants, each one in a different configuration. They seem to hold the rest of the sculptures on their shoulders

detail has gone into their makeup, jewellery and coiffures. All around the temple, the three-dimensional figures of deities and dancing girls that adorn the outer pillars are chiselled with finesse and realism. You can actually see drops of water dripping out of the hair of a goddess, a feat that speaks volumes about the skills of the sculptor. Elsewhere, a dancer can be seen beating a drum while a beautifully carved figure holds a bowl of fruit, on which a fly has just landed. A large lizard lurks just a few inches away, mouth open to lap a hapless insect. An annoyed lady is seen shooing away a monkey who is tugging at her sari, while another brushes a scorpion from her garment. Yet another sculpture depicts a lady with a 360° turn of her body, which is anatomically impossible. But it is the stunning sculpture of the *Darpanasundari* (lady with a mirror), the epitome of beauty, grace and charm, which clearly steals the show.

More interesting sculptures awaited us in the dark interiors of the temple. We saw distinctive pillars, lathe-turned, embellished with a profusion of carving. Our guide got the large spotlight turned on and pointed to the walls and ceiling, revealing 48 perfectly polished carved pillars with elegant geometric designs, and life-size statues of Vishnu, Lakshmi and other deities that seem like they would step out of the pedestal any time. The embellishments on the ceiling are wondrous; in places the carvings are floral or serpentine. The Narasimha Pillar once revolved on its ball-bearing foundations. A pillar of a dancing lady features bangles that can be moved up and down on her arms, and another has a headdress with a tiny, movable ring. The smooth circular platform in front of the shrine displays a sculpture of Shanthala Devi, King Vishnuvardhana's wife. Equally impressive are the temples of Chennigaraya,





(Facing page) Visitors lost in admiration of the intricate temple carvings at Halebid; (clockwise from top left) exquisite carving of a dancer beating a drum at Chennakesava; Halebid's eye-catching exteriors; an enormous Nandi guarding the entrance to the shrine

Viranarayana, Sridevi and Bhoodevi, all in the same complex.

From Belur, we headed to Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebid, just 16 km away. Halebid, which was originally known as 'Dwarasamudra', was the capital of the Hoysalas from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Work on the temple was interrupted by a Muslim invasion from the north in 1310. Thereafter, the Hoysalas shifted their capital to Belur, and Dwarasamudra became known as Halebid, or the old capital. Much like the Belur temple, the star-shaped temple in Halebid is a sculptural extravaganza. However, we concluded that the interiors of the Belur temple are more beautiful, while the exterior of Halebid temple is more eye-catching.

As you enter the temple here, the doorway with its elaborate *makathoranam* draws your attention. Its walls are richly carved with a variety of Hindu deities, sages, stylised animals, birds, and friezes depicting the life of the Hoysala kings. This Shiva temple has two shrines, one each for Hoysaleswara (King Vishnuvardhana) and Shantaleswara (Queen Shanthala Devi). The two shrines are identical in that they both face east and have a foyer leading to the sanctum sanctorum, housing a Shiva *linga*. Adorned with



bells and jewels, Nandi (Shiva's bull) occupies pride of place outside both the entrances.

The walls here are covered with layer upon layer of frieze, beginning at the bottom with an endless procession of sturdy elephants, some of them playfully interlocking their trunks. Above them is a row of lions, their courage surmounting the strength and wisdom of the elephants; still above, horsemen engaging in battle, mythical four-legged animals, peacocks and, finally, vignettes offering an insight into the daily life of the Hoysalas: hunting, warfare, worship, amorous dalliances, dancing and music make for the impressive line-up. One of the most remarkable images is that of the demon king Ravana, unsettling Shiva's mountain abode Kailasa: the mount is populated by numerous animals and figures, and Shiva is seated atop with Parvati.





## FACT FILE

### HOW TO GET THERE

**By air:** Mangalore, the nearest airport, is 160 km away.

**By train:** The nearest railway station is Hassan (39 km).

**By road:** Take NH 14 to Nelamangala; then, take NH 48 to Hassan via Kunigal and Channarayapatna and get on to the state road to Belur.

### WHERE TO STAY

Eka Resort, Hassan; Tel: 08173-266822/833

Hoysala Village Resort, Hassan;

Tel: 08172-256764

### INFORMATION

Department of Tourism, Government of Karnataka, Yatri Niwas Building, Hassan;  
Tel: 08172 -268862

### WHAT TO BUY

*Panchaloha* (a precious alloy of gold, silver, zinc, copper and bronze) statues of gods and goddesses are available. You can also buy slate stone curios outside the temples.

### TIPS

It is advisable to base yourself in Hassan, which has more options to stay. Hire a government-approved guide who will help bring some of the sculptural details to life.

Built by French missionaries for affluent British estate owners, the Shettyhalli church got submerged with the construction of Gorur dam

We had a peek at the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century sculptures, wood carvings, idols, coins and inscriptions on display in the museum in the temple complex.

We also took a detour to the enormous crumbling ruins of the Holy Rosary Church in Shettyhalli, near Hemavathi River. Built in 1860 by French missionaries for affluent British estate owners, the church got submerged in the 1980s with the construction of Gorur dam. It is said that the church was built with mortar and a mixture of jaggery and eggs. During my last visit to the church many years back during the monsoon, I was fortunate to take a coracle ride to these ruins. It was a spectacular sight then with the entire church submerged in the river, but for its spire.

However, this time round, the battered edifice was a striking contrast to the breathtaking landscape of the Gorur Dam catchment area. The columns, the arch, a few walls, part of the altar and the central nave in the ruins are intact, but there are no stained glass windows, pews or even windows left. Only a few walls remain to tell a tragic story. Currently, Shettyhalli's backwaters continue to lure tourists with its spectacular sunset, excellent birding, angling and photo opportunities. ✨

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# COOL CAPERS

WE BALANCE THE SPIKE OF THE MERCURY WITH FIVE ÜBER COOL SILVERS WHO HAVE CHOSEN A PATH MORE UNCONVENTIONAL—AND FOUND THEIR OWN ROUTE TO HAPPINESS

## RHYTHM DIVINE

She navigates the musical terrains of contemporary folk, pop and soft rock with equal ease, bringing to her music a flavour that is unique. In her powerful voice, curator-turned-singer Geetu Hinduja, 53, tells evocative stories, from Rumi's poetry to reflections of Mumbai's street life, from Adi Shankaracharya's contemplation of the self to the hypocrisy of modern life.





Monica Dawar

# GEETU HINDUJA



# SHATBHI BASU

## NO HOLDS BARRED

She is India's first lady on everything spirited. Venturing beyond clichés, our first woman bartender and mixologist Shatbhi Basu, 53, based in Mumbai, revels in constantly challenging the palate by creating and concocting newer blends and cocktails.





# JYOTI SHARMA

## ARABIAN NIGHTS

It's not easy to shimmy and shake it like Shakira, especially for an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer. Discarding *abhinaya* and *mudra*, theatre and voice artist Jyoti Sharma, 62, is learning to sway her body to Arabian music at Ritambhara Sahni's The Belly Dance Institute, Mumbai.

Vilas Kalgutkar



# PINTUELI GAJJAR



## THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES

Speed and the feel of the breeze on her face set her pulse racing. Undoubtedly one of the most daring Indian grandmothers on the circuit, 55 year-old Pintueli Gajjar's love for biking is legendary among her family and friends in Rajkot.

# NONDON BAGCHI



## **HIP 'N' HAPPENING**

Nondon Bagchi, 59, and his band Hip Pocket are synonymous with Western music in Kolkata. A mathematician whose love for music and food is comparable to his love for numbers, Bagchi's drumbeats set the city's best known pub, Someplace Else, swinging every week.



A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a light blue checkered shirt and white trousers, is riding a blue duck-shaped water toy in a pool. She is smiling and has her arms outstretched. In the background, a man with white hair, wearing a light green shirt and khaki shorts, is also riding a similar water toy. The background is filled with lush green foliage.

## Experience

### A second childhood

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*harmony*  
**celebrate age**

## A lengthy affair



A moustache could mark male vanity for some. For Rajasthani men, though, it is a symbol of honour. Meet 60 year-old Ram Singh Chauhan, who holds an unbeaten record for the world's longest moustache in *Guinness World Records 2010*. In more than two years, his black shining treasure has grown from 14 ft to 18 ft; he plans to break his own record this year. On 29 March, he received the Virasat Dharohar Award 2013 (presented to people excelling in various fields) in Jaipur on the eve

**THIS 'N' THAT**

of Rajasthan Day. "I was fascinated by the flamboyant moustache of a fellow Rajasthani Karna Bheel and decided to grow my own three decades ago. But being a state employee prevented me from participating in the many fairs and festivals held by Rajasthan tourism," he says, twirling his prized possession. In February 2013, he retired from the state services and is looking forward to an untiring moustache-raising feat in the coming days.

—Abha Sharma



## DELICIOUS ACT

CALL IT A SMOOTH BLEND OF CULINARY SKILLS AND DELIGHTFUL HISTRIONICS. SEEMA BHARGAVA, AKA BADKI FROM INDIA'S FIRST TV SOAP OPERA *HUM LOG*, HAS COME OUT WITH AN AVANT-GARDE PIECE OF THEATRE. IN AN INNOVATIVE STYLE, BHARGAVA RENDERS *SAAG MEAT*, A SHORT STORY BY WELL-KNOWN HINDI WRITER BHISHAM SAHNI, AS A SOLO PERFORMANCE WHILE COOKING THE MOUTH-WATERING RECIPE AT THE SAME TIME! "I HAD ENACTED THE PLAY—ABOUT HOW THE 'WELL-TO-DO' EXPLOIT THEIR DOMESTIC HELP—IN 1982; THIS TIME, I THOUGHT WHY NOT DO SOMETHING OUT-OF-THE-BOX? FOR MY AUDIENCE, IT IS AN EXPERIENCE OF A DIFFERENT KIND, AS THE AROMA OF *SAAG MEAT* [MADE OF MUTTON AND SPINACH]

ENGULFS THEM WHILE WATCHING THE PLAY," BHARGAVA TELLS *HARMONY CELEBRATE-AGE*. AND THAT'S NOT ALL! AFTER THE 40-MINUTE PLAY, THE SPELLBOUND AUDIENCE IS ALSO

TREATED TO THE DELICIOUS DISH. SO FAR, BHARGAVA HAS HELD TWO PRIVATE PERFORMANCES ON HER HOUSE TERRACE AND THREE ON STAGE FOR AUDIENCES INCLUDING VINAY PATHAK, NASEERUDDIN SHAH, RATNA PATHAK SHAH, RAJAT KAPOOR, SUPRIYA PATHAK, HIMANI SHIVPURI, DOLLY AHLUWALIA AND SUSHMITA MUKHERJEE. AND WHAT DOES SHE FEEL ABOUT THE TIMELESSNESS OF *HUM LOG*? "THE DAILY STRUGGLES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS, THE SUBJECT OF THE LEGENDARY SOAP OPERA, ARE STILL RELEVANT. SOCIETY HASN'T CHANGED MUCH FROM THOSE DAYS." IN THE OFFING FOR THE 50 YEAR-OLD IS RAJAT KAPOOR'S *AANKHON DEKHI*, WHERE SHE PLAYS A LEAD ROLE WITH SANJAY MISHRA. THE FILM REVOLVES AROUND THE VARIOUS CHALLENGES FACED BY A 55 YEAR-OLD MIDDLE-CLASS COUPLE AND IS SLATED FOR AN OCTOBER 2013 RELEASE.



## HERITAGE

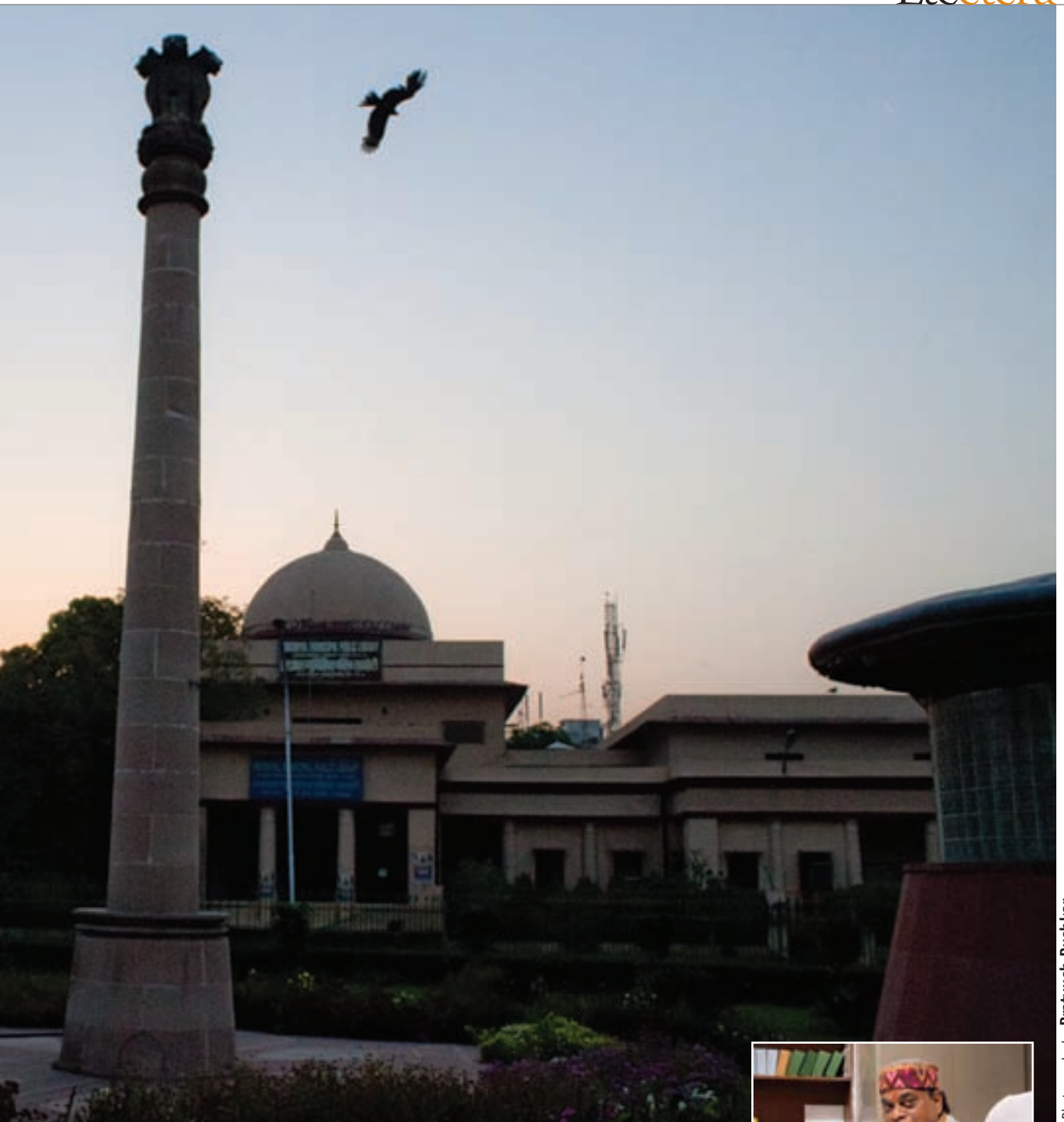
# Between the lines

Enami Chopra finds Delhi's 150 year-old Hardayal Municipal Public Library in dire need of custodians to safeguard its legacy

In a quiet corner near Delhi's Chandni Chowk Metro Station stands a heritage building with a fresh coat of paint. Right outside is a pillar embellished at the crown with the Ashoka lions—on it roosts an eagle. Seen clearly from the dome of the building that houses Hardayal Municipal Public Library, one won-

ders whether the sight is symbolic—of the library's eagle-like determination, focus and vision to preserve its identity as one of Delhi's oldest libraries and heritage monuments.

Set up in 1862, the Hardayal Municipal Library is home to over 170,000 books in Hindi, English, Urdu, Arabic,



Photographs by Pratyush Pushkar

Persian and Sanskrit, of which at least 6,500 are rare. Originally set up as a reading club for the British, it started with books left behind by Englishmen who brought enough reading material for their long voyage to India. These books were later given to Lawrence Institute Library, named after the then Viceroy of India. In 1912, the

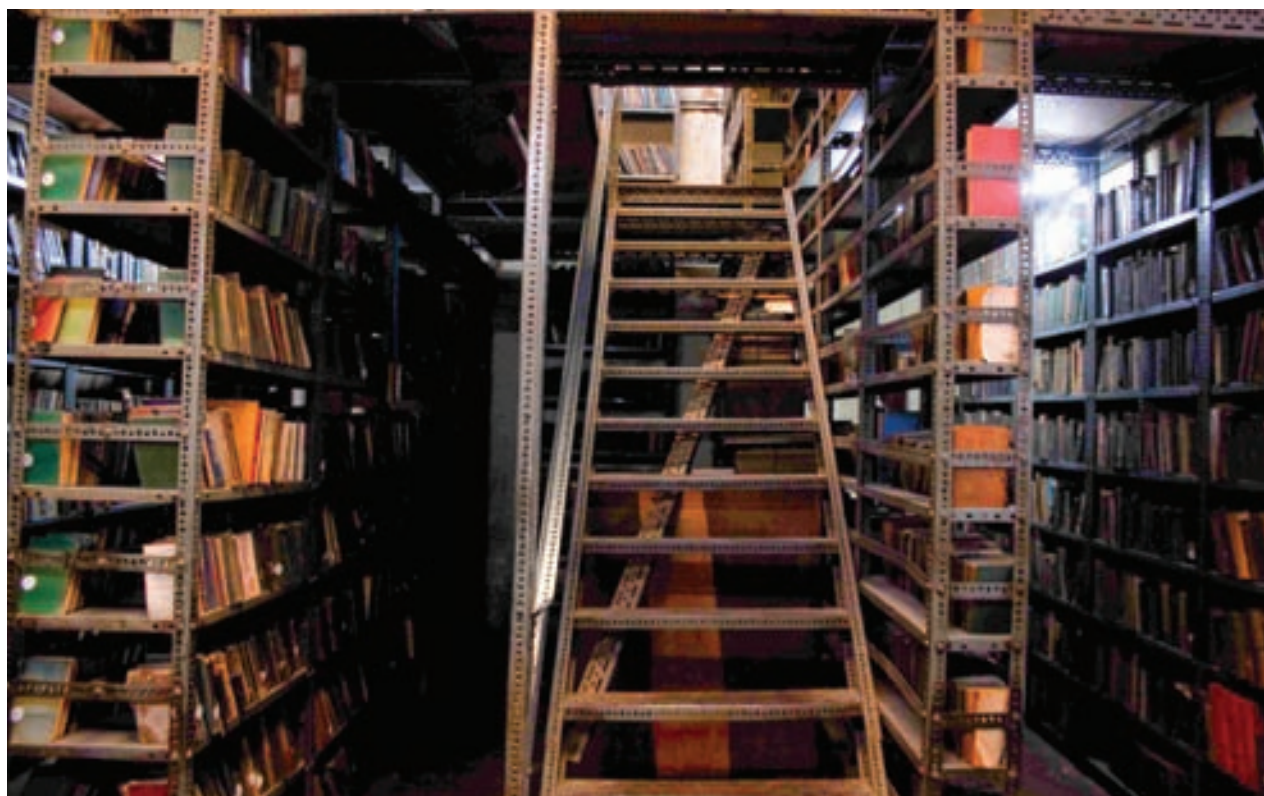
library was renamed the Delhi Public Library and shifted to the small Kachcha Bagh building.

However, a turn of events brought a change not only to the name of the library but its location. On 23 December 1912, a bomb was hurled at then Indian viceroy Lord Hardinge



**Madhukar Rao, chief librarian,  
Hardayal Municipal Public Library**





while he was atop an elephant in a procession in Chandni Chowk. Lord Hardinge escaped the attack; to commemorate this, a new building was promised for the Delhi Public Library. In 1916, it was renamed Hardinge Municipal Public Library and shifted to Gandhi Ground. In 1942, it was granted an autonomous status with 100 per cent grant-in-aid from the Municipal Corporation; in 1970, it was renamed Hardayal Municipal Public Library.

After a complicated circuitous history, the library has 28 branches all over Delhi. What's more, the recent division of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi into the north, south and east zones has proved to be a major setback—it has resulted in lack of funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the institution. Chief librarian Madhukar Rao, who has been working here since 1971, has fought a bitter battle to save it from closure. "The library is a treasure trove of books that are not available anymore," he says. "Those who

"It is heartwarming to see the students and youth keeping alive the legacy... we want more people to step forward and explore what it has to offer"

**Surekha Gupta,**  
*the first elected woman secretary of  
Hardayal Municipal Public Library*

used to visit the library still remember their favourite reading spots."

Some of the rarest books the library houses include the *Mahabharata* written in Persian by Abul Raizi; *History of the World* by Sir Walter Raleigh; and *Ayats of Quran* written by King Aurangzeb, along with its Hindi translation. It also issues 31 newspapers and 72 periodicals in English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi. There are about 3,123 Gazettes of India and Delhi Gazettes that are a reposi-

tory of government notifications from 1917 to 1998.

Surekha Gupta, the first elected woman secretary of the library, has envisioned several positive steps like automated vigilance through CCTV cameras, microfilming and digitisation of rare books, and construction of a research room to help people use the library to its fullest. "Students, particularly those preparing for competitive exams, visit the library," she says. "Although it is heartwarming to see the youth keeping alive the legacy, we want more people to step forward and explore what it has to offer."

Despite the lack of funds, the library is surprisingly well-kept. The institute has collaborated with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India for its maintenance and infrastructural needs like air-conditioning and computers. As we step out of the building, we look squarely at the rising pillar in front. The eagle is ready to take flight, with her fledglings.

**RETRO ROUTE:** Dharmendra is currently engaged in the making of *Yamla Pagla Deewana 2* and has snubbed the routine song-dance promos to adopt the retro-cool bioscope for the first look of his film. For the film's sneak peak, the bioscope will stand at the entry of various cinema halls across the country. Viewers will also be able to get themselves photographed while watching the film's promos. Directed by Sangeeth Sivan, *Yamla Pagla Deewana 2*, like its prequel, stars the Deol brothers with their actor-father.

## RAJNI CAN

NO ACTOR HAS LIVED THE YOUNGEST SCREEN LIFE AS SEAMLESSLY AS RAJNIKANTH. ALWAYS A HERO, THE LEGENDARY ACTOR HAS BEEN IN NEWS FOR A WHILE FOR HIS NEXT FILM *KOCHADAIYAAN*. AFTER MAKING HEADLINES FOR ITS TECHNOLOGICAL FEATS AND CASTING DEEPIKA PADUKONE AS THE FEMALE LEAD,



RAJNI'S *KOCHADAIYAAN* TRAVELLED TO THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL FOR ITS MUCH-AWAITED TRAILER ON MAY 15. WHILE THE TRAILER WAS MEANT FOR AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE, THE FILM WILL RELEASE SIMULTANEOUSLY IN TAMIL, TELUGU, HINDI AND ENGLISH. DIRECTED BY THE SUPERSTAR'S AMBITIOUS DAUGHTER SOUNDARYA R ASHWIN, THE FILM WILL BE OUT BY THE END OF THIS YEAR. IT STARS SARATHKUMAR AND JACKIE SHROFF, AMONG OTHERS.



On 13 January 2013, to encourage talented singers and composers, India's melody queen Lata Mangeshkar launched her own label, L M Music. L M Music selects talent from reality shows and focuses on non-film music. The first album from the label—to be released by May 2013—will feature Marathi compositions by renowned singer-composer Dr Salil Kulkarni. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* spoke to the 40 year-old doctor-turned-musician who is elated with the collaboration. Excerpts from an interview:

**How did you feel when Lataji selected your compositions for the first album of L M Music?**

I am truly blessed. She is the goddess of music. I have been listening to Lataji since my childhood days and not a day of my life has passed without listening to her melodious voice—not just classical, but all kinds of genres. The opportunity was, indeed, a dream come true.

**How did the collaboration come about?**  
It was Lataji's decision after watching my reality shows and various performances.

**How many songs has she lent her voice to in the album?**

There are six songs in the album—all of them are semi-classical Marathi *bhavgeet*. Lataji has rendered three and I have sung three. While five songs are old poems from Marathi classical literature, one has been written by my friend Sandeep Khare.

**What was it like watching Lataji recording in the studio?**

How does a child react when he sees the God he worships everyday on earth? According to me, she is the last word in music and no one can match her.

**Marathi music is back on the popularity charts. What is your opinion about contemporary Marathi music?**

Contemporary Marathi music has caught up with the times in the past 10 years. Fortunately, new-age Marathi music composers like Ajay-Atul and Avadhoot Gupte have established their own styles, which is an encouraging trend.

—As told to Sai Prabha Kamath





AUTHORSPEAK

# Meet the TAGORES

**J**orasanko, the family home of the Tagores in Kolkata, was at the hub of the Bengal Renaissance. Sahitya Akademi Award winning author **Aruna Chakravarti** recreates the world inside the Tagore home through her latest book *Jorasanko* (HarperCollins; ₹ 350; 406 pages). The book mirrors the hopes and fears, triumphs and defeats that the women of the Tagore household experienced in their intricate interpersonal relationships, as well as the adjustments they were continually called upon to make as daughters and daughters-in-law of one of the most eminent families of Bengal.

In an interview with **Srirekha Pillai**, Chakravarti sheds light on the family that came to represent the enlightened face of modern Bengal and much more.

**What makes Jorasanko Tagores the first family of Kolkata?**

The Tagore family of Jorasanko is one of a few that can trace its roots from the genesis of Kolkata itself. The Tagores were the first stevedores and contractors of the new port city, Calcutta, which was being built by aligning the three villages of Sutanuti, Gobindapur and Kolikata. Under Dwarkanath, the wealth and power of the family rose to dizzying heights. Dwarkanath was not only an immensely wealthy *zamindar*, he was also an astute businessman with interests in banking, shipping, insur-

ance, silk, indigo, jute and coal. His power and wealth were such that he received adulation even from British royalty and was addressed by them as 'Prince'.

Dwarkanath's son, Debendranath, added another dimension to the family's achievements. He founded the Adi Brahma Samaj, proving that the Tagores were not only interested in self-enhancement but were deeply sensitised to the need of the hour. The Brahma *dharma* was, in essence, a cleaner, renovated form of Hinduism

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**The Tagore women were among the first to come out of the zenana and enter the public domain**

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that had, over the centuries become ridden with stigmas, superstitions, biases and corrupt practices. The Samaj was set up to restore Hinduism to its original pristine form.

Later, the family became the face of an enlightened, cultured, modern Bengal. It was at the forefront of the Bengal Renaissance; its members taking an active part and even the women coming forward and playing a pivotal role. Last though not the least was the emergence of Rabindranath, a multifaceted genius, one of the most illustrious sons of India.

**How did the Tagore women influence the times they lived in?**

The Tagore women were among the first to come out of the zenana and enter the public domain. Debendranath's second daughter-in-law, Jnanadanandini Debi, was a dynamic, self-educated woman who had many firsts to her credit. She travelled to England alone with her children and set up house for her husband Satyendranath Tagore, the first Indian ICS [Indian Civil Service] officer, who followed her later. She was the first Bengali woman to attend the Governor's reception, that too without her husband, and the first to move out of the extended household of Jorasanko and set up a nuclear establishment of her own. She took a keen interest in politics, art, literature and photography and invented the modern way of wearing the sari.

Another daughter-in-law, Kadambari Debi, was Rabindranath's muse and a discerning and sensitive critic of his work. The poet has acknowledged his debt to her in his autobiographical writings and dedicated most of his work to her.

Rabindranath's wife Mrinalini Debi, though less known than the other two, influenced her times in her own way. She sold her jewels to fund Rabindranath's dream project of Santiniketan and also took on a lot of the practical work of running it. Without her active help and support,

Rabindranath's dream of reviving the ancient ashram system of education could not have been realised.

**Was Rabindranath's childhood as lonely and unhappy as you have portrayed in the novel?**

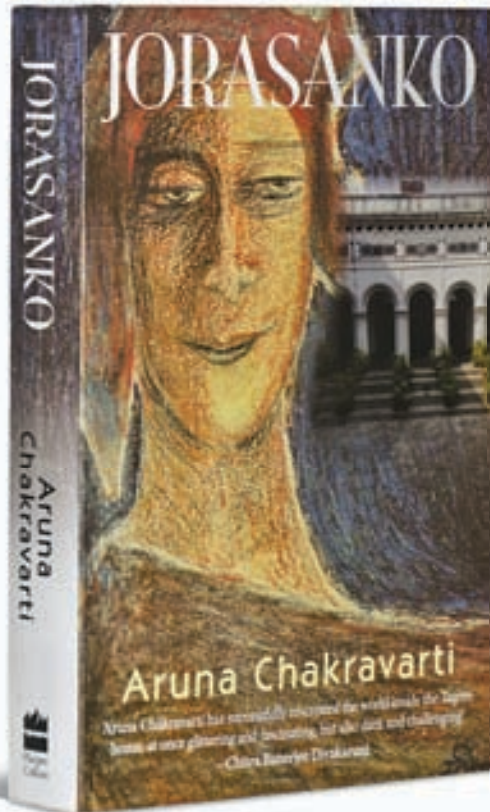
My account has been taken from Rabindranath's autobiographical writings as well as those of others in the family. In most wealthy, extended households of the time, children were left largely in the care of servants who were, in many cases, insensitive to their needs. Children who were strong and demanding fared better. But those who were shy, gentle and sensitive, like Rabindranath, did not get their proper share of nurture. The fact that his mother gave birth nearly every year and had neither the time nor energy to enquire after the welfare of her little ones, or to monitor and discipline the servants, exacerbated the situation.

**What kind of relationship did Rabindranath share with his sister-in-law Kadambari?**

Rabindranath was seven-and-a-half and Kadambari nine when she came to Jorasanko as his brother Jyotirindranath's bride. Rabindranath, who was a highly imaginative child and given to daydreaming and fantasising, saw her initially as a fairytale princess imprisoned in a castle, weeping for the mother she had left behind, and himself as the prince who had to rescue her. And this he could only do by being with her, comforting her and wiping away her tears.

As Kadambari grew older, the roles reversed. Maturing early, she turned herself into a little mother to him, looking after his needs as his own mother had never done. The old image of the weeping princess was now subsumed in the new one of a

sympathetic nurturer but never entirely lost. It was from this time onwards that the two discovered a common love of poetry and she started recognising his genius. She made him show her everything he wrote and was encouraging but also sternly critical of his failings, thus continually urging him to greater, more stringent effort.



Kadambari had a streak of melancholia and suffered from depression brought on by her husband's neglect of her and her inability to bear children. In her extremely vulnerable state, she clung tenaciously to Rabindranath for comfort and companionship. But when Rabindranath started acquiring fame and adulation, he too had less time for her. This fact, among others, led her to suicide at the age of 23.

**A young, gawky, illiterate Mrinalini Debi was thrust upon Rabindranath Tagore. How did the relationship evolve over the years?**

Exactly as I've described in my novel. Mrinalini was ignored by her illustrious husband for most of her life. He began by treating her like a sweet, silly child to whom he owed his protection and a bit of affection—nothing more. There was no question of seeking her companionship or treating her as an equal. Later, in the natural course of things, they came together physically and had five children. He also started recognising and admiring her housewifely skills and the comforts she brought to his day-to-day life. But this grudging respect became truly overwhelming after the role she played in helping him create Santiniketan.

**To get the intimate details of the Tagore household is not easy. What kind of extensive research has gone into your book? Whom did you tap into for an insider's perspective?**

Fortunately, nearly all the members of the Tagore household wrote something or the other—memoirs, reminiscences or articles in their family journals of *Bharati* and *Balak*. Quite a lot of research work on the subject has also been done by eminent scholars. I spent two years examining all the material available, primary and secondary. I was particularly keen on reading the women's accounts.

I visited Viswa Bharati University Library twice and managed to access some old issues of *Bharati*. I was also lucky enough to be able to examine some private collections. As for the insider perspective, I spoke to Sharmila Tagore and Ashish Kumar Banerjee, both descendants of Gunendranath Tagore. I would like to add that *Jorasanko* is a novel, not biography. It contains a fair amount of fictional material. The characters and main incidents are sourced from authentic records but linked with fictional inputs and seen and presented through the light of the imagination.



# Mum's the word

We toast Mother's Day with an excerpt from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne, which introduced us to Hester Prynne, one of the most memorable mothers in literature

So Roger Chillingworth—a deformed old figure, with a face that haunted men's memories longer than they liked—took leave of Hester Prynne, and went stooping away along the earth.

"Be it sin or no," said Hester Prynne bitterly, as she still gazed after him, "I hate the man!"

He being gone, she summoned back her child. "Pearl! Little Pearl! Where are you?"

Pearl, whose activity of spirit never flagged, had been at no loss for amusement while her mother talked with the old gatherer of herbs. At first, as already told, she had flirted fancifully with her own image in a pool of water, beckoning the phantom forth, and—as it declined to venture—seeking a passage for herself into its sphere of impalpable earth and unattainable sky. Soon finding, however, that either she or the image was unreal, she turned elsewhere for better pastime. She seized a live horseshoe by the tail, and made prize of several five-fingers, and laid out a jelly-fish to melt in the warm sun.

Her final employment was to gather sea-weed, of various kinds, and make herself a scarf, or mantle, and a head-dress, and thus assume the aspect of a little mermaid. She inherited her mother's gift for devising drapery and costume. As the last touch to her mermaid's garb, Pearl took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother's. A letter—the letter A—but freshly green, instead of scarlet! The child bent her chin upon her breast, and contemplated this device with strange interest; even as if the one only thing for which she had been sent into the world was to make out its hidden import. "I wonder if mother will ask me what it means!" thought Pearl.

Just then, she heard her mother's voice, and, flitting along as lightly as one of the little sea-birds, appeared before Hester Prynne, dancing, laughing, and pointing her finger to the ornament upon her bosom.

"My little Pearl," said Hester, after a moment's silence, "the green letter, and on thy childish bosom, has no purport. But dost thou know, my child, what this letter means which thy mother is doomed to wear?"

"Yes, mother," said the child. "It is the great letter A. Thou hast taught it to me in the horn-book."

"Dost thou know, child, wherefore thy mother wears this letter?"

"Truly do I!" answered Pearl, looking brightly into her mother's face. "It is for the same reason that the minister keeps his hand over his heart!"

"And what reason is that?" asked Hester, half smiling at the absurd incongruity of the child's observation; but on second thoughts turning pale. "What has the letter to do with any heart, save mine?"

"Nay, mother, I have told all I know," said Pearl, more seriously than she was wont to speak.

"Ask yonder old man whom thou hast been talking with! It may be he can tell. But in good earnest now, mother dear, what does this scarlet letter mean?—and why dost thou wear it on thy bosom?—and why does the minister keep

his hand over his heart?"

She took her mother's hand in both her own, and gazed into her eyes with an earnestness that was seldom seen in her wild and capricious character. The thought occurred to Hester, that the child might really be seeking to approach her with childlike confidence, and doing what she could, and as intelligently as she knew how, to establish a meeting-point of sympathy... But now the idea came strongly into Hester's mind, that Pearl, with her remarkable precocity and acuteness, might already have approached the age when she could be made a friend, and entrusted with as much of her mother's sorrows as could be imparted, without irreverence either to the parent or the child.



# BETWEEN THE LINES

Since its illustrious beginnings in 1874 to cater to the snobbish British gentry that didn't want to rub shoulders with the 'natives', New Market in Calcutta has pretty much remained unchanged. Its thriving economy has never been a slave to historic movements like the freedom struggle, the Naxalite surge or the red revolution on the streets. It's still the place to flock to for old RPM records and good street food. Through a colourful assortment of short stories, **NEW MARKET TALES** (Picador India; ₹ 299; 197 pages), actor-director **Jayant Kripalani** weaves in the flavours and fragrances of this



historic part of the city. The book teems with heart-warming characters, as individualistic as their unique eccentricities and quirks. Of the bouquet of characters on offer, it's Homi, the "misogynist and non-gay dog lover", living in a dilapidated building with his mother and her seven cats, who leaves an unforgettable imprint. The rest of the ensemble characters too leave a lump in the throat. The old-world charm of this repository of culture and glimpses of the *Bhadralok* make this a true blue trip down the streets of Calcutta.

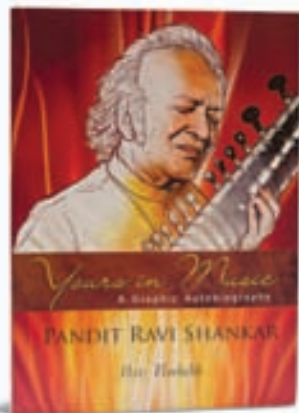
Modelled on faddish self-help guides that sell like hot cakes across Asia, **HOW TO GET FILTHY RICH IN RISING ASIA** (Penguin; ₹ 499; 228 pages) comes with a set of 12 simple ideas that can propel a nameless character, 'you', to a filthy rich business tycoon, with the must-have accessories: bulletproof cars and bodyguards. The title of each chapter is a piece of advice that will take you further along the rags-to-riches road. Acclaimed author **Mohsin Hamid**'s 'you' climbs up the proverbial ladder by dint of some quick thinking, hard work and the right connections, three necessary qualifications for anybody eyeing the profit-pie in the burgeoning market that is South Asia. It traces the nameless protagonist's story from a village to a city slum to revolutionary college days to finally setting up a bottled water business on the outskirts of a city, where nothing works,



but everything can be had for a price. But as 'you' leaves his past behind, one thing remains constant and true, his love for the girl he met as a teenager. Though it packs in 70-odd years, covering the different phases in a man's life, the story moves along pretty fast. 'Filthy' in the title is not just about the amount of obscene money waiting to be made, but the way it's acquired

in a growing economy—from selling pirated DVDs to fake bottled water. At the end of the day, it's not just the story of individuals but the umpteen bustling cities in the subcontinent grappling with an influx of migrants, inadequate infrastructure, red tape, corruption, poor hygiene and a surging population. These are cities where swanky towers and slums cohabit; where the latest SUVs and rickety bicycles jostle for space on pot-holed roads. These are our realities.

It is not easy to do justice to a life as rich and versatile as that of **Pandit Ravi Shankar** whose music took him across the seven seas, making him a global phenomenon. **YOURS IN MUSIC: A GRAPHIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY** (Wisdom Tree; ₹ 495; 105 pages) with art by **Neelabh Banerjee** keeps the focus on the legendary musician's professional life, with no mention at all of his marriage to Annapurna or Sukanya. (The two-and-a-half pages of images from his personal album are but a feeble nod in that direction.) However, there are vivid recollections of his childhood days of penury, his parents' separation and the archetypal dilemma in choosing between two art forms: dance and music. His growth from being a sensitive, unsure young Robu in the by-lanes of Benaras to becoming one of the greatest ambassadors of Indian music is well delineated. Challenges, opportunities, hurdles, his tutelage under Ustad Allaiddin Khan and friendships with iconic figures like George Harrison and Yehudi Menuhin all add depth and colour to this compelling self-portrait.







# Once upon a time

Amit Dasgupta deliberates on the old-world charm of storytelling and the umpteen stories waiting to be told

My father was a wonderful storyteller. *Ma* would say he was the best. I recall the many occasions *Baba* would regale both my mother and me, and many of my friends who dropped in at our small flat on Park Street in Kolkata, with tales from the epics and India's great folklore. But his favourite characters came from Hollywood films and one of them must have been Zorro. One day, he even got *Ma* to make him a black eye mask and made a delightfully realistic-looking rapier by making a hole in the centre of the lid of his cigarette tin holder and then putting a long stick from the *jharu* through it. "Lends a bit of panache," he said, and all of us ran off to find the Chambers dictionary to learn the new word. "Panache," I recall saying with a sense of confidence, when I was in Class 6 at St Xavier's Kolkata and Father Bouche, I could swear, looked at me ever since with great respect.

The last occasion I heard my father telling a story was to my five year-old daughter, Diya, way back in 1993 in Delhi. The two of them were sitting in the garden and looking at the sky and talking about stars and the night. I nursed my scotch and silently listened to them. The two were rambling. My five year-old, as with all five year-olds, was asking multiple questions and my father was the ever-indulgent grandfather patiently responding. But then, somehow their conversation took an odd turn and they started talking about death and learning to let go. "What is a star, *Dadu*?" my daughter had asked. The old man had thought for a while and quietly whispered, "When we die, we all become stars." He let it sink in—panache?—and then, he continued, "but only if we are able to recognise that letting go of

someone we love does not mean that we forget them. If we are unable to let them go, if we continue to cling on to them when it is time for them to leave, the sky is denied a star." My daughter nodded, and I am sure she must have understood. I didn't.

Later that evening, *Baba* and I sat down to have a drink together. I asked him how the conversation had suddenly moved from stars to death and

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My relationship with my father is something I have always cherished. The stories he told me were fascinating. But more fascinating is what I learnt being with him and hearing about him from others

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to letting go. "One thing always leads to another," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "That is what life is all about!"

My relationship with my father is something I have always cherished. The stories he told me were fascinating. But more fascinating is what I learnt being with him and hearing about him from others. He told me once, "Talk with everyone, listen to everyone because everyone has something to say and, often, it is new and you will learn something different."

Let me share one such incident. Grocery shopping in Kolkata markets is

always a talkative and argumentative affair and the most enjoyable. It's been like that since God-alone-knows-when but now, after the experience I had with *Baba*, it took on an entirely new dimension for me. *Baba* would always end up chatting and I learnt, through the conversation that followed, as the tomatoes and the onions and the *lauki* and the *baingan* were being weighed that Salim *chacha* had three sons and two daughters, of whom he could only afford to send the eldest to school, that his wife suffered from pleurisy, and that his aged parents stayed with him in a small makeshift hut off Gariahat market, for which they paid ₹ 5 as rent. There was only a common toilet for the *bustee* and everyone suffered from tapeworms. I listened silently as *Baba* paid. "Why didn't you bargain," I asked *Baba*. "It would be injustice to do so," he replied. A week later, when we went back to Gariahat market, Salim *chacha* refused to take any money from us for the kilo of tomatoes we bought from him. He hugged my father and wept. *Baba* had spoken with Father Piccachi at St Xavier's and all his sons had been given admission with full fee waiver. I ended up playing in the St Xavier's cricket team with Salim's son as our wicketkeeper.

*Baba* once took me to Mother Teresa's Nirmal Hridaya in Kolkata. I watched and then joined him as we spent time with the dying, talking to them, cleaning their wounds, feeding them. Mother came in silently and spoke briefly with *Baba* and then went on to meet the residents of the home. I remember she held my hands. Her eyes were laughing and though she was frail and small in stature, she filled the room with her

presence. "Love," she told me when we were leaving, "fill your heart with it for without it, life has no purpose."

There were many other incidents I remember clearly, all of which had a deep impact on me. They have stayed in my heart as strong reminders of what life is rather than what it appears to be. In each of these incidents lay a story. Just like a photograph or a painting or a piece of music can, without words, tell a story. They can tug at your heartstrings and make you weep or laugh with joy or quieten your troubled mind. Even news items tell a story: 'Promising engineering student commits suicide' or '27 dead as bus falls in ravine,' for instance. Instantly, questions arise in our mind: What drove this promising young lad to commit suicide? Who all has he left behind? How are they coping? Or, who were these 27 persons who died? Where were they going? Who was the bus driver? Was he married? Did they have any children? How old are they? How will they manage now that he is dead? These are all simple and everyday people; none are celebrities and very few would really care about what happens to them or their families, other than their families and loved ones. And yet, there is a story in each and every one of them.

It is, of course, true that not all of us end up writing our stories, though most of us do tell our story to a friend, family member or colleague. *Baba* never wrote but I hope, one day, I will tell his story and that of Salim *chacha* and the many others whom I have come in contact with over these years. I believe that there are multiple stories that lie in each of us desperately waiting to be told and, thus, heard. Indeed, our everyday life experiences are, in themselves, a story! Simple, harsh and humble, ours is the story of the constantly pushed-around, of those who live a routine and mundane



There are multiple stories that lie in each of us desperately waiting to be told and, thus, heard. Indeed, our everyday life experiences are, in themselves, a story!

existence with no hope of respite. There is nothing extraordinary about our lives and yet, they resonate. This is our story.

I began by telling you about my father and my daughter and you might be wondering what happened after the 'star story,' as my daughter would refer to it. Not long after, one hot and humid night in the August of 1993, my father died. My five year-old daughter took it well. I knew she had learnt to let go. I know because I asked her and she simply said that her *Dadu* had become a star. For a very long time, I struggled with his physical absence. I was simply

unable to let go, to understand his not being there. Much, much later, I saw a story in all that talk about the night and the stars and the storytelling, the love and the caring and the friendship, and more important, in my daughter. I wrote *The Lost Fragrance* not so much for anybody else but for myself and my family. And yet, it seemed to speak to many, and so the book was published. The journey to letting go had begun: it did not mean that I had forgotten just because he was not there physically anymore. One thing had led to another, as indeed it was always meant to, and that is what life was all about.

**Amit Dasgupta is an Indian diplomat. His latest book, *The Lost Fragrance* (Wisdom Tree; ₹ 195; 216 pages), is a fable about the joy of love, death and letting go**



***The first day at school***

*The first time you rode the bicycle.*

***The first crush you had at thirteen***

*The first drama you got a part in*

***The first day at college***

*The first date you went on*

***The first kiss***

*The first time you proposed*

***The first job interview***

*The first board meeting you addressed*

***The first day after retirement***

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# The bliss within

The material world is evanescent. Dip into the internal universe to find pure bliss, says **Swami Vivekananda**

After every happiness comes misery; they may be far apart or near. The more advanced the soul, the more quickly does one follow the other. What we want is neither happiness nor misery. Both make us forget our true nature; both are chains—one iron, one gold. Behind both is the *Atman*, who knows neither happiness nor misery. These are states, and states must ever change; but the nature of the Soul is bliss, peace—unchanging. We have not to get it; we have it. Only wash away the dross and see it.

Stand upon the Self; then only can you truly love the world. Take a very, very high stand. Knowing our universal nature, we must look with perfect calmness upon all the panorama of the world. It is but baby's play, and we know that, so cannot be disturbed by it. If the mind is pleased with praise, it will be displeased with blame. All pleasures of the senses or even of the mind are evanescent; but within ourselves is the one true unrelated pleasure, dependent upon nothing. It is perfectly free. It is bliss. The more we enjoy inner bliss, the more spiritual we are. The pleasure of the Self is what is called religion.

The internal universe, the real, is infinitely greater than the external, which is only a shadowy projection of the true one. This world is neither true nor untrue; it is the shadow of truth. It is imagination—the gilded shadow of truth—says the poet.

We enter into creation, and then for us it becomes living. Things are dead in themselves; only we give them life and then, like fools, we turn around and are afraid of them or run after them. But be not like certain fishwives who, caught in a storm on their way home from market, took refuge in the house of a florist. They were lodged for the night in a room next to the garden, where the air was full of the fragrance of flowers. In vain did they try to rest, until one of their number suggested that they wet their fish-baskets and place them near their heads. As soon as

they got the smell of fish, they all fell into a sound sleep. The world is our fish-basket. We must not depend upon it for enjoyment. Those who do are the *tamasika*, the bound. Then there are the *rajasika*, the egotistical, who talk always about 'I', 'I'. They do good work sometimes and may become spiritual. But the highest are the *sattvika*, the introspective, those who live only in the Self. These three qualities—*tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*—are in everyone, and different ones predominate at different times.



Creation is not a 'making' of something; it is the struggle to regain equilibrium—as when bits of cork, thrown to the bottom of a pail of water, rush to the top, singly or in clusters. Life is and must be accompanied by evil. A little evil is the source of life. The little wickedness that is in the world is very good; for when the balance is regained, the world will end, because sameness and destruction are one. As long as this world exists, good and evil exist with it; but when we can transcend

this world, we get rid of both good and evil and have bliss.

There is no possibility of ever having pleasure without pain, good without evil; for life itself is just lost equilibrium. What we want is freedom—not life, nor pleasure, nor good. Creation is infinite, without beginning and without end, the ever moving ripples on an infinite lake. There are, however, unreached depths in this lake, where equilibrium has been regained; but the ripples on the surface are always there; the struggle to regain the balance is eternal.

Life and death are only different names for the same fact, the two sides of the one coin. Both are *maya*, the inexplicable state of striving at one time to live, and a moment later having to die. Beyond this is our true nature, the *Atman*. What we call God is really only the Self, from which we have separated ourselves and which we worship as outside us; but it is our true Self, all the time, the one and only God.

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Extract from *Inspired Talks* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, ₹ 30, 218 pages), a compilation of talks by the late Swami Vivekananda, who is regarded as one of the most powerful exponents of Vedanta





## Going to a Go-Go

When Whisky a Go-Go made a rocking debut on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood, it rewrote discotheque culture. Heavily made up Go-Go girls in short skirts and boots, shaking their booty in cages suspended from the ceiling, sparked a trend—cage dancers became all the rage on the pop circuit.

Though billed as America's first real discotheque, the Whisky is a live music venue on the Sunset Strip, credited with launching many musical careers. From rock and punk to heavy metal, the club has been at the forefront of many musical trends. Incidentally, it was here that Jim Morrison and The Doors were discovered and signed by Elektra Records. It was also here that Johnny Rivers rode the go-go craze to fame with music recorded partly live. With Go-Go

girls and the Sunset Strip sound created by Rivers, Whisky sealed its place in history. Modelled after the original Whisky a Go-Go in Paris, the club also played host to a number of hard rock and metal bands including Guns N' Roses, Metallica, The Byrds, Led Zeppelin, The Police, Buffalo Springfield and Motley Crue.

Such has been its impact on the rock scene that the club has been immortalised in lyrics and movies. While The Miracles sang about the thrills of *Going to a Go-Go*, The Rolling Stones improvised and used the number in their album *Still Life*. *Down at the Whiskey* by Motley Crue also made references to the pulsating club scene. More recently, the musical *Rock of Ages* (2012) paid tribute to the Whisky through The Bourbon Room, modelled on the legendary rock club.

### THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MAY 1963

- On 1 May, Sir Winston Churchill announced his retirement from politics at the age of 88, owing to health reasons.
- On 8 May, *Dr. No*, the first James Bond film with Sean Connery as Agent 007, premiered in the US.
- On 14 May, The Rolling Stones signed their first recording contract with Decca Records.
- On 29 May, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, *The Rite of Spring* was performed by the London Symphony Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall.

# What is 60?

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

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson

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

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## Latte art

*n.* A decorative image created by skillfully pouring steamed milk into an espresso. Also: **cappuccino art**.  
**Example.** Lively competition in the coffee tasting and **latte art** competition stirs the most applause. Several baristas making latte art are almost undone by nervous, shaking hands. Some people in the crowd find their avant-garde creations equally challenging, among them milk foam depictions of Batman, a red-back spider and a perplexing 'peacock on fire'.

—Peter Munro,  
"The coffee wars", The Courier,  
5 March 2013

“You are  
never  
too old to set  
another goal  
or to dream a  
new dream.

—Author and essayist C S Lewis  
(1898-1963)

## Flexivore

*n.* A person who combines a mostly meat diet with the occasional vegetarian meal.

**Example.** We do want to try, so we decided to start slow. We'd heard of 'flexitarians' who occasionally eat meat, but we decided to become **flexivores** (our term) and go meat-free two days a week.

—Craig and Mark Kielburger, "What do the Kielburgers feel guilty about?", The Globe and Mail, 10 October 2011

## DE-EXTINCTION

*n.* The artificial recreation of a previously extinct species.

**Example.** It's a process known as **de-extinction** and the genomic research that lies at the heart of it is much closer to reality today than the science fiction of dinosaurs stomping across the island laboratory depicted in the *Jurassic Park* movies.

—Lee Berquist, "University of Wisconsin professor questions efforts to reverse extinction", Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, 23 March 2013

## Crime-as-a-service

*n.* Web-based software that enables or enhances online criminal activity.

**Example.** A worrying new phrase has entered the lexicon of cybercrime—**Crime-as-a-Service (CaaS)**... CaaS has become a well-oiled machine, built on a wide network of players that fulfill specific functions.

—Vishak Raman, "Cybercrime-as-a-Service —A very modern business", PCQuest, 7 March 2013

## Amygdala hijack

*n.* An immediate, overwhelming, and usually inappropriate emotional response to a perceived threat or emergency.

**Example.** Psychologists call this an **amygdala hijack**, a point at which the most un-evolved part of our brain—the amygdala—overrides every other civilised impulse and quite simply, goes nuts.

—Natalie Reilly, "Is crying at work career suicide?", Daily Life, 3 April 2013

## Datasexual

*n.* . A person who obsessively collects and shares data about his or her own life to improve self-knowledge and embellish self-presentation.

**Example.** Here is a collection of people who record and track their everyday lives online, and then analyze and quantify their existence, from tooth brushing to reading to fecal contents. These **datasexuals** now have a social movement, of a sort, which they call the 'Quantified Self' movement.

—Tom Slee, "Evgeny Morozov's 'To save everything, click here' ", Whimsley, 9 March 2013

## Proteus phenomenon

*n.* The tendency for early findings in a new area of research to alternate between opposite conclusions.

**Example.** Proteus is a sea god in Greek mythology. He could change his shape at will. The **Proteus phenomenon** refers to early extreme contradictory estimates in published research.

—Chaomei Chen, "Turning points: The nature of creativity", Springer, 27 December 2011



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“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence

—Helen Keller

## Work-life overload

*n.* An excessive burden caused by the combined responsibilities of a person's work and personal life.

**Example.** In theory, flextime seems like an everyone-wins proposition. But one person's work-life balance can be another's **work-life overload**. Someone, after all, has to make that meeting or hit that deadline.

—Hannah Seligson, “When the work-life scales are unequal”,  
The New York Times, 1 September 2012

## Crowdworker

*n.* A person who provides a small amount of labour, usually for little or no pay, as part of a larger crowd-sourced project.

**Example.** AutoMan could be used by developers of apps like VizWiz, in which blind people take a photo of their surroundings and receive a description of the scene. The algorithm could be incorporated into the app, sending the photos to **crowdworkers**, choosing the correct descriptions and sending them back to the app's user.

—Douglas Heaven, “Your next boss could be a computer”,  
New Scientist, 6 December 2012



## “People need to respect the earth and change their approach to living”

*Vanya Orr, 80, Nilgiris, on creating self-sufficient communities*



**A**t a time when rampant urbanisation is clawing its way into our green belts, **Vanya Orr**, a feisty 80 year-old Briton, is reaching out to local tribes like the Toda, the Badaga and Kota, among others, in over 200 villages in the Nilgiris through her non-government organisation, The Earth Trust. Orr, who has been living in India for close to two decades now, says, “It was my destiny that led me here.” Her link with India, however, goes about six generations back. Orr’s great-great-grandmother was among the first lot of Europeans to arrive in the Nilgiris in 1824. It was during a visit to the ancestral home in 1994 with her mother that Orr felt distressed at the plight of the locals, a neglected lot. She was disturbed at the ravage wrought on the verdant hills by commercialisation, uprooting indigenous tribes, along with the flora and fauna. “It is sad to see the urban sprawl in the Nilgiris,” she laments. “People need to change their

approach to nature and living.” And that is precisely what Earth Trust hopes to achieve—the NGO establishes organic training centres to impart biodynamic and organic farming techniques; helps the locals sell their produce profitably; conducts stress management and healthcare programmes for abandoned and traumatised women; and works with children in eco-clubs in schools. Orr’s years as a nurse in London also came in handy when she decided to train the locals in cultivating medicinal herbs, which can be used in Ayurveda and other alternative medicine systems. “The passion, the curiosity and the love of people, and this beautiful landscape... all of this keeps me going. My belief: We all make a contract before we are born and if we keep in line with that contract, the universe will look after us. That we are all here for a purpose and need to fulfil it.”

—Jayanti Somasundaram

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