harmony MAY 2015 ₹ 40

celebrate

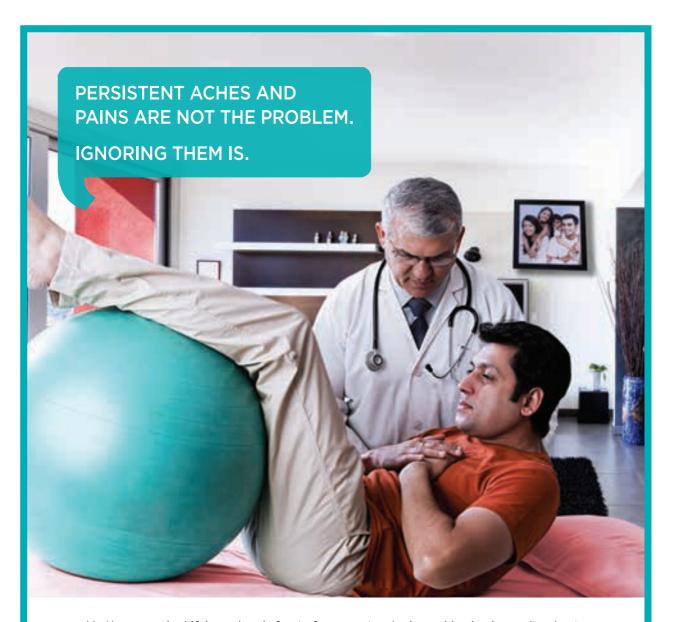
The magazine for silver citizens

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION **FOR SILVERS**

INTERVIEW WITH POET-CRITIC

THANJAVUR'S FESTIVAL OF SACRED MUSIC

DILIP VENGSARKAR CRICKET



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Friends with benefits

In 1967, The Beatles famously sang, I get by with a little help from my friends. Now, more than 50 years later, we learn that we don't just get by; we actually survive because of our friends.

Just consider the research of Rudi Westendorp, professor of geriatric medicine at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, who recently delivered an astounding statement: "Old people who don't have many friends die younger than those who smoke." Indeed, the presence of friends, as he explains in his book, Growing Older without Feeling Old: On Vitality and Ageing, is why some of us remain full of life while others appear to run out of steam.

Westendorp is not alone—his hypothesis has been backed by studies in countries across the world. Take, for instance, the American study that established a direct link between social isolation and human mortality, calling it one of the biggest risk factors. The British study that affirmed that social connections are the key to long-term physical and emotional health. And the Australian study which states quite simply that silvers who have close friends and confidantes live longer than those who don't—the researchers further argued than having close family ties, on the other hand, has no discernible effect on survival!

It's clear, then: friends do have benefits. And these go far beyond just living longer—they ensure that



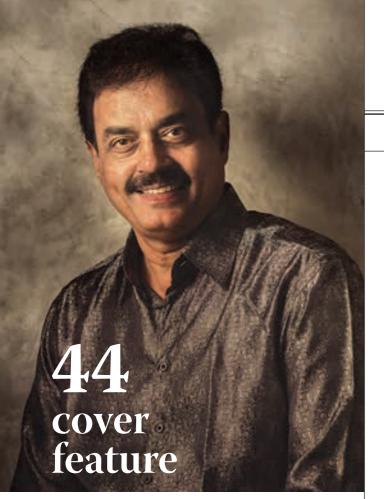
we live better. A thriving social network, as we have demonstrated time and again in the pages of this magazine, empowers us to be more, do more, see more, learn more than we ever thought possible. From travel and pilgrimage to music, film and book clubs, from sports and recreation to neighbourhood activism, spending time together can be immensely rewarding, both for silvers and the communities they inhabit.

Truth be told, for many of us, plagued by diffidence and the mindset of an ageist society, it may be easier to stay in one's cocoon, impervious to the world outside with all its opportunities. But it's time to understand that the price of isolation may be too high. Be brave, break out, spread your wings and embrace the presence and company of people who make you happy. Your life may depend on it.

lina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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'Colonel' Dilip Vengsarkar on his calling to mentor young talent

Cover photograph: Varun Mehta

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WEB EXCLUSIVES www.harmonyindia.org

HOME, SWEET HOME

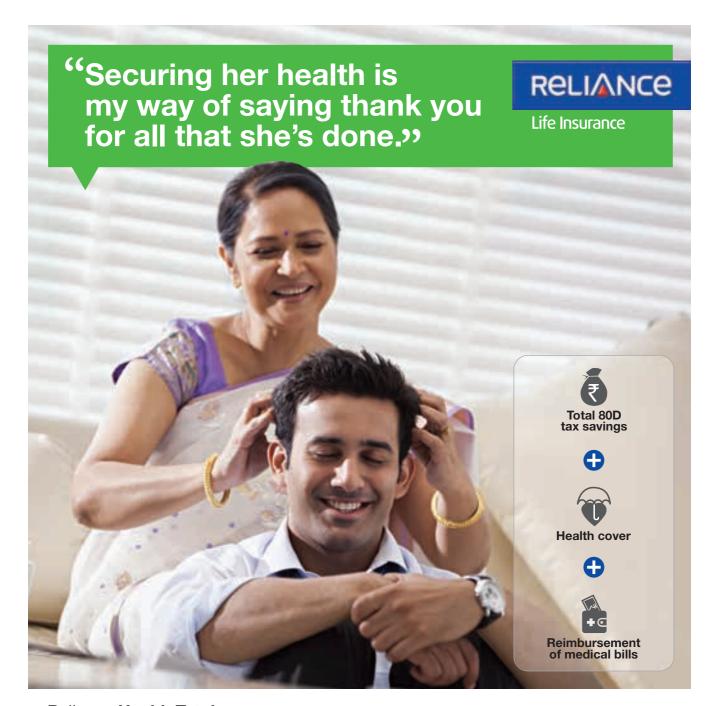
Jeevrathni Foundation gives Bengaluru's street children a second chance at life

TEMPLE TOWN

Believers throng to Ujjain in search of salvation

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE CONTACT: Harmonycare, Living Media India Ltd, A-61, Sector 57, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) - 201301. Toll-free: 1800 1800 100 Phones: New Delhi: (0120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India Fax: (0120) 4078080; Kolkata: 033-22827695 Fax: 22828949; Bengaluru: 080-2212448, 22213037, Fax: 2218335; Mumbai: 022-66063355 Fax: 24444358; Chennai: 044-28478525 Fax: 24361942; Email: harmonycare@intoday.com

Total number of pages in this issue of Harmony-Celebrate Age, including covers: 84



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column

"Cricket is my oxygen," he says simply. And watching Dilip Vengsarkar on strike, on song, can take your breath away. Indeed, the flamboyance of his strokes and his dashing persona have won the 'Colonel' fans world over. And, as this player-turnedmentor tells Neil Joshi in our cover feature, "This Gentleman's Game", he continues to keep his eye on the ball as he prepares fresh talent for the major league.

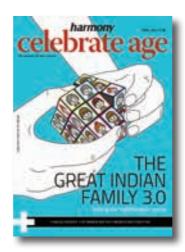
A sustained passion is truly an elixir. Another fine example is renowned poet-critic-essavist-translator Ashok Vajpeyi. In an exclusive interview, he emphatically denies that age has slowed him down, saying, "I work enthusiastically, feel I can do something for others, get filled all too often with hope and despair, love and hatred."

Elsewhere in this issue, we examine how physical medicine and rehabilitation, an integral part of geriatric care in the West, is slowly catching on in India, enabling silvers to find their feet again after debilitating injuries and illness.

Also, for lovers of the arts, there are a couple of treats. In words and images, we present the ancient temple ritual of tholpavakoothu, a form of shadow puppetry kept alive by the Pulavar brothers in Palakkad, Kerala. And we accompany Saritha Rao Rayachoti on her elusive search of *duende*, loosely defined as a heightened state of emotion, expression and authenticity she comes close on a journey to the Festival of Sacred Music in Thanjavur on the banks of the Kaveri.

Will any of us ever find *duende*? Your guess is as good as mine—but the beauty of life lies in trying.

—Arati Rajan Menon



am 65 and recently lost my beloved wife. Since I am now alone, my daughter has asked me to start living with her. I like the idea, but I was a little hesitant as I don't want to be a burden to her and her husband. However, after reading the cover story of your April issue ("The Great Indian Family 3.0"), I realised that we could opt for a similar arrangement. My daughter and I are going to start looking for a place for me near her home. This way I won't be a burden and won't be alone all the time. Thank you for the inspiration.

Dhiraj Mahindra

Delhi

hose who cope with retirement best are those who look upon it as a time of fun. You cannot help the ageing body, but your mind does not need to grow old. He who is neither in debt nor exile is a happy

person. On retirement at 60, I had wholeheartedly paid my dues to society. I am now a free bird with no commitments.

This is the time to sit back, relax and take a moment to think about all the goodness that life has brought...to rewind through the pages of one's memory and enjoy the wonderful images of the past. You get to spend your time with your loved ones, mainly your spouse who has been looking out for you since you were married. And more than one's own children there are the grandchildren, who bring joy to old age.

There is also the respect that comes with old age-more honour, concessions, special facilities, etcetera, not to mention the dignified designation, 'senior citizen', or, as Harmony likes to call us, 'Silver'. We live only once; in our silver years on this beautiful earth, let us prudently swim along the stream of life, usefully, satisfactorily and happily. Life is one grand sweet song, so let's start the music.

N Subramanian

Chennai

Cilvers are finding it difficult to **O**read *Harmony-Celebrate Age* due to small font size. Request you usr larger fonts.

Mansukhlal Ruparelia

Via email

CONTRIBUTOR



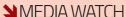
Author of our 'Cover Feature' this month, Neil Joshi heads the Sports Department of Afternoon Despatch & Courier, a leading tabloid in Mumbai. A sports enthusiast, he has covered events ranging from the Cricket World Cup, T20, Commonwealth Youth Games and I League to Hockey India League and Formula One. He also hosts Sports Magazine, an exclusive weekly show on All India Radio. A journalist

of repute, he mentors Gen Next as a visiting lecturer at colleges of the University of Mumbai.

P26: Bowel blues

P28: Skin and you

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



Granny's got swag

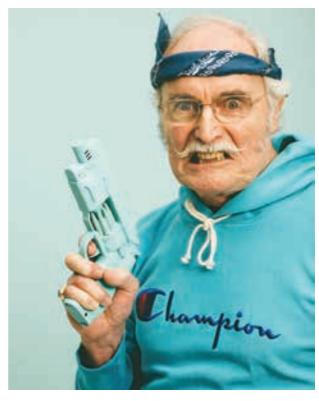
Inspired by his 92 year-old grandmother, British photographer Alex de Mora has turned the traditional notion of silver style on its head with a fun, funky, hip-hop photo shoot. The silvers in these images embrace the paraphernalia of street chic, from chains, hoop earrings and bandanas to fierce 'teeth grills' more common among the boys in the 'hood'. "The photos are a celebration of age and I hope viewers are surprised by the energy and personality of the models just as I was," he tells website huffingtonpost.com. "The models were all so happy to be there. They were all very keen to be involved as they saw their age and retirement as a way of discovering new things. There was a real unbridled enthusiasm to them. I think that as people get older, they can be less afraid of what people think and want to make the most of life." The shoot was orginallly commissioned by Vice.

Turn over for more images











Check out Alex de Mora's shoot at http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/leisurewear-fashion-shoot-393; to view more from the photographer, go to alexdemora.com and instagram.com/alexdemora

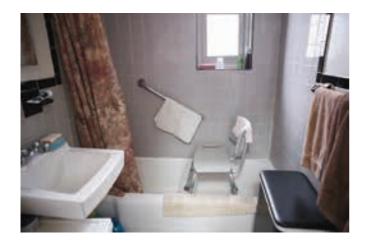
LIFE SKETCH



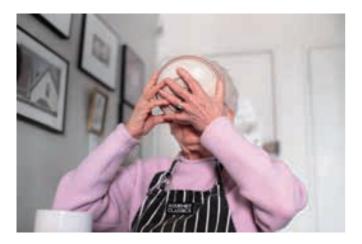
THE MEMOIRS of New York Times bestselling cartoonist Lucy Knisley have begun to establish her reputation in an expanded literary space. And her latest, **Displacement** (Fantagraphics; 168 pages), is sure to cement it even further. Her visual narrative of a holiday cruise with her elderly—and frail—grandparents blends travelogue, memoir, legacy and social commentary seamlessly, evoking the reader's interest not just in her family's history and palpable bond but the very nature of human mortality and the frustration, fear and compassion it can generate. Interspersing her own account with the memoir of her grandfather completes Knisley's story, allowing us to locate the characters more definitively in our own mind's eye. Engaging, entertaining and extremely intelligent, this book is available at amazon.in



BUONGIORNO! 65 PER RICOMINCIARE—OR '65 YEARS OLD TO FEEL ALIVE AGAIN'-IS A NEW ITALIAN MAGAZINE FOR SILVERS WITH INFORMATION ON **EVERYTHING FROM FOOD AND** HEALTH TO MONEY AND TRAVEL. SOUNDS FAMILIAR?









Life Ever After documents a community of women that live alone after losing companions, relatives or friends. To look at them is also to look at the beauty of life, that definitely does not end when you reach your 80s," says photographer Patricia Monteiro on her website



Patricia Monteiro

Candid camera

n exhilarating visual celebration of active ageing, *Life Ever After* is photographer Patricia Monteiro's paean to single silver women **in the Big Apple**. "Even with all the rush and fast pace of New York City, many elderly women manage to keep up with their lives in their own rhythm and grace," she writes on her website. "Life Ever After documents a community of women that live alone after losing companions, relatives or friends. To look at them is also to look at the beauty of life, which definitely does not end when you reach your 80s." Inspired by her own grandmother, Monteiro's images capture everyday moments in the lives of octogenarian and nonagenarian women that strike an intensely personal chord—her subjects primp in front of the mirror, exercise, indulge in nostalgia, and savour life's little pleasures, from a glass of wine and a game of cards to a trip to the theatre. This is reality, raw and unvarnished yet imbued with hope and promise. Experience the images at www.patriciapmonteiro.com/life-ever-after



Time of trust

The cynical, suspicious silver may be nothing but a stereotype—new

research establishes that age can actually make people more trustworthy. When a team at Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy examined the association between age and trust at multiple points in history, using a sample of 197,888 individuals from 83 countries, they found a strong positive association for at least the past 30 years with little change over time. "When we think of

old age, we often think of decline and loss," writes study co-author Claudia Haase in the online edition of journal Social Psychological and

> Personality Science. "But a growing body of research shows that some things actually get better as we age. Our new findings show that trust increases as people get older and, that people who trust more are also more likely to experience

increases in happiness over time. As we age, we may be more likely to see the best in other people and forgive the little letdowns that got us so wary when we were younger."



Simply **Ibuprofen?**

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST UBIQUITOUS over-the-counter meds on the market. And now scientists are suggesting that ibuprofen could be the **key to anti-ageing.** Researchers from Texas A&M University found that the



non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory painkiller extended the lives of yeast, worms and fruit flies by the equivalent of about 12 human years while maintaining their fitness and health. "Ibuprofen interfered with the ability of cells to pick up tryptophan, an amino acid protein-building block found in every organism," writes lead researcher Michael Polymenis in online journal Public Library of Science Genetics. "Regular dosage added about 15 per cent to the lives of the different

species. We are not sure why this works but it is worth exploring further. This study was a proof of principle, to show that common, relatively safe drugs in humans can extend the lifespan of very diverse organisms. Therefore, it should be possible to find others like ibuprofen with even better ability to extend lifespan."

GOOD SEX: SEX IS INDEED GOOD FOR BODY AND MIND. ACCORDING TO A STUDY IN THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF GERIATRIC PSYCHIATRY, STAYING SEXUALLY ACTIVE IS LINKED TO HIGHER COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING AS PEOPLE AGE. SILVERS SATISFIED WITH THEIR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS PERFORMED BETTER ON TESTS OF COGNITIVE FUNCTION THAN THOSE WHO FELT SEXUALITY AND INTIMACY WERE UNIMPORTANT.

rom sibling rivalry, it now appears time to study sibling longevity. According to a study of siblings by a team from Boston University and Boston Medical Centre, genes appear to play a stronger role in longevity in people living to extreme older ages. They found, for instance, that for people who live to 90, the chance of their siblings also reaching 90 is relatively small (1.7 times greater than for the average person born around the same time). However, for people who survive to 95, the chance of a sibling living to the same age is 3.5 times greater; and for those who live to 100, the chance grows to about nine times greater. Finally, at 105 years old, the chance of a sibling attaining the same age is 35 times greater.



"These much higher relative chances of survival likely reflect different and more potent genetic contributions to the rarity of survival being studied, and strongly suggest that survival to age 90 and survival to age 105 are dramatically different phenotypes or conditions, with very different underlying genetic influences," writes study leader Paola Sebastiani in the online edition of Journal of Gerontology: Biological Sciences. "The findings advance the idea that genes play a stronger and stronger role in living to these more and more extreme ages."

CAR CHECKLIST

As we've reported many times in these pages, car manufacturers world over—from Ford and Chrysler to Volvo and Nissan—are working to make **automobiles silver-friendly**, increasing safety and minimising accidents. With some help from website *auto.spokesman.com*, we list some standout features that enable a smoother ride for silver drivers:



For **those with back or joint pain**: seats with multi-position adjust-ments, selectable seat height and lumbar support; heated seats (some even have a massager option) to ease pain







For those with arthritic hands and fingers and diminished motor skills: remote pushbutton entry/start that eliminates the use of a key; power remote-operated trunk or hatchback; tilt and telescoping steering wheels and power adjustable brake/accelerator pedals





For those with diminished upper body range of motion: parking proximity warnings and/ or rear-view camera that minimise upper body rotation; self-parking feature that automatically steers the vehicle into a parking space while the driver just uses the brake pedal and shifts gears





reaction times: blind-spot warning systems that alert a driver to the presence of cars and other vehicles to the side and rear; lane departure warning systems (some even use the brakes or steering to 'nudge' the driven vehicle back into the correct lane); forward collision-warning systems (some are able to automatically apply the brakes if the driver's response is too slow); low-speed auto-braking systems to prevent rear-end collisions and encounters with pedestrians

and bicyclists

For those with diminished



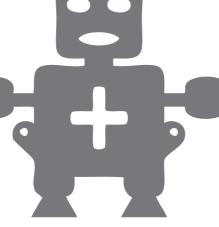


For **those with vision problems**: digital speedometer readout that is easier to spot and process; display that projects speed and key information in the driver's line of sight; adaptive headlamps for night driving that pivot with the steering angle and automatically switch between high and low beams



FEET FIRST It's all in the feet. Japanese robot maker Yasukawa Electric Corp has developed a **device that measures the fitness of silvers based on how they move**. As website *the-japan-news.com* reports, the tread-mill-like prototype houses 3,600 sensors over a 60-sq-cm portion of its floor. After silvers complete five types of movements—such as walking in place and maintaining balance on an inclined floor—the machine rates their balance and muscle strength on a five-grade scale. Before putting it on the market, the manufacturer plans to add more features, like a predictor for physical health age as opposed to chronological age, and a game element to add some fun to the experience.

Teddy there



eet Robear, the latest assistive robot to be developed in Japan. Designed by the RIKEN-SRK Collaboration Centre for Human-Interactive Robot Research in Nagoya, the friendly looking teddy will primarily be used in nursing care: to lift patients in and out of bed and into a wheelchair, help them stand up and sit back down, and turn them around at specified intervals to prevent bedsores. "We really hope this robot will lead to

advances in nursing care, relieving the burden on caregivers today," team leader Toshiharu Mukai tells news agency Reuters. "We intend to continue with research toward more practical robots capable of providing powerful yet gentle care to elderly people."

THINK INK: SCIENTISTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA – SAN DIEGO HAVE DEVELOPED HI-TECH BIO INKS THAT REACT WITH SEVERAL CHEMICAL, INCLUDING GLUCOSE. THEY FILLED REGULAR BALLPOINT PENS WITH THESE INKS AND WERE ABLE TO DRAW SENSORS TO MEASURE GLUCOSE DIRECTLY ON THE SKIN. THIS PAVES THE WAY FOR SENSORS TO BE DRAWN DIRECTLY ON SMARTPHONES FOR PERSONALISED AND INEXPENSIVE HEALTH MONITORING.

AGRA

Area:

188.40 sq. km. Population :

1,686,976 (2010 est.)

Altitude:

169m above sea level.

Season:

November-February Clothing (Summer):

Cottons

Clothing (Winter):

Woolens

Language:

Hindi, Urdu & English

Local Transport : Buses, Taxis

Tempos, Auto-Rickshaws.

STD Code: 0562

ACCESSIBILITY

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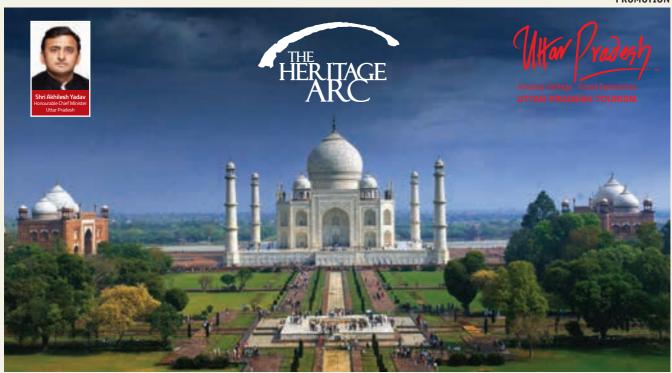
Tel: (0562) 2226521-22-23

Rail

Agra is connected to the major cities of India. Agra Cantt. Railway Station, Enquires, Tel: 139.

Road

Agra is well-connected to the following cities by road: Mathura, Delhi, Chandigarh, Kanpur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Jhansi, Chitrakoot, etc. Agra's distance by road, from the mail cities is as follows: Delhi 203 km, Khajuraho 393 km, Gwalior 118 km, Jaipur 237 km, Calcutta 1287 km, Varanasi 657 km, Mussoorie 17 km, Mumbai 1204 km.



Alluring Agra

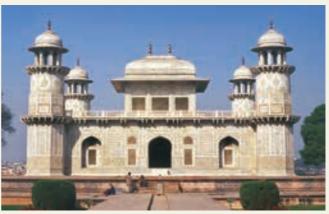
Agra has been immortalised as the City of the Taj. Yet, it doesn't take much for the roving eye to discover that there's more to Agra than just the fabled Taj Mahal. Beyond the better-known monuments like Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, Agra's environs are studded with architectural gems such as Chini ka Rauza, Itimad ud Daula, Sikandra and Jama Masjid. This ancient land also has many artistic expressions like marble-stone inlay work, sculpture, murals and carpets.

The adjoining region of Bateshwar, which has one of the oldest temple series on the banks of a flowing river, also encompasses a very rich culture. The National Chambal Sanctuary supports the largest population of ghariyals, the Gangetic dolphins, and a rare species of turtles. The twin holy cities of Mathura, 56 km from Agra, and Vrindavan, a further 15 km, are traditionally recognised as the capital of Braj Bhoomi and are integral to the legend of Lord Krishna.



Today, luxury and modern convenience exist along with tradition—hotels, shopping malls, plazas, wide avenues and a superb choice of venues for recreation, business, sports, pleasure, education and the arts.







SHE'S not EQUAL

While silvers of both sexes are vulnerable to discrimination, women have it worse. A study by New Delhi-based Agewell Research and Advocacy Centre, titled Gender Discrimination Among Older Women in India, surveyed over 50,000 silvers (27,500 from rural areas and 22,500 from urban areas) across 330 districts of 26 states and union territories. Here are some highlights:

89.38%

of silver respondents say the status of elderly women within their families is lower than male counterparts because of their gender

84.07%

say the dominance of elderly women is often denied in Indian families

11.46% (8.2 % rural & 15.5 % urban)

believe gender discrimination does not matter when dominance in family is adjudged

50.59%

Every second respondent says elderly women have to face marginalisation or isolation owing to gender discrimination, even in old age

48.43%

elderly women and 52.84 per cent elderly men agreed that gender discrimination causes marginalisation or isolation of elderly women

43,063

silvers, including 22,549 women, claimed people don't care as much for women silvers, with respect to healthcare, compared to the men in their families



ASIAN INITIATIVE:

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA RECENTLY SIGNED AN MOU WITH THE RIKEN RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF JAPAN TO STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND JAPAN BY ESTABLISHING THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE IN AGEING SCIENCE. CALLED THE USM-RIKEN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR AGEING SCIENCE (URICAS).

CLEAN BRIGADE:

NIRAMAY SADHANA,
A GROUP OF 200-ODD
SILVERS IN NASHIK, IS ON
A MISSION TO CLEAN AND
GREEN THEIR COMMUNITY.
THEIR FIRST VENTURE WAS
TO CLEAN UP THE CITY'S
KRUSHI NAGAR JOGGING
TRACK FOR PUBLIC USE.
ALSO, EACH MEMBER OF
THE GROUP HAS PLANTED
AND ADOPTED A PLANT.

MEANS TO AN END

ilvers can get anything done—if they put their mind to it. Over 150 elders from Mumbai's Santacruz West joined hands to set up a one-of-a-kind 'green crematorium' that will use LPG for last rites, as city newspa-

per Mid Day reports. Located on Linking Road Extension. the facility, which is expected to be operational by early 2016, will provide free cremation services to people from all strata of society. For its part, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has agreed to waive official charges and deposits pertaining to development

survey, sewage and water, amounting to over ₹ 3.7 million, for the ₹ 36 million facility. The balance is expected to be raised by donations. When complete, the 5,000-sq-ft crematorium will have hi-tech features such as live video coverage with Wi-Fi to relay the final rites to the family of the deceased who

aren't able to attend the funeral as well as refrigerated coffins in case the family wants to preserve the body for a few days before the cremation. "These extra services will be provided at highly subsidised rates," 68 year-old Nagin Shah, chief co-ordinator for

the project, tells the newspaper.

Meanwhile project architect Bharat Shah, 68, explains that natural gas was chosen as it is cost-effective and eco-friendly. "The crematorium will house two furnaces and have provisions to collect the sacred ashes

and follow the

of hygiene," he

highest standards

adds. "Further, the entire infrastructure will have rain-harvesting facilities, making it even more eco-friendly. According to the understanding with the BMC, we will run the operations and in turn get paid ₹ 1,200 by the civic authority for each body cremated, which would ease operation and maintenance costs." Great job.

OVER 150 ELDERS FROM MUMBAI'S SANTACRUZ WEST JOINED HANDS TO SET UP A ONE-OF-A-KIND

'GREEN CREMATORIUM'

Heart and Seoul

WALK 50 m from the Anguk station in Seoul and you find Samga Yeon Jeong, a 'book café' that employs retired citizens. Between 11 and 16 trained silvers over the age of 60 run the kitchen, wait tables and manage the accounts of the café. Overlooking a bustling skyline from a quiet corner of the city, it is a sanctuary for

people looking for a cuppa over a friendly chat, or a quiet browse through the many books that line the walls. The café, whose patrons run across all generations, is a social enterprise that started in 2009, supported by the city's municipal corporation and South Korea's Ministry of Labour and Employment. We love it.



Animal planet!

iodiversity was the buzzword at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, on 20 March, with 'Know your Wildlife', an intergenerational session conducted by the volunteers of Spreading Awareness on Reptiles and Rehab Programme (SARRP). Talking about a range of species from snakes, butterflies and birds to spiders and fishes, naturalist Chaitanya Keer, the facilitator of the session, explained the concept of biodiversity by narrating his experiences on the field and facts about animal behaviour. And let's not forget his birdcalls, which had the silvers entertained! What's more, he served up some useful information on how to deal with unusual creatures who may wander into one's home. For example, Keer advised, "If a snake creeps into the house, don't kill it until absolutely necessary as it might release pheromones into the atmosphere that will attract another snake. Instead, call our organisation on 9769335531." The session ended with a question-and-answer session



where silvers enthusiastically sought more information.

Earlier, on 18 April, the silvers enjoyed an informative session with neuropsychiatrist Dr Rahul Ghadge, who educated them on psychiatric disorders such as anxiety, depression, mania, schizophrenia, addiction and dementia; related misconceptions;

and avenues of treatment. Other than describing the psychological and neurological changes in patients with depression, like feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, lack of confidence, worries about health and financial security, and phobias of accomplishing certain tasks and socialising, Dr Ghadge spoke about loneliness and how to accept it as an aspect of ageing. Further, he discussed addiction, stating that it is not a "bad habit" but an illness that can be treated. He also dispelled common misconceptions, such as consumption of sleeping pills becoming a habit or psychiatric treatments being lifelong. "The average period for treatment for depression is about six months for the first episode, one year for the second and about five years if a third episode occurs," he explained. "Acute onset of the illness can be treated for a specific duration, whereas chronic illnesses may require lifelong medication. There are no side-effects of psychiatric medicines." Dr Ghadge also elaborated upon the benefits of cognitive behavioural therapy and group therapy.









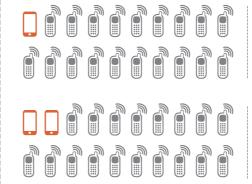
ANY.DO

Available for: Android 2.2 and up; iOS; Chrome

What it does: Makes your daily to-do list easily manageable. The app lets you make a reminder for daily tasks and generate lists for various categories like 'personal', 'work', etc; the categories can be expanded by tapping on them. The app also gives smart prompts while typing the to-do list; for example, when you type 'wash', it suggests options like 'car', 'clothes', 'dishes'. The app can be synced to your iPad as well as desktop through Google Chrome. It also allows you to share your to-do list with friends or colleagues.

After installation: Once the app is installed, you can register your account and sync it with multiple devices. Entries to your list/s can be keyed in or added through the voice feature by tapping on the microphone icon. The app gives you the option of call, email or text when you enter a name from your contact list in the to-do list. Even removing an item from the list when the task is complete is easy; just swipe on it from left to right and the task is marked done. To remove a task completely, a tap on a button will suffice; to remove them all, just shake your phone!

According to a study by Nielsen Informate Mobile Insights:



5% IN 2012

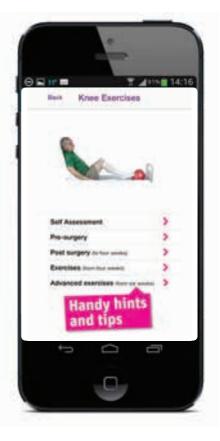
9% IN 2013

SIGNIFICANT
INCREASE IN
THE NUMBER
OF PEOPLE
ABOVE
40 USING
SMARTPHONES,
WITH THE
NUMBER
CLIMBING
RAPIDLY

POCKET PHYSIO

Available for: Android 2.3 and up; iOS

What it does: Preparing for or recovering from a hip or knee surgery? Now, you have help with your exercises. Launched in collaboration with UK Specialist Hospitals, this easy-to-use app is a great guide for physiotherapy, including advice on walking with crutches, managing pain, self-assessment and breathing. You can create individualised exercise plans and goals and record your progress. Apart from the selfassessment tool, the app has options of different exercises based on pre or post surgery at defined time intervals. An additional information tool recommends techniques of dressing, bathing and how to easily get in and out of a

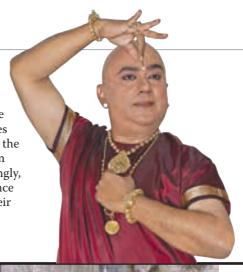


vehicle, among others. The reminder tool is another value-add, ensuring you don't forget your regimen.

After installation: Once installed, the app automatically creates a shortcut on your home screen. After accepting the terms and conditions, you can explore the app. As soon as you open it, it gives you the option to choose between exercises, reminders, information and contacts. The videos given are of high quality and easy on the eye, while the text is in different colours, making it easy to read.



Dance to health. Research world over has proven that a regular dance practice improves balance and flexibility, strengthens bones and the core, combats aches and pains, and staves off depression and dementia in silvers. A recent study by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York established that dancing is, in fact, the most effective activity to ward off deterioration of the brain. Interestingly, The Royal Academy of Dance in the UK has launched a programme called Dance for Lifelong Wellbeing, where it holds customised ballet classes for elders—their oldest dancer is 102—across the country. Ballet or Bharatanatyam, choose the form that inspires you and get your feet moving!





Love gardening but don't have too much space in your backyard? Here's a simple trick to make a pot for your seedlings and hang them on your backyard or window grill. All you need is an empty plastic milk or juice bottle, scissors, mud and your seedling. Take the bottle and rinse thoroughly so no milk/juice is left in it. Let it dry thoroughly. Cut it from the halfway mark, making sure the handle is intact. Put the mud at the bottom of the bottle along with the seedling. Ensure some space is left at the top for water. Cut the handle from the lower end so it can take the weight of the mud and doesn't fall when hung. Now, you just need to hang the pot. You can paint on the pot to decorate it and put different types of seedlings to get blooms in different hues, bringing even more cheer and colour to your life.

RECYCLING FACTS

- Plastic bottles take around 700 years to begin composting.
- It takes 24 million gallons of oil to produce 1 billion plastic bottles.
- India generates 56 lakh tonne of plastic waste annually, with Delhi being the highest waste producer. Of this, only 60 per cent is collected and recycled.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

- 1. CUT THE TOP HALF OF THE BOTTLE AND DECORATE THE REST WITH PAINT OR STICKERS AND SEQUINS. VOILA—A FUNKY PEN/PENCIL/CRAYON/PAINTBRUSH HOLDER FOR THE GRANDKIDS!
- 2. TAKE A LARGE-SIZED BOTTLE; GIVE THE BOTTOM HALF ANY SHAPE DESIRED. PAINT OR SPRAY COLOUR ON THE OUTSIDE, FILL THE INSIDE OF YOUR BOTTLE WITH MUD AND PLANT YOUR SEEDLING. NOW PLACE THE BOTTLE IN YOUR BACKYARD OR EVEN ON A WINDOW SILL.

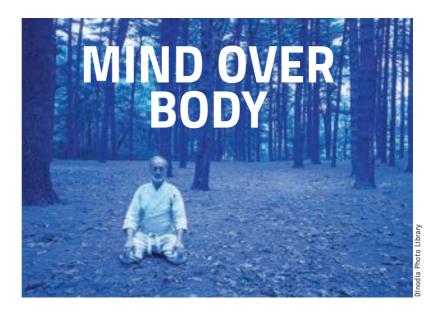


Speedy removal of a clot that triggered a stroke is far better than treating it with conventional treatment.

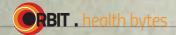
hat's the conclusion of a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which detailed the findings of two international trials, Escape and Extend-IA. For Escape, conducted at 22 centres worldwide, the team randomly picked 316 patients suffering from ischemic stroke and started treatment in 12 hours. The patients were either given tissueplasminogen activator (tPA), a clot-busting drug, or standard medical and endovascular treatment. After observing the patients for 90 days, the researchers concluded that 53 per cent of those who received the clot-busting drug were functionally independent compared to just 29 per cent of those who received the standard treatment. And in the second trial, Extend-IA, which was conducted in Australia, 70 per cent of people whose clot was removed were functionally independent after 90 days compared to 40 per cent of those who got the standard care protocol.

Stemming Parkinson's

A new study by Brazilian researchers at the D'OR Institute for Research and Education (IDOR) and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) claims that implantation of stem-cell generated neurons could help treat Parkinson's disease. Their study was conducted on three groups of mice: the first group did not receive any cell implant, the second was implanted with stem cells and the third received stem cells treated with mitomycin C, a drug prescribed for cancer. The second group showed improvements in motor function but died in three to seven weeks. However, the third group survived till the end of the study with no tumours detected. "Our technique with mitomycin C may speed the proposal of clinical trials with pluripotent cells to several human diseases," team leader Stevens Rehen tells website sciencedaily.com. "It is the first step to make this kind of treatment with stem cells possible."



NEVER underestimate the power of the mind. Examining the role of the brain's cortex in the development of muscle strength, researchers from the Ohio Musculoskeletal and Neurological Institute (OMNI), Ohio University, US, found that despite four weeks of immobilisation, participants in their study were able to preserve muscle strength with regular mental imagery exercises. The finding is good news for people suffering from problems where they might be immobile for a longer amount of time. "Our findings that imagery attenuated the loss of muscle strength provide proof of concept for it as a therapeutic intervention for muscle weakness and voluntary neural activation," writes the research team in *Journal of Neurophysiology*.



Attack on Alzheimer's

WE NOW HAVE MORE AMMUNITION IN THE BATTLE AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S, WITH A HOST OF RECENT RESEARCH STUDIES OFFERING NEW AVENUES OF UNDERSTANDING, AWARENESS, PROTECTION AND TREATMENT. HERE ARE 10 OF THEM TO THINK ABOUT



Food for thought: According to Chicago-based, non-profit academic medical centre Rush, the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet can reduce risk of Alzheimer's. The MIND diet mainly comprises 'brain health food groups', such as green leafy vegetables, other vegetables, nuts, beans, berries, whole grains, fish, poultry, olive oil and wine. The study was published online in the journal Alzheimer's and Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association.

Ceramide control: Scientists from Georgia Regents University in Augusta, Georgia, have identified elevated ceramide levels as a risk factor for Alzheimer's. Ceramides are a family of waxy lipids, a group of naturally occurring molecules, which includes fats, waxes, vitamins and others. Their research on mice revealed that when excessive ceramides worked their way into the bloodstream, antibodies supporting the progression of Alzheimer's were generated.

Glucose check: Researchers from Georgetown University in Washington DC have found that undiagnosed pre-diabetes is prevalent in patients with early or moderate Alzheimer's disease. Their study aimed to examine whether resveratrol, found in red grapes and red wine, could change glucose levels in patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's. Resveratrol is also thought to mimic the effects of a low-calorie diet on proteins in the brain, thus helping to combat Alzheimer's.

The word is out: The ELEKIN research group of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Spain, a collaboration of professionals from various departments and various disciplines, have developed a non-invasive technique to detect the early signs of Alzheimer's: Automatic Spontaneous Speech Analysis (ASSA). Here, a patient is interviewed and recorded in a relaxed and comfortable environment; parameters such as number and length of pauses taken to remember a word are significant early indicators of Alzheimer's.

Gene this? Researchers at the University of California - San Diego School of Medicine have discovered that certain variants of the SORL1 gene, predominantly found in the central nervous system, can reduce the amount of beta amyloid, the proteins that build up in the gap between neurons and are linked to neuronal death and dementia. Variants in the SORL1 gene could be associated with brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a natural compound that protects nerve health. BDNF is also under investigation as a potential therapy for a number of neurological diseases, including Alzheimer's.





Viagra for Alzheimer's:

Gout can be good: Researchers from

Massachusetts General Hospital and

concluded that gout has a protective

effect on the brain, perhaps owing to

the presence of higher levels of uric acid.

In fact, they found a 24-per-cent lower

risk of Alzheimer's in individuals with a

history of gout.

Boston University Medical Centre have

from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Viagra can help battle Alzheimer's and cancer if used in combination with new drugs. In their study, published in journal *DNA* and Cell Biology, they explain how Viagra can reduce the activity of a specific 'chaperone protein'—chaperone proteins supervise the folding of protein in human cells.

According to researchers

Plant hope: Withania somnifera, known as Ashwagandha in India, has been identified as a possible treatment for Alzheimer's disease. Muraleedharan Nair of Michigan State University has patented the botanical compound of the plant and his spinoff company, Natural Therapeutics, will begin clinical trials soon.

Blood marker: To date, there has been no reliable blood test to diagnose Alzheimer's in humans. However, researchers from the University of California - Los Angeles (UCLA) have made progress on the development of a simple blood test that focuses on beta amyloid.

Finger on the trigger: Researchers at Cleveland Clinic's Lerner Research Institute in Cleveland, Ohio, have found that, like beta amyloid, the triggering receptor expressed on myeloid cells 2 (TREM-2) also plays an important role in Alzheimer's. Deleting this receptor in mice decreased plaque formation and brain inflammation and improved the survival of neurons. This suggests that reducing the activity of this receptor might put a stop to neuro-degeneration in Alzheimer's patients.

WITH DR CHARLES PINTO, FORMER PROFESSOR **EMERITUS OF PSYCHIATRY, BYL NAIR HOSPITAL** AND T N MEDICAL COLLEGE, MUMBAI

There have been many new advances in the fight against Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Is this encouraging news for silvers in India?

It is exciting that so many new advances in the fight against Alzheimer's disease and dementia (AD) have been made all over the world. It kindles new expectations and hope for those suffering from AD and their relatives and caregivers. The elder population is on the rise all over the world. By 2030, one of every five Americans will be 65 or older. In India, there are 70 million elders (2001 Census); they will comprise 12 per cent of the population in 2026. With this increase, there will be a rise in AD globally as well as in India.

Where are Indians headed in terms of treatment and cure?

Epidemiological studies show 3.7 million with AD in India; this will double by 2030 (Dementia *India Report 2010*). There are more women (2.2 million) affected than men (1.5 million). There is a high prevalence of risk factors like smoking, diabetes and lifestyle issues. Most patients (50 per cent) live with three-generation families. Caregiver stress is high with physical/ psychiatric morbidity (70 per cent). There are insufficient residential facilities in the country and the treatment gap for AD patients may be as high as 95 per cent. This is despite US FDA-approved anti-dementia medications being available and cheaper in India. Patients receiving them are few owing to non-detection of AD, stigma against dementia, and such few memory clinics and treatment facilities.

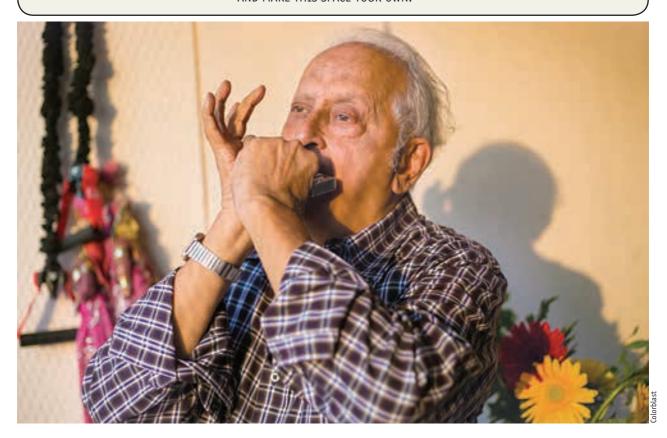
How can we predict and prevent the disease?

Prediction of the disease comes after suspecting it. In elders, it is mistaken for age-associated memory impairment (AAMI) or senescence. A new concept of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is now recognised as the early phase of AD by the new DSM V classification of the American Psychiatric Association, especially aMCI (amnestic MCI). This could form the target of new therapies as current medications do not prevent, change the course of or prevent the deterioration of AD. The new studies are a positive indicator of things to come.



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.



PLAY ON

I remember the first time I heard the lilting sound of the harmonica; I was a teenager growing up in Mumbai in the 1950s. It has been my life's greatest passion since then, yet I never made it my profession.

I studied engineering in Mumbai and went to America in 1960 for a master's in chemical engineering. Once I had signed up for an amateur competition—this was at a time when an Indian in America was a novelty. More so, an Indian with the harmonica was something no one had seen! The experience of playing to a foreign audience is fresh in my memory. I graduated in 1964, worked for 50 years and retired from my rubber manufacturing business three years ago. Now the harmonica has taken a serious place in my life.

A few years ago, I temporarily relocated to Chennai, moving into the same apartment building as my younger daughter. There I was introduced to the enormous reach

Parikh experiences the magic of classical music on the harmonica

of the Internet. My granddaughter Tejasvee had made a video of me playing the harmonica which she put up on YouTube. Sometime later, I was contacted by harmonica groups from Baroda. I paid them a visit; we played together and had a good time. That's when it struck me that there are harmonica groups like this all over the country, but none that I had heard of in Mumbai.

When I returned from Chennai in 2012, I got in touch with a few harmonica players around Mumbai. Since last October, we have been holding regular sessions at my home. It started as an informal get-together, but now we're a group of 45 musicians, comprising mainly harmonica players, with a few backing instruments. We get invited to play at various places and sometimes we go busking at Churchgate or Marine Drive.

I specialise in playing classical music on the harmonica, though I don't have any formal training. Playing the

intricacies of classical music within the limited span of a harmonica is quite complicated. Compare the piano, a large instrument with many separate keys making up a single tone or semitone; on a harmonica all these individual tones are crammed into a specific number of holes. And the magic of classical music lies in its intricacies.

When we were fist married, my wife didn't know about my love affair with the harmonica. On our honeymoon, I played *Shish kebab*, a Turkish song, for her. She has always been supportive and catches an earful every time she gets the chance. She is a psychologist and has been working with dyslexic children for the past 15 years.

My suggestion to my fellow silvers: dust the dirt off your long-lost passions and start investing in them. Passion is all that matters in the end.

-Ramesh Parikh, Mumbai

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

I am 65 years old and have descended from six generations of Army officers. My mother was home-schooled, but was very progressive for her time. I had a wonderful *fauji* childhood, living in beautiful old homes with expansive grounds in places such as Jhansi, Gwalior and Delhi.

When I was a young girl, I was given two life lessons. My father (late) Major M A Subhan of the Madras Sappers had once told me, "In life, you must do things for others without asking for anything in return. When you do things for those who do not have what you have, the satisfaction it brings is immense." He has been my greatest inspiration.

The second lesson came when I was studying in the 6th grade when my school nuns took my class to a village they had adopted. I saw them serving the lepers there and I was filled with compassion. After this life-changing moment, I began to volunteer regularly. But I hid my volunteering activities from my orthodox grandmother as my extensive biblical knowledge was a cause for worry for her.

In college, I was with the Auxiliary Cadet Corps (ACC) in the regiment that used to clean up villages and roads. By then, I had imbibed the core essence of being a volunteer.

In keeping with the tradition of my ancestors, I married a man in the forces—an Indian Air Force (IAF) officer. During my years in the IAF, I taught at many schools and colleges as we moved around. Simultaneously, I earned my two postgraduate degrees in English and child development. My work with various associations in the forces has allowed me to indulge in one of my greatest joys: compering. The highlight of this came in 1980, when I became the master of ceremony for the presentation of the President's



Working with people gives immense satisfaction to Sheriff

Colours to No. 6 Squadron by then president of India Sanjiva Reddy.

For the past year or so, under the aegis of the Defence Veterans Volunteer Group of Hyderabad (DVVGH), five of us—retired officers and wives—have been training *jawan* to write skill certification exams for clerical jobs. I planned the curriculum and course structure, apart from creating a timetable and coordinating with those interested.

In January, five senior *jawan* who were aspiring to become officers approached me for help. They wanted to appear before the Services Selection Board. Whenever they found time, they would come to me with their questions. Sometimes they just needed a morale boost. One of them, Abhishek, has been selected and will join the Officers Training Academy in June this year. I train a diverse group of people—from working engineers to the little children of our building security guard—in spoken English, making them think beyond their lessons.

After decades of hopping cities and towns, my husband Rashid and I made Secunderabad our home. I have a son who works in Hyderabad. Rashid is a cautious and quiet person and supports my work in his own way. But my son doesn't understand why I don't want to sit back and "enjoy life"! Friends tease me saying I have been doing *faltu* [worthless] things for long enough. But, the fact of the matter is, my work with people is an integral part of who I am!

— Jamila Shahnaz Sheriff, Secunderabad







BIRTHDAYS

Former UK prime minister Tony Blair turned 62 on 6 May.

Renowned writer Nayantara Sehgal turns 88 on 10 May.

Veteran ghazal singer **Pankaj Udhas** turns 64 on 17 May.

Former prime minister **H D Deve Gowda** turns 82 on 18 May.

Eminent Indian author Ruskin Bond turns 81 on 19 May.

Actor Pankaj Kapur turns 61 on 29 May.

Actor Paresh Rawal turns 65 on 30 May.





IN PASSING

Renowned Hindi poet **Kailash Vajpeyi** died on 1 April owing to cardiac arrest. He was 79.

Tamil author and literary critic **Jayakanthan** breathed his last on 8 April. He was 81.

Noted singer **E M Hanifa** died on 8 April. He was 97.

Former Air Chief Marshal of the Indian Air Force (IAF) **Hrushikesh Moolgavkar** died on 9 April. He was 95.

Former Australian cricket captain and commentator **Richie Benaud** passed away after a long battle with skin cancer on 10 April. He was 84.

MILESTONES

- NOTED HINDI POET **GOPALDAS NEERAJ** AND VETERAN HINDI LITTERATEUR **UDAY PRATAP SINGH** WERE AWARDED THE SAHITYA SHIROMANI SAMMAN BY THE UTTAR PRADESH GOVERNMENT ON 8 APRIL.
- **→** FORMER INDIAN HOCKEY PLAYER **BALBIR SINGH SENIOR** WAS CONFERRED THE MAJOR DHYAN CHAND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE GAME.
- ▶ PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI WAS AWARDED 'INDIAN OF THE YEAR' BY CNN-IBN FOR HIS HISTORIC WIN IN THE 2014 LOK SABHA ELECTIONS.



OVERHEARD

"There's a certain percentage of vanity that is unhealthy in my business and it affects both sexes. You see it with the men, dying their hair into their 60s pretending they don't have grey hair, or having plastic surgery and using sun lamps. I'm not that guy. I'm totally happy—well, you're never totally happy with ageing, but you accept it. You understand that you do age but there are roles for any age if you're prepared to play them."

—Australian actor Russell Crowe, 50, to The Sunday Times magazine



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

TAURUS

20 April to 20 May

he word stolid is best identified with this zodiac sign. It is a very strong sign, and has a super (read 'high') metabolism, great temperament, is a very devoted sign, stays true to its roots and friends, yet is very independent. It likes the good things in life, including good food (a big weakness).

People belonging to this sign have high energy but equally love to play the role of couch potato. So, their yoga *sadhana* has to be regularised to break the fallout of eating a lot and being comfortable lolling about. The good news is that they have the discipline to work out on their own, which means it is best they create a chart to follow. Weak areas include the sore throat; psychosomatically, this may be owing to their unwillingness to hurt anybody by speaking out. They can prevent this with poses and practices that keep the throat region healthy. Having a steady breathing (*pranayama*) practice, therefore, is a must for them.

Owing to their tendency to overeat as well as avoid activity, they can put on weight in the thigh and butt areas. The weak area of the spine is the neck region, coming from their reaction to stress or choice of professions. Including poses that keep these regions toned and strong will make them feel good. For the neck, all forward bends are soothing. Some poses are downward dog (adhomukhosvanasana), seated forward bend (paschimottanasana), and extreme stretch (uttanasana). There are several variations and all of them must be introduced or practised on and off to keep the practice spicy and ensure the muscles are maintained. The body tends to get bored with the same routine and may not tone up well, so variety is very important. For the hips, all squats are a must. The squat (utkatasana) has many variations in dynamic and static form. All the dancing Shiva poses (Natrajasana) also tighten and strengthen the leg muscles thoroughly.



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

It's time to find your place in the sun. A bit of sunlight is essential to overall health, especially bone health, respiratory capacity and mood. Research shows that no amount of dietary supplementation of Vitamin D is as effective as some sunlight to ensure absorption. However, as UV radiation is harmful to the skin—it can cause age spots and wrinkling as well as skin cancer—it is recommended you expose yourself to the gentle sunlight in the morning (before 10 am) or after 4 pm.

Squat (utkatasana)

Stand up straight with feet a foot apart. Hold out your arms at shoulder level, palms facing each other. Inhale, going on vour toes. Exhale and lower your hips down towards the heels. Execute the final stage of the pose so all the muscles are rightly used. Avoid tilting ahead. If you are comfortable at this stage, you can do this pose dynamically by standing back up on your toes as you inhale. Exhaling, lower the heels back. If you do this pose continuously five or 10 times, it is akin to a full body workout. However, avoid it if you suffer knee or lower back problems. **Benefits:** This is a complete body workout that builds mental and physical stamina. It will ensure you do not have hip joint problems; tone the thigh and hip regions; and ground and calm the mind.

Model: Anita Namole, Harmony Interactive Centre **Photographer:** Haresh Patel



FOOD FACTS BY NAMITA JAIN

Tummy troubles: Control symptoms of IBS by eating right, and light

I am 69. For the past few months, I have been suffering from stomach cramps, bloating and diarrhoea with a marked change in my bowel movements. I have been diagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome. How can I manage my diet? What are the foods I need to consume and avoid?

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is often defined as abdominal pain and discomfort with altered bowel habits, in the absence of any other medical explanation for the symptoms. Patients with IBS often report gas, bloating, diarrhoea or constipation.

Causes

Foods: Many people with IBS have more severe symptoms when they eat certain things. A wide range of foods has been implicated—chocolate, spices, fats, fruits, beans, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, milk, carbonated beverages and alcohol, to name a few.

Stress: Most people with IBS find their symptoms are worse or more frequent during periods of increased stress, such as during a family crisis or the first week on a new job. But while stress may aggravate symptoms, it doesn't cause them.

Hormones: Because women are twice as likely to have IBS, researchers believe hormonal changes play a role

in this condition. Many women find their symptoms are worse during or around their menstrual periods.

Other illnesses: Sometimes another illness, such as an acute episode of infectious diarrhoea (gastroenteritis) or too many bacteria in the intestines (bacterial overgrowth), can trigger IBS.

Symptoms

If you are experiencing abdominal pain, a change in bowel habits or gas, diarrhoea or constipation is interfering with your normal activities, you should see a doctor. Especially if you have any of the following:

- Blood or pus in stools
- Celiac disease
- Fever
- Malnutrition
- Symptoms that wake you from sleep
- Age 50 or over
- A lump you can feel by touch
- Unintentional weight loss

Dietary dos and don'ts

To battle IBS, remember the following:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Eat plenty of starchy carbohydrates, such as bread, rice, cereals, pasta, potatoes, chapattis and plantain.
- Include milk and dairy products (2-3 portions per day); if you are lactose intolerant, include dairy alternatives such as soy, rice or oat milk and yoghurts enriched with calcium.
- Eat meat, fish, eggs and alternatives like beans and pulses.
- Limit foods high in fats and sugars.
- Limit saturated fat found in animal products such as butter, ghee, cheese, meat, cakes, biscuits and pastries.
 Replace these with unsaturated fats found in vegetable oils such as sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds.
- Drink plenty of fluids; at least 2 litre daily, such as water or herbal teas.
- Probiotics, which balance gut bacteria, may be useful in improving symptoms of IBS; they aid digestion and improve symptoms of wind, bloating and diarrhoea



- Reduce caffeine; it can stimulate activity in the colon that may worsen diarrhoea. Limit tea and coffee to no more than 3 cups per day. Filter coffee contains higher amounts of caffeine (140 mg) compared to instant coffee (100 mg) and tea (75 mg). So, if you drink filter coffee, limit it to 2 cups per day.
- Alcohol and fizzy drinks can worsen symptoms of diarrhoea. Aim to have at least two alcohol-free days each week and no more than 2 units each day.
- Reduce intake of starches resistant to digestion in the gut (small intestine); they reach the colon intact and lead to bloating, wind and diarrhoea. Examples include processed foods such as chips, supermarket pizzas, biscuits and cakes, breakfast cereals, cold potato/pasta salads, ready meals, partially baked bread (garlic bread or pizza base), sweet corn, green banana and muesli that contains bran, dried pasta and savoury snacks.
- Reduce fatty foods; they are difficult to digest and can cause symptoms of diarrhoea. Limit cakes, biscuits, chocolates and pastries; cut down on fatty meat products such as sausages and pies; use minimal oil/butter when cooking. Try steaming, boiling, microwaving, roasting, grilling and poaching rather than frying.
- Reduce fructose; it can cause diarrhoea in some people when eaten in large quantities. Try limiting fruit intake to no more than 3 portions each day. Only have 1 small glass (150 ml) of fruit juice per day. It might be useful to limit honey, which contains fructose.
- Avoid sorbitol; it is poorly absorbed and has a laxative effect when it enters the colon, causing bloating and diarrhoea. IBS sufferers may be sensitive to small amounts of sorbitol. Sorbitol is found in artificial sweetener, low-sugar sweets, drinks, mints and gum, and often found in diabetic or slimming products.

I am a 55 year-old socially active male. In this sweltering summer, body odour is a major concern and cause for social embarrassment. Can body odour be prevented by changing the diet?

Body odour is strongly affected by what's emitted by your sweat glands. The real cause of body odour is the excretion of toxins by your body. Yes, your foods control your body odour; manufactured foods, those lacking fibre and made with refined white flour, added sugars, hydrogenated oils and other processed ingredients are culprits. Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower contain sulphur that your body breaks down into compounds that are absorbed into the body and secreted in sweat. Overload of spicy food can lead to excessive sulphur that is eliminated through the skin's pores and breath. Red meat requires maximum digestive effort for your body to process. Chocolate, soda, tea, coffee, alcohol—consuming any of these in excess causes body odour. A diet that does not contain carbohydrates can lead to a greater release of sweat in the body as can excess of protein-rich foods. Excess consumption of dairy products can lead to release of hydrogen sulphide and methyl mercaptan in the body that can trigger off a foul smell.

When you eliminate excess consumption of these foods from your diet and shift to a 100 per cent healthful diet comprising whole grains, large quantities of leafy vegetables, fresh fruits, soy products, sprouts, raw nuts and seeds and healthy oils, your body odour will disappear in a matter of weeks. A plant-based diet is an internal deodoriser; chlorophyll and other phytonutrients will cleanse you from the inside out.

Sample diet plan

Here's a sample diet plan for people suffering from IBS:

- Breakfast: 1 glass fruit juice, white bread/toast, butter/seedless jam
- Mid-morning: 1 cup tea/coffee, plain biscuits/fruit
- Lunch/dinner: Clear soup, rice with thin dal, yoghurt
- Evening: Tea, cucumber sandwich (white bread)

Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist at Diet Mantra and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit www.dietmantra.in.

If you have any questions for Namita Jain, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



SILVER LINING BY DR V S NATARAJAN

Skin sense: Understand the largest organ of the human body, and treat it right

The skin gets the credit of being the largest organ of the human body, weighing around 12 per cent of total body weight. From six to 60, irrespective of sex, each one of us strives to look more attractive. And intrinsic to this is clear skin. We know the maxim, 'Beauty is being the best possible version of yourself on the inside and outside.' And this article focuses on helping silvers bring out the best possible version of their skin.

What does skin do?

- It protects: The skin acts as a screen guard, preventing the entry of microbes, harmful UV rays of the sun and dust into the body.
- It secretes: The skin breathes through its sweat glands. A significant amount of heat and waste is let out in the form of sweat. The sebaceous glands secrete oil, which makes the skin silky and smooth.
- It regulates: By controlling sweat production in accordance with environmental temperature, skin plays a key role in the regulation of body temperature.
- It produces: With the aid of sunrays, skin converts cholesterol into Vitamin D.
- It absorbs: The skin absorbs ointments and gels, making it possible for them to act on their destined targets.
- It beautifies: Skin tone remains a major criterion of beauty.

Ageing and skin

As we get older, the skin progressively undergoes many changes. How our skin ages depends on diet, heredity, lifestyle and several other factors. UV rays break down elastic tissues of the skin, leading to stretching, sagging and wrinkling. Stress, obesity and loss of fatty tissue (subcutaneous fat) between the skin and muscle are other contributors for skin ageing. Moreover, sweat and oil production decrease with ageing, lessening the lustre of skin.

Normal skin changes associated with ageing include:

- Transparent or thinned skin
- Sagging facial skin, especially around eyes, cheeks and jaw
- Dry, roughened skin
- Easy bruising owing to decreased elasticity
- Benign growths such as seborrheic keratosis and cherry angioma



Seborrheic keratosis

Seborrheic keratosis is one of the most common noncancerous skin growths in elders. It appears brown to black and is slightly elevated and waxy. There is no fear about progression to skin cancer and there is no need to remove it, other than for aesthetic reasons.

Cherry angioma

Medically, a cherry angioma refers to the proliferation of blood capillaries. It appears like a dome-shaped reddish to pink elevation. If you wish to remove it, options like cryo surgery are available.

Age spots

Age spots are the brown patches that appear on sunexposed parts of the body in silvers.

Xerosis (dryness) & senile pruritus (itching)

Dry skin leading to itching is a very frequent problem among elders. The main cause for dryness is declining oil production by the sebaceous glands of the body. Dryness may also be owing to inadequate fluid intake. Dryness, in turn, leads to itching without any other core cause, while

itching is a highly irritating disorder that, in turn, can trigger anger, frustration, sleeplessness and depression.

Causes for itching can include:

- Dry skin
- Eczema
- Psoriasis
- Thyroid disorders
- Liver disorders
- Kidney disorders
- Senility
- Anaemia
- Cancer
- Dandruff
- Psychiatric diseases

Seborrheic keratosis

To avoid dryness, lubricate your skin with olive oil, liquid paraffin and moisturisers. Frequent bathing can aggravate skin dryness. If the itching becomes intolerable, antihistamine drugs can be taken on a doctor's prescription. If it still persists, the core disease triggering it should be discovered and treated.

Skin cancer

UV radiation is the most common risk factor for precancers and carcinomas of the skin. A changing mole or new skin growth needs evaluation by a dermatologist, preferably with a biopsy.

Some troublesome skin issues

- Scabies: This is an extremely itchy disorder that can be transmitted from one person to another through close skin contact. Thus it is more common among close contacts, more so among family members. It is caused owing to infestation by a parasite: the itch mite. The mite lives on the skin and burrows into it. It is easily treated by applying an insecticide lotion to the skin. Self-diagnosis and treatment must be strictly avoided. A dermatologist will advise the right method and medication to treat you and your family.
- Fungal infections: Fungal infections like candida are more common among elders because of waning

READERS ASK

How is Vitamin D essential for silvers?

Vitamin D levels are often low among silvers. Scant exposure to sunlight (especially among the housebound) and poor nutrition are primary causes for low levels of Vitamin D. While low levels are mostly asymptomatic, they may be accompanied by muscle weakness and muscle and joint pain. Low levels of Vitamin D increase risk of heart disease, memory loss, osteoporosis, cataract and even cancer. Dietary sources of Vitamin D include fish, fish oil and liver. Several foods are also fortified with Vitamin D, including milk (cow, soy), some yoghurts, cereals and margarine. Exposure to sunlight for about 30 minutes twice a day is essential to produce Vitamin D from the skin. A regular walk in the bright sun and a healthy diet will go far in raising levels of Vitamin D.

immunity, altered commensal balance and intake of immune suppressants like steroids. These infections are more common in regions like the axilla, which sweat more. Fungal infections are mostly accompanied by itching. Once diagnosed, it takes a really long time for these infections to get totally cured.

Tips for general skin protection

- Protect your skin from sun with sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 15); try avoiding strong sun rays (10 am to 2 pm); and wear protective cotton clothing and accessories to minimise exposure of the skin to the sun when you step out. Avoid overexposure to the sun.
- Do not smoke.
- Pamper your skin—limit bathing time, avoid strong soaps and astringents, shave carefully, pat dry after bathing and moisturise dry skin.
- Eat healthy.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Say no to stress.

When it comes to the skin, we need to adhere to one rule—patience. There is no rapid relief for most skin problems. Be patient. Your skin took a while to deteriorate; now, give it some time to reflect a calmer, inner state.

Padma Shri 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





Taste master

BGMATHEW • KOTTAYAM

An engaging series about silver men who wield a deft ladle in the kitchen

Simple and unassuming, this 73 yearold retired banker from Kottayam loves cooking! B G Mathew especially enjoys whipping up festive meals at Christmas and Onam. He loves to share recipes and enjoys improvising. His simple dictum: "I cannot eat if the food is not tasty. Hence, I enjoy putting in the effort to prepare tasty food." As he rightly points out, a recipe need not be elaborate to be tasty. For instance, a simple side dish with tender beans is delicious, if minimum ingredients are seasoned with passion.

Mr Mathew, a pleasure to meet you. First of all, tell me about your childhood.

My father C V Mathew was a teacher in Munnar, a hill station on the Western Ghats. I grew up in Munnar along with my three brothers and three sisters. I was the oldest among the boys. I remember being quite interested in cooking even as a young boy. My mother, whom we called Ammachi, prepared simple food that exuded the aromatic flavours of Kerala's Syrian Christian cuisine. She managed the housework and was very particular that all of us paid attention to our studies.

Did you help with the cooking?

Yes. *Ammachi* was quite strict; being a perfectionist, she expected cleanliness in whatever we did. For instance, if I was grinding the *dosa* batter, she

would frown even if one drop spilt; and if we did not learn in one or two instances, she wouldn't allow us to step into the kitchen.

What about your sisters?

Ammachi had the same rules for boys and girls. She did not expect any of us to help unless we wanted to. She imparted good value systems to us and had clear expectations that we

"When you order food from outside, you cannot be sure of the quality of the ingredients. I wanted my children to be familiar with our traditions and value system. According to me, food is an important part of culture"

should perform well in school. Her family was interested in education. One of her brothers had been a college principal.

What about your education and work?

After my graduation, I went to Mumbai and started working with IDBI Bank. I worked with them for 36 years and retired as DGM in 2002. We are now settled in Kottayam.

What brought about the interest in cooking?

It was quite a gradual thing. The main reason for it may have been that I can eat only if the food is tasty.

Your first memory of cooking?

I can't remember the first dish I cooked, but I remember making tea when I was in the 4th standard. There was a lesson on tea and tea growing and the teachers asked us to try making tea at home. I remember being excited about it. I even remember the makeshift fireplace I constructed to make the tea. But I must tell you, tea is my favourite beverage. I enjoy making good tea and am very particular about the variety of tea leaves. In

Munnar, we could get good tea leaves.

So when did you start cooking?

I developed an interest in cooking when the children were growing up. We have one son and two daughters. I was very particular that they should eat healthy home-cooked food and I enjoyed preparing innovative dishes for them. When you order anything from outside, you cannot be sure of the quality of the ingredients. I also

wanted the children to be familiar with our culture and traditions, and grow up with our value system. According to me, food is an important part of culture.

What about your wife? Was she okay with your presence in the kitchen?

Very much [laughs]! My wife Saramma Mathew is not an enthusiastic cook and has always been quite happy



to leave the kitchen to me once in a while. We don't agree on everything but, over the years, we have made some peaceful adjustments.

Do you cook on a daily basis?

Not really. I pitch in whenever necessary. I also like to cook on special occasions.

What is your most cherished memory in connection with food?

Festivals, Christmas as well as Onam. For Christmas, we go all out to make special dishes and traditional delicacies. In Kerala, most Christians celebrate Onam as well and that too in a grand way. It is one of our favourite festivals. I like it for its simplicity and because it is more of a

celebration than a series of religious rituals. To me, Onam symbolises a family meal. On that day, the family comes together at mealtimes and all of us eat on plantain leaves. It is how I grew up and the tradition continued while the children were growing up.

Do you still make an elaborate meal at home on Onam?

Yes, I do. Though, sadly, most people don't follow that practice any more. But whether the children are here or not, we cook an elaborate meal. All my brothers live nearby and all our families assemble in one of the homes with each family bringing some delicacies for the meal.

What special dishes do you prepare on Onam?

An elaborate meal with three varieties of *payasam*; normally, I prepare these.

Why three?

For that extra special touch!

What would be some of your most popular recipes?

I think...the cakes I bake. I always bake a cake on the children's birthdays if they are around. We also have one granddaughter and twin grandsons. Right now, they are all away. Our eldest daughter Lisa is in London, Sudha is in Bangalore and Pravin is in Chennai. But whenever they visit us, I always bake a cake or two. Occasionally, I bake a cake and courier it to them.

Where did you learn the recipes?

I have a large collection of recipe books at home and enjoy trying new recipes. I also learnt much about cooking by observing my mother and wife in the kitchen. Initially, I was more interested in learning how to make snacks. I found I could always improvise.

Which is your favourite cookbook for Kerala cuisine?

For Kerala recipes, I refer to late Mrs K M Mathew's *Nadan Pachakarama*. Most of the recipes use local ingredients, but I enjoy improvising as well. I also like to refer Ammini Ramachandran's *Grains*, *Greens and Grated Coconut*.

Please share a simple favourite from Kerala that is part of your everyday cooking.

That would be a side dish known as *mezhukkupuratti* (also *poriyal*), meaning pan-fried or coated with oil. It is made with tender beans slit lengthwise and chopped into 1-inch bits. Cook them with salt, 1-2 slit



green chillies, and just enough water so they look green and fresh when cooked. Next, prepare the tempering by heating 1 teaspoon oil. Pop mustard and add finely chopped onions. Pan-fry until the onions turn golden brown. Now add the cooked beans. See if you need to add more salt. Pan-fry for a minute. The dish is ready.

I can imagine the fresh taste of tender beans with the golden onions. Your recipe is even simpler than a typical *poriyal*.

Yes, I do not add asafoetida or turmeric or curry leaves or coconut. You can if you like, but try this first. Let me now share the recipe for a delicious *pachchadi* with bitter gourd.



This is a delicious *raita*, known as *pachchadi* in southern India, with fried bitter gourd. Relished by Mr Mathew's friends and family for the crunchiness of chopped cucumbers and fresh tempering, this accompaniment to a meal is an Onam favourite.

Ingredients

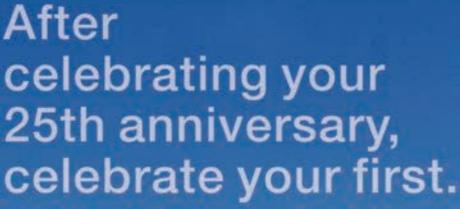
- Yoghurt: 2 cups; beaten
- Bitter gourd: ½ cup; chopped into
 ¾ inch bits
- Cucumber: 1/4 cup; chopped fine
- Onion: ½ cup; chopped fine
- Green chilli: 1; chopped fine
- Mustard powder or paste: ½-1 tsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
- Coconut oil for deep frying
- Salt to taste

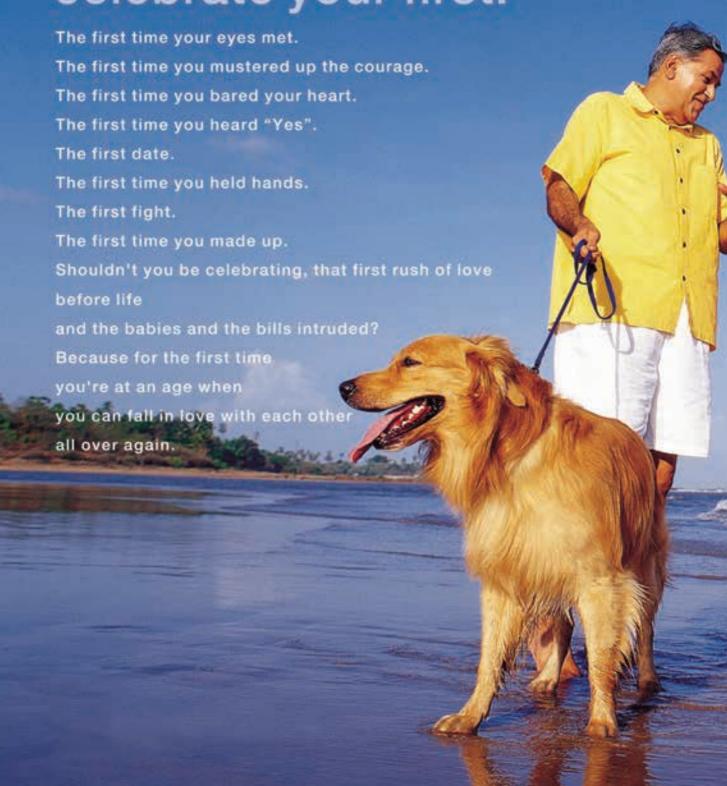
Method

Heat oil for deep frying. Add the chopped bitter gourd and fry on medium flame until it turns golden brown. Heat 1 tsp of oil and add half the onions. Sauté for 1-2 minutes and set aside. Mix the voghurt, sautéed onions, chopped cucumber, chopped green chilli, mustard powder and salt. Transfer to a serving bowl. Heat 1 tsp of oil in a small wok for tempering. Add the mustard seeds and as they start spluttering, add the remaining chopped onions. Sauté until they turn golden-brown and slightly crisp. Just before serving, add the fried bitter gourd and tempering into the voghurt mixture. This is done to retain the crispness of the bitter gourd and crunchiness of the tempering.

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









The road to recovery

Physical rehabilitation is intrinsic to silver care. And now, India appears to be waking up to the benefits, discovers **Aakanksha Bajpai**

yoti Kishanchand Nichani has spent the past three months relearning the arts of walking and talking. The Mumbai-based 67 year-old suffered a stroke that left her speech impaired and paralysed the right side of her body. After intensive rehabilitation, she can now walk with some help and even lift her right arm. The journey to complete normalcy might still be a long one but Nichani's happy to be moving in the right direction.

For many silvers like Nichani, advancement in healthcare may be a double-edged sword. While increased longevity is cause for cheer, it also renders people susceptible to age-related medical issues, including strokes and heart attacks, from which recovery is often an uphill climb. And though physical rehabilitation has been an integral part of geriatric care in the West, with clinics dealing with practically every situation from a simple fall to cancer, incontinence and neuropsychological problems, it is still a fairly new concept for most Indians. The silver lining is that many hospitals are now waking up to the need for setting up rehabilitation units (see 'Help at hand'; page 39).

Understanding 'physiatry'

Physical medicine and rehabilitation, also called 'physiatry', is a medical speciality concerned with diagnosis, evaluation and management of people with physical and/or cognitive impairment and disability. It involves treatment of patients with painful or functionally limiting conditions and the management of co-morbidities and co-impairments. Physical therapy can help restore strength, range of motion, flexibility, coordination, and endurance, as well as reduce pain.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation, also called 'physiatry', can help restore strength, range of motion, flexibility, coordination, and endurance, as well as reduce pain

Another important feature is retraining patients to do everyday tasks. "Many seniors have multiple co-morbidities ranging from cardiovascular, endocrinological and musculoskeletal problems, leading to reduced mobility and difficulties in performing day-to-day activities," says Dr Dhiraj Adiga, consultant physiatrist, physical medicine and rehabilitation, Manipal Hospitals, Bengaluru. "Rehabilitation aims to restore and enhance functional abilities and quality of life in such cases."

Treatment is tailor-made depending on the patient's needs. "Patients need one-on-one treatment, closely monitored or guided by a therapist," says Pooja Bajaj, senior neurotherapist at AktivOrtho, Delhi. "Based on individual evaluation, a diagnosis is made and a goal-directed rehabilita-

tion therapy focused on physical, functional, cognitive, perceptual and social goals is provided to maximise the patient's recovery."

In India, multiple rehab programmes are available for silvers (see interview; page 38). These include neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary and even sports rehabilitation.

Neurological rehabilitation

This type of rehabilitation is generally useful for silvers who have had stroke, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, Parkinson's and neuropathy. It includes neuromuscular strengthening and training. After a stroke or brain injury, a patient generally suffers from immobilisation in some part of the body. Neurological

a stroke or brain injury, a patient generally suffers from immobilisation in some part of the body. Neurological rehabilitation helps regain strength. The therapies are targeted at maximising the patient's independence and reducing reliance on machines and other people. Machines form an integral part of the treatment, and range from the treadmill to those for gait and motion analysis.

A resident of Mombasa, Kenya, Abdulsatar Zakariya, who had been





A neurological rehab patient undergoing assisted walking therapy using the Lokomat, a robotic-driven gait orthosis and computer-enhanced rehabilitation device; a patient using walking bars as for musculoskeletal rehabilitation

suffering from severe back pain for almost 10 years and had lost his ability to walk following a fall, has been undergoing rehabilitation at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai since November 2014. With a marked improvement in his condition and decreasing dependence on medicines, Zakariya is hopeful of returning home in time for Ramzan. "The improvement in his

gait is remarkable," says Zaid Hussain Allana, Zakariya's grandson. "He also enjoys working on the machines, particularly Lokomat, and loves to chase sheep on the monitor!"

Musculoskeletal rehabilitation

Patients with arthritis, osteoporosis, neck pain, back pain and spondylosis can benefit from musculoskel-

etal rehabilitation. The focus is on increasing muscle strength, endurance, flexibility and mobility, and improving gait and balance. It could also be helpful for people who have undergone knee replacement, like 72 year-old Dr Lalita Palab. A yoga enthusiast, she was advised not to continue yoga after the surgery. But with rehabilitation treatment working on strengthening her knee muscles,

Dr Palab hopes to get back to yoga soon.

Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation

Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation comprises both cardio and pulmonary rehabilitations. While cardio rehabilitation caters to patients with a history of cardiac problems or those who have undergone heart surgeries and angioplasty, pulmonary rehabilitation is for patients of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), respiratory infections and lung diseases. Specific exercises like walking on the treadmill, lifting, and balancing are part of the recovery process.

Sports rehabilitation

A preventive procedure, sports rehabilitation basically caters to people who want to remain fit or engage in some kind of sports activity. "At least one hour of exercise is necessary for people above 50 if they want to remain fit, healthy, and do not want to become a burden on others," says Shvam Sundar Ihurani, 83, who retired as chief general manager of the Reserve Bank of India. He has had a series of cardiac problems and underwent bypass surgery recently. Jhurani has decided to be proactive by opting for sports rehabilitation, besides continuing with cardiopulmonary rehabilitation.

Therapies galore

Depending on individual cases, therapies vary. Sometimes, a patient is advised two or more therapies at the same time. These include:

Physiotherapy: The focus is on helping people with gait and balance problems to recover and reclaim the strength and endurance they might have lost. Exercises are customised to strengthen trunk muscles, and improve balance and gait. Patients are also advised to continue with the exercises at home.

"Rehabilitation has multiple components"

In conversation with Dr Abhishek Srivastava, Head, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Centre, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH), Mumbai

What are the different rehabilitation programmes available for silvers in India?

There are multiple rehab programmes including neurological, musculoskeletal, cardiopulmonary and sports rehabilitation.

When does a senior seek rehabilitation?

A senior generally comes for rehabilitation after a major health issue like a stroke or surgery. Sometimes the rehab starts while the patient is still in the ward. Rehabilitation has multiple components, including medical management. During rehab, medicines as well as therapies are designed according to the needs of the patient.

Are these therapies completely personalised?

Yes, all therapies are customised according to the needs of the patient. A team of experts assesses the patient in detail before deciding on the therapies to offset the deficits he might be facing. Sometimes a person might require multiple therapies.

What are the different exercises undertaken during these therapies?

The exercises vary according to the therapy. For instance, a person who is working on strengthening muscles would do anti-gravity, weight cuff, and other machines; if endurance is needed, treadmill, bicycle and other machines might become part of the routine.

How long does rehabilitation take?

The timeframe of the treatment depends on the problems a person is facing and response to therapies and services provided. A therapy can start from the initial phase, when a patient is still in the ICU, till the time the goal is achieved. For instance, if a patient has a problem with the mobility of his right hand, the goal would be to make him achieve normal flexibility and movement of his right hand. If the patient does not achieve normalcy even after sixs months of rehab, the goal would change to make him comfortable with his left hand and maintain the state of his right hand. Once the rehab programme is over, a patient is sometimes advised to keep doing some exercises at home.

Has there been a gradual increase in the number of seniors who opt for rehab?

Yes, there definitely is an increase in awareness. The KDAH Rehabilitation Centre sees 400 patients on a daily basis, of which two-thirds are inpatients and the rest are outpatients. Besides this, we also have people coming in for preventive therapies, just to stay fit. Owing to advancement in medicine, people are able to survive longer these days. But they wouldn't want to lose their independence and mobility and be laden with heavy medical bills because of diseases.

What about the follow-up routine?

Every patient generally comes back for a follow-up after four to six weeks or as prescribed by the doctor.

How much does rehabilitation tend to cost?

It depends on the patient's requirement. Sometimes a patient might require only two sessions of therapy; sometimes a person might go through various sessions and multiple therapies owing to the deficits faced. Treatment can cost from ₹ 5,000 upward.



A patient using the ergometer which enables him to perform over two dozen movements

Occupational therapy: The main aim of occupational therapy is to make patients independent again by helping them regain strength to do daily activities and improve motor functions. Patients are trained to do activities ranging from opening drawers, folding bedsheets and clothes to working with a microwave and gas stove, and handling toiletries, under the watchful eyes of doctors in a room simulating the environs of a home. Occupational therapy is recommended to stroke and brain injury patients to regain control of the body after a course of physiotherapy sessions. The prime caregiver of an Alzheimer's or dementia patient is also recommended to go through occupational therapy to be sensitised to the needs of the patient.

Speech language and swallow therapy: People suffering from a stroke or brain injury are often beset with speech and communication problems. Speech and language ther-

apy is useful in such cases. Patients are trained to manipulate sound with various voice exercises, including saying vowels aloud. Specific exercises target throat muscles and the tongue. Swallow therapy is done for patients who have trouble swallowing. A tube is inserted through the nose to feed them. Gradually, they are trained and encouraged to eat as normally as possible, graduating from liquid to mashed and eventually solid food.

Psychological therapy: People with depression, cognitive deficits and memory problems require cognitive and behavioural therapy. People with dementia and Parkinson's generally go through depression. With psychological counselling, the patient is helped to accept age-related changes. Though counselling is generally aimed at the patient, in cases of quickly progressing dementia, it is focused around the family or caregiver. Loneliness can also push silvers into depression. In such a case, the aim is to help the

HELP AT HAND

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person regain confidence and bring him back into the mainstream.

Orthotics and prosthesis: Patients with abnormal joints might require a brace called orthosis for support. Orthotics can work well in cases of paralysis, while prosthesis involves training a patient to get back to a normal routine using a replacement when the original body part has suffered irreversible damage.

Indeed, with Indians slowly, but surely, getting access to world-class rehabilitation facilities, the road to recovery just got a little smoother. **



"My best, if at all, is yet to come!"

Iconic poet-critic-essayist-translator Ashok Vajpeyi tells **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** about his sustained passion for the written word

is engagement with literature is indeed an extension of his zest for life. Renowned Hindi poet, critic, essayist and translator Ashok Vajpeyi enjoys a dynamic presence in Indian intellectual discourse. The 75 year-old is also distinguished for his dexterity of writing elegantly and succinctly in both Hindi and English. However, the former IAS officer emphasises, "It is foolish to think that all can be achieved through literature."

While the narrative of his prose forges new ideas, Vajpeyi's versatility as a poet resonates intensely in his perspective on any subject communicated simply and elegantly. Poems like "Vinay Geet" and "Mitrheen Akash" from his anthology titled Kahin Koi Darwaza (Rajkamal Publishers, 2013) bear testimony to the fact that Vajpeyi weaves aesthetic sensibilities into ordinary subjects like nature and human relationships. His observation, "Har kavi thoda chor hota hai [every poet is bit of a thief]", speaks of his humility and the fact that creative writing thrives on a cyclic exchange of the old and new. As Chandigarh-based established short story writer Virender Mehndiratta says, "As a true proponent of art, Vajpeyi experiences beauty in all forms and is not keen to seek meaning always. He extracts the best from whomsoever he addresses, interacts with or writes about. There is an aesthetic appreciation evident in his delivery of speech as well. As a critic, Vajpeyi presents his own perspective with honesty while highlighting the splendour of another person's writing, thus inviting newer readership for the critiqued text."

Author of 38 books of poetry and criticism in Hindi and the founder/editor of numerous journals in Hindi and English, Vajpeyi's poems have been translated into several Indian languages, as well as French, Spanish, German, Polish, Russian and Arabic. His notable poetry collections include Shaher ab bhi Sambhavana Hai (1966), Tatpurush (1986), Bahuri Akela (1992), Ummeed ka Doosra Naam (2004) and Vivaksha (2006). He has also published works on literary and art criticism such as Filhal, Kuchh Poorvagrah, Samay se Bahar and Sidhiyan Shuru ho Gayi Hain. Vajpeyi has translated works of four major

poets of Poland—Czeslaw Milosz, Wisława Szymborska, Zbigniew Herbert and Tadeusz Rozewicz—into Hindi, revealing another aspect of his ingenuity as a writer. "It is natural to get constrained within one's own genre, hence the occasional attempt to translate," he shares.

From being a man of letters to an institution builder, Vajpeyi's scholarship and administrative incisiveness have richly contributed towards India's art, culture and heritage. He founded the multi-art centre, Bharat Bhawan, in Bhopal; was the first vice-chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha; served as trustee at the Indira Gandhi National Centre of the Arts; was member of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations; was an executive board member of the Sangeet Natak Akademi; and has chaired the Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi. At present, he is actively involved as a trustee of Raza Foundation. As Jyotish Joshi, literature and theatre critic, and editor, Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi, says, "Having worked with him during his chairmanship at the Lalit Kala [2008-2011], it was heartening to see someone forge new initiatives and approaches, and grant independence in a structured system wherein hierarchy, networking and sycophancy rule the roost. He has always stood for breaking new ground and moving away from conventions that bind our thinking."

Further, the iconic writer is the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award (1994) for his book *Kahin Nahin Vahin*, the Officer's Cross of Merit (2004) from the Republic of Poland, and the Officier de L'Ordre Des Arts et Des Lettres (2005) from the Republic of France, among others. In conversation with *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, the Delhi-based Vajpeyi talks about his love for poetry, serving the Indian bureaucracy and his leisurely pursuits. Excerpts:

What is it about poetry that engages you?

Poetry has fascinated me by its emotive strength and possibility; its power to say a lot in a few words; its emergence as a voice of conscience and its moral stringency. For me it causes—when it succeeds—a refinement, an expansion of sensibility and empathy.



"I believe civil service gave me a firm hold on raw day-to-day realities and my poetry hopefully brought some humanness to the rather mundane civil service"

When did you experience the poet within?

I was awfully young, the eldest child of my parents. I felt lonely in a small central Indian town. I started playing with words and soon realised that my love and lure of the world and language could be best embodied in poetry.

During your career as a civil servant, how did you strike a balance between the job and creative pursuits?

I was already an established young poet before I got into civil service. If you are passionate enough for any creative pursuit, you will find time and space in the most indifferent or adverse circumstances. I believe civil service gave me a firm hold on raw day-to-day realities and my poetry hopefully brought some humanness to the rather mundane civil service. Poetry does not allow power to get into your head.

You are an acclaimed critique. How do you view criticism for your own works?

I took to criticism almost by accident while reviewing books for a prestigious literary journal *Kalpana* [in Hyderabad] when I was barely 18! My own poetry has attracted a lot of criticism, sharp attacks and ideological insinuations. That, in any case, is the fate of any writer in our time. But adverse criticism also helps you understand the implications and resonances of your writing and, in that sense, is helpful. There is a lot of critical writing of master critics such as Ram Chandra Shukla, Agyeya, Muktibodh, Nirmal Verma and Malayaja, apart from T S Eliot, R P Blackmur, Allen Tate and Seamus Heaney, which I could recall with excitement, delight and gratitude.

In your opinion, who makes a worthy critic?

A worthy critic is one who has an acute sense of time and place, sensitivity to visions one may not share, openness to innovation, a dynamic memory of both tradition and what has happened in our own time, and one who is able to combine all these to illuminate, explain, defend, analyse



Vajpeyi, during his civil service days, with Bengali poet Subhash Mahopadyay and former prime minister Indira Gandhi; (opposite page) Vajpeyi with artist and fried S H Raza (extreme left)

and describe in lucid evocative language. If this sounds like a tall order, the fact is that there are always very few worthy critics. The number of worthy creative writers is many times more than worthy critics!

In a long career as a writer, what do you consider milestones and major turning points?

The publication of my first book of poems *Shahar Ab Bhi Sambhavana Hai* in 1966 and my first book of literary criticism *Philhal* in 1970 are two milestones I can recall. Also, the publication of *Kahin Nahin Wahin*, a collection of poems, in 1992 when I was in doldrums in civil service. Establishing and editing two journals, *Poorvagrah* (1974-1991) and *Pehchan* (1970-74), also could be considered important path-breaking initiatives. But such things are better left for others to judge and feel.

From the active bureaucratic life with its privileges and pressures to becoming a writer, did you experience a sense of 'retirement', and were there any particular challenges to combat during the transition period?

There are many occasions in civil service when one is challenged, misinterpreted, politically motivated and unfairly attacked. Poetry helped me get over these moments. I never feel retired or even old. After all, I retired thrice: in 2001 from the IAS, in 2002 from the vice-chancellorship of Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University and in 2011 from the chairmanship of Lalit Kala Akademi. I am still active as a writer, columnist and executive trustee of Raza Foundation.

Tell us a little about your family and their contribution to your journey as a poet.

My wife Rashmi was a Kathak dancer, one of the first disciples of Biriu Maharai, and now looks after a theatre archive, Natarang Pratishthan. But for her constant support and sensitive critical companionship, I may not have survived many crises. My son Kabir is an architect who specialises in rural school buildings. My daughter Doorva is a social worker in the fields of children's theatre and education. My children and grandchildren value my vocation as a poet as do my seven sisters and brothers; poets are usually not so fortunate. Over the years, my home has become a chaotic godown of books. My family is inconvenienced but do not mind and happily suffer my obsession!

Which names figure noticeably in your reading list and what intrigues you about their works?

Rilke, Yeats, Z Herbert, Yves Bonnefoy, Emily Dickinson, T S Eliot, John Ashberry... the list is too long. All of them surprise you by their deep apprehension of reality-life-existence. They all vindicate, in unique and memorable ways, your love and lure of the world. They forge 'the uncreated conscience' of the human race.

What ails Hindi today?

Hindi as language and literature has led a very dynamic and vibrant life. It has expanded its geography of sensibility, sympathy, expression and knowledge. It has become quite popular in cinema and media. But knowledge-production in it leaves much to be desired. Its official usage has been doomed *ab initio* as this version of Hindi is far from Hindi people, Hindi literature and Hindi media.

What is your daily routine?

I wake up early in the morning and take a 45-minute walk. Mornings are taken up with reading newspapers, books, etc. I write after an early lunch. The evenings are spent at Raza Foundation where I also watch—more often in silence—the legendary Syed Haider Raza painting at 93. Some evenings are taken up with cultural events, art shows, lectures and seminars.

Has age slowed you down?

No. I work enthusiastically, feel I can do something for others, get filled all too often with hope and despair, love and hatred. I hope I remain alive and human. My best, if at all, is yet to come! **

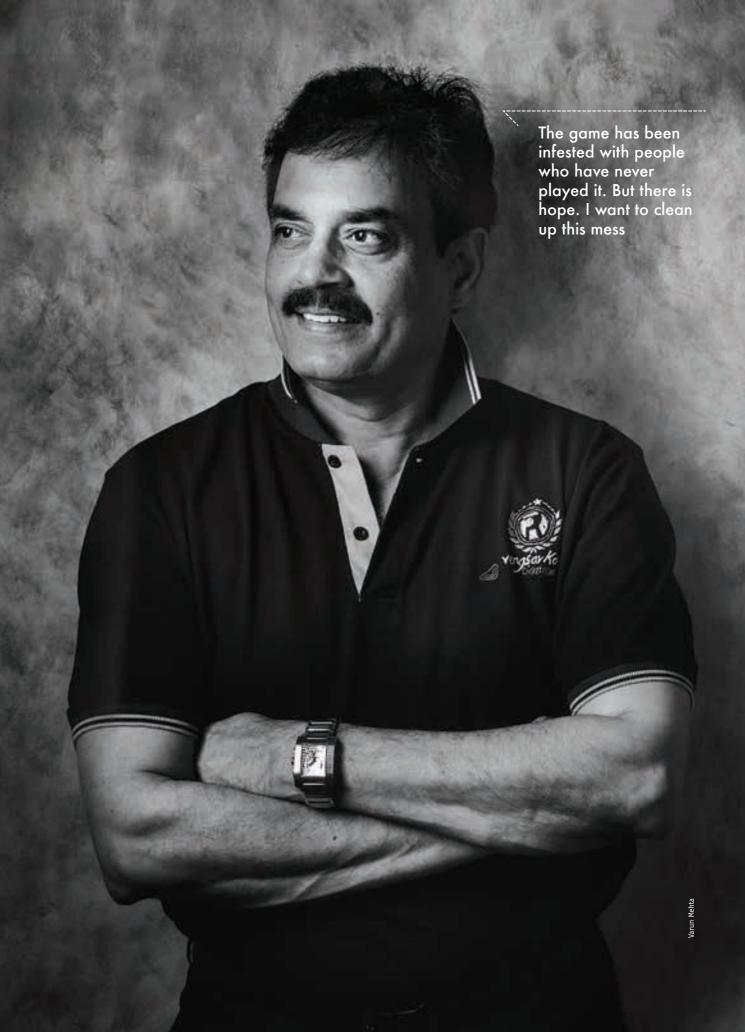
This gentleman's game



A flamboyant batsman and fierce competitor, Dilip Vengsarkar remains on strike for India by spotting and mentoring young talent, writes Neil Joshi he doyen of the Indian batting line-up in the 1980s and a fierce competitor, Dilip Balwant Vengsarkar was a flamboyant stroke-maker who enthralled audiences across the world with his finesse, especially his trademark cover drive. After living

his dream of excelling in the Gentleman's Game, the 'Colonel' is now leading a new army of young cricketers to fulfil theirs. Standing tall on the sidelines of his eponymous academy at Mumbai's Oval Maidan, Mumbai—he's here at 4 pm every day—his pride in his wards is palpable. Today, the 59 year-old is especially impressed by the batting of an 11 year-old lad from a poor family who travels two hours with his elderly grandmother to reach the Maidan; the boy is rewarded by his guru with a cricket kit and warm words of encouragement as the other boys and coaches break out into applause.

Indeed, ever since he hung up his gloves, Vengsarkar has been on a mission to give back to the game. And his academy, which coaches children free of cost, has created cricketers of international repute like Yuvraj Singh, Ajit Agarkar and Ramesh Powar, to name a few. A recipient of the Padma Shri in 1987, the Colonel's knack of spotting talent is well known; he has served as chairman of the Talent Resource Development Wing of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as well as the BCCI's chairman of selectors. In November 2014, he received BCCI's highest cricketing award, the Col C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award. However, he believes his work is far from done. "There is too much of politics in cricket," he rues. "The game has been infested with people who have never played it. But there is hope. I still have lots to achieve. I want to clean up this mess."



:: cover feature ::

When you play as a child, you just play for the love of the game. And then you perform for your school, college, Ranji team—these are steps...how you achieve them is an integral part of your success

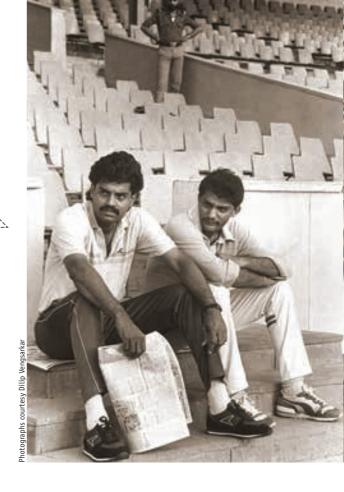
He shares more on the game, his career and his life off the field in an exclusive interview. Excerpts from the conversation:

Your academy has produced many top-class cricketers. Describe your journey as a coach. I wanted to give something back after retirement, especially to those kids who come from humble backgrounds and have a hunger for success. My friend Makarand Waingankar saw Oval Maidan and we approached the state government; they gave us this place on a long lease. At that time, it was like an open-air toilet; there were a lot of rag pickers and drug addicts, and prostitution was rampant. One feared to come here after 5 pm. We got help from our friends and well-wishers and put up a fence, created wickets, and planted grass and 60 trees. That was in 1995. Now, it is one of the best grounds in Mumbai. Since then players like Agarkar, Powar and Yuvraj [from the first batch] went on to play for India. And many went on to play for Mumbai in various age groups.

I opened the next chapter of my academy in Mahul [suburbarn Mumbai] in 2004; I applied to the BMC [Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation] for a place there as children in the suburbs had to travel a long way to come to the Oval Maidan in Churchgate. We planted 120 trees in an area that would have become infested with slums. Then we opened another chapter in 2007 in Chinchwad, Pune. We have excellent training staff at all the academies and we participate in many tournaments. I remember we participated in a tournament in 1996 in Satara and Yuvraj was also there; he travelled in a state transport bus!

Do you feel it's a good move for former cricketers to become coaches?

Career-wise, I wouldn't know. If they charge money, it's good for them. Here, we don't charge any money—we coach the kids for free. We have sponsors helping us. We had Elf Lubricants sponsoring us for 15 years and in Pune we have Varroc Industries, which makes automobile parts. Right



now, we don't have sponsors at Oval Maidan and Mahul. It is difficult to run the academies without sponsors because the kits have become expensive and we have to pay rent and salaries. We have 400 students across three centres.

You have established your reputation as a talent scout....

In 2002, I was made chief of the Talent Resource Development Wing where I spotted prospective players. The boys I selected were groomed at the National Cricket Academy. The boys I selected comprise the Indian team at the moment, except Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami as they weren't there at the time. However, players like Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, M S Dhoni, Suresh Raina and Robin Uthappa were all there at the NCA. I really enjoyed that part of my life.

You also served as the chief of selectors....

After I retired, I immediately became chairman of the Mumbai selection committee. At the same time, the BCCI asked me to do the same job. But I didn't quite agree with zonal representation and I stood for that. I used to get calls after every election and I refused on three to four occasions. In 2007, I took up the task and became chairperson of the selection committee.



How would you rate your tenure as chief selector?

I had a successful tenure. When I took over, India was No. 6 in the International Cricket Council [ICC] rankings and when I left we were No. 1. We beat England in England and won a triangular tournament in Australia for the first time; it has been the only time we have won a tournament of that nature till today. We won the T20 World Cup in 2007; went on to beat Pakistan in Pakistan; and beat Sri Lanka in their backyard in ODIs [one-day internationals]. We gave opportunities to a lot of young cricketers; we made Dhoni the captain and groomed players like Ishant Sharma and Virat Kohli.

At a local level, do you feel Mumbai cricket has taken a backseat?

Cricket has definitely taken a backseat because of a lot of politicking. We have had glorious years in Mumbai cricket. Now, anybody and everybody can come and beat us [in the elections]. In the past four years, Mumbai cricket has gone back at least 10 years. I feel elections are okay but once they are over, everyone should concentrate on cricket and not indulge in measly politics.

Is maidan cricket the best way to improve cricketing standards in Mumbai?

With Viv Richards and (opposite page) Mohammad Azharuddin In the earlier days, there was more emphasis on Test cricket. I used to play for Bombay, for my office, Tata, as well as my club, Dadar Union. It was not just me who would play; several Test cricketers got on the field. But nowadays, there is so much international cricket that cricketers don't get time to play club cricket. We need to revive club cricket because a person may not necessarily play in the Indian team but can surely find his way at the first-class level.

Should only players be involved in the administration of the game?

That is the only way ahead. Cricketers can best run the game because of their cricketing background. If you don't have that, you have to depend on somebody else. You need to have a competitive system and build good infrastructure and a conducive environment for players, which only a player can understand if he is running the show.

What was it like to receive the Col C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award? I am very proud I got this prestigious award. It is the highest cricketing award given by the BCCI and I have been part of the BCCI since 1976.

In fact, you are called the 'Colonel' of Indian cricket yourself! Who gave you that tagline? When I was playing for Bombay in Nagpur in 1975, I scored a century against Rest of India led by Bishen Singh Bedi, which had the likes of E A S Prasanna and Madan Lal. Lala Amarnath was doing the commentary on All India Radio; he proclaimed that I batted like Colonel C K Nayudu. It was a great compliment for me. And the press went forward and splashed it all over.

Did you ever believe you would travel such a long road?

When you play as a child, you just play for the love of the game. And then you improve and perform for your school, college, Bombay University, Bombay (Ranji team), West Zone—these are all steps and how you achieve them is an integral part of your success. Being part of the Bombay team helped me a lot. We had a strong team and most of the time we would reach the final of the Ranji Trophy. Having seniors in the side who have played for India also helps you raise the bar.

Was it easy to find your footing in the Indian team?

My start wasn't so good and I feared I wouldn't be selected again! Test match cricket in reality was completely different. The wickets I played were

totally different. There were a lot of fast bowlers and no spinners faced during the start of my career. I had to make a lot of adjustments and tighten my technique. I had to avoid and curtail certain shots that had a lot of flourish. So that was a big change for me when I started playing international cricket.

You became the only overseas player to score three tons at Lords! How special was that? When you play, you don't think. All records happen along the way. I am glad when I scored the hundred at Lords in 1986, India won the Test. It was the first time that India won a Test match at Lords. I am glad to have played a major role in that win. Lords is the 'Mecca of cricket' and every cricketer dreams of playing well there. The atmosphere is electrifying when there is a full house; it's an experience you won't witness anywhere in the world.

You played with two legends from different generations: Sunil Gavaskar and Sachin Tendulkar. What was it like to share the dressing room with them?

When I played for Mumbai in 1975, Gavaskar was at the peak of his career. In 1989, when I was on the verge of retiring, I played for three years with Tendulkar. Both were amazing cricketers: one, an opening batsman; the other, a middle-order player. There was a boyishness in both these players that added that sense of humour to the team.

What were your best on-field moments?

Winning the World Cup in 1983 was one of the best. But there were other achievements like winning the Benson & Hedges Cup in 1985, and being named 'Man of the Series' on the 1986 England tour where I scored back-to-back hundreds—one at Lords and the other at Headingley. And then I was given the mantle of leading the Indian team and I scored a hundred in my first match as captain. So there were many good moments.

Do you think you would have been a successful T20 player?

I would have enjoyed playing T20 cricket because the aggressive style of cricket is in my genes. I could go for the big shots from the word go. And T20 cricket is all about that.

Speaking of the game today, has India exceeded expectations in this World Cup? If you see the performance of the Indian team in Test cricket before the World Cup, it was very poor. We must thank the ICC for scheduling



At the Academy, mentoring young talent the India-Pakistan tie as our first match. To beat Pakistan in the first match was a big thing for the team. Pakistan has always been our arch rival and you always have to play your best to beat them. After beating Pakistan, the confidence level was so high that the Indian team looked completely different, which helped us against South Africa. The bowlers started looking better along with the fielders.

Did the bowlers raise the bar?

Yes. And if the bowlers perform well, it definitely helps the captain as well. Mahendra Singh Dhoni is a very good captain. Even if he gets flustered, he doesn't make it evident and doesn't get too excited either. It has been very good for the Indian team that Dhoni has led the team for a very long time.

How would you rate the performance of the smaller nations?

I was quite impressed with the performance of Ireland and Zimbabwe. These two teams played really well. Then, there was Afghanistan who beat Scotland. That was a good exposure for them.

What is your take on bringing down the number of teams from 14 to 10 in the next edition of the World Cup?

ICC has a lot of programmes for the development of associate members and those who show improvement. I'm sure a couple of teams would be added to the World Cup. There is a concern that some of the matches will become very one-sided.

Going the distance

Profile

Full name Dilip Balwant Vengsarkar Born 6 April 1956 (age 59); Rajapur, India **Batting style** Right-handed **Bowling style** Right arm medium Scored 110 runs for Bombay in the Irani Trophy at Nagpur Over 300-run partnership with 1978-79 Sunil Gavaskar against West Indies Part of India's World Cup 1983 winning squad 3 consecutive centuries at Lord's - Man of the Series Captain of 1987-89 Indian cricket team Last Test against Australia 1997 at Perth 1995 Started the Elf-Vengsarkar Academy 2014 C K Nayudu **Lifetime Achievement** of All-India Award from BCCI Committee, BCCI

I feel this can be negated if some of the Test-playing countries send their 'A' teams to these upcoming countries; I am sure they will definitely blossom.

According to you, which country should be awarded Test status next?

I think Ireland should get Test status. I say this based on their performance in the World Cup. They looked a formidable team in the tournament.

With Duncan Fletcher set to part ways, who should coach the Indian team?

I always believed an Indian should be the coach. If we have a foreign coach, he will only coach those fringe players that constitute the

team. He doesn't watch anyone playing domestic cricket, so he doesn't know his options.

His job is mainly to coach those 12-13 players. But an Indian would know the psyche of the players; he would know their work

ethic and attitude to the game. So that definitely helps. I think Ravi Shastri is doing a tremendous job and he should take the team forward. We have a good staff in place with Sanjay Bangar and Bharat Arun. At this level, we don't need to coach the boys. It is all mental. The coach's main role is to strategise.

Would you consider yourself open to the job?

I could be a mentor for the Indian team. I don't want a coaching job but I would love to mentor the team. I have been a part of the setup for many years and it won't be a tough job for me.

Who has been your source of inspiration?

There are many cricketers, officials, colleagues, coaches from :: cover feature ::

I would give 100/100 to my wife Manali. I was touring often and the way she brought up our two beautiful children was exemplary. Our children are fantastic citizens of this country today

my school, college and clubs. I have also received guidance from captains of different teams. I can't really specify any one person as so many people have contributed at some point of time in my career. However, Vasu Paranjape, my club captain, was a mentor to me in many ways.

Speaking of family, tell us about yours. How important has your wife's contribution been to your life?

I would give 100/100 to my wife Manali. I was touring often and the way she brought up our two beautiful children was exemplary. Our children are fantastic citizens of this country today. My son Nakul is a renowned architect and also has a tremendous passion for photography. My daughter Pallavi has her own label known as 'PV', which stands for 'Pallavi Vengsarkar Creations'. All the credit goes to my wife Manali.

How difficult was it to stay away from family? When I was playing league cricket in England, which was for a good four months, the whole family came over, so we had a good time. We made so many friends back then that we started going there every year. Even now I go, but I take my academy team along.

Didn't any of your kids opt to grab the bat? When my son was young, he had gone to Kodai-kanal International School and there wasn't much cricket there. Thereafter, he did his masters in Italy at Domus Academy. My daughter did her MBA from Durham University, England. Both of them are doing extremely well. Pallavi modelled for my wife's jewellery line; after that, she got a lot of offers to model and act, but she chose a different career altogether.

Do you and your wife exchange inputs with regard to your respective careers? All four of us are involved in varied fields so it becomes very interesting to talk about the other's subject. However, Manali has never been a cricket person, so I have never got on-field advice!



With wife Manali What were your parents' contribution? It all started with my parents! They gave me a lot of encouragement during my early days and then, once I got married, Manali became my pillar of strength. My father was a scientific officer at BARC [Bhabha Atomic Research Centre] and my mother hails from Rajapur in the Konkan belt where I was born. A housewife her whole life, she has been the strength of the entire family. She is an amazing cook and I still go to Hindu Colony, Dadar, to grab a meal at least twice or thrice a week! I have fond memories of the place and I often go to Dadar Union Club, which is very

Tell us more about your life off the field. Do you have a strict fitness regime?

close to my place.

Though I don't follow the same regime as my playing days, I work out in the gymnasium at least four days a week. I do a good amount of weights and spend sufficient time on the treadmill. That keeps me going. Food intake is also important; sometimes I cross that line where food is concerned but I try to keep it quite balanced.

How do you recharge your batteries? Cricket is my oxygen—whenever I go on to a cricket field, it is the best feeling I get and that keeps me going. When I stand on the greens, I feel beautiful inside. When I see a good cricket match or spot new talent, it just makes my day. **





At the Festival of Sacred Music, held amid nature and heritage spaces in the hometown of Carnatic legend Thyagaraja, one comes tantalisingly close to experiencing that moment of oneness

Saritha Rao Rayachoti

The Kalyana Mahal Ghat



uende. I came across the word in Spain.
I have often wondered whether this is what our Indian bards, saints and bhakti poets meant when they sang of being one with their lord, the beloved, the Other.

While the word literally means 'elf', in the context of Flamenco music and dance it takes on a figurative form. Poets, writers and philosophers have tried to explain it, musicians and dancers aspire to achieve this intense state, but mere words cannot describe the feeling of being possessed by the spirit of a performance, of self-oblivion, of surrendering to an amplified emotion, of channelling something primal in one's veins. Who experiences this? Is it the performer? Is it the audience member? Is it both?

In a Sevillan courtyard, I watched a male Flamenco dancer combine grace and masculinity in staccato stomps of sole on wood. At the Piazza della Signoria in Firenze I have noticed passersby stop in their tracks, mesmerised by a guitarist's fingers conjure fluid melody out of wood and nylon. In the raspy age-lined voice of the old man who sang praises of *Maa* Ganga seated on the steps of the Assi Ghat in Varanasi, I may have felt a semblance of it.

But the Spanish say that when one is in the state, one knows for sure. That's the confusing part, there's selfoblivion but there's also a heightened sense of awareness

It is this feeling that I have searched for, chased and one could even say, quested after. And like an addict who has not tasted even a grain of the rare drug, but has heard of its effect, I began to seek it in the city I live in, Chennai. But what are the chances that I will find it in the current establishment?

The high point in a year for most people above a certain age in Chennai is the annual Music and Dance Season in

December and January when a wealth of talent is show-cased. While there have been numerous instances of free performances made possible by generous sponsors, *sabha* or artists, most performances are ticketed. The performance space is usually an air-conditioned auditorium and the *rasika*—people who by definition savour the elixir of the performance—are those who can afford to buy a ticket.

Despite being a regular concert attendee for the past four years, I have little knowledge of the intricacies of Carnatic music. I have picked up key phrases of a few raga, but I get distracted by the words and the cadences. I extrapolate the snatch of a particular krithi with the interlude of a film song that's embedded in my mind. It's only then that I bridge it with the raga it is composed in. It is a slow chaotic way to learn and, to be honest, I may also be rebelling against the rigorous structure of the form. But it works for me.

In the last Season, however, I felt a growing sense of unease. As an ambience, an enclosed auditorium heightens distractions and preoccupations. Ringing mobile phones; the off-key rendition of some audience members intent on humming along with the performer; the frequent altering of the sound system to suit the performer's exacting standards... distractions galore. There is also the 8-pm exodus

when some *rasika* abruptly take leave Cinderella-style, sometimes to the amusement and often to the chagrin of the performers who can be understandably perturbed by this desertion, especially when the percussionists have just begun the *thani avarthanam*. But full bladders, hypoglycaemia and the prospect of not finding an auto rickshaw to ferry one back home are all real issues to contend with for the majority of the audience, the senior citizens. It is understandable, and as I see it, unavoidable unless there's a scheduled break.

There's a certain amount of self-consciousness among the *sabha*-goers, almost as if we are all watching ourselves watch a performance. In a strange sense, we may also be putting up performances of our own, playing knowledgeable *rasika* to others.

In my need to belong to this milieu, I, who once tapped into the emotion of a song, have become a frenetic *raga*-guesser. I fear that I may be quite content to stand on the shore preoccupied with my pocket-sized *raga* guide, rather than step in and taste the sweet waters of the Carnatic stream of music.

Would unlearning what I know about *raga* work? Or should I immerse myself fully into the nomenclature disregarding



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the unease that creeps up every time I feel like a failure at not getting the right *raga*?

Maybe this *duende* is not something one seeks, maybe one stumbles upon it. Maybe the Spanish celebrate insanity!

In early March this year, my family and I set out to Thanjavur to attend a music festival. Thanjavur and the neighbouring villages along the river Kaveri have been ruled by the Pallavas, Cholas, Nayaks and the Marathas, who have all contributed to the region being considered one of the most sacred and most fertile. Thanjavur was the seat of creativity, where music, dance and art were nurtured by royal patronage. The trinity of Carnatic music, Muthuswami Dikshitar,

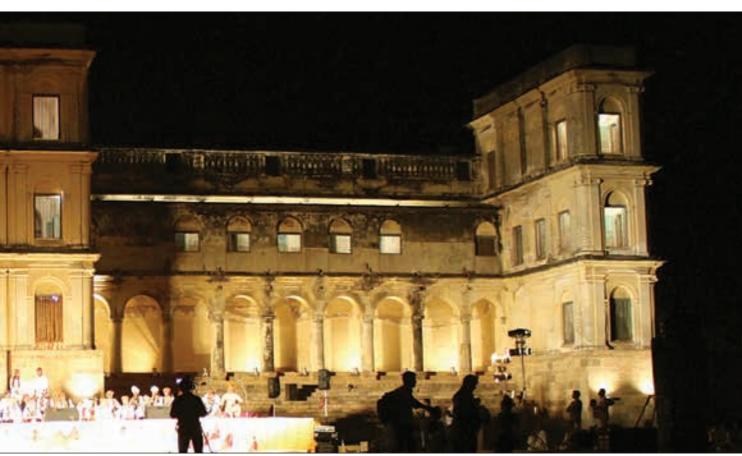
Shyama Shastri and Thyagaraja, lived and composed prolific music in the region. Every year, multitudes of Carnatic musicians descend on Thiruvaiyaru to pay their respects to the saint-composer Thyagaraja on his death anniversary by participating in a group rendering of the Pancha Ratna Kritis, the five gems in the grand treasure chest of a musical legacy.

There's a certain amount of self-consciousness among the *sabha*-goers, almost as if we are all watching ourselves watch a performance. In a strange sense, we may also be putting up performances of our own, playing knowledgeable *rasika* to others

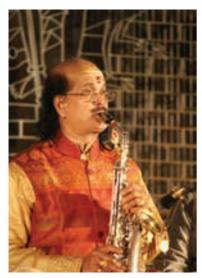
After our plans to attend fell through two years in a row, it seemed as though the stars were finally aligned to make our visit to the Festival of Sacred Music happen. The Festival is a three-day event organised by Chennai-based Prakriti Foundation established by Ranvir Shah in 1998, and takes place in heritage spaces in Thiruvaiyaru, about 15 km from Thanjavur.

Since its inception six years ago, the festival has played host to genres as varied as chants by the monks of Drepung Loseling Monastery to

Rajasthani folk music by the Manganiyars. While outstation guests are required to make their own travel and stay arrangements, the performances themselves are free.



harmony celebrate age may 2015 55





I wasn't expecting much. It was simply a new ambience to hear live music.

On the first evening, we made our way to the Diwan Wada, in the ruins of a Maratha palace on the banks of the Kaveri, where a temporary stage bedecked with marigolds stood against the backdrop of a glorious peepal tree. There was also the pagoda-like *pura koondu* (dovecote) with its numerous alcoves illuminated by tea-lights. The evening began

with Krishna's Temple Rock that combines musical talent from diverse streams to perform contemporised Carnatic music. The second band for the evening, Filter Coffee, had a unique blend of the old and the new, the melodic and the electronic.

The most popular performance, going by the turnout and recall, was on the second evening, when the 45-member band of Manganiyars from Rajasthan performed from the steps of the Kalyana Mahal Ghat with the audience seated on the sands of the nearly-dry river bed of the Kaveri.

On the third day, the performance was at the Panchanadeeswarar Temple (temple of the Lord of the Five Rivers). The five rivers in the name of the presiding deity allude to the five rivers that flow in the vicinity—Arasilaaru, Vennaaru, Vettaaru, Kudumurutti and Kaveri—also giving rise to the name of the town, Thiruvaiyaru (*Thiru-ai-aaru*

which means 'five holy rivers'). A group of music students rendered devotional *bhajan* as a preamble to Kadri Gopalnath's performance on the saxophone accompanied on the violin by this year's Padma Shri awardee, A Kanyakumari.

At least that's the straightforward factual narration of the Festival. However, there's a different set of highlights that stood apart for me.

I can't help feeling that the Festival of Sacred Music and many others like it herald a return to the old days, of concerts in temples, in public spaces and amid nature. Performers free of the confines of an enclosed space, performance formats and all that it entails A toddler sits in the front row of the floor-audience chaperoned by his grandmother. He crawls on the coir carpet towards the stage, drawn to Krishna's Temple Rock's rendition of Adi Shankara's *Bhaja govindam*. The child's grandmother gently drags him back and teaches him to pat the *tala* with his chubby hands on her own chore-worn ones.

Some distance away, against the backdrop of the *pura koondu* and standing close to the loudspeaker, a man claps in rhythm to the *tala* being verbalised by Mahesh Vinayakram in collaboration with

Swarupa Ananth, the percussionist of Filter Coffee. The man's checked shirt comes un-tucked from his waistband thanks to his feisty movements, but he is oblivious. Does it really matter what *tala* is being performed on stage, as long as he has the rhythm pulsing through him and his face is awash with a feeling of oneness with the music?



Krishna's Temple Rock performing contemporised Carnatic music; (opposite page) Dr Kadri Gopalnath on the saxophone; the Manganiyars at the Kalyana Mahal Ghat

The audience catches on to Bhanvari Devi's idiosyncrasy of pulling the edge of her sari over her head to cover her face while she sings. Sitting on the riverbed of the Kaveri under a nearly full moon, the audience erupts in applause for the soulful rendering from the sole woman in a 45-member strong band of Rajasthani musicians who have found admirers in interior Tamil Nadu, over 2,000 km from home.

These vignettes somehow link back to the basic elements of a performance: the performer, the audience and the patron. I can't help feeling that the Festival of Sacred Music and many others like it herald a return to the old days, of concerts in temples, in public spaces and amid nature. Performers free of the confines of an enclosed space, performance formats and all that it entails. Most important, the patronage is behind the scenes, a certain enabling of events without adhering to the 'flex banner' school of sponsorship.

For some of us who travelled for the Festival, it was an opportunity to listen to music in a different ambience. For others, it was a convenient break for the long Holi weekend. For me, it wasn't so much about Thyagaraja's Nagumomu being sung a mere stone's throw away from his samadhi, as much as the informality of the performance format, and the difference it made. I remember the music and the performers, but I was riveted by the audience

that was largely local. They belonged in that performance space. One could even say the space was incomplete without them. The inclusivity, in this case, was about their acceptance of us.

Did I find the moment of *duende* I sought? I may have come close, but I didn't return empty-handed.

When Bhanvari Devi began to sing her first song for the evening, it was like being swept away by a tidal wave of raw emotion. The music was in my veins. The lyrics did not matter. The *raga* did not matter. I did not have to tune out my surroundings and all of it—from the gently lapping trickle of the Kaveri by our feet, the feel of soft sand underfoot, the cool breeze, a waft of *sambrani/dhoop*, the sight of little children trying to catch tadpoles and small fish in the few patches of water, families on an evening picnic sprawled on the sands and cheering the musicians on—added to the experience.

It is not that such festivals do not occur in Chennai. They do—in temples, on the beachfront and in the instance of the Urur Olcott Kuppam Margazhi Vizha, in a fishing village. But I have been blind to them. Maybe all that was required was a soul-affirming but fleeting experience in an unfamiliar aesthetic ambience to renew my quest. If anything, the experience affirmed that my chances of finding *duende* in a formal concert ambience are minimal. **

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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p64: Shadow play p74: Mother's love









nce the grand residence of industrialist Jamsetji Tata, Mumbai's Esplanade House, with an illustrious history spanning 127 years, has a new lease on life. A decade ago, the oldest surviving cast-iron building in India was listed as one of the world's endangered monuments. "It was run down and many architectural details were missing," says Vikas Dilawari, the conservation architect who worked on the building situated in the cultural hub, Kala Ghoda. "We had to structurally reinforce and maintain the architectural integrity of the unique building." The restoration project was funded by the trustees of the R D Sethna Scholarship Fund, the owners of the building currently occupied by a few companies. The monumental effort didn't go unnoticed—the House was recognised at the 2014 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards in the Cultural Heritage Conservation Programme. "The award acknowledges the role of private communities in preserving their cultural heritage," says Farrokh M Rustomji, CEO of the R D Sethna Scholarship Fund. "It is surely a great honour for us."



ou cannot satisfy your human urge by sticking to one field. You have to constantly update yourself with rapid change or rot within a restrained existence." Whether it is art or science, Bedabrata Pain has always tried to break away from stereotypes, playing diverse roles with consummate ease. A senior scientist, Pain holds over 87 patents and was one of the inventors of CMOS imaging technology cinema that enabled the digital camera revolution. Yet, he quit a lucrative job at the US-based National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in pursuit of celluloid. In 2005, he produced critically acclaimed Konkana Sen-starrer Amu. In 2012, his debut film Chittagong—set in the turbulence of 1930s British India—brought him a National Film Award for Best First Film of a Director. The 52 year-old, who is also a screenwriter, singer and painter, is back in action this year with a 'corporate thriller'. Partha and Priyanka Mukherjee caught up with

the Los Angeles-based Pain, who was on a recent visit to his native Kolkata for pre-production for his upcoming film, which is slated to start in May. Excerpts:

How do you play two distinct roles of scientist and filmmaker?

During the Renaissance, nobody asked Michelangelo or Leonardo Da Vinci: 'Are you a sculptor or a scientist or an engineer?' In fact, Albert Einstein was a fantastic violin player. Of course, it's difficult to be both... I think I've been at least fortunate so far.

You quit NASA to venture into filmmaking. Does that mean that your ties with science are severed?

I haven't left one for the other. I want to do justice to both. There are so many unresolved problems in the branch of science that I want to work on.

Does the scientist in you help the filmmaker?

Apart from being scientists or artists, we are all managers. A scientist also leads a big group and it's very much the way a filmmaker works. All a filmmaker has is his exclusive, integrated vision. He must have the ability to communicate that vision to everyone in the unit. The fact that I had led a team of scientists actually helped me to have self-conviction. I quickly formed a method of doing things.

But aren't scientists known for their calm and quiet mental setup?

They are all stereotypes. Famous American theoretical physicist Richard Feynman was outgoing and flamboyant. Steve Jobs was a person with wide-ranging interests.

Is money a constraint in both the fields?



Pain directing veteran theatre director Barry John in Chittagong

In science today, many theories that we come up with cannot be proven or disproven because we simply don't have the money to do this kind of research. You have to make sure it is logically valid long before you do an experiment. You have to be very sure of your theory and what you are trying to do. And the same thing holds true for movies. But there is tremendous scope for experimentation in movies.

What is your take on the advancement of science and technology in the country?

It hasn't been much. These days, we hear a lot about 'Make in India'. But in order to make in India, we need both physical infrastructure [transport, energy, water] as well as human infrastructure [health, education, nutrition]. Statistically speaking, we must have at least a few million geniuses in this land of 1.2 billion people. Do you think they are being recognised? Just the other day, at the Indian Science Congress, someone mentioned that Indians mastered space aviation during Vedic times. Think about it, our education system was put in place by Lord Macaulay to create clerks to serve the British Raj. We often give more value to

recognition from the West and overestimate their expertise. And this is probably an issue in any field. We have to develop our own standards and, along with that, we have to shed our chalta hai attitude. In the US, entrepreneurs understand that by creating something different they are going to make money. We Indians don't tie quality with making honest profit. We need to critically assess whether we are striving to improve ourselves or just taking things from the West and mismaking it for ourselves.

Tell us about your upcoming film this year.

I am in the process of making a corporate medical thriller set in Delhi. Every story has an external and internal plot and a lovely film happens when both blend well. Hope that will be the case here.

Do you aspire to make a film studded with stars?

Absolutely. I would definitely want to use stars in my movies because one cannot sustain as a filmmaker of high-quality movies without casting stars. Stars are also great actors who often don't get to act in off-the-track ventures.

Grand finale

It's going to be a big month for internationally acclaimed author Amitav Ghosh. The final volume in his Ibis Trilogy on the opium wars, *Flood of Fire*, is expected to release on 28 May. Through this, he will tie up the story he began telling with the Sea of Poppies, followed by *River of Smoke*. In February, Ghosh, unexpectedly, held the 'first-ever reading' of his new book in Imphal, Manipur, followed by a reading at the Penguin Spring Festival in Delhi. "My new novel is about a war that has disappeared into the furthest recesses of memory, in both India and Britain," he told The Telegraph, referring to the Anglo-Chinese Opium War fought in the 1840s from Calcutta.



"I still stick to paintings and oils, maybe I am a dinosaur and extinct. Yet, I like the gravitas of oils to create the mood and posture.... Many of my works disappear into private collections and I never get to see them again. So I would like to dedicate the last few years of my career towards public art."

Anjolie Ela Menon, who returned with Vintage Menon, an exhibition of her recent works after a five-year gap, speaking to Sunday Express



CLOSED

Located in Mumbai's Jehangir Art Gallery, the café that hosted famed people such as Husain, Raza and Naipaul-and the senior Bachchans on their first date—folded up recently to make room for artists. After three decades of court hearings and lease extensions, the muchloved Café Samovar has been handed over to the trustees of the Gallery. Despite its location in a heritage area full of eateries, the café, which operated in a 700-sq-ft passage, had held its own over the past 51 years with devoted patrons clamouring for its famous mutton chops, pakoda and pudina chai. Is this really the end of Samovar? For her part, gritty 88 year-old proprietor Usha Khanna believes it can be revived in the corner of the gallery's terrace. We hope so.

The last chapter

Hyderabad's oldest bookstore A A Husain & Co has shut shop. It will be replaced by—predictably enough—a shopping mall. Sustaining business in an age of high discounts and home delivery at the touch of a button had become too big a challenge for the 65 year-old store. "I feel there should be a regulation committee to streamline the discounting structure," rues Asif Husain Arastu, a thirdgeneration owner of the bookstore. "Online stores garner large discounts from publishers because they purchase books in large quantities and sell for small margins. If the same discounts were offered to standalone stores... that would've been something."

His story

The Hindi version of Mahesh Elkunchwar's contemplative Marathi play *Atmakatha* (1988) made its Mumbai debut as part of the Prithvi Festival last month. The play stars 70 year-old Kulbhushan Kharbanda as Rajadhyaksha, an acclaimed author in the august of his life, dwelling on the "differing truths" of his past relationships. "The play conveys how memory is subjective," says director Vinay Sharma. "It was a pleasure and privilege to work on the nuances of characterisation with a sensitive actor like Kharbanda. He possesses an emotional energy that belies his age."









Vintage lens

Famous for his vivid images of the 1943 Bengal famine, late photographer Sunil Janah's lesser-known and intimate works of peasants, tribal communities and dancers were on display recently at an exhibition titled Vintage Photographs, 1940-1960, at Bengaluru's Tasveer Art Gallery. Janah, who was a prolific photographer, had made very few prints as he was protective of his work. None of the rare images, sourced from the Swaraj Art Archive, were retouched or restored in order to preserve their original tones and textures. Curator of the exhibition and close friend of Janah, Ram Rahman believes it gives viewers "a unique chance to see the work of a major photographer in the way he intended to be seen".

GO CREATE!

Veteran artist Kanchan Chander held a three-day mixed media workshop for budding artists in Chandigarh recently. Her instructions were succinct: go out, pick up objects you find interesting and create! To her delight, the results were "impromptu and innovative". The most crucial moment came when the artists-in-the-making poured out fears about their future. "I do hope my inputs—aesthetically, intellectually and technically—give them a starting point for a new departure," she shares. Also featured was an audiovisual presentation, 35 Years of My Art, displaying Chander's distinct works, including her recent obsession: collages of renowned beauties using lace, seguins, baubles and crystals.





tradition

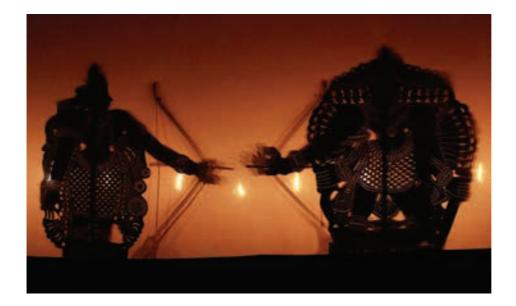
Splendour in the shadows

The brothers Pulavar of Koonathara, Palakkad, are among the last remaining custodians of an ancient temple ritual of puppetry, writes **Natasha Rego**



ccording to legend, Lord Shiva created Bhadrakali from the poison in his throat to liberate the universe from the wrath of the demon, Daruka. But while Bhadrakali was fighting Daruka, another battle of epic proportions was underway between Rama and demon king Ravana—which she missed. So Bhadrakali beseeched Shiva to find a way for her to witness the epic battle. Pleased with her victory over Daruka, Shiva sent Bhadrakali to Kerala bhoomi and granted that the epic be reenacted for her using light and shadow. This, it is believed, gave birth to the ritualistic art form, tholpavakoothu (literally, leather doll play), which is performed every night from January to May during the Pooram festival in worship of the goddess.

During these five months, when the festivities are over and the day has ended, the beat of the chenda drums alert the puppeteers inside the koothumadam—the traditional shadow puppet theatre built in the premises of particular devi temples in north-central Kerala—that it is time to begin their act. The oracle-priest, who represents Bhadrakali, arrives in a procession carrying a divine flame from the temple that he gives to the master puppeteer, usually a Pulavar. This flame, it is believed, is the mother goddess Bhadrakali herself. With it, the puppet master lights the 21 coconut shell lamps lined on a wooden beam to illuminate the screen on which the shadows will be cast. A puja is conducted and, then, the play begins.



The Pulavars of Koonathara, Palakkad, are among the last remaining custodians of this ancient temple ritual. Night after night during the festival, the brothers Pulavar—Ramachandra, Viswanatha and Lakshmana—and a handful of disciples perform in almost 50 devi temples around Palakkad, Trissur and Malappuram. The Ramayana, as told by 12th century Tamil poet Kamban, is enacted chapter by chapter using up to 200 perforated leather puppets of the many characters in different postures, animals and landscape. From behind the horizontal rectangular screen come the sounds of percussion insturments such as chenda, maddalam, ezhupara and ilathalam, poetic chants of the shloka and impromptu commentary on life, the universe and everything, in a mixture of Tamil, Sanskrit and Malayalam. It takes a minimum of seven nights to tell the epic story, and can go up to 14, 21, 41 or 79 nights depending on the format requested by the temple authorities. This elaborate ritual is diligently carried out even in the regular absence of an audience, for the puppeteers believe they are performing to please their mother goddess.

To be a shadow puppeteer takes lifelong discipline and endurance. "There are 12,126 *shloka* in the *Kambaramayana*. A shadow puppeteer has to learn a select 3,126 of them by heart," explains Ramach-

andra, 56, eldest of the three brothers who started training under his legendary father, the late Krishnankutty Pulavar, when he was eight years old. "We would wake up at 4.30 am and attempt to learn four songs every day. Each song would have to be repeated 400 times. By then, it would be at the tip of our tongue. We used 400 small stones to help keep count."

But the role of the puppeteer goes beyond reciting memorised *shloka* and manipulating shadows. Inserted into the dialogue are impromptu conversations on topics relevant to modern society, for which the puppeteers have to study the *Purana* and other ancient texts. While still in training as young adolescents, the brothers Pulavar would accompany their elders in the *koothumadam* during the night to learn the nuances of this ancient art.

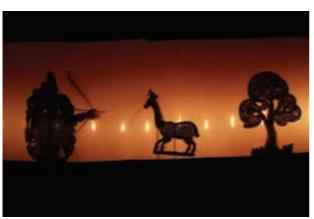
"For many years, I performed along with my ancestors, assisting them as they took the lead. We'd study in the day and perform in the night, for five to six hours. When I was 25 years old, after training for 15 years, I gave my first performance alone. Now I am 58 years old and I've been doing this for more than 40 years," says Lakshmana.

For centuries in the past, tholpavakoothu families were patronised by local rulers and bestowed the honorific 'Pulavar', which

A scene from the
Kambaramayana where
Rama is engaged in battle
with Ravana

Opposite page (clockwise from top): Ninth generation Pulavar Rajeev manipulating the fire backstage; Ramachandra Pulavar reading scriptures written on ancient palm leaves; Lakshmana (left) and Vishwanatha Pulavar rendering music backstage; 21 coconut shell lamps on a beam behind the screen during a ritual performance; a scene from the Kambaramayana where Rama chases the golden deer Mareecha



















Opposite page (clockwise from left): An 800 year-old shadow puppet made of deer leather; the family theatre at Arangyavu temple, Koonathara; modern-day paraphernalia inspired by the tholpavakoothu art form; Ramachandra Pulavar and his family painting a set of puppets using long-lasting vegetable dye

means 'poet-scholar'. As time passed and kingdoms disintegrated, the puppeteers started earning their living by performing in temples for five months and spent the rest of the year working on their paddy and sugarcane fields. But towards the latter half of the 20th century, with television taking over the Indian imagination and extensive migration from traditional occupations, Krishnankutty Pulavar noticed the dwindling numbers—in his fellow puppeteers and audience.

"Because there is very poor income in this job most young puppeteers have become engineers...they go abroad to America and Dubai to earn, and the old puppeteers have died" rues Lakshmana. "Then, there are those who will come and study the art form, get a doctorate degree and work for the tourism ministry."

In a bid to preserve the art form to which he had dedicated his life, Krishnankutty led his troupe out of the spiritual confines of the *koothumadam* in 1969, for the first time in its 1,000 year-old history, when he staged a story on Mahatma Gandhi in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. From there, it's been a slow and challenging story towards finding relevance in modern society.

Even as the 9th and newest generation of Pulavars ready themselves to be future bearers of this ancient knowledge, its form continues to evolve. Ramachandra's eldest son Rajeev, 26, one of Krishnankutty's seven grandchildren, says, "Where it once took up to 10 puppeteers to sing, recite dialogue and play the instruments, it now takes two puppeteers to play the roles of puppeteer and singer, as the newer generation has lost interest in the art: where we once used deer leather to make the puppets, we now use buffalo leather, as deer has become illegal; where the temple shows would once begin at 11 pm and end at 4 am, they now begin around 9 or 10 pm and wind up by 1 am; where we would once perform only the Kambaramayana within the koothumadam, one chapter per night, for nights on end, we now have concise scripts for the stories of Gandhi, Jesus Christ, Mahabali and even the Ramayana that we perform using fewer puppets on stages across the world."

There was a time when foreign scholars actually believed *tholpavakoothu* had been lost forever. However, after Krishnankutty's bold move and the growing attraction for all things Indian, there has been ample documentation and official recognition for the art form and its keepers.

"Now, during the rest of the year, we are getting a small income through grants from the central government and private scholarships," reveals Ramachandra. "We also get invitations to perform from around the world, for which we get a fee. We spend the rest of our time on the maintenance of old puppets, making new puppets and finding new stories to tell."

With a master's degree in English, Rajeev is a teacher of computer science at a school in Koonathara. "If it was any other job, I wouldn't do it. Here I also get to introduce my students to the art. Now I will modernise shadow puppetry to attract the new generation...it is one of the main responsibilities I have. Soon we're going to stage Shakespeare's Othello."

Another radical change tholpavakoothu has undergone is the participation of the Pulavar women—Ramachandra's wife Rajalakshmi and daughter Rajitha—in the making of the puppets and even as performers, though the women are still not allowed in the koothumadam. Knowledge of the art form is also being disseminated to interested young artists from different communities and cultures who visit the Koonathara tribe for short-term workshops.

Almost half a century ago, Krishnankutty Pulavar foresaw the danger his art was in, so he ingrained in his sons the importance of carrying this burden—today, the Krishnankutty Koonathara troupe is one of only three surviving tholpavakoothu troupes in Kerala. The brothers Pulavar and their families, who live in three different houses within a single compound, in a village 134 km from the nearest town, are now the dedicated protectors of this endangered art form. Krishnankutty told his sons, who now tell their children, "No matter what happens, don't stop performing. God will bless you, Bhadrakali will preserve you and the people will respect you."

etcetera : at large



The golden age

Age is just another number in the pristine Hunza Valley in the Himalaya, where the average life expectancy is 100 years, writes **Mithun Dey**

t was during one of those bone-rattling trips to Hunza Valley, in the lap of the mighty Himalaya, that I was pondering the basic questions of life: Why do some people live longer than others? Are there ways to extend our lifespan? What role do climate, ambience, food and lifestyle play in furthering longevity? Understandable, as I was in a land famed for longevity, with most inhabitants living up to the ripe young age of 100.

In 2012, I had travelled to Jammu & Kashmir to meet a friend, an officer in the Army. During our friendly banter, I mentioned Hunza Valley. On the spur of the moment, we decided to make a trip there to experience for ourselves the famed lifestyle.

It's not uncommon to see 90 yearold Hunza men fathering children! Equally jaw-dropping was the sight of 85-90 year-olds ploughing fields. Their face and body belied their age. In my discussions with locals, I learnt that the so-called silver citizens of 80, 90 and 100 years repair the weather-beaten rocky roads in the valley and lift large boulders to repair the walls of their home. People nearing 100 playing a competitive game of volleyball in the hot sun against men almost 50 years younger is also a common sight. Studies have underlined the fact that the people of Hunza reach physical and emotional maturity at the venerable age of 100. Indeed, in Hunza, people often reach the age of 130 in perfect health. In

fact, a significant number of people have been reported to live up to the age of 145.

I spoke to a 115 year-old, quizzing him about the reason people live longer in the valley. Without batting an eye, he said, "unadulterated pure water". Situated at an altitude of about 2,500 m (8,200 ft), Hunza is like an impregnable citadel, and content to remain that way, preserving a Utopian lifestyle.

In Hunza, people often reach the age of 130 in perfect health. In fact, a significant number of people live up to the age of 145

Interestingly, no matter their age, Hunzaites remain amazingly youthful. The secret, it seems, is their lifestyle. The natives eat only two meals a day at regular hours, with the first meal at 12 pm. In complete contrast to civilisations around the world, their dietary habits still comprise absolutely natural food, with no chemical additives at all. For them, 'processing' simply consists of drying fresh fruits in the sun, and making butter and cheese out of milk. Preferred fruits and vegetables include apples, pears, peaches, apricots, cherries, blackber-

ries, potatoes, string beans, peas, carrots, turnips, squash, spinach and lettuce. Milk and cheese are the central source of animal protein. Meat, though not fully eradicated from their diet, is kept for special occasions like marriages and festivals. Any talk of their diet would be incomplete without bringing up their special chapatti, made from unrefined wheat, millet, buckwheat and barley flour.

All along Hunza we could see orchards of apricot and blankets of
the fruit adorning every rooftop.
One of their dietary mainstays,
apricots are consumed in different
forms—as fresh fruit, jam, juice
and even ice cream. Like the
jam, the ice cream—made with
pureed dried apricot blended with
snow—needs no sugar because
the apricots are naturally sweet.
I had a scoop and it tasted divine!

The apricots here are said to have originated in Armenia, from where it was brought to regions along the Silk Road by Alexander the Great. It's believed apricots contain the maximum levels of carotenoids—an antioxidant which brings down cholesterol levels and protects against cancer. No wonder, you don't hear of a Hunzaite suffering from heart problems.

As many studies point out, the three basic rules of Hunzaites—consuming fresh local produce, frugal meals and eating nutritious—could be the secret behind their robust health. Lessons to learn, to be sure.

Dey is a columnist based in Bongaigaon, Assam





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

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of places you have to travel to.

The above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the maximum.

Filled with human interest stories, exching features and celebirate age.

Mum's the word

We toast Mother's Day with *The Beginning*, a poem celebrating maternal love by **Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore**



"Where have I come from, where did you pick me up?" the baby asked its mother. She answered, half crying, half laughing, and clasping the baby to her breast -

"You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling. You were in the dolls of my childhood's games; and when with clay I made the image of my god every morning, I made the unmade you then.

You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.

In all my hopes and my loves, in my life, in the life of my mother you have lived.

In the lap of the deathless Spirit who rules our home you have been nursed for ages.

When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals, you hovered as a fragrance about it.

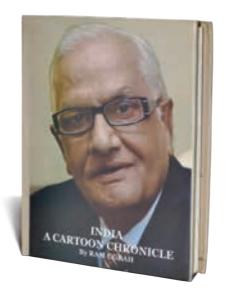
Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs, like a glow in the sky before the sunrise.

Heaven's first darling, twain-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.

As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me; you who belong to all have become mine.

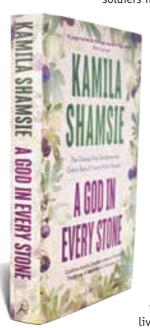
For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has snared the world's treasure in these slender arms of mine?"

With bold, witty and opinionated sketches, noted cartoonist Ram Ugrah has been at the forefront of political cartooning. For the followers of his cartoons, the new compiled edition, INDIA: A CARTOON CHRONICLE (The Press; ₹ 550; 195 pages), is a trip down memory lane. His cartoons are a window into the political, economical, cultural and social scene, right from 1970s up to the 1990s. The cartoons on the state of the economy, especially



before the liberalisation, will have you smirking and shaking your head at their ingenuity. Interspersed is an autobiographical account of his cartooning days, a list of the various jobs he held, and anecdotes about the interesting people he encountered. The cartoons are sectioned into broad topics, such as Indian National Congress, Janata Period, Freedom of the Press, External Affairs and so on, each with an introduction in his own words, his viewpoints and a brief outline of the major events that underlined those periods.

Against the backdrop of World War I, even as young archaeologist Vivian Spencer decides to follow her heart and chosen career, her life intersects with those of two young boys from Peshawar. In A GOD IN EVERY STONE (Bloomsbury; ₹ 280; 389 pages), Kamila Shamsie shows why she is such a brilliant storyteller as she deftly connects the dots between an enthusiastic and dreamy Spencer in London and the radically different brothers, Qayyum and Najeeb, in Peshawar. Covering a wide range of emotions including love, honour, betrayal and friendship, the story takes us through 1914—when Indian soldiers fight as part of the British



army—to 1930, when the anti-colonial resistance peaks. As political and social backgrounds change, so do the beliefs and lovalties of individuals. Shamsie succeeds in revealing the story a little at a time and setting the suspense well for a dramatic finish. The historical context and the weighty research only embellish the moral conflicts the lead characters encounter. What stays with you, though, is the unique bond between the Pashtun brothers, willing to pledge their lives for each other.

After completing a hat-trick of books-two of which were long-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize—with Chennai as the central theme, Tulsi **Badrinath** continues her love affair with the city in her fourth book, MADRAS, **CHENNAI AND THE SELF: CONVERSATIONS WITH** THE CITY (Pan Macmillan; ₹ **263**; **228 pages**). In her latest offering, she pays tribute to 12 people who have succeeded in their respective fields, and in the process rendered their names inseparable from the history of the city. Drawn from different backgrounds, the one thing that binds these protagonists, other than their association



complete revelation of the anatomy of Chennai!

Just be

Connect with your essential being to experience sheer happiness, urges Ramana Maharishi

appiness lies deep within us, in the very core of our being.... Though we seem to derive happiness from external objects or experiences, the happiness that we thus enjoy in fact arises from within us.

Whatever turmoil our mind may be in, in the centre of our being there always exists a state of perfect peace and joy, like the calm in the eye of a storm. Desire and fear agitate our mind, and obscure from its vision the happiness that always exists within it. When a desire is satisfied, or the cause of a fear is removed, the surface agitation of our mind subsides, and in that temporary calm our mind enjoys a taste of its own innate happiness.

Happiness is thus a state of being—a state in which our mind's habitual agitation is calmed. The activity of our mind disturbs it from its calm state of just being, and causes it to lose sight of its own innermost happiness. To enjoy happiness, therefore, all our mind need do is to cease all activity, returning calmly to its natural state of inactive being, as it does daily in deep sleep.

True happiness is therefore the happiness of just being, which is the perfect and absolute happiness that in mystical literature is known as 'beatitude'. This true happiness of being is also described as 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding', because it is experienced in full only in the perfectly peaceful state



of just being, which is the state in which all mental activity has subsided in the clarity of unobstructed self-consciousness....

The degree of happiness that we experience at any moment is directly proportionate to the degree of clarity with which we are then conscious of our true and essential being. Therefore happiness is not only our essential being, but is also our consciousness of our being. In fact, since we are the consciousness that experiences our own being as 'I am', we are both being and consciousness. In other words, our essential being is consciousness, or more precisely it is self-consciousness—consciousness that knows itself clearly as 'I am'.

The rising and subsequent activity of our mind distracts our attention away from our essential being, thereby clouding our natural clarity of self-consciousness and obscuring our awareness of the happiness that we really are. Therefore so long as our mind is extroverted, attending to

anything other than our own essential being, we can never experience perfect, permanent and unqualified happiness. To experience true and eternal happiness, we must attain the experience of true self-knowledge, that is, perfectly clear consciousness of our own essential being.

In order to experience such true self-knowledge, we must withdraw our attention from everything other than ourself, and focus it wholly and exclusively upon our own essential being, which we always experience in the form of our fundamental consciousness—our primary knowledge, 'I am'.

All our knowledge about the world and God—about science, religion, philosophy, physics, cosmology, psychology, theology or any other branch of human knowledge—is open to serious doubt so long as our knowledge about ourself, the consciousness by which all those other things are known, is confused and uncertain.

Maharishi (1879-1950) was an Indian spiritual guru who advocated the path of self-enquiry

WHERE ELSE WOULD YOU FIND SOMEONE ABOVE 55 YEARS WHO'S PERFECTLY IN TUNE WITH YOU?

HARMONY, OBVIOUSLY.

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Heading

Advt. No.

Master of modernism

he influence of Thomas Stearns Eliot on modern literature can't be overstated. The makeover of poetry as intellectual, ironic and impersonal is largely owing to the efforts of T S Eliot; every free verse poet since has drawn from him, directly or indirectly. When the Nobel laureate died on 4 January



1965, legendary publisher Robert Giroux lamented, "The world has become a lesser place." Indeed!

When 22 year-old Eliot burst upon the literary scene with the precocious *The Love Story of J Alfred Prufrock*, the world of poetry underwent a paradigm shift from conventional romantic verse to chaotic modernism. Prufrock ushered in the use of fragmented structure and dramatic interior monologues as important poetic tools to express frustration, anguish and disillusionment of the post-war generation. Eliot's masterpiece, The Waste Land (1922), with its juxtaposition of different voices and discourses, and the shift between satire and prophecy, is considered a touchstone for modern poetry. The publication of The Hollow Men (1925), Ash Wednesday (1930) and Four Quartets (1943) further cemented Eliot's position as the Father of Modernism, resonating with a war-weary society. As an editor at Faber and Faber, Eliot mentored W H Auden, Stephen Spender and Ted Hughes. Other greats such as Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, Allen Tate and Seamus Heaney were also deeply influenced by him. Internationally lauded, Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948, besides the Dante Gold Medal, the Goethe Prize, the US Medal of Freedom and the British Order of Merit.

All was not hunky dory, however, in his personal life. In an interview, Eliot admitted that it was his disastrous marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood in 1915 that "brought the state of mind out of which came *The Waste Land*". The difficult relationship became the subject of a 1984 play, *Tom & Viv*, which was adapted as a film in 1994. Though he never legally separated from her, after Wood's death, Eliot married Esme Valerie Fletcher, his secretary at Faber and Faber, in 1957. *A Dedication to My Wife* is a rare public declaration of the deep affection Eliot felt for his second wife. One of the most daring and radical literary innovators of our times, Eliot left an indelible mark on the syntax and structure of poetic expression.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MAY 1965

- On 9 May, legendary pianist Vladimir Horowitz returned to the stage after a self-imposed exile of 12 years, performing at Carnegie Hall in New York.
- On 12 May, West Germany and Israel established diplomatic relations, putting to rest some of the demons of the Holocaust.
- On 25 May, boxer Muhammad Ali knocked out Sonny Liston in the first round of their championship rematch with the controversial 'phantom punch' at the Central Maine Civic Centre in Lewiston.
- On 29 May, an accident in a coal mine in Dhanbad, Jharkhand, killed 274.

Turtledove effect

n. In a work of alternate history, the implausible insertion of characters or events from the original timeline.
Example. neologism: Turtledove effect: Inserting historical characters into an alternate history long after the Point of Divergence makes them unlikely.

—Paul Weimer, "neologism...", Twitter, 5 March 2015

GRANLORD

n. A retired person who rents a room or property.

Example. Research has revealed that hard-up pensioners with spare rooms—dubbed **Granlords**—are set to cash in by renting out spare rooms to lodgers.

—"Hard-up elderly look to lodgers:
Rise of the Granlord as one in seven say they could rent out room to make ends meet",

Daily Mail, 23 January 2014

Nanodegree

n. An educational certification obtained by taking quick, highly focused courses over a short time. **Example.** "Nanodegrees are at the other end of the scale from the traditional university degree," Professor Sharples said. "For a degree, you spend three years gaining all the skills you need from a broad area. Nanodegrees are focused on what skills you need to learn for a very specific task."

—Chris Parr, "Making Moocs social is the next challenge", *The Times Higher Education*, 13 November 2014

Men do not quit playing because they grow old; they grow old because they quit playing.

—American physician and poet Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894)

FRACKLOG

n. Gas or oil that is ready to be fracked, but remains in the ground pending higher petroleum prices.

Example. The backlog of unfracked wells—call it a **fracklog**—is one reason that US crude output is poised to climb even as companies have idled more than a third of the rigs that were drilling for oil in October.

—Dan Murtaugh & Lynn Doan, "Introducing Fracklog, the new-fangled oil storage system: Energy," *Bloomberg Business*, 5 March 2015

Nieflings

n. A person's nieces and nephews.

Example. I think that I heard this on "A Way With Words"—**nieflings** is a combination of nieces and nephews. So, instead of writing a post on "my niece and nephew," I can write about my nieflings. I haven't been able to find a link to that show, but a Google search for "niefling" or "niephling" identifies other blogs.

—"The Nieflings," Our Seattle Adventure, 25 November 2007

Walking ATM

n. Illegal immigrants or migrant workers who are frequently robbed because they have no bank account and so must carry all their cash. **Example.** As many undocumented immigrants are unable to open bank accounts, they are often forced to carry large amounts of cash, making them susceptible [to] crime or, as Cruz-Takash called it, **walking ATMs**.

—Aaron Sankin, "Undocumented immigrant debit cards: Oakland introduces landmark new program", *The Huffington Post*, 26 February 2013

The wiser mind mourns less for what age takes away than what it leaves behind.

—English romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

DECACORN

n. A technology company that is less than 10 years old and worth more than \$ 10 billion.

Example. Billion-dollar companies join a club of 'unicorns', a term used to explain how rare they are. But there are more than 50 of them now. There's a new buzzword, **decacorn**, for those over \$ 10 billion, which includes Airbnb, Dropbox, Pinterest, Snapchat and Uber.

—Sarah Frier & Eric Newcomer, "The fuzzy, insane math that's creating so many billion-dollar tech companies", Bloomberg Business, 17 March 2015

.....

Fassage

n. A spa treatment that includes both a facial and a full-body massage. **Example.** One of their more distinct services, **Fassage**, combines a full-body massage with a classic facial all in the comfort of one room (\$ 164).

—Catherine Del Casale, "Coastal fashion: Rehab for the soul at Spa Gregorie's", Newport Beach Independent, 27 November 2014



Empowering entrepreneurs

Need help selling your homemade products? Bengaluru-based BUZZ Silver Surfers Club - Empowerment in Retirement (TSSC) could be the answer. TSSC offers silvers an online marketing platform for their home-run business through their social media page and other social platforms. Further, the club offers a socially interactive platform for more face-to-face interactions between sellers and consumers through its 'Silver Bazaar', a flea market hosted exclusively for silvers. Two such Bazaars have already been successfully conducted; the most recent, in April 2015, had a tropical theme and featured goodies ranging from gourmet sauces to handcrafted jewels and ethnic wear. To join, you need to pay an annual fee of ₹ 1,000; at present, the club has 50 members. For more information, call Dipti on (0) 990091143, email info@thesilversurfersclub. in or check out the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/ events/457771041039284/

Crowdsensing

pp. Obtaining information about an environment by accessing the sensor data generated via smartphones and other devices used by a large number of people in that environment.

Example. An application called MoboQ does exactly this by linking social networks with location data to let users ask time-sensitive questions about specific locations, and get them answered by complete strangers on the spot. This is **crowdsensing**: a way of tapping into networks of distributed human beings.

—Hal Hodson, "Crowdsensing apps tap every stranger's eyes and ears", New Scientist, 27 March 2013

"The least we can do for the departed is to give them a decent farewell"

Kishore Bhatt, 64, Mumbai, arranges funerals for unclaimed bodies



n a city that's always in a hurry, it's rare to come across someone with time for fellow beings, much less for the dead. For almost 47 years now, Kishore Bhatt, an interior designer-cumbusinessman who runs a shop in Mumbai that sells artefacts and furniture, has been ensuring that bodies lying unclaimed on the city's streets get a dignified send-off. His encounters with the dead began in 1968 during the floods that devastated Surat. Bhatt, who was in school then, hopped on to a relief supply truck to help those who were stuck. On his return, he told his father about the dead bodies strewn on the streets. "If you ever come across a dead body, make sure you do whatever you can," said his father. The words stayed with him. Gradually, he started arranging funerals at his own expense. "Our holy scriptures say that a person's soul doesn't find peace until the last rites are performed," says Bhatt. Pointing out that many unclaimed bodies are of those who come to the city in search of livelihood or medical care and land up on the streets, Bhatt says, "In death there should be dignity." So far he has performed over 3,000 last rites through his registered non-profit, Sadgati Foundation. He also ensures the religious beliefs of the dead are respected; while Hindus are

cremated, Christians and Muslims are buried. Now, Bhatt gets regular calls from hospitals and the police, informing him of the whereabouts of unclaimed corpses; he is often the only one present for the funeral of the abandoned. "One day, a man suffering from TB turned up outside my shop," he recalls. "As he looked sick, I got him hospitalised, paid for his treatment and left. After five days, he came to my shop again, to thank me for saving his life—and passed away in front of my eyes." Needless to say, Bhatt arranged his funeral. His family, he says, is his biggest support system; daughter Priti is one of the founding members of Sadgati Foundation. And though Bhatt doesn't carry a cell phone, he has two landlines in his shop, Priti Arts, which is open round the clock. "I stock all materials required to perform last rites," he says. He also has two ambulances, gifted by well-wishers, which help him reach anywhere, anytime, to claim the bodies. Bhatt, who has only studied till grade eight, has a higher calling "to reinstate faith in mankind". He stands by his word: "If you see anyone in need, give them my number and rest assured!"

—Prarthana Uppal

You can contact Bhatt on 022-23087976, 23076230

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