

NOVEMBER 2010 ₹ 30

harmony

celebrate age

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Play to win

There has been much to celebrate this festive season.

Harmony Silver Awards, held on 6 October in Mumbai, was a grand success. The evening was gilded by the presence of film icon Jeetendra, a dear friend and emblem of active ageing who charmed us all as our guest of honour; jury members Mrinal Pande and Shyam Benegal, who took the time not just to select our winners but to speak about them so eloquently; and singer Vikram Hazra, who brought soul and spirit to the proceedings, enveloping the rapt audience in his wondrous harmonies.

An evening like this would have been impossible without teamwork and support. My special thanks to our presenting sponsor S Kumar's Nationwide Ltd, represented at the event by the company's director Anjani Kasliwal; our airline partner Kingfisher Airlines; our media partner CNBC Awaaz, who broadcast an excellent special show on the winners; Nobel Biocare and VLCC, who gave away a wonderful bag and gifts to all those present; all Reliance ADA Group companies for their unstinted support; and my team at Harmony for Silvers Foundation for their zeal and commitment to the event and the larger cause. Of course, above all, the greatest thanks are due to our winners—every year, I am increasingly humbled by the achievements of our silver heroes and inspired by their transformative power and unflagging drive.

Equally inspiring were the achievements of another set of heroes this October: the Indian athletes who brought in a rich harvest of medals for India at the Commonwealth Games. They not only resurrected the country's reputation in the wake of all the scandals that had plagued the



Donald Woodrow

Games but announced to the world that India has the potential to be a true sporting nation; to take on the world's best—and win.

We must remember, however, that many of these victories have come in spite (not because) of our sporting establishment. Other than major metros, sporting infrastructure is sadly lacking in most of our cities and towns. And even in our big cities, scarce emphasis is paid on nurturing sporting talent. I believe this is another area where silver power could play a significant role—retired sportsmen across the country can play the role of mentors to budding players in every discipline, sharing their expertise, talent and experiences. This would not just empower the youth by giving them worthy role models to learn from and emulate but the silvers in equal measure, by giving them renewed vigour and a chance to leave behind a sporting legacy far richer than they ever imagined.

It really is time for all of us—young and old—to come out and play, together. Wish you all a prosperous Diwali.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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column one

Looking good is not about what we wear and how we wear it. It's about feeling good from inside, confidence, self-esteem and outlook to life. After scores of plays, films and television serials, Sushma Seth is comfortable in her skin. Proud of her body of work, of the balance she has struck between acting and her family life and her current choices, she glows from within. Her self-assurance shows in her eyes, her conviction in her demeanour. On the cover this month, she speaks about being the coolest grandmother on and off screen, working with NGOs and, of course, acting.

Your narrations of self-confidence, success and social contributions are as important to us. Do write in to the 'Your Space' section, a collection of diverse anecdotes and experiences from across the country. This month's highlight in the section is teenager Rohan Sawhney's account of meeting silvers at an old age home, arranged by Harmony for Silvers Foundation. Pained at losing two of his grandparents and regretting not having spent enough time with them, Rohan has decided to spend more time with silvers. "All that the elderly need from my generation is 10 minutes of my day—enough to bring a million-dollar smile on their faces!"

Harmony believes even silvers can make a huge difference to society by including young children (including their own grandchildren) in their plans, giving them the legacy of their wisdom. The highlights of this month are Rajan Vir for spreading awareness about Indian maritime heritage; RTI crusader J P Shah; and puppetry educationist Ranjana Kanitkar. You could be there too—there's a world out there to make a difference to.

—Meeta Bhatti



It was a pleasure for this retiree, who has crossed the age of 70, to listen to Mrs Tina Ambani on one of the TV channels and learn about the work done by Harmony for Silvers Foundation. I wish to share some of the achievements and concerns of some 1,000 senior citizens in the age group of 65 to 90 living in the Senior Citizen Home Complex in Greater Noida. These seniors fought a battle with an unscrupulous society called Senior Citizen Home Complex Welfare Society, which sold flats to 'would-be retirees' from government and semi-government organisations, including the defence services, without authority to sell. It did so with the patronage of Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA) that gave it 15 acre of land on lease in 1997.



A significant portion of the collection from the allottee seniors was embezzled by the office bearers of the society as discovered by the Income Tax authorities who slapped a recovery of some Rs 27 crore as tax on the Society for siphoning away the money collected from the seniors, treating it as income. Having no place to go after retirement, the allottees took the possession in the half-built flats devoid of promised facilities; some had no lifts, most had just one without the promised second lift for a wheelchair, in the complex devoid of promised facilities. The erring Society has been cancelled by the registration authorities for acting against public policy and its own objects.

In view of the cancellation of the Society, the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, where the matter has been pending for over six years, has authorised day-to-day maintenance and management of the complex to the residents. Although the residents are happy to be free of the clutches of fraudulent people, they are now struggling to complete the unfinished work with their own resources and get their flats registered so that they can be bequeathed to their loved ones. They also urgently need to identify some agency to oversee the management of their complex. However, this shall happen only when GNIDA comes forward as per the conditions of its lease deed. In the event of failure of the lessee, the lease prescribes actions to be taken by the lessor. But it is vacillating as it may expose its own inefficiency and violations of policy.

We hope organisations like Harmony, who are working for silvers, can use their offices to impress upon GNIDA the need to act quickly and take up the matter with the concerned government bodies at the central and state levels, like the Human Rights Commission and Ministry for Social Justice.

Pratap Narain, Noida

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O»FACE OFF

Spectacle STORY

Even as spectacles turn haute couture with fashionistas across the world sporting them, a new study argues that wearing them actually 'ages' a person. According to a survey of 4,000 people commissioned by the London Vision Clinic, **people who wear glasses appear about 3.3 years older than their actual age.** And, as newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, the perceived image is even worse for those aged 45 and over, who appear five years older with their glasses on. For the study, the participants were divided into two groups: the first group was given 10 pictures of people with glasses and asked to guess their ages and discuss their attributes while the second group was given 10 pictures of the same people without glasses and asked the same questions. The results showed a clear difference in perceived ages. Further, those who wore glasses were a fifth less likely to be seen as confident and were thought of as physically weaker. "This study highlights the snap judgments we make as a society," says psychologist Dr Glenn Wilson, who analysed the results. "This association seems to hark back to the school playground, with a quarter of those surveyed admitting they were teased as a child for wearing glasses."





Oktoberfest!

To commemorate **World Elders' Day** on 1 October, there were a host of celebrations and initiatives across the country. Here, in a nutshell, is a quick review of the top three events that caught our attention:

- In Chennai, Additional Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Shakeel Akhter announced that one police station in each of the nine police districts in the city will be dedicated for interaction with silvers on designated days. The police districts are T Nagar, Flower Bazaar, Washermanpet, Anna Nagar, Kilpauk, Pulianthope, Adyar, Mylapore and Triplicane. The names of the stations and the specific days will soon be released to media.
- The Haryana State Legal Services Authority declared that it will organise regular legal awareness classes for silvers with the assistance of the Social Justice and Empowerment Department. The aim is to stem elder abuse by making silvers aware of their legal rights, with special reference to the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens' Act.
- The Nagpur Zilla Parishad donated over 500 sets of dentures to silvers from families below the poverty line—10 silvers from each health centre in the district were selected. The scheme was carried out under the aegis of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in association with a group of 35 dentists.

A new SAVIOUR

SILVERS IN MUMBAI can now get quick help in an emergency. Softspin, a Pune-based company, has developed software called **Siren Saviour** that informs your kin, police and hospital during any mishap with just the press of a button. The software can be installed in your mobile and land phones for a nominal fee of ₹ 250 a year. "The idea was to enable a call for help with just one reflex action, that of pressing a button," says Vinay Sathe, one of the brains behind the software. "This instantly sends a message to a fixed number embedded on the Saviour software console that then sounds an alarm to the console operator, conveys an acknowledgment to the sender through an SMS, and sends SMS to three predefined numbers: family, hospital and police." The service console is set up in a

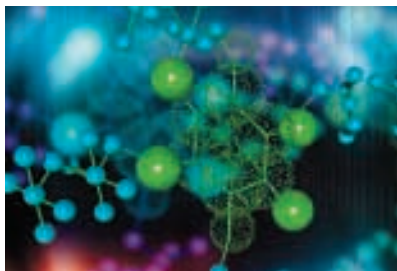


hospital or police station where there are maximum users. At present, Softspin has launched the service only in the Chembur area in suburban Mumbai but expects to replicate it all over the city—and eventually the country. To learn more, contact Sathe on (0)9860822242.

O»NEWSWORTHY

Miracle or mirage?

Russian scientist Vladimir Skulachev stunned the world in October when he announced that he had found **a cure for ageing**. “Ninety-nine per cent of the time, oxygen turns into harmless water, but there’s that 1 per cent that turns into a super-oxide that later turns into very poisonous elements,” Skulachev, a bioenergetics professor at Moscow State University, tells *www.rt.com*. “So the task was to find an antioxidant that stops that process.” Skulachev has been working on his goal for 40 years, and believes he has achieved it—the com-



pound has undergone animal testing and human trials are on.

Understandably the international scientific community is yet to be

fully convinced. Still, hopes are high that Skulachev, who claims to have treated his own cataract successfully with his miracle drug, will deliver. As Dr Gunter Blobel, a Nobel prizewinning cell biologist from Rockefeller University, says, “We know nothing about the antioxidant that Skulachev has developed but I believe he will come through. After all, he is the world’s best biochemist and bio-energetic scientist.” Skulachev is sure of success—he expects his discovery to reach the shelves of a pharmacy near you in just a few years.

100S OF 100S: IMPROVED LIFESTYLES HAVE LED TO A FOUR-FOLD INCREASE IN CENTENARIANS IN 30 YEARS IN BRITAIN. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS, LAST YEAR THERE WERE 11,600 CENTENARIANS, MORE THAN FOUR TIMES THOSE RECORDED IN 1979. EVEN OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE RANKS OF CENTENARIANS HAVE SWELLED BY NEARLY 25 PER CENT. THERE ARE EXPECTED TO BE 87,900 CENTENARIANS IN THE UK BY 2034.

O»ANALYSE THIS

GET A GRIP

HAVING A FIRM HANDSHAKE has long been attributed to strength of character—now we learn it may be a harbinger of longevity. According to a study by the Unit for Lifelong Health and Ageing at the Medical Research Council (MRC) in the UK, **‘grip strength’, the speed at which we walk or rise from a chair, and our ability to balance on one leg may all be indicators of life expectancy**. After reviewing 33 research projects conducted worldwide measuring grip strength, involving more than 50,000 people tracked for over 40 years, the team discovered a clear link between weaker performance and earlier death. “The same held true for the other tests, with the slowest walkers almost three times more likely to die earlier than the fastest,” writes study leader Rachel Cooper in the *British Medical Journal*. “It is now evident that simple, non-invasive assessment measures like these can help doctors identify those most vulnerable to poor health in later life and who may benefit from early intervention to keep them active for longer.”





The 'Nevertirees'

WORK ON! That's the slogan of a new breed of 'Nevertirees'—defined by Barclays Wealth as **wealthy workers who want to carry on working for as long as they are able**. In its report, *The Age Illusion: How the Wealthy are Redefining Their Retirement*, the wealth management giant surveyed 2,000 high-net-worth individuals globally to discover what retirement and later life meant to them. Here's what it found:

- The concept of 'Nevertirement' is expected to become more popular over coming years, with 70 per cent of respondents under the age of 45 saying they will always be involved in some form of work.
- The findings apply to all wealthy respondents, with 57 per cent of those who inherited their wealth also affirming that they will continue working in later life.
- The top Nevertiree country was the UK, where 60 per cent of wealthy individuals polled plan to become Nevertirees, starting businesses and taking on new projects in their later years.
- The Top 5 Nevertiree countries in Europe are the UK (60 per cent); Ireland (59 per cent); Monaco (58 per cent); Spain (44 per cent) and Switzerland (34 per cent). In the US, 54 per cent of respondents expressed a desire to carry on working, with Switzerland (34 per cent), Spain (44 per cent) and Japan (46 per cent) more likely to opt for a conventional retirement.



You can read the entire report at
www.barclayswealth.com/insights/volume12.htm

Grandma's kids

Here's some data that has surprised many in a country where intergenerational bonds are assumed to be eroding: **one child in 10 in the US lives with a grandparent. What's more, about 40 per cent of these children are being raised primarily by that grandparent.** According to a new analysis of data from the US Census Bureau by the Pew Research Centre, these numbers have been increasingly slowly and steadily in the millennium before rising sharply in 2007-2008, probably owing to the economic recession. Here are some highlights of the report:

» 2.9 million children are now being raised primarily by a grandparent; this figure rose slowly throughout the decade and spiked from 2007 to 2008, with a 6 per cent increase.

» The phenomenon of grandparents serving as primary caregivers is more common among blacks and Hispanics than among whites, but the sharpest rise since the recession began has been among whites.

» 49 per cent of children being raised by grandparents also live with a single parent while for 43 per cent there is no parent in the household. About 8 per cent have both parents in the household, in addition to the caregiver grandparent.

» Overall, grandparent primary caregivers are relatively young—over 67 per cent are younger than the age of 60, with 13 per cent actually being younger than 45.

» 62 per cent of grandparent caregivers are female, and 38 per cent are men; 76 per cent of grandparent caregivers are married while 34 per cent are not.



The full report is at pewsocialtrends.org



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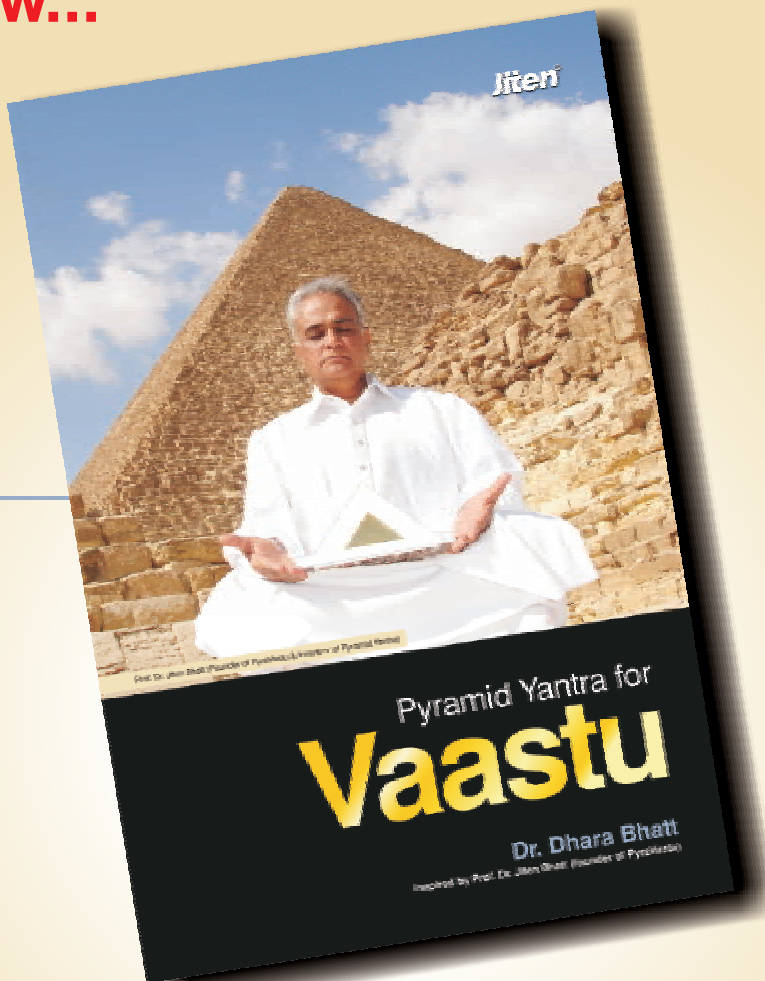
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HIS STORY



It's been 18 years ago since he wrote his first autobiography, *What's It All About?* But "as a lot has happened over the years", British actor **Michael Caine** decided to write another. The result is *The Elephant to Hollywood* (Hodder & Stoughton), where the 77 year-old dwells at length on the trauma of being an ageing actor in a youth-centric film industry. "The few scripts I was sent invariably had coffee stains on them, having passed through so many other actors' hands before they got to me," he writes wryly. "And I realised the only girl I'd ever get to kiss in a film again would be my daughter." He also retells his rags-to-riches story—he was the son of a porter and a charlady—his enduring romance with wife Shakira; successful foray into Hollywood and subsequent buddydom with icons Frank Sinatra and John Wayne; and his encounter with a series of young bucks in the industry. For instance, "Joaquin [Phoenix] was a pleasant young man but somewhat strange...." Today, Caine insists, he's happiest at home, cooking a Sunday roast for his family. As proof, he serves up his secret recipe for roast potatoes.

Starkly SILVER

Guess who pipped 24 year-old sex kitten Megan Fox to the post to win *Esquire* magazine's title of Sexiest Woman Alive? Dame Helen Mirren, 65 and smouldering. A recent risqué photo-shoot for *New York* magazine and an extended nude scene in her upcoming film *Love Ranch* have only cemented her sexy-as-all-hell reputation. Mirren is at the vanguard of a legion of older actors who are becoming increasingly willing to show off their bodies on screen, notes *The Guardian*, citing the examples of Diane Keaton, Charlotte Rampling and Meryl Streep, all in their 60s. For her part, Mirren, who has stripped nine times on celluloid, says, "As you get older, it actually gets easier; there's even a sense of liberation about it." Not every silver agrees though. Former



British politician and novelist Ann Widdecombe, 63, who is taking part in reality dance competition *Strictly Come Dancing*, has firmly refused to wear any skimpy costumes for the gig. Her take: "What I wouldn't show the Pope I shan't be showing the audience."



She's back!

In the 1980s, she got an entire legion of women to shake their booty in their privacy of their homes in a bid to get lean and mean. Now, at the age of 72, actor and aerobics queen **Jane Fonda is back with two new exercise videos—*Walk Out* and *Fit and Strong*—that aim to help silvers lose weight and build strength through low-impact exercise.** "I'm very excited to be back in the fitness business," says Fonda in an interview to British newspaper *Daily Mail*. "I know from experience and research how critical it is for seniors to be physically active. Even if they've never exercised in their lives, now is the time and my programmes are a good, safe way to do it."

Fonda, who recently admitted that she has undergone plastic surgery, is also writing a book on ageing and will be back on the big screen with a new film, *Peace, Love and Misunderstanding*. The movie and book will be out next year; the videos hit the market this month.

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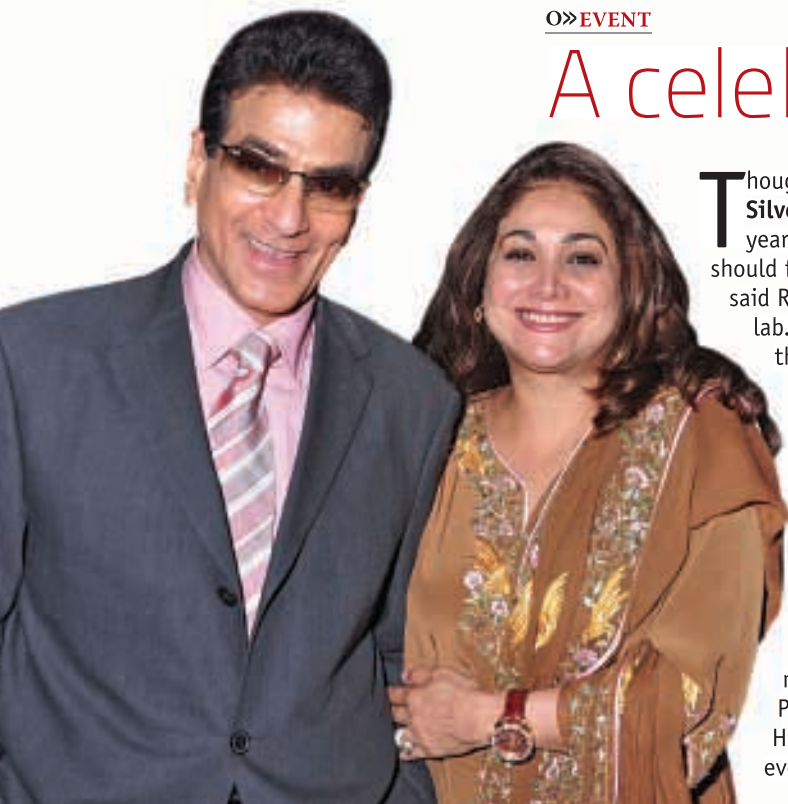


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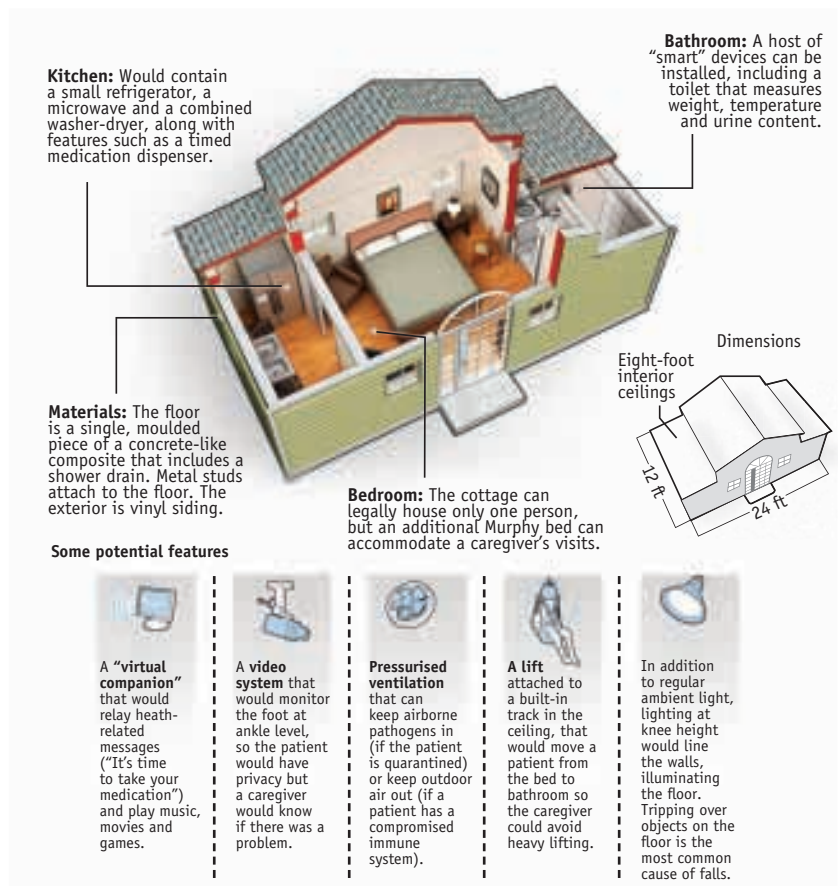
Though there were many inspiring moments at **Harmony Silver Awards 2010**, a defining one occurred when 103 year-old Annaswamy Rangantha Rao gave his speech. "We should fill each moment of life with life till the last breath," said Rao who was felicitated for setting up India's first math lab. The applause that followed his words reverberated through the Nitu Mandke Convention Centre at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital. The occasion was not just a celebration of age, but a tribute to the commitment and courage of 10 exceptional silvers. As chairperson Tina Ambani reaffirmed, "These winners are not just proof of the power of silvers but of ordinary people who show us all how we have the ability to improve the lives of all those around us." The event was made more luminous by the presence of guest of honour, actor Jeetendra; actors Jaya Bachchan, Archana Puran Singh and Parmeet Sethi; director of SKNL Group Anjani Kasliwal; and members of the jury Prasara Bharati chairperson Mrinal Pande and director Shyam Benegal. Spiritual singer Vikram Hazra's soulful numbers offered the perfect finale to an evening that was all about conscience and consciousness.





GRANNY PODS

American priest and entrepreneur Reverend Kenneth Dupin has struck upon a novel, if controversial, way to enable silvers to carry on living independently while remaining close to relatives: the MEDCottage, or granny pod, as many have labelled it. This is hi-tech accommodation, which can be set in a garden as if it were a shed, providing silvers with their own space—8-m long and 4-m wide, the cottage comprises a bathroom, cooking facilities and a bed on a single floor. Special details include camera surveillance that alerts caregivers if the resident has fallen or is immobile; medical appliances, from a blood pressure monitor to a pill box; a bathing area adapted for people with special needs; a lift to help patients out of bed; and an air-conditioner that filters the air to minimise risk of infections. The cost: \$ 64,000 to \$ 73,000 (about ₹ 2.8 million to ₹ 3.2 million) outright, or \$ 1,400 (about ₹ 62,000) a month to rent. As *The Washington Post* reports, critics of the concept have labelled it a “storage container to throw your parents in,” but powerful American silver advocacy groups like AARP have given it thumbs up, calling it “an innovative idea”. Meanwhile Dupin, who will deliver the first 100



cottages in 2011, is confident he has a winner on his hands. “Every granny I know has called me asking for one,”

he says. “We will change the world.” Check out www.medcottage.com to see for yourself.



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O»H PEOPLE

Shell specialist

Most of us are intrigued by the shells that wash up on the seashore and often can't resist picking one up while on a stroll on the beach. But Pune-based **Anand Shinde's** fascination for shells runs fathoms deeper. The 56 year-old has been collecting shells for the past 35 years and prides himself on being more than just a hobbyist. His paper on marine wealth and its impact on economy and environment is now part of the syllabus of the Maharashtra SSC Board. Accompanied by his 28 year-old daughter Sampada, he has conducted lectures on marine flora and fauna in schools all over Pune for the past decade. Five years ago, his incisive documentation on the subject was first published in *Shikshan Sankraman*, the official publication of the Maharashtra SSC Board, circulated in recognised schools all over the state. Over the years, he has amassed thousands of coins, stamps and cards themed on marine environment. "I love sharing my collection with children as I feel



Khursheed Dinshaw

that even instilling the excitement of such a hobby in them can enable them to appreciate marine wealth and respect its value," says Shinde, who runs a business supplying marine and geological samples to school laboratories. These days, he is busy studying the increasing use of marine resources such as pearls and shells in popular mystical pursuits such as Feng Shui, Vastu Shashtra and astrology.

ACTION PLAN FOR NOVEMBER



Launch a club. You don't need a private space, just the will to come together. Fourteen years ago, a group of elderly Sikh men in Fremont, California, formed 'The 100 Years Living Club' to provide them an outlet for their feelings and frustrations, joys and alienation—they meet in a mall and discuss everything from crime in nearby Oakland and the cheapest flights to Delhi to dealing with recalcitrant daughters-in-law.

BIRTHDAYS

- Playback singer **Lata Mangeshkar** turned 81 on 29 September
- American fashion designer **Donna Karan** turned 62 on 2 October
- American actor **Susan Sarandon** turned 64 on 4 October
- Prime Minister of Russia **Vladimir Putin** turned 58 on 7 October
- Actor **Amitabh Bachchan** turned 68 on 11 October
- Actor **Hema Malini** turned 62 on 16 October

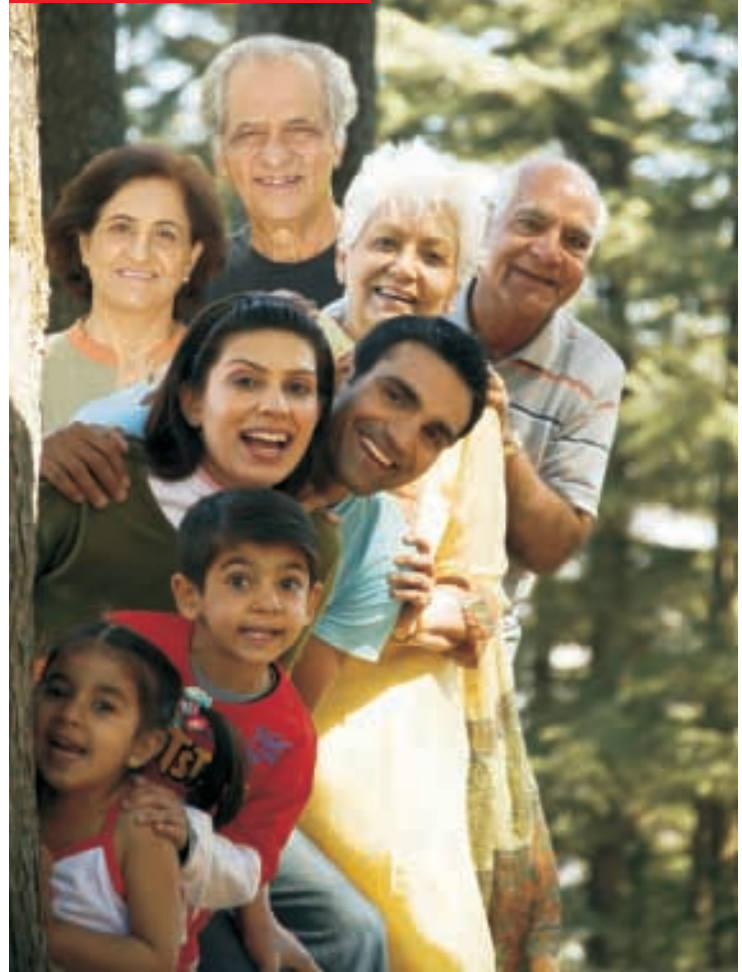
MILESTONES

- Noted geriatrician **Dr V S Natara-jan** won the Vayoshreshtha Samman 2010 for Lifetime Achievement from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment on 1 October
- Peruvian writer **Mario Vargas Llosa**, 74, received the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature on 7 October
- Chairman of the Tata Group **Ratan Tata** donated ₹ 220 crore to Harvard Business School (HBS) in October. The money will be used to fund a new academic and residential building, named Tata Hall, on the HBS campus in Massachusetts.

IN PASSING

- Algerian Islamic scholar and controversial thinker **Mohammed Arkoun** passed away on 1 October. He was 82.
- American soul singer **Solomon Burke** passed away on 10 October. He was 70.
- Iranian classical singer **Marzieh** died of cancer on 13 October. She was 86.
- Chennai-based Tamil poet, writer and orator **Soundara Kailasam** passed away on 16 October. She was 83.

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STRONGER, HAPPIER, WISER

On 7 June 1996, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The doctor's words stunned me into silence. But the next moment I made up my mind about two things: I would enjoy my life to the fullest, like Rajesh Khanna in the movie, *Anand*; and I would fight for my life till my last breath.

I was asked to go in for surgery. Besides my ovary, the cancer had spread to my bladder and intestine. The surgery which was, therefore, complex, lasted for seven hours. As I lay in the hospital bed afterwards, with half-a-dozen tubes penetrating my body, I had to make the most difficult choice: give into self pity or emerge stronger than the adversity I was facing. I decided to counsel myself out of agony and dejection. I was lucky—my family was my greatest source of strength through this ordeal. My husband was constantly beside me and my daughter, son and daughter-in-law had flown down from the USA to be with me. Surrounded by their love, I knew my road to recovery wouldn't be lonely.

After my discharge from the hospital, I had to undergo six rounds of chemotherapy, during which I lost all my hair—even my eyelashes and eyebrows. I had rashes all over my body and was constantly assailed by a burning sensation; sometimes, my fingers and toes would go numb (a condition known as peripheral neuropathy). To ease the effects of chemotherapy I started having wheatgrass juice. Acupressure helped ease the numbness.

Gradually, I realised that the body is perishable, but the soul is indestructible. After completing treatment,



Shah defeated cancer with optimism

I went to the US where a top cancer specialist, Dr Malavia from Detroit, declared me free of cancer. However, he cautioned me that there was a 40 to 60 per cent chance of recurrence in the case of ovarian cancer for up to 15 to 18 months after the operation. We returned to India after spending two months in the US. On my return, I got fully occupied with the interior decoration of our new flat, but was haunted by the fear of relapse. Fortunately, my fears remained unfounded. It's been 14 years since my surgery. Except for some numbness in my feet, I am fully fit. Two years ago, I started writing articles for magazines like *Navnit-Samarpan* and *Janmbhoomi-Pravasi*. My son has taught me to use the computer and these days I am in constant touch with my children and friends through the Internet. Over three years ago, I even started my blog, 'Dada Dadi Hotline'. I have also registered for a PhD in philosophy at Mumbai University. Much of my time is now devoted to research.

I would request all cancer patients to practice four mantras: faith in God, yourself, and your doctor; strong will power; strong will to live; and a positive attitude towards life..

—Kokila Shah, Mumbai

UNITED, WE BOND

Six months ago, my friends from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, from where I had passed out in 1971, decided to have a reunion for our batch. It was not our first reunion party though—we have been meeting every two years for a long time now. Our last two trips to Rajasthan and Kerala are still fresh in my mind. As all of us are scattered around the globe, coordinating the reunion was a tedious process. One of my friends

Vaidyanathan, settled in Singapore, and Salem Ganapathy, who lives in Delhi, strung us all together through phone calls and email.

For our venue, we had zeroed in on Melia Bali, a five-star hotel located on a pearly beach in exotic Bali in Indonesia. We refer to our reunions as *milan* and this particular one was called 'Bali Ho'. Everyone was accompanied by their spouse; there were 36 couples. Most of us have hung up our boots and retired from or quit the corporate



Harithara Subramanian

Shenoi (in green T-shirt) and his friends at Angkor Vat

world. Yet everyone is engaged in some activity or the other, whether it is assisting an NGO or teaching at an academic institution. A few, like K V Kamath of ICICI and Pradeep Bhargava of Cummins, are still at the helm of business affairs.

The *milan* started on 3 September at Bali and went on till 7 September. The fun and frolic consisted of enacting awkward moments with our professors from yore; recalling our late-night escapades from the hostel; the perpetual pranks and mischief that were an inextricable part of our lives; and the young dreams we once believed in. We bonded over long leisurely dinners on the beach, boat cruises, and visits to popular tourist spots. The highlight was a funny, romantic episode: each male at the event had to go down on his knees in front of his wife and vocally acknowledge her role in his life! Each couple was gifted with a special photo album as a memento of our trip.

From Bali, some of us headed to Angkor Vat in Cambodia for a three-day trip. My wife Malathi enjoyed the whole trip as much as I did. The group parted with a promise to meet up again. "Next time in Ahmedabad," said some. "No, somewhere in the Mediterranean!" interjected a few others. Though we all may differ in our recommendation, we also know that the place doesn't matter, as long as we are together and relive those good old days.

—M P V Shenoi, Bengaluru

LIFE'S BEST LESSON

With a mixed feeling of excitement and anxiety, I walked into Manav Seva Sansthan, an old age home. This was my first visit to the Sansthan, arranged courtesy Harmony for Silvers Foundation. As I entered the big hall, I was greeted by 60 energetic people in the age group of 55-92 years. After a brief introduction, I set out to explain the purpose of my visit. In 2006, I lost my paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother (my *dada* and *nani*). I was only 13 at that time. As I was strongly attached to both of them, I was left with a feeling of remorse—I could

have easily spent more time with them. An outcome of these events was that I started to consciously devote more time to my remaining grandparents (my *dadi* and *nana*). Often I wondered about their generation and the relationship they shared with their grandchildren. I started my attempt to understand this complex relationship with a survey. My survey revealed that grandchildren were slowly drifting apart from their grandparents owing to lack of time, polarised mindsets, and most important, the parents not playing a bridging role. Emotional attachment can become stronger only when there is connectedness. In the absence of this connection, grandparents are left reminiscing about their past and feeling unhappy.

At the Sansthan, I had to don a teacher's hat and manage a noisy brood! Many spoke sadly but enthusiastically. Some were there because their children were settled abroad; some because of a shortage of space in their homes; and many others because their families simply didn't care. Most of them felt sad that their grandchildren were not encouraged to visit or call them. Some spent an entire Sunday waiting for a phone call from home or in the hope that they may be taken home for two hours to spend time with the family. I spent five hours with them, talking in groups and individually, visiting some of their rooms, listening to them as they updated me about their daily routine of yoga, meditation and singing. Most of them had found their best buddies here, with whom they shared their sorrows and joys.



Rohan Sawhney is happy he bridged the generation gap

On my way back home, I wondered why my generation was becoming so self-centred? Is it really all that difficult to find time for our grandparents? We do find time to talk to our friends, our parents, watch TV or chat on Facebook. All that the elderly need from my generation is 10 minutes of my day—enough to bring a million-dollar smile on their faces! I promise my time to my grandparents. I hope others from my generation will do the same

—Rohan Sawhney, student of John Connon & Cathedral School, Mumbai



Glamorous GRANDMA

Between reading scripts and choosing roles, actor Sushma Seth paints, sings, teaches drama, plays the tanpura, writes a book and figures out the complex workings of her laptop computer. **Rajashree Balaram** runs out of breath as she tries to keep pace with the enthusiasm and energy of India's favourite *daadi*

The first impression of Sushma Seth is enough to inject starch into your spine. There is a queenly aura to her that nothing can displace—not even her many roles as the rustic, *paan*-chewing, feisty grandmother in Indian cinema or television. Can we ever forget the imperious *Daadi* of *Hum Log*, sari *pallu* tightly drawn over her head, spouting snide jibes at her meek daughter-in-law and grandchildren? Though many silver-haired *daadi* entered and exited the idiot box since then, no one could quite match her spite or sneer.

But when we meet Seth in her bungalow at the plush D block in New Friends Colony in Delhi, it's not the imperious arch of her neatly plucked eyebrows that presides over the meeting; it's her sunshine warmth and class. In the three hours of the photo shoot that follows, she cheerfully poses through five changes of attire and accessories—not snapping once, even when there is a technical snag

in lighting that holds up the shoot for a while. We wonder if Seth's poise and sophistication have been honed through her years at Briarcliff College in upstate New York and Carnegie Mellon School of Drama in Pittsburgh where she studied art and drama. Or if it is the years spent as drama teacher and director of children's plays that have brought such patience to her disposal. Her experiences and learnings from these two episodes of her life have richly contributed to her recently launched debut book, *Stageplay - The Journey of An Actor*, a dedication to the art and discipline involved in theatre.

At 72, Seth has slipped effortlessly into her latest role as a writer—but that's not the only one she is playing. She has already started shoots for her role as *sutradhar* for *Hum*, a new soap opera—modelled on *Hum Log*—that will soon be aired on Doordarshan. With her quest to explore new roles in life, on stage and on screen, Seth exemplifies how life can only get richer with time.

IN HER OWN WORDS

I was destined to be a theatre artist right from the time I conducted dolls' weddings as a child. I come from a progressive family. When other women were hidden behind their *purdah*, my aunts were encouraged to participate in music, dance, painting and radio plays, and perform in public concerts. My father Rameshwar Dayal was a sports person and my mother Prakash Rani was my greatest role model. She fulfilled all her own dreams through us. I was the eldest among the 12 children of my generation—who lived in our huge home at Babar Road in New Delhi—and thereby the director of skits and playlets adapted from storybooks. We used to create our stage at home using curtains and ropes, improvise on costumes and, of course, focus on edible props provided by our mothers.

When I won a scholarship to study art at Briarcliff College in New York, there was some resistance from my

relatives. My parents gave their permission immediately, but some members in my family felt it was unwise to send a girl alone at the vulnerable and marriageable age of 18 years to such a distant land. My mother, though, stuck to her decision.

While studying in Briarcliff, I thoroughly enjoyed my trips to the Metropolitan Museum in New York which I often visited to study the European painters of the 16th and 17th century; my favourites were Titian, Vermeer, Reynolds and Rembrandt. I mastered a variety of media—charcoal, pen

and ink, watercolours and oils. At a college fest I actually sold a few of my paintings and got orders for some more! Even today, in my own home, whenever I want to change my colour schemes, I make paintings in the selected colours. I generally got straight As as I thoroughly loved the subjects I had chosen. As a consequence, I was on the Dean's List throughout and even received the highest award for all-round excellence.

India was never far from my heart even when I was abroad. I had carried with me colourful handicrafts,

paintings, and a colourful *phulkari* that served as a bedspread against an all-white cubicle and white curtains. My warm and friendly American dorm-mates had expected someone who would have no clue about the English language and were startled at my chaste diction. They used to call me 'Sloosh'! I spent all my vacations at their homes all over the country, wore my silk saris and cooked chicken curries and *poori* for them. The dean of the college raised a scholarship for me to transfer to Carnegie Mellon, which had one of the best drama schools in the country.





“Each one of us is gifted with a special talent. It is important to pursue that area of vocation, study and involvement to feel joyous, enthusiastic and creatively fulfilled. The focus should always be to excel in one’s chosen field”

On returning to India, I was offered an assignment to teach speech to officers of the administrative service by the Natya Akademi, and cast to play Gurdafrid in *Rustam Sohrab*, a play written by Agha Hashra Kashmiri, and directed by Habib Tanvir.

I love the stage. Theatre is a very fulfilling experience. One develops the character and prepares the play over four to five weeks of rehearsals; interacts with a group of actors to bring the story alive before an audience; and, above all, receives instant feedback. Stage is an actor’s medium; television and films, the director’s.

It was my passion for theatre that motivated me to write *Stageplay*. As a theatre artist and director, I had often made notes for workshops, researched among books, periodicals and pamphlets and preserved all the material. Two years ago, after seeing several school and college productions, I realised that a comprehensive book on practical drama material was required for all those who aspired to a career in teaching drama, holding workshops and forming amateur theatre groups. So I decided to put together my observations, findings, experiences and guidelines into a practical manual, with some relevant biographical material. And voila, *Stageplay* happened! It’s necessary to make drama and other creative pursuits accessible to everyone. Soon, I plan to organise workshops with aspiring theatre workers and groups of students in schools and colleges.

I wish there was an opportunity to play varied character roles such as those offered to mature actresses in

the West. In our films most roles are stock characters. But as I have mostly played meaty, colourful roles on stage, I’m quite fulfilled. Among my favourite roles were Rano in *Ek Chadar Maili Si*, Champa in *Sakharam Binder*, Shen Te in Brecht’s *Good Woman of Sezuwan*, Kate in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*, Gurdafrid in *Rustam Sohrab*, Sabrina in *Sabrina Fair*, Raina in *Arms and the Man* and Fatima in *Ali Baba*.

Daadi in *Hum Log* was the role of a lifetime. It still remains the most fulfilling role I have ever played—something for which I have received boundless adoration, love and fan mail! Despite acting in 80 films and playing close to a hundred roles on stage and television, it sometimes amazes me that people still remember me as *Daadi* of *Hum Log*.

Of course, the popularity and the sheer excellence of the script endeared each member of the *Hum Log* family to viewers worldwide. Each character was beautifully conceived by writer Manohar Shyam Joshi. And the cast was full of excellent actors. We shared a wonderful working relationship with each other that gradually turned into a familial bonding. We used to spend the whole day shooting and rehearsing in the studio and living in our constructed flat, eating together as well as revolting against the food on the sets, then supplementing it with goodies brought from home, and generally sharing the wonderful experience of creativity and togetherness. Whenever we meet now, it is with nostalgia for those wonderful times. The same camaraderie is revived instantly; however, as everyone has

moved to different cities, we don’t get to meet as often.

Hum Log was closer to the lives of the urban middle class, their aspirations, dreams and relationships. *Hum*, on the other hand, is the story of five women who get interconnected in the socio-political issues of their village. I am playing the *sutradhar* and, as they say, I’m loving it!

I don’t think I will ever tire of learning. I was very intrigued with the technique of Tanjore painting, so after learning the art some time back, I have done about 50 paintings of Puranic deities, some of which adorn my walls, and are also on my website www.sushmaseth.com.

Similarly, my experience with Arpana, a project with slum children, taught me many things I was unaware of. In the summer of 1998, I was invited to a function at this educational initiative in the slums of Delhi’s East of Kailash headed by three wonderful women Usha Seth, Sushma Agarwal, and Krishna Shroff, to coax the parents of non-school going children to permit their children to come to the Arpana centre to study letters and numbers. I was pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm and talent of the performing children, as they sang and recited a poem. I agreed immediately when Ushaji asked me if I would come twice a week to do dramatics with the children. I had to adopt a psycho-physical-emotional perspective to establish an easy rapport with the kids. They lacked basic hygiene, and many of them did not go to school. They had lost their childhood and knew nothing about kindness, caring,

“At this age, we are more focused, calmer, patient, centred, and generous with our time, experience and knowledge. This is the time to give back to society, to family, to everyone, to be filled with gratitude for having received so much in life”



honesty, compassion and sharing. Abusive language and beatings were part of their daily routine. I formulated a workshop for them to impart values, confidence and motivation as well as help them laugh, explore and learn. Their lives provided ample content for our plays. As we enacted skits and rehearsed dialogues, the children came into their own. I never corrected their lines or performance.

There's so much to learn from the younger generation. My grandkids inspire me every day. My son Kavi has two wonderful daughters: Tarika and Nainika. Tarika is 18, a talented actress and sensitive poet. Recently, she learnt sign language and was the narrator in a play where all the artists were speech impaired. Now she is working with the children of an orphanage, doing drama and playing soccer with them. In fact, when she called me to ask what improvisations she could do on one such drama project, I was doing the final draft of *Stageplay*. I mailed her the pages on drama improvisation.

That episode reaffirmed my belief that I could reach out to younger drama enthusiasts who could benefit from my research and experience. Nainika, my younger granddaughter, is a warm and sensitive person and is fantastic at tennis and swimming. Ananya, who is 13, is my younger daughter Priya's daughter. She is a gifted dancer and also my computer teacher! Divya's daughter Mihika, 9, is a fearless person, who is also a keen and confident actress. I cherish them all, and perhaps indulge them a little, but never go against the rules their parents have set for them.

Though I enjoy going with the flow, I dislike compromising on discipline. About 40 years ago, I discovered the Ashtanga Yoga discipline of Patanjali—the eight-point blueprint for an individual's entire life. The *asana* and *pranayama* I practise have really influenced me on a mental, intellectual, ethical and spiritual level. I wake up at 4 am every day to meditate and chant the *Gayatri Mantra* and *Mahamrityunjaya Mantra*, then take a walk in the park, do *yogasana* and *pranayama*, and then practise at least 20 minutes of musical *riyaaz*.

If I were not an actor, I would have been a classical vocalist. Music has always been a very important part of my life. I studied Indian classical vocal music from the age of five from an excellent teacher, Shri Vipin Chandra of Gandharv Mahavidyalaya. Even when I travelled to the United States, I carried my tanpura and sang on many occasions. But by then my focus had shifted to drama, which didn't leave much time to pursue anything else. My favourites have always been Ali Akbar Khan, the renowned sarod player, vocalists Bade Ghulam Ali and Kishori Amkar, flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, and Pandit Jasraj. Among the western classical musicians I enjoy listening to Grieg, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Bach. My daily practise these days helps me reconnect with my musical side.

I savour life...moment by moment. I turned vegetarian 16 years ago, but I do still have a sweet tooth. I never go to the gym or beauty salon, and I have always preferred to do my own makeup and hair. The only beauty products I use are Monica Palta's,

non-commercial herbal products made by a dear beautician friend. As much as I enjoy nuts, fruits and vegetables, I can never resist chocolate. Bless the soul who said chocolates are beneficial to the soul!

I believe there is a source of energy responsible for all Creation. I strive to achieve that purity and perfection within me. I have great faith in the inner potential that each one of us is blessed with. Though all of us are vaguely aware of this metaphysical energy, we often spend most of our lives living on the periphery, without going within. I treat all miseries, misfortunes and disappointments as cleansing processes that help me discover my hidden strength to cope with adversities.

We should always strive for excellence and perfection in all we do, whether it is designing a dress, painting a picture, creating a role, or cooking a dish—which I'm terrible at! I love to paint, and potter around the house improving on the decor, arranging flowers and designing costumes for the Arpana dance-dramas and my family's clothes and jewelry. Fortunately, so far, everyone has always worn whatever I designed or bought for them, specially my husband Dhruv!

I don't enjoy discussing details of my personal life. It's not that I am media shy but I do believe our personal lives are best kept private. I prefer to share professional matters, or findings and information that will benefit readers. I never subscribe to any of the gossip magazines and prefer not to contribute to them either!



I have been very fortunate to have a wonderful spouse. My husband Dhruv not only encouraged me in my endeavours but never complained at my absences when I was away shooting all over the world. He was very secure in our relationship, romantic, and a charming extrovert who was a favourite with all age groups.

As a family, we used to often attend music and dance recitals. I still make time to watch classical concerts, dance programmes and plays in Delhi. I don't find the time to watch television or movies because I am out on rehearsals, performances and shoots. But I do make it a point to catch exceptional films, especially if the plot is unique and the music appealing. I quite like the slick packaging and experimental choreography in our films

today. I am proud that Indian films have such a huge market internationally. I was on the jury for the 2009 National Awards and was privileged to see some sensitive and excellent Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali and Hindi films.

Life is brimming with so many possibilities and there is no better age than now! We are more focused, calmer, patient, centred, and generous with our time, experience and knowledge. This is the time to give back to society, to family, to everyone, to be filled with gratitude for having received so much in life. Each one of us is gifted with a special talent. It is important to pursue that area of vocation, study and involvement to feel joyous, enthusiastic and creatively fulfilled. The focus should always be

to excel in one's chosen field. I do not seek reassurance at most times, and rely on my own judgement. But I do firmly believe that seeking fame and fortune is detrimental to creativity.

I recently bought myself a laptop when I was writing *Stageplay*; I am delighted by the convenience of email; writing and correcting text on the computer screen; having access to information from around the world; and the lightning connectivity that information technology offers you. At the same time, I'm still a novice when it comes to computers; while replying to an email, suddenly the matter I type out sometimes disappears and I am left without a clue how to locate it! During such instances, my granddaughter Ananya offers to be my trouble-shooter. I enjoy all of it.

Yours, mine, ours

Remember the good old days when coconut oil meant 'Parachute' and a matchstick was synonymous with 'Ship'? Over generations, these unsophisticated brands have been embraced almost like family, surviving the relentless consumerist onslaught post the Age of Liberalisation. Here's a slice of nostalgia, where we take a look at what makes these brands click. **Dhanya Nair Sankar** also speaks to the advertising experts for an insight into why these products still stand proud on the shelves of grocery stores, thumbing their nose at their new-age cousins

📷 Jit Ray and Haresh Patel

Roohafza

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, THIS SCINTILLATING THIRST-QUENCHER HAS BEEN THE TOAST OF MANY A SIZZLING SUMMER. COOKED UP BY HAKEEM (WAKF) LABORATORIES IN 1906, THE COMPANY FINALLY SIGNED ACTOR JUHI CHAWLA AS BRAND AMBASSADOR IN 2008.

So how did this soothing soft drink with its signature deep red hue survive the test of time? Alok Nanda, founder of Alok Nanda and Company, says the product is closely entwined with India's social fabric. "Roohafza may be called a traditional product now but it is certainly not a small brand," he says. "They have a very professional advertising set-up and are constantly

upgrading the brand to keep up with contemporary times." Brands, traditional or otherwise, cannot afford to alienate themselves from old customers while reaching out to newer ones, he adds. "Old brands need to balance their old-fashioned imagery in a contemporary context. It is a tightrope to walk but one that is necessary to undertake to survive the consumerist onslaught."

Delhi-based homemaker Pushpa Chauhan, 57, revels in Roohafza's "old-world comfort". "We have been drinking Roohafza since the 1980s, when it was the only refreshing drink available," she shares. "Unlike soft drinks, it is neither aerated nor heavily sugared."

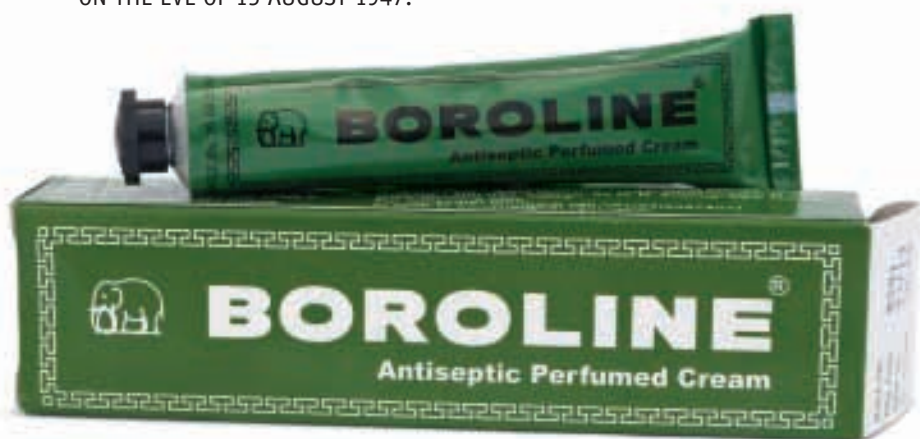


Boroline

THIS OVER-THE-COUNTER ANTISEPTIC CREAM WAS LAUNCHED IN KOLKATA IN 1929 BY BENGALI MERCHANT GOURMOHAN DUTTA AND BECAME A SYMBOL OF INDIA'S ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN COLONIAL TIMES. WHY, IT IS SAID THAT BOROLINE WAS HANDED OUT FREE TO ANYONE WHO ASKED FOR IT ON THE EVE OF 15 AUGUST 1947.

K V Sridhar, national creative director of Leo Burnett, says it's the 'trust' factor that has worked for Boroline. "Neither has the cream itself, nor the technology, or the packaging changed. The fact that it has acquired home remedy status further enhances its appeal." He adds, "Unlike big FMCG

brands, Boroline has maintained its fantastic relationship with regional distributors. This encourages word-of-mouth publicity and brand equity. But to resonate with the new generation, it should make subtle changes so it retains its loyal customers while appealing to younger ones."



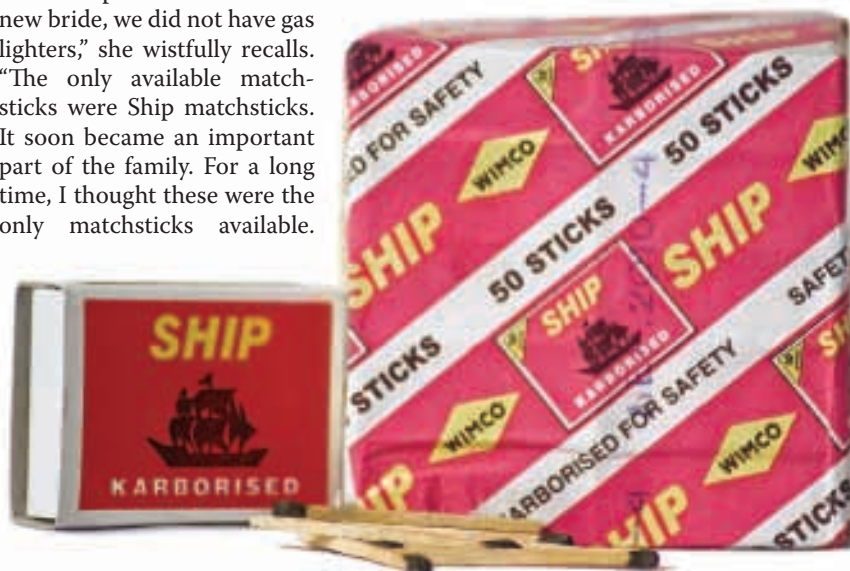
Ganga Menon from Palakkad, Kerala, calls Boroline a "family member". This matriarch has been using the cream for 50 years. "My mother insisted on applying it on me for 'smooth, supple skin' even though it was sticky," recalls Menon, now 75. "Now my skin is dry and sagging and it feels really good on my skin." She adds, "Times have changed and, today, consumers are spoilt for choice. But old habits die hard. Besides, why experiment just for kicks?" Her daughter Jayashree, 40, and 12 year-old granddaughter Sruthi swear by Boroline too.

Ship Matchbox

FOR THE BETTER PART OF 80 YEARS, IT HAS LIT UP EVERY INDIAN HOME AND KITCHEN: A RED WOODEN BOX WITH A BLACK SHIP ON IT FROM THE HOUSE OF WIMCO. "IN FACT, THE WORD 'MATCHSTICK' BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH 'SHIP'," REMINISCES ANAND HALVE, CO-FOUNDER OF CHLOROPHYLL BRAND & COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANCY. HE ADDS, "A BRAND'S IDENTITY BEING MORE THAN JUST A RECOGNISABLE SYMBOL IS RELATIVELY NEW IN INDIA. THEREFORE, IN THE PAST, BRAND NAMES AND SYMBOLS OFTEN DID NOT REPRESENT WHAT THE BRAND STOOD FOR." HALVE BELIEVES THE SHIP BRAND IS SO POWERFUL THAT IT NEED NOT CHANGE AT ALL. "IT'S PERFECT AS IT IS."

Sarswati Menon, 82, from Palakkad, Kerala, is very sentimental about the iconic Ship matchbox. "When I was a new bride, we did not have gas lighters," she wistfully recalls. "The only available matchsticks were Ship matchsticks. It soon became an important part of the family. For a long time, I thought these were the only matchsticks available.

I still ask my granddaughters to get Ship from the market when I actually mean matchsticks!"





Fevicol

LAUNCHED IN 1959, IT WAS THE FIRST WHITE GLUE MADE IN INDIA. HALF A CENTURY LATER, FEVICOL IS THE LARGEST-SELLING ADHESIVE BRAND IN ASIA AND A METAPHOR FOR PERSONAL BONDING AND STUBBORN STICKINESS.

"Fevicol is where it is today because Pidilite has constantly upgraded the product in terms of both brand building and product enhancement and by reaching out to their marketing team," says Piyush Pandey, executive chairman and creative director, Ogilvy & Mather South Asia. He says the secret of Fevicol is that the product has constantly reinvented it-

self. "It has not lost its identity and yet has a contemporary feel," adds Pandey, who has been the creative head for all the Fevicol advertisements. Another reason Fevicol has stuck around so long is that it has launched different versions of the same product. "Like the cult brand Volkswagen first came out with the Beetle and then other types of Volkswagen cars," he explains.

Chandreshwar, 56, a carpenter from Uttar Pradesh, has used Fevicol for as long as he can remember. "Before Fevicol, there was scarcely any glue that made wood stick together," he remarks. "The product made life easier for us."

Bandar Chap Kala Dant Manjan

A LITTLE-KNOWN MUMBAI-BASED COMPANY, NOGI AND CO PVT LTD, LAUNCHED THIS TOOTH POWDER ALMOST EXACTLY A CENTURY AGO. ALSO POPULARLY CALLED 'MONKEY BRAND' BY THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATION, BANDAR CHAP HAS HAD A SPARKLING RUN IN RURAL AREAS NEXT ONLY TO NEEM STEMS AS A TOOTH CLEANSER.

"Products like this do well in rural areas because sophisticated brands have relatively low penetration in these parts," says Piyush Pandey, executive chairman and creative director, Ogilvy & Mather South Asia. But the times, they are a-changing. "I used this product myself while growing up

in Jaipur," reveals Pandey. "But I doubt anyone uses it now even there. If Bandar Chap is doing well in this segment, it is because it is moving further into the interiors of the country. To survive competition, however, the company will have to market other oral-care products."

Nevertheless, Rukmini Devi, 72, a homemaker from Udaipur, is a staunch Bandar Chap loyalist. "We have been using this *dant manjan* for almost a decade," she says. "Though my children have moved on to fancy tooth-pastes, I stick to it because I am familiar with the product and it has done me a lot of good."



Tiger Balm

BACK IN THE DAY, PAIN RELIEF CAME PACKAGED IN A TINY HEXAGONAL JAR WITH A FLYING TIGER ON IT. HISTORY CREDITS A BURMESE HERBALIST, AW CHU KIN, WITH ORIGINALLY DEVELOPING THE RECIPE IN THE 1870s. THIS PANACEA FOR PAIN WORKS ITS MAGIC WITH A MIXTURE OF CAMPHOR, CLOVE AND MENTHOL.



"Fifteen years ago, globalisation spelt the death knell of many Indian brands but not brands like Tiger Balm, which remained true to their original core values," points out Mohammad Khan, founder of Enterprise Nexus and chairman of Bates Enterprise. But, he says, to continue to survive, these brands must reinvent themselves. "You have to make it relevant to the present generation while not losing the intrinsic values the brand represents. After all, that's the reason for its loyal following."

Ratan Pathak, 82, from suburban Mumbai describes Tiger Balm as "a doctor in your pocket". She began using the product when she was in her 30s and now recommends it to her 21 year-old granddaughter Sejal. "The current generation always seems to be in some kind of pain and this balm seems to relieve all of them even today," chuckles this retired policeman.

Jai Kajal

BEFORE EYE PENCILS, BEAUTY HAD JUST ONE NAME: JAI KAJAL. PACKAGED IN A SMALL GREEN JAR AND A LABEL SPORTING A MOTHER HOLDING HER CHILD, THE KAJAL HAS BEEN CHERISHED FOR COSMETIC PURPOSES AS WELL AS ITS AYURVEDIC PROPERTIES, WHICH INCLUDE RELIEF FROM SWELLING, IRRITATION AND SORENESS.



Anand Halve, co-founder of Chlorophyll Brand & Communications Consultancy, calls Jai Kajal a "branding phenomenon". "It was launched at a time when Indian beauty was defined by eyes and hair," he says. "Everyone aspired to long hair and large, black eyes. Even our Hindi songs spoke of beauties with *kajal*-

lined eyes." Modern cosmetic culture and changing notions of beauty have brought Jai Kajal under competitive pressure. To make it 'cool' to the current generation, Halve says, "I would associate the brand with someone who doesn't wear make-up and is not plastic but still loves to line her eyes with *kajal*."

Pune-based Praful Surpuriya, 56, has been buying Jai Kajal for his wife Suryamala, a homemaker, for the past 20-25 years.

"Unlike other *kajal*, this is purely Ayurvedic and it soothes your eyes," he says. "My wife even recommends it to the young women in our family. Most of them sit in front of a computer all day and we know from experience that Jai Kajal's cooling property brings relief."

Lookman-E-Hayat Tel

THIS RATHER RUSTIC-SOUNDING OIL IS MADE IN THE MOST COSMOPOLITAN CITY OF THE COUNTRY: MUMBAI. HERBAL OIL APPLIED ON CUTS, BRUISES, BURNS, ACHING MUSCLES, ALLERGIES AND RASHES, IT'S BEEN AROUND SINCE 1974.






"As city folk, we may not be able to recognise a brand like this. But just because it is not popular in urban areas doesn't mean the product is not important," remarks Alok Nanda, founder of Alok Nanda and Company. He admits that for brands like this to maintain their status, the question is not urban versus rural but modern versus traditional as traditional families living in cities might use a brand like this one. "The fact that this brand is still around means they are doing something right," explains Nanda. "It might be reaching out to a younger consumer by bringing in the nostalgia factor with the older ones and sprucing up its old-world, simple and comforting unpretentious imagery."

Raheem Khan, a 68 year-old shopkeeper from Aurangabad, swears by Lookman-E-Hayat Tel. "There is no need to buy a hundred remedies," he asserts. "It's an all-in-one. It also doesn't cost much unlike similar products. We have been using it for more than 20 years."

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PULLING STRINGS

FOR ALMOST THREE DECADES, RANJANA KANITKAR'S TALKING DOLLS HAVE KEPT SOCIAL MESSAGING ALIVE IN THE RURAL HEARTLAND, REPORTS **KHURSHED DINSHAW**

The term 'pulling strings' takes on a whole new meaning at the Kanitkar home in Pune—that's what gets the message across through their 'family' of wooden dolls. Stacked neatly on rows of shelves, their lifelike expressions take you by surprise at first. But then, that's what makes them such effective communicators.

This is the extended family of Ranjana Kanitkar and her late husband Hemant; their organisation The Puppet (The People's Universal Popular Puppetry Educational Theatre) has redefined the meaning of 'social messaging' in rural India. Set up in 1982, this non-profit learnt one of its first lessons the hard way. "During one of our initial shows, a performance on child marriage in Rajasthan, we were stoned for pointing a finger at this practice. We soon learnt the art of subtlety," laughs Ranjana, now 56, peeling back the years.

Hemant learnt the craft from his father, a talent he blended with training at the National School of Drama. In 1979, he earned a fellowship from the University of Mumbai for using puppets as an art form to spread social awareness in India's rural hinterland. Shortly thereafter, Hemant met Ranjana, a postgraduate in communication media and an idealistic political worker then, and together they set up

The Puppet. After Hemant succumbed to cancer in early 2008, Kanitkar has been stoically carrying the torch.

"Over the past 28 years, we've staged puppet shows in practically every corner of the country," explains Kanitkar, who is also a senior fellow with the Union Ministry of Culture. "As puppetry is a type of folk art and associated with entertainment, villagers instantly connect with these dolls. Also, as puppetry uses metaphors and humour, the message is easier to digest and gets the audience thinking. Besides, puppetry is a universal language and can be adapted to both rural and urban audiences. The issues in different communities and social groups may vary but the medium is equally effective in both settings."

Nevertheless, as The Puppet expanded its scope, the Kanitkars did come up against a language barrier of sorts. "To stage shows in different languages and reach out to more and more communities, we began teaching the craft to artists and social workers from other NGOs," she says. "Since inception, The Puppet has trained 55,000 people in some form of puppetry through 851 workshops."

Training aside, things always don't go according to script. As puppet shows are live, there have been times when lines have been forgotten or mixed up.

When this happens, the puppeteers have had to invent lines while being careful not to go off-track. "Speaking of improvisation, there have been times when we have reached a village and there's been no electricity," shares Ranjana. "We have performed puppet shows using the headlights of our much-travelled van!"

Only a year into their mission, the Kanitkars also began using puppetry as a therapeutic tool for children with physical and developmental disorders such as cerebral palsy, dyslexia and autism. Volunteers visit special schools, where they design puppetry exercises that integrate standard physiotherapy and other therapeutic techniques to make therapy fun and engaging for these children. Disabled soldiers at The Queen Mary's Technical Institute in Pune have also used these 'dolls' to express their bottled emotions and deal with their trauma.

To stay relevant and dynamic and keep extending its scope, the organisation has reinvented itself many times. As part of this strategy, it has enriched the repertoire of Bharud singers, travelling folk artists who sing devotional songs, by teaching them to incorporate social messages in their lyrics. Many of these singers have since travelled abroad as part of government cultural exchange programmes. "Thanks to TV and radio, people no longer came to listen to



me," says Niranjana Bhakre, a Bharud singer from Sillod near Aurangabad. "I even thought of becoming a mason but The Puppet has brought me into the mainstream and I can now financially support myself"

Using hand, string, rod, shadow and sometimes finger puppets, the Kanitkars have also adapted the craft to urban requirements, even changing lives in the process. "I was trained by The Puppet and I now perform puppet shows as part of my events," says Ragini Soman, a 45 year-old, Pune-based homemaker who now runs an event-management company. "From being subdued and dependent on my husband, I now manage my own company. I am a financially stable and confident woman." Similar to Soman, Mrudula Kelkar who belonged to a lower income group after interaction with The Puppet has not only learnt how to make puppets but also effectively use them to convey environmental issues and events.

In 2003-04 Maharashtra Association of Anthropology Studies (MAAS) commissioned The Puppet to do a 'before-after' puppetry performance assessment. Though for the Kanitkars, it was yet another challenging assignment, for Uma Dhavale from Nasirgaon village, who works with MAAS, it was a life-altering project: "I am an *anganwadi* teacher and found it boring to manage the kids at times. I found the work conducted by The Puppet extremely exciting and soon I overcame my stage fright by staging my own puppet show in the school where I taught." Being a widow, Dhavale had to tread carefully in the conservative milieu of which she was a part. "My in-laws and mother had inhibitions about me performing puppetry on topics like sex education," she says. "Now they are proud of me. My show was performed in front of 7,000 viewers and I received a lot of press coverage." Dhavale receives a fixed honorarium for her work and has done 34 puppet shows on HIV-AIDS awareness.

Seema Jagtap from Velhe Khurd, another *anganwadi* teacher, has a similar inspiring story to share. Jagtap's husband is alcoholic and jobless. "Earlier I was often taunted on the streets for the way my husband abused me," says Jagtap. "My husband had taken loans from many people and I was often accosted by them for repayment. The Puppet helped me shed my fears and gain confidence." She is grateful that the Kanitkars gave her the freedom to choose her own theme for her puppet show. As expected, she chose alcoholism and the anguish it caused in families. "Many women come up to me during my shows to share their experiences and ask questions," says Jagtap proudly. "Once, a government official even urged me to continue

In villages where there has been no electricity, Kanitkar has performed puppet shows using the headlights of her much-travelled van!

my work and destroy the illicit liquor trade." Armed with such encouragement, Jagtap is now spearheading a signature campaign to demolish liquor bars in Velhe Khurd."

Besides almost every state in India, the Kanitkars have brought a huge change in the lives of many such underprivileged men and women in the interiors of Maharashtra: Mapari Poonam from Goavwadi, Geaphale Mangal from Mormarewadi, Maipmalpotetai from Phalelane and Kaseaar Rekha from Budhvti. All of them are now spreading awareness on the importance of educating the girl child; dangers and prevention of HIV AIDS; women's healthcare concerns like abortion, sonography and hysterectomy; and water conservation. Ranjana says the next challenge is making The Puppet self-sustaining. One step in that direction was to open a training

centre in Karjat, a small town on the outskirts of Mumbai, a few years ago. Through short training modules, the Kanitkars taught volunteers to make puppets, script shows and use different forms of puppetry. Ranjana sold the Karjat training centre recently and plans to plough the funds back into the organisation's activities.

Though Hemant is not around through this round of reinvention, Ranjana's 23 year-old son Yogendra is helping her draw up a roadmap for the future. "An environmental engineer, he is the acting secretary and treasurer of The Puppet and besides emotional support, he offers practical, decision-making inputs," she says with pride.

Fund-raising is a related challenge. "As our work is unconventional, we get funds on an ad-hoc basis for experimental purposes. Most of our financial aid comes from foreign institutions. There is a perception in India that puppetry is only for entertainment," rues Ranjana. To stay in tune with the times, The Puppet is hoping to modernise its craft. It is therefore looking for collaborations that merge electronic inputs with puppetry, such as animatronix puppets. Still, Ranjana can't help but reminisce about the time her late husband created a bag puppet, a low-cost social communication tool made by using a gunny bag, which is easily available in any village. "The person himself becomes a puppet by cutting out arm slits and sticking old clothes or coloured paper on the bag to make a face and body. As the puppeteer wears the bag over his head, his face is concealed. As a nameless face, he gets the required courage to speak on social ills," she says, eyes misting.

Though Hemant passed away two years ago, Ranjana feels his presence strongly. "While working with puppets, I don't feel alone as I believe he is with me. But when it comes to taking important decisions about the organisation, I miss him a lot."

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Viewfinder

Centenarian Pranlal Patel still loves to photograph the changing world yet wishes some things didn't have to change with time, discovers **Dhanya Nair Sankar**

At 101, Pranlal Patel believes he still has a lot left to learn from life. The Ahmedabad-based photographer shares tips and tricks on light and shadow with amateur photographers who drop by at his house. "While I teach them about angles and composition, I learn some more facets about the craft that I was not aware of earlier," says Patel who often mentors budding photographers who cannot afford to pay for expensive photography courses. Though he has donated most of his old cameras and film to schools, he has retained some equipment to train his students.

Patel is clearly not ready to hang up his hat. When we meet him at his house, he appears sprightly and hearty. His handshake is firm and his smile beams at you through his eyes. "Yoga and *pranayama* are the best ways to keep your spirit intact," he says. "Age can wrinkle your body but it should not do the same to your mind." Patel is not merely making polite noises about ageing well—till two years ago, he was busy with assignments at his studio.

Interestingly—though his fascination for photography seems like a lifelong love affair—if it weren't for a stroke of destiny, Patel would have been a teacher. Born in January 1910 in Keshiya in Jamnagar, Patel moved to Ahmedabad at the age of three after his mother's demise. Though he was a keen photographer even in his teens, he never really thought of taking photography as a profession. In his late 20s, while working as a Gujarati teacher in Madalpur Gujarati School in Ellis Bridge, Patel suddenly altered the course of his career one fine day. "When an administrative officer came in for a surprise inspection

at the school where I was teaching, he noticed a camera hanging on the blackboard behind me," recalls Patel. "When he found out what it was and whom it belonged to, he shouted at me and asked me to quit teaching and set up a studio." Patel went ahead and did just that. He quit full-time teaching in 1930 and took off with his box camera to capture the world. "My heart was set on photography, but initially I couldn't have relied on it for my daily bread, so I used to teach at the school in the mornings and click pictures in the evening," he recalls.

"It's not the medium that makes the magic; it's the person behind the camera"

Thankfully, the subjects of his early experiments were more than willing. "Every Sunday, I used to go around town with my friends and click a series of 'people's' pictures," he says. Some of those pictures were published in Gujarati weekly *Kumar*. Soon, the magazine's editors Ravishankar Rawal, Bachubhai Rawat and Harinarayan Acharya turned mentors. "They would keep me on my toes all day, making me run the length and breadth of the city," he says. "I used to spend days dabbling with different cameras and clicking different subjects, and nights learning the art of developing films and managing the darkroom." Spurred by their encouragement, Patel grasped the intricacies of outdoor, candid, and wedding photography. "Today I am thankful they did not let me rest!"

The hard work paid off—Patel became one of the most prolific freelance photographers in Ahmedabad and his work started appearing in publications like *Chitrlekha*, *The Times of India*, *Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Your Health*. As Patel's heyday coincides with a period when India was in the throes of independence, he was one of the privileged few who captured history in the making. Nostalgia and excitement take over his voice as he shares some precious memories: "In the mid-1930s, when Gandhiji was returning from South Africa, all photographers including me were there to capture the historic moment when he was stepping out of the train. It was surreal to see the man who would later on become Mahatma." He also remembers taking shots of the Sabarmati Ashram and then washing the giant prints in the Sabarmati River! Ingenious creative techniques such as these lent a bewitching dignity to everything he captured on film—especially rural India. "I come from a simple background but the poverty and harsh realities of rural India opened my eyes to larger issues," he explains. "Despite all their problems, people in villages hold their head high and have a genuine smile and generous heart."

Patel was paid a princely sum of ₹ 15 for his work. And he saved every bit to invest on his heart's desire: the Super Ikonata camera. In 1940, when he had saved up ₹ 350 he purchased the camera and took off to Kashmir. Though his initial agenda was to see an exhibition by renowned photographer Abidbhai Sayed, on reaching the valley, he was completely transfixed by its beauty. "Today Kashmir is quivering with war and terrorism but back

then it was beauty personified," smiles Patel. He still vividly remembers the time when Dal and Wular Lake were still crystal clear, and 'the paradise on earth' was only known as a peaceful land filled with beautiful and healthy men, women and children and flower-bedecked *shikara* and snow. "I consider the Kashmir period of my life as the golden period," says Patel. The walls of his home are adorned with beautiful black-and-white photographs of Kashmir, when it was still many years away from being ravaged by hostility and terror. "Kashmir was poetry those days; its beauty could overwhelm you completely and turn you into an artist." Patel isn't far from the truth. His own oeuvre found national acclaim thanks to his photographs on Kashmir which were published in *The Times of India*, *The Hindu* and *Chitrallekha*, following which he got assignments from Rajkot, Jamnagar and Mysore.

Another personal highlight is the time he was assigned to capture the wedding ceremony of the prince of Rajkot. "Back then, we did not have films as sensitive as the ones we have now," he recounts.

"I had to use six, 500-volt bulbs to capture every detail of the procession. That, by the way, was the first time artificial lighting was used in Indian photography." Patel credits his late wife for constantly pushing him to do well. "It is true that behind every man's success lies a woman," he says fondly. "Damayanti was certainly responsible for mine." His memories of her are as

vivid in his mind's eye as the pictures he captured over the years. "Ours was an arranged match but her wit and beauty made me fall head over heels in love with her," he reminisces. Educated in Africa, Damayanti was an art lover who painted and dabbled in photography. However, she had one overriding passion: developing photographs. "She had a sharp eye



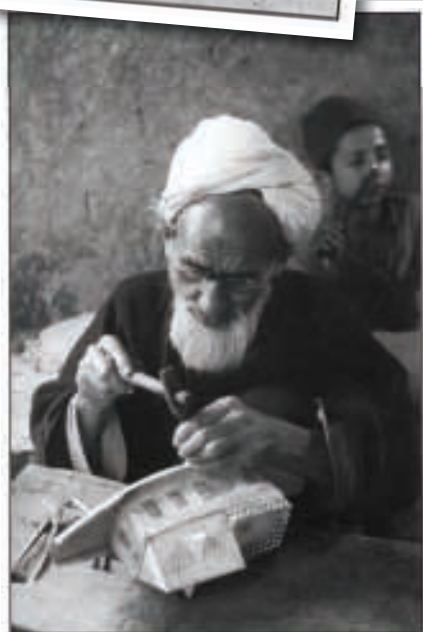
for colour and depth and knew how to enhance the subject while developing pictures," says Patel of his beloved. "Once when Queen Elizabeth was scheduled to visit India, a prominent newspaper wanted to do a story on the places she should visit. I was out of town but someone from the newspaper came asking for photographs of Somnath temple. None were devel-

oped. But she went to the darkroom attached to our house and developed 100 photos. I was deeply touched by her gesture."

In 1953, Patel set up a full-fledged studio in Dalia Building, Ellis Bridge. Today, his son Anand, who specialises in architectural photography, looks after the studio. "Needless to say, my father

has been my inspiration," says Anand, 70. "He taught me to view structure, whether a heap of bricks or cement, as a piece of art." His grandson Gautam, 45, who also runs a photo studio, is in awe of him. "Grandpa nurtured my talent and turned into a passion," says Gautam. "My fondest memory is of returning from school and going straight to his studio, where he would let me play with cameras, take my photos and even show me how to wash films." Patel's favourite subject these days is his great-grandson, Jai, Gautam's 10 year-old son.

Though he shares a great rapport with children and youth, Patel is scornful of digital photography. "He is a firm believer that the person behind the camera matters and not the medium itself," says Gautam. While teaching his students, he always underlines the importance of trusting one's instincts—something that, according to him, has been sacrificed at the altar of technology. "Back then one just couldn't afford to go wrong," says Patel. "Today exposure, colours and frames can be digitally manipulated. But all said and done, it's not the medium that makes the magic; it's the person behind the camera."



The WEEKLY for the young mind

Another magazine is probably the last thing you need.

**But then, we're
not just another
magazine.**



Though we share the same alphabets and words with other magazines, we still speak a different language when it comes to news. One with a judicious use of words, because we make it a point to get to the point. We opt for the globally-minded and pan-Indian, instead of staying within the confines of the cities you read us in. We tend to be sceptical and irreverent, so you can trust us more. And finally in the interest of saving time, both yours and ours, we make our features more engaging. And we like to surprise.

We believe you are ultimately what you read and we intend to give you what your intelligence demands. Because you have an open mind.

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Dr Anjali

Mukerjee

Eating right: Today's diet makes for tomorrow's energy

I am a 59 year-old woman. In the past few months, I have lost a lot of weight and generally feel weak. Please suggest remedial measures.

Life is all about energy. Within each of us lies a vital force known as 'vitality', life force or *prana* (in Sanskrit), which constitutes health when in balance and causes disease when deranged. The way each of us processes this vital energy makes a difference to our health. This energy may calm you down or activate you. It is only when there is an imbalance in the body's energy systems that it is unable to perform normal bodily functions. This imbalance can be caused by a number of reasons like death of a loved one; low self-esteem; a feeling of insecurity, fear, depression, lack of purpose in life, lack of emotional support from family members; or the need for love. Environmental factors such as toxins, pesticides in food, nutritional deficiencies and the stress of modern day living further suck our life force and leave us exhausted, irritable, negative and moody! To kick the body to work further we start taking stimulants like coffee, cigarettes, and energy-boosting drugs. This actually worsens the problem.

Real energy can only be released by putting in the right fuel. Therefore our goal in the pursuit of higher energy levels should be to understand how to make the right food choices to build up the body and not destroy it further by taking stimulants. The good news is that energy can be increased at any age, or at any level of fitness, whether you are lethargic or active, young or older. Your body makes it from the food you eat. The type of the food you ingest decides your energy for the day and for months to come. If you eat food deprived of nutrients, it will affect your energy levels later, if not now.

How does one increase energy levels?

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

Eat five to six mini meals every day. Studies show that people who eat small, frequent meals suffer less from

fatigue and think more clearly than those who eat two to three large meals a day. These mini meals should comprise dry fruits; fresh fruits; vegetable juices like cucumber juice, tomato juice, carrot, beetroots; a wholegrain salad sandwich; or wholegrain biscuits. To enhance energy levels, foods must be taken in their natural state—unprocessed. These mini meals should be consumed in between meals.

Eat sprouts raw. Sprouting increases the nutritional value of food and is an excellent way to consume seeds, beans and grains in raw form. When you cook the sprout, most of its energy-giving vitamins are destroyed.

Take Vitamin B supplements. The lack of B-complex vitamins leads to chronic fatigue. The entire B-complex protects nerves and increases energy levels. Food cannot be converted into glucose and utilised when there is a deficiency of B Vitamins. Natural dietary sources of this group are wholegrain cereals, leafy vegetables, unpolished rice, banana, yeast, peas, dals and pulses.

Avoid taking tranquilisers—these might help you sleep but do not eliminate fatigue. On the contrary, they make you feel more lethargic and dull and cloud your thinking.



Our goal in the pursuit of higher energy levels should be to understand how to make the right food choices to build up the body and not destroy it further by taking stimulants

Increase your activity level by exercising for 30 minutes regularly. (Don't overdo it, as it can work the other way for you.) The best form of exercise would be a brisk walk, swimming or stretching exercises.

Limit your sugar intake. Sugar may give you instant energy but in the long run it reduces your lifespan and makes you tired more easily.

Replace wheat with *jawar*, *bajra* or bran *roti* as wheat is difficult to digest and causes fatigue. But make sure you take other rich sources of calcium like leafy vegetables and soybean.

Drink a glass of raw vegetable juice like tomato, carrot and beetroot or coriander and lime every day. This helps increase the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood and improve energy levels.

Take supplements of CoQ10. It is a potent antioxidant and helps improve energy levels.

DIET TO BOOST YOUR ENERGY

- **Breakfast:** Two glasses of warm water; one cup green tea; a bowl of fresh fruits (of your choice)
 - **Mid-morning:** A wholegrain sandwich
 - **Lunch:** Chapatti (made from wheat, *jawar*, *bajra* or oatmeal); a cup of any vegetable; a cup of raw sprouts mixed with salad; a cup of curd
 - **Tea:** Herb tea; a glass of vegetable juice (cucumber, *dudhi*, tomato, spinach, beetroot or carrot); dry fruits (a handful) or two to four wholegrain biscuits made from oatmeal or millet
 - **Dinner:** A cup of whole wheat pasta or chapatti or brown rice; a cup of dal or fish or chicken; a cup of vegetables plus a cup of salads.
-

Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health related disorders. Visit www.health-total.com



If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

promotion

Nobel Guide



Dr Rajeev Narvekar is consultant prosthodontist at Jaslok Hospital and head of the Centre for Advanced Dentistry at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai.
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Email: narvekar.rajeev@gmail.com

Nobel Guide is the placement and restoration of dental implants using CAD CAM technology. This is a computer-guided, minimally invasive surgery where implants can be placed without opening the gums. Recovery time is negligible (e.g. discomfort and swelling) and it is so accurate that the bridgework can be placed at the time of surgery. Hence the name, 'Teeth in an Hour'.

Q1. I have heard people talk about how long it takes to complete the implant process, but then I heard the time frame wasn't right. What is the real truth?

Yes, some cases require the implants to heal in the bone and the treatment time is three months. But this treatment can also be done by a process called 'Immediate Loading' where the bridgework is placed at the time of surgery. Nobel Guide aids this process, as the implant positions are already predetermined and the bridgework can be pre-made.

Q2. I am missing all of my teeth and wear full upper and lower dentures. I can no longer tolerate my lowers. Will I need an implant for every tooth I am replacing on the lower jaw?

These are the cases best treated with Nobel Guide. The surgery for the entire jaw is painless, the teeth are placed immediately and the patient is back leading to a normal life immediately. A patient who is missing all her/his teeth would require anywhere between six implants for the upper jaw and five implants in the lower jaw. There are certain technical criteria that need to be met to determine whether the patient can be treated with Nobel Guide or needs conventional implant treatment. The benefit to patients and clinicians alike is astounding with Nobel Guide.

Q3. Is there any discomfort associated with getting implants?

Since Nobel Guide is a flapless procedure with minimal invasion, its implants can be placed painlessly and recovery is much faster as compared to conventional implant surgery.



Madhukar

Talwalkar

Handling hernia: Exercise without strain is the mantra

I am a regular at my gym since 2009. However, I have to undergo a surgery for hernia next month. How soon can I resume exercising and what kind of exercises would be suitable?

Most hernias are the result of straining, for example when lifting heavy objects, coughing or constipation. Being overweight also contributes to the problem because much of the excess fatty tissue is deposited around the intestine. This increases the pressure on the abdominal muscles and encourages the intestine to protrude through any weak area and thereby form a hernia.

You need to keep your weight down, not only to prevent the hernia from getting worse but to make surgery easier. Avoid exercises that involve heavy lifting, pulling or pushing. These close off your throat, which increases abdominal pressure and the size of the hernia. Besides, such exercises do not burn calories efficiently and will not help with weight loss. Do aerobic exercises at a steady rate for long periods, say 30 minutes at a time, which do not involve closing off the throat with effort. Recommended activities include swimming and static cycling.

The use of a recumbent exercise bike is ideal. It forces you to use the most powerful muscles in the body, the thigh muscles, even as the sitting position relaxes your abdominal muscles and doesn't exacerbate the hernia. If the hernia is bulging outwards continually, ask your doctor about a temporary truss to hold it back so that you can exercise. Try to exercise aerobically for 30 minutes every other day at a moderate pace.

Strengthening your abdominal muscles following hernia repair:

In the absence of medical advice, it would be wise to wait for a month before starting a strengthening programme.

Strengthening would initially involve sit-ups, or more correctly abdominal curls, on a firm flat surface—ideally the floor. The knees should be raised in order to minimise the probability of using the hip flexors in place of the rectus abdominis. The actual amount of knee raises are a matter of personal choice; try raising them until the heels touch the fingertips; if that feels uncomfortable, lower them slightly.

Initially, aim to reduce the pressure of the shoulder blades on the floor, without any obvious bodily movement. In the early stages, rest the fingertips of the appropriate hand over the site of the hernia repair and over the stoma, aiming to detect any obvious difference in the feel of the sites, compared to the surrounding abdominal wall as it takes up the stress. The temptation should always be resisted to join the hands behind the head, which tends to place unnecessary stress on the neck; just keep your arms on the floor with the fingertips monitoring the movement.

One vital point: if you have a stoma or a hernia, repaired or otherwise, on no account should you hold your breath while carrying out a task. Holding the breath has the effect of increasing intra-abdominal pressure, which is just about the worst possible situation for a hernia repair. A useful reminder is the 'grunt rule'—if it makes you grunt, don't do it! When doing abdominal curls, think in terms of squeezing the air out as you curl, and it will come naturally to breathe out as you curl up.

Any muscle strengthening exercise should be carried out only on alternate days: the muscle is weakened by the exercise, and strengthens in the following 48 hours. Exercise the same muscle every day and the result will almost certainly be to weaken it: a process known as over-training. Be sensitive also to any soreness in the vicinity of a repair, which would indicate that the muscle is responding to local stresses. Only you can judge your progress, and when to move to a more demanding task.

Madhukar Talwalkar is chairman of Talwalkar's, one of India's largest chain of fitness centres with 78 branches across major cities. Website: www.talwalkars.net



Shameem

Akthar

Dealing with dyspnoea: Soothe breathlessness away with yoga

Breathlessness is now accepted as a serious ailment with a medical tag to it: dyspnoea. Causes include heart problems, inefficiency of the respiratory mechanism, weak muscles, panic or anxiety disorders, anaemia or even cancer. Whatever the cause, breathlessness can ruin normal life functioning, limit activities and make a person anxious about all forms of exercise.

Evidence suggests that rehabilitation, which improves tolerance to exercise, is better than conventional medical therapy. This is achieved by habituating the respiratory mechanism and has been proven to improve lung capacity up to 30 per cent in just a few weeks. Anxiety is reduced even further if the therapy is done at

home. However, yogic therapy should be phased out and individualised. Indeed, a few weeks of carefully monitored, consistent practice can create a remarkable tolerance to exercise that can last up to six months. The key word is 'consistency'.

Various levels of practice may be carefully incorporated in yoga, with generous use of props to attain poses without exertion—at least initially. Backbends that open the chest include the camel (*ushtrasana*) and lying thunderbolt pose (*supta vajrasana*). Standing poses that stretch the entire body, giving it an overall workout, are ideal start-ups: these include the palm tree (*tadasana*); abdominal twist (*katichakrasana*); downward

dog pose (*adhomukha svanasana*); and the triangle (*trikonasana*) and all its variations. Soothing inversions, such as the inverted psychic lock (*viparita karani mudra*) help to ease anxiety away. Forward bends have a similar impact while improving deep, belly breathing: these include the standing downward stretch (*utтанasana*) and seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*). The cow face pose (*gomukhasana*) and psychic union pose (*yoga mudrasana*) also encourage deep, measured breathing. Practising some breathing exercises (*pranayama*) that are healing (without breath retention), like energy purifying breath (*nadi shodhana*) and humming bee (*bhramari*), will further boost breath control.

YOGIC MOVES

Side-stretch angle pose (*utthita parsvakonasana*)



Stand up straight with your feet a metre apart. Flare the right foot towards the right side. Inhale; hold hands out at shoulder level. Exhale; lunge towards the right, bending the right knee, to place your right palm on the ground outside the right foot. Continue breathing, holding the left arm up, palm pointed up. Keep your eyes focused on the raised palm. Hold for a few seconds. Inhale; stand back to starting position. Repeat for the

other side. Ensure your feet are flat on the ground; this intensifies the stretch and improves stamina further.

Caution: Ensure you have some yoga practice before trying this pose, which calls for flexibility and strength.

Benefits: This pose gives a transverse twist to the spine, effectively massaging the organs and glands hanging alongside, including the lungs. The twist also makes the lungs stronger. Your legs too become strong, improving the efficiency of the heart. The pose improves your focus and helps you de-stress.

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 advice given here)



Dr Norman

Relkin

Alzheimer's turned upside down: Brain plaque as hero, not villain

Age-related disorders have become so common that they may seem inevitable. Over 3 million older people in India are currently afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, a form of age-related brain failure and a leading cause of dementia in elderly people worldwide. Alzheimer's initially causes rapid forgetfulness and then slowly impairs all higher brain functions until the person declines into a state of complete dependency. It can be treated but not cured and, in most cases, causes death from associated medical complications after two to nine years of illness.

Ironically, the current epidemic of Alzheimer's followed from 20th century successes in medicine and nutrition as well as other advances that extended average life expectancy beyond 60 years. Studies confirm that the longer we live, the greater our chance of developing Alzheimer's disease. The risks are higher for individuals who have blood relatives with Alzheimer's and among carriers of certain genetic risk factors. The risk is also slightly higher for women than for men. However, there is reason to believe that Alzheimer's is not an inevitable part of ageing. The lifetime risk of getting Alzheimer's is only about 10-15 per cent. This means there is an 85-90 per cent chance of living a normal life without developing the disease. The factors that protect certain persons from developing Alzheimer's when they become very old while others are affected at a relatively young age remain unknown at this time.

Although the exact causes of Alzheimer's remain a mystery, a protein

fragment produced by brain cells called beta amyloid has been implicated as a key player. Strands of beta amyloid molecules called fibrils accumulate in the brain of people afflicted with Alzheimer's in microscopic collections known as plaques. Plaques were first identified in the brains of demented individuals by Dr Alois Alzheimer over 100 years ago. They remain an important sign of the disease that is still used today by medical pathologists to confirm the diagnosis of Alzheimer's after death.

The emerging idea is that the amyloid plaque may actually be a way for the body to sequester harmful amyloid oligomers in a relatively inert form, thereby defending the brain from the nearly invisible attack of the oligomers

Given the strong association between amyloid plaques and Alzheimer's, medical scientists sought ways to eliminate plaques from the brain and prevent their deposition. Over the past two decades, several promising anti-amyloid drugs were discovered and tested in clinical trials. Four major clinical studies of anti-plaque medications have been completed that collectively involved several thousand patients. Sadly, all four of

these anti-amyloid agents failed to stop the progression of the disease. In fact, patients receiving certain anti-amyloid treatments actually declined more rapidly than those receiving an inactive placebo!

This medical mystery deepened when follow-up studies showed that some anti-amyloid agents were actually quite successful in removing plaques from the brain. Their lack of clinical effectiveness could not be explained as a failure to clear amyloid plaques. Instead, scientists were forced to re-examine the basic idea that amyloid-containing plaques are the primary cause of brain degeneration in Alzheimer's. Some scientists, including myself, believe that we are still on track in targeting beta amyloid but not in concentrating on the relatively inert form of amyloid that is deposited in plaques. A new idea has emerged that could turn the world of Alzheimer's disease research upside down. Stated simply, plaques may prove to be more protective than harmful.

How could the amyloid plaque be a hero, rather than the villain, when it comes to Alzheimer's disease? Beta amyloid, studies now show, has a secret life. Between the time it is produced as a protein fragment in brain cells and later deposited in plaques between brain cells, it undergoes a series of folding and aggregation steps to form what are called 'amyloid oligomers'. Oligomers are soluble amyloid aggregates that can freely diffuse around the brain and are highly toxic. They compromise brain function and kill brain cells at concentrations that are so low that they cannot be



detected by the techniques most doctors currently use to examine brain tissue. As oligomers cannot be as easily visualised as plaques, their existence went undiscovered for many years. The emerging idea is that the amyloid plaque may actually be a way for the body to sequester harmful amyloid oligomers in a relatively inert form, thereby defending the brain from the nearly invisible attack of the oligomers. By analogy, the plaque may be viewed as holding cells to neutralise enemy combatants (amyloid oligomers) rather being the arbiters of an assault on the brain themselves.

There are now a handful of treatments under study that can foster the clearance and detoxification of amyloid oligomers. I am currently leading one such study, a Phase 3 clinical trial of intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) for treatment of Alzheimer's. IVIG is made from human blood plasma and contains several naturally occurring antibodies against beta amyloid, including several that target amyloid oligomers. In earlier phases of study, IVIG maintained thinking ability and daily function in mild to moderate stages of Alzheimer's while lowering soluble forms of amyloid in the fluid

around the brain. Alzheimer patients treated with IVIG showed improvement in brain metabolism and slower rates of brain shrinkage than those treated with placebo. The ongoing Phase 3 study of IVIG for Alzheimer's is scheduled to be completed in late 2012. That year will mark a decade since we last saw a new class of medication approved to treat Alzheimer's disease. With the prevalence of Alzheimer's in India and the rest of the world increasing so rapidly, we must all hope and pray we do not have to wait another decade for a breakthrough in treating this disease.

The author is a professor at Weill Cornell Medical College, New York



Dr Blossom

Kochhar

Winter skincare: Home remedies to pamper yourself

As the air gets cooler, the skin gets drier. Cold winds during winter lead to dry, red patches and tight, flaky skin. Even if you are inside your warm, cosy home, you could be doing your skin more harm than good by sitting too close to the heater. The dry air simply drains your complexion of its moisture. The rest of your body—hair, feet, hands—also suffers the onslaught of the cold.

FACE

Most soaps are extremely dry. Use a gentle cleansing lotion or cleansing cream instead. Moisturising is the next important step. As winter skin usually loses moisture more quickly than it can replenish, it has to be protected with extra-rich emollients. These moisturisers help seal in the water below the skin surface and act as a barrier against external conditions. Use a heavier moisturiser than you usually use during the hot summer months. Apply moisturiser while the skin is damp, evenly over your entire face, massaging cream upward and outwards.

Every night before going to bed, and after cleansing your skin with an appropriate cream, take one tablespoon of almond oil and mix in a few drops of glycerine, castor oil and two drops of patchouli essential oil. Mix well and apply on your face, neck and hands. Leave overnight and rinse in the morning with warm water and splash with cold water.

Here's a homemade facial mask you can try. Mix one-fourth cup yogurt;



Extra-rich emollients help seal in the water below the skin and act as a barrier against external conditions

a teaspoon of honey; a tablespoon of milk powder and two drops of sandalwood essential oil. Leave the pack on for 20 minutes and then splash with cool water. Do this once a week for best results.

Use a pot of water plus two drops of rose essential oil over your heater to keep the air in your home moist. Or slightly open a window to allow some fresh air in. Do not take a bath or wash your face at least half an hour

before going out into the cold. Your skin loves water but water that has moisturised your face will chap the skin when cold air hits it.

HAIR

Conditioning your hair during winter is important. We use deep conditioners to help revive dry, damaged hair, and hair that is excessively brittle or broken. Deep conditioners contain large amounts of protein. For these proteins to be absorbed into the hair shaft, a deep conditioner should be applied for a longer time. The protein works by repairing hair damage at the area that is badly in need of help. Conditioning also helps restore the loss of moisture in hair, reduce friction and adds 'combability' to your hair. In addition, it removes dryness.

For a magic rinse, mix one teaspoon of castor oil; one teaspoon of *amla* or *brahmi* oil; one teaspoon of malt vinegar; one teaspoon of glycerine; one teaspoon of shampoo and three drops of eucalyptus oil. The castor oil gives body to hair, herbal oil acts like a hair tonic, vinegar restores the acid mantle, glycerine moisturises and shampoo is the medium that blends the ingredients. Before washing your hair, apply this mixture gently and leave on for about 20 minutes. Shampoo out with clear water and feel the marvellous change in your hair texture.

For extra shine and sheen, grate two to three onions and some cabbage together and leave in a copper utensil overnight. In the morning, add a few drops of 'ylang ylang' oil to remove

the onion smell. Mix in a few drops of herbal oil like *amla* or *brahmi*; leave it on your hair for 20 minutes and shampoo it off. Your hair will gain superb gloss and colour. Follow this routine once a week for best results.

FEET

For rough cracked heels, take about 100 gm of coconut oil; 5 gm camphor and 20 gm paraffin wax. Melt and store in a tin. Use on clean feet at night daily till the cracks disappear. Wash feet in the morning and use a hand and body lotion.

HANDS

Try some exercises to improve blood circulation, which is at the root of

many hand problems. Stretch your hands out in front of you and stretch your fingers as far apart as you can, keeping them tense. Hold this position for a count of ten and slowly reduce the tension in your fingers. Repeat 10 times daily. You can also shake your hands vigorously several times a day. Apart from this, take a course of calcium tablets and massage your hands daily.


To help roughened or chapped hands and keep your hands smooth and soft, take one teaspoon of sugar; one teaspoon of honey; one teaspoon of almond oil; a teaspoon of lemon juice and two drops of geranium oil. Mix together and massage your hands with it for five minutes and rinse off. Dry and apply hand cream or lotion.

BODY

To remove dead skin and obtain a soft and polished texture, take a ripe, peeled and seeded papaya; one-fourth cup yoghurt (natural); two tablespoons honey and three drops of geranium oil. Blend all the ingredients and puree for 30 seconds. Apply on skin, leave on for 15-20 minutes and rinse off or take a shower. Do this once a week.

You must also religiously use a hand and body lotion after a bath or shower every day. Giving yourself a massage with almond or olive oil, to which a few drops of sandalwood essential oil or lavender oil have been added, before a bath also helps keep your skin soft.

Blossom Kochhar is a beauty expert who specialises in alternative, herbal and aroma therapies. She manufactures a wide range of beauty products under the brand name 'Blossom Kochhar - Aroma Magic'



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Gender BENDER

A new study by Ewha Women's University School of Medicine, South Korea, suggests that **gender-specific prostheses offer no special clinical benefits** compared to standard ones. The gender-specific total knee prosthesis was developed to closely match the anatomy of the female knee, aiming to be a better fit resulting in a better outcome. However, it is now suggested that a standard prosthesis fits a woman's knee better than a gender-specific implant as it fits the distal part of the femur better. "The gender-specific prosthesis was developed a few years ago with the anticipation that it would give improved results over the years," Dr Sharat Kumar, orthopaedic and sports medicine consultant at Apollo Hospital in Hyderabad, tells *Harmony*. "However, recent reports have not been very encouraging. Today, it has become another medical-business model. In about 95 per cent of cases, we recommend a general prosthesis to our elderly female patients as it gives all the required benefits. A gender-specific implant offers no specific advantage."



Keeping in mind the rising number of heart diseases in India, the **Apollo Hospitals have launched a campaign called Billion Hearts Beating (BHB) to spread awareness on prevention of heart disease**, various risk factors and how the disease can be controlled. Heart disease in India has spread at an alarming rate—Indians are three to four times more likely to have a heart attack than their western counterparts. To pledge support, go to www.billionheartsbeating.com

Keyed in

According to a new study by Rush Alzheimer's Disease Centre in Chicago, **mild memory loss does not comprise normal ageing.** The condition is called benign senescent forgetfulness or age-associated memory impairment that results from slowing of neural processes. However, such sluggishness in cerebral affairs does not interfere significantly with activities of daily living and is not a precursor of pathologic ageing. The condition is characterised by 'senior moments' such as forgetting someone's name (a mild symptom of cognitive decline). Symptoms confirmed in objective tests include a general slowness in processing, storing and recalling new information, and a general decline in the ability to perform tasks related to cognitive functioning. Benign senescent



forgetfulness usually affects short-term memory rather than long-term or remote memory. "Patients tend to forget where they have kept something or a less familiar person's name," Dr Alka Subramanyam, consultant psychiatrist at Nair Hospital in

Mumbai, tells *Harmony*. "However, some patients might be suffering from mild cognitive impairment that may or may not interfere with daily activities. This stage is usually considered as the transitional stage between normal ageing and dementia."



Anchal Kejriwal

SWEAT IT OUT

According to new guidelines for physical activity released by Delhi-based National Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol Foundation, **Indians, including the ageing population, need to bid farewell to sedentary lives and get more active than their western counterparts.** This is because we genetically have high insulin resistance and abdominal obesity, making us more vulnerable to non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, cardiac disease and metabolic complications. "A majority of Indians, including silvers, lead a sedentary lifestyle thanks to our rapid economic and demographic transformation," Dr Priyanka Nigam, research officer at the foundation, tells *Harmony*. "Thus, exercise should be the topmost priority." Indians are advised to exercise for an hour for seven days a week; for silvers, it is 30-45 minutes, six days a week. "Though the elderly tend to become immobile after a certain age, for healthy ageing they should do at least low-resistance exercises like walking for about 30 minutes and increase it gradually," she adds. "Of course, those who are already suffering from an ailment should exercise under medical supervision. But exercise for all Indians is a must."

The truth inside

Unlock your inner potential, says Osho

When he [Gautam Buddha] says, "Be a light unto yourself," he does not mean become a light unto yourself. There is a great difference between being and becoming.

Becoming is a process, being is a discovery. The seed only appears to become the tree; that is an appearance. The seed already had the tree within itself; it was its very being.... A rock cannot become a rose; that doesn't happen because a rock has no potential to become a rose. The seed simply discovers itself through dying into the soil: dropping its outer shell, it becomes revealed in its inner reality. Man is a light in the seed.... You are not to become a light unto yourself, it is already the case. But you don't go in; your whole journey is outward. We are being brought up in such a way that we all become extroverts. Our eyes become focused on the outside. We are always seeking and searching for some goal 'there,' far away. The farther the goal, the more challenging it appears to the ego. The more difficult it is, the more attractive it appears. The ego exists through challenges; it wants to prove itself. It is not interested in the simple, it is not interested in the ordinary, it is not interested in the natural, it is interested in something that is neither natural, nor simple, nor ordinary. Its desire is for the extraordinary. And the reality is very ordinary, it is very simple. The reality is not there but here, not then but now, not outside but in the innermost sanctum of your being. You have just to close your eyes and look in.

In the beginning it is difficult because the eyes only know how to look out.



The reality is not there
but here, not then
but now, not outside
but in the innermost
sanctum of your being.
You have to just close
your eyes and look in

They have become so accustomed to looking out that when you close them, then too they continue to look out—they start dreaming, they start fantasising. Those dreams are nothing but reflections of the outside.... But your eyes are still open to the outside world, you are not in. In fact, every meditator comes across this strange phenomenon: that whenever you close your eyes your mind becomes more restless, your mind becomes more insane. It starts chattering in a crazy way: relevant, irrelevant thoughts crisscross your being.... And naturally you become tired, naturally you think it is better to remain oc-

cupied in something, in some work, rather than sit silently with closed eyes, because nothing seems to happen except a long, long procession of thoughts, desires, memories. And they go on coming, unending.

But this is only in the beginning. Just a little patience, just a little waiting.... If you go on looking, watching these thoughts, silently, with no judgment, with no antagonism, with no desire even to stop them—as if you have no concern with them—unconcerned.... Just as one watches the traffic on the road, or one watches the clouds in the sky, or one watches a river flow by, you simply watch your thoughts. You are not those thoughts; you are the watcher, remembering that "I am the watcher, not the watched." You cannot be the watched; you cannot be the object of your own subjectivity. You are your subjectivity, you are the witness, you are consciousness—and remembering it! It takes a little time; slowly the old habit dies. It dies hard but it dies certainly. And the day the traffic stops, suddenly you are full of light. You have always been full of light; just those thoughts were not allowing you to see that which you are....

When all objects have disappeared, there is nothing else to see, you recognise yourself for the first time. You realise yourself for the first time. It is not becoming; it is a discovery of being. The outer shell of the thoughts of the mind is dropped, and you have discovered your flowers, you have discovered your fragrance. This fragrance is freedom. Hence don't ask, "How can I become a light unto myself?" You are already a light unto yourself....

Excerpt from Walking in Zen, Sitting in Zen (Westland; ₹ 295; 374 pages) by Osho. Osho, also known as Acharya Rajneesh, was an Indian mystic and spiritual teacher who deliberated extensively on meditation, creativity, love and awareness

“Even in my twilight years, I can be outdoors amid nature and sensitise people to it”

**MAJOR GENERAL (RETD)
HARWANT KRISHAN, 61**

RETURN TO NATURE



The adventurous life in the Army teaches you many things. You interact with all kinds of people and it sensitises you to the ways of nature. You bask in the sun, rain, snow and the wind because that's the only way to survive. In the Army, we pledge to lead an active, independent life. Post-retirement, I thought I would continue to practice what I had preached.

After spending 33 years in the Army, I retired in 2007. I could have spent the rest of my life playing golf and leading a cushy life but I wanted to put my physical and mental energy to use. The love of roughing it out prompted me to start an eco-tourism-plus-adventure camp in Solan, Himachal Pradesh. Along with a former colleague, Brigadier (ret'd) H S Nagra, I

set about getting the requisite clearances from the government and we set up Pine Hills eco-camp in 2009. It is a government-private partnership spread across 1 hectare and cost me a large chunk of my savings.

In combat, you are completely attuned to nature. The idea behind Pine Hills is to show civilians that they can enjoy nature and also contribute to preserving our depleting green belts. The biggest challenge was to identify a suitable place for the camp. As most people do not have the time for long holidays, we wanted our camp to be easily accessible. Pine Hills is thus easy to reach from both Delhi and Chandigarh. Second, all our products needed to be eco-friendly. We have therefore used only natural products like mud and wood at our camp. We conduct

fun activities such as trekking, nature walks and forest walks for our guests. We also have outbound training programmes for corporate firms, where they learn to enhance team-building, decision-making and bonding skills amid nature.

It's a challenging but exhilarating job to manage a camp. We usually live in the camp itself as there is so much to look after such as maintenance and manpower. We have a team of 15 people, mainly locals, who help us. But then, the Army teaches you many things: forecasting, logic, vision, time management and dealing with all kinds of people. But the biggest high is that even in my twilight years, I can be outdoors amid nature and sensitise people to its wonders.

—As told to Dhanya Nair Sankar

ANIMAL MAGNETISM

EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR QUERIES AND CONCERNS ON JOBS AFTER RETIREMENT

I am a retired army officer and animal lover. I am thinking of starting a kennel. How should I go about it?

Running a kennel is a time-consuming and tough occupation, so make sure you have a good understanding of canine behaviour. You need to have a capital of at least ₹ 300,000 to start. You need about an acre of land to set up the kennel. The place should have a good boundary wall with iron or steel fencing. Conduct market research and get updated on various breeds, their popularity, quality and health. There is no need to start a kennel with several breeds; identify one to begin with. Consult a veterinarian before designing your facility for maximum comfort.

Get the American Kennel Club or Indian Kennel Club certificate for your dogs; this would certify that your dogs are pure breeds and in good health. The offices of these clubs are located in all major cities and they personally certify your dogs after a thorough check-up. Getting these certificates build credibility. Advertise in local newspapers or through flyers; you can also put up posters near colleges and malls to attract clientele or even advertise online. Take your dogs to local dog shows. You need to employ at least four to five people for cleaning, grooming and walking, to look after marketing and to deliver the dogs to customers. Running a kennel is a challenging art that can be



a successful business only if you are passionate about dogs.

—Fardeen Mehdi runs a kennel called *Pets Paradise* in Hyderabad

I am a retired photojournalist. I want to start a travel firm for seniors. How do I get started?

As travelling has caught on among all age groups, this is a good area to venture into. Your passion apart, you need to have strong networking and quick decision-making skills. As you want to start a small-scale set-up for a niche group, you can begin with an investment of about ₹ 10,000, but make sure you have a computer, good Internet connection and a printer. You can start by advertising on travel websites, blogs and social networking sites. Later, word-of-mouth publicity and media coverage will help. You could hire a young person for a small stipend to run minor errands or collect payment from customers, though with Internet banking you can do away with this as well.

A lot of your work depends on your ability to research and come up with innovative travel packages for your target group. You could go for ofbeat options like hill stations, bird sanctuaries, temple tourism, spiritual/yoga tourism and organic tourism. Depending on your travel group and

nature of tourism, you could tie up with hotels—they usually give good discounts to large groups. Your success in such a venture depends solely on how innovative your travel packages are and how well you network with hotels and your target group.

—Mumbai-based Rushikesh Kulkarni runs *Breakfree Journeys*, a travel firm

I retired as an English teacher, but I know French as well. How can I use my language skills to earn a modest living?

With a lot of Indians going abroad and the boom in the hospitality and IT sectors, demand for the French language has risen. To be a private French tutor, you need to have completed your diploma or degree in French from a reputed institute. You could first begin by teaching younger schoolchildren. It is best to affiliate with a private coaching class initially as it will help you to make contacts and give you further grounding. Later, you could start individual or group classes from your home. Ideally, you should target students who have at least completed Class X. You can advertise in local newspapers; later, word-of-mouth publicity helps.

Each course should be typically divided into three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. Each level comprises 30 hours of teaching. You could charge up to ₹ 5,000 for the basic level, ₹ 6,500 for intermediate level and ₹ 8,500 for the advanced level. Teaching is usually done by English to French translations, audio sessions and reading aloud. Your success will depend on how well you reach out, your patience and how well you can gauge a student's potential.

—Bengaluru-based Ajanta Talukdar is the director of the *Language School*, a language training institution

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Bumpy landings

How far are service providers accountable to passengers whose baggage has been lost? **M S Srihari** has some answers

With so many highly modern international airline carriers carrying thousands of passengers every day, our world has indeed become smaller—it is reported that India has the fastest growing number of air passengers in the world. I have endeavoured to prepare and present a book with 22 chapters—each covering a distinct aspect of air service—in such a manner that the reader, whether an air passenger or a person in the legal fraternity in pursuit of a solution for his air travel-related problems, can find an answer to his question.

Complaint regarding missing baggage not maintained, if not made within prescribed time

The provisions relating to discovery of damaged baggage or cargo as the case may be and complaint to be lodged thereon are contained in Rule 27 of Schedule 11 to the Carriage by Air Act, 1972, are as under:

Receipt by the person entitled to delivery of baggage or cargo is prima-facie evidence that the same has been delivered in good condition and in accordance with the document of carriage. In case of damage, the person entitled to delivery must complain to the carrier forthwith after the discovery of the damage, and, the latest, within seven days from the date of receipt in the case of baggage and 14 days in the case of cargo. In case of delay, the complaint must be made at the latest, within 21 days from the date on which the baggage or cargo have been placed at his/her disposal.

Every complaint must be made in writing upon the document of carriage or by separate notice in writing dispatched within the time aforesaid. Failing complaint within the time aforesaid, no action shall lie against the carrier, save in the case of fraud on its part.



In case of damage to your baggage, you must complain to the carrier within seven days from the date of receipt

In one case, the suitcase (the contents of which were alleged to have been stolen) was delivered to the complainant by the staff of the carrier on 15.8.1992 on arrival at the destination. However, in the Damaged Baggage Report (DBR), the complainant did not mention details of the missing articles. His complaint giving particulars of missing articles was made on 25.9.1992. The National Commission

ruled that the claim was not maintainable even otherwise under sub-rule (4) of Rule 27. No action lay against the carrier, as no complaint was lodged within the period mentioned in Sub-Rule (2) of Rule 27. Once action is barred under the law, provisions of Section 24A of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (which provide for limitation period of two years to admit a complaint by the Forum) are inapplicable. On both these grounds, no claim would lie against the carrier. While on the subject of 'Limitation', the ratio in another case before the Delhi State Commission is interesting. Here, the Commission ruled that claims for damages for loss of baggage are not such which are governed by the Limitation Act or the provisions of the Civil Procedural Code. These are only damages provided to a consumer on account of deficiency in service or unfair trade practice. The providers of service are not expected to take such a plea.

In this case, the appellant (British Airways) had contended that it offered \$ 250 to the complainant after filing of the purchase voucher against the damaged bag, which was delivered late; but the complainant did not accept it. Subsequently, the Airways did not pay the sum by claiming that it had become time-barred and called upon him to file purchase vouchers. Whether such an offer was initially made or not, the fact remained that the Airways declined to pay even \$ 250 on a highly flimsy plea that the claim had become time-barred, which clearly amounted to deficiency in service.

Excerpted from Remedy for Air Travel Hassles (Ameya Publications; ₹ 360; 270 pages) by M S Srihari, a Bengaluru-based legal consultant. Email: srihari.s.murthy@gmail.com

Money-back policy

AFTER SPENDING 31 YEARS IN THE BANKING SECTOR, JUNAGARH-BASED J P SHAH HAS TURNED INTO A RTI CRUSADER. WITH HIS BLOG AND PHONE HE HELPS WIDOWS GET THEIR DUES, PENSIONERS THEIR FUNDS, AND EDUCATED UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS GOVERNMENT JOBS. **DHANYA NAIR SANKAR MEETS THE TIRELESS CAMPAIGNER**

After losing her husband in 2003, her eight year-old daughter a year later, and her money to fraudsters, 40 year-old Chandrikaben Thakkar's life had come to a standstill. In 1993, Thakkar and her husband had made a fixed deposit of ₹ 229,000 with the State Bank of Saurashtra in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. They lived in East Africa then. On their return, when they wanted to withdraw the money, they were told the fixed deposit had been withdrawn. A year later, three fraudsters were booked for the crime but the bank was not ready to return the money till the case was over. "We could not reason with them," recalls Chandrika. "My husband could not get the best treatment and eventually passed away in 2003; and my daughter a year later."

Thakkar had no energy or will left to deal with the bank. Ironically, a 59 year-old former bank manager came to her rescue. In the tiny district of Junagarh, J P Shah is known as the crusader who quietly and diligently uses the Right to Information Act (RTI) to help hundreds of families across the country to get what is rightly theirs. Together, they filed five RTI applications and eight appeals before the Central Information Commission (CIC). The long drawn battle was finally won in 2008 when the bank repaid Thakkar's savings with 11 years' interest. "I had lost everything; but Mr Shah's support came at a crucial juncture in my life," she says. "My struggle is still on as the bank has to pay a part of the deposit. But now I am not apprehensive, for I have the power of RTI."



"The Internet has a wide reach and I want to use it to teach people how to file applications and, more important, the need for RTI"

As for Shah, he is only too happy that people are using the Act to discover unpleasant truths and make authorities pay. After completing his matriculation in 1967, he joined the Union Bank of India in 1969. While working, Shah completed his Bachelor's in commerce in 1973 and Master's in 1976 from Nagpur University. He also did an LLB in 1987 from Junagarh University. He served there for almost three decades and took voluntary retirement in 2000 when he became bank manager. "I started taking interest in the Act as soon as it was passed

and have been dealing with consumer problems since 2005," says Shah. "I think RTI is an extremely powerful tool if properly used to make government machinery accountable." So far, he has helped people from all walks of life: widows, pensioners, educated unemployed youth and senior citizens.

He uses modern tools like the Internet, social networking sites and a blog (www.jps50.blogspot.com) to stay in touch with people. "The Internet has a wide reach and I want to use it to teach people how to file applications

and, more important, the need for RTI,” says Shah; in the past two years, his blog has witnessed 140,000 hits. A former RTI advisor in Junagarh and Anand Agriculture University in Gujarat, he conducts RTI workshops in rotary clubs and local colleges in his spare time. In 2007, the Administrative Staff College of Assam invited Shah’s suggestions on RTI training for its personnel. “Without the Internet and mobile phones, it wouldn’t have been possible to reach out to such a large audience,” emphasises Shah.

So far, he has assisted over 6,500 people in filing RTI applications. The entire cost for the application, including postal charges, is borne by him. The majority of complaints pertain to the status and refund of provident fund, income tax refund and vacancies in government positions. For instance, Rakesh Shah, 34, was eligible for the post of an authorised auditor at the charity commissioner’s office in Junagarh. After repeated refusals, he filed an RTI application in February 2007. According to the rule under Section 32(2) of the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950, persons who are not chartered accountants can also be approved by the charity commissioner’s as authorised auditors and they can audit accounts of trusts whose income is up to ₹ 3,000 per month. Rakesh Shah also found out there were no amendments made to this law. “After pursuing the case for 18 months, I was told that the previous commissioner had made a file noting that commerce graduates should not be allowed to audit accounts till their capabilities are thoroughly scrutinised,” he says. “Instead of scrutinising the applications, the charity commissioner threw them in the dustbin.”

Just when the young man was about to give up, he met Shah. “JP Sir helped me file the first appeal in the Gujarat State Information Commission. Finally, I was heard. He helped me tirelessly fight the charity commissioner. Thanks to him, I now have a well paying job.”

“I want to involve educated, retired senior citizens, so they can leave a better governed India where our next generation can enjoy real democracy”

RTI RECAP

Which territorial area does the Act cover?

It extends to the whole of India except Jammu & Kashmir.

What does ‘information’ mean?

‘Information’ includes records, documents, memos, emails, opinions, circulars, reports, etc, relating to a public body and any private body that can be accessed by a public authority.

What information can be exempted from disclosure?

This concerns the strategic, scientific and economic interests and sovereignty of the country; information that a court prohibits from disclosure; and information that would cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or a State Legislature, etc. Organisations that deal with such information are excluded from this Act but are bound to provide information pertaining to allegations of corruption and human rights violations.

Shah has also filed 15 applications with the CIC, Delhi; and seven in State Information Commission offices of Rajasthan, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Assam and Kerala. “These applications were filed for evaluating the performance of these commissions and to arrive at a cost for every decision under RTI. I had asked for total expenditure of the commission for arriving at a decision. The cost to arrive at one decision is ₹ 4,000. This means, with each delay the applicant has to shell out more money,” says Shah who also works in bringing transparency in information commission offices that have been mired in controversy in the recent past.

He has had his share of challenges; one of the toughest cases Shah had to face was with the Tamil Nadu State Information Commission. “In 2008, I had filed an application with the commission for seeking information relating to its working,” he shares. “SIC is the guardian of citizens’ right to in-

formation in the state. But they were reluctant to reply to my applications. The battle continued for about a year. However, the commission gave all the information when I served them a notice under Consumer Protection Act 1986 which declared that the RTI applicant is a consumer under the Act and is entitled to information on how information commissions work.”

Despite any setbacks, Shah is confident about the RTI Act. “Hate RTI and perpetuate bad governance for the next generation,” reads the tag line in all his letters and posts. He strongly feels that the Act has the potential to change how government offices function and deal with ordinary citizens. “I want to involve educated, retired senior citizens, so they can leave a better governed India for our next generation,” he asserts. “At least the coming generation should not face corruption, indifference and delays and be insulted in government offices. They should be able to enjoy real democracy in its true form.”

Travelling light

IIT-Mumbai alumnus Sanjay Nair has designed silver-friendly luggage that takes the sweat and stress off travel, discovers **Dhanya Nair Sankar**

Though travel can be fun and exciting, the thought of shouldering unwieldy luggage usually brings on a grimace. Frown no more, for Sanjay Nair, a former student of the Industrial Design Centre (IDC) at Indian Institute of Technology-Mumbai, has come up with novel luggage design that takes the stress off your back and shoulders. The 26 year-old has designed Stanz, a four-wheeled trolley bag that allows you to pack your things in an upright position for easy access. Nair designed the bag as part of his project work during his final year at IIT. "We had to submit two major projects," he says. "I took up luggage design because travel has significantly risen among all age groups. I wanted to create a model friendly for everyone, especially the elderly."

Stanz comes with three separate zippered compartments to ensure that each family member gets adequate space to pack their things, and the contents in your bag don't end up in a mess. Made of lightweight ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene) plastic, the bag flexes on impact and then returns to its original shape. Measuring 28 inches in height and width, it also fits the luggage dimensions demanded by all airlines.

Most other luggage bags available in the market have to be placed in a horizontal position while packing and unpacking and then pulled up into a vertical position when one needs to haul them around. For silvers, the

bending involved in hauling luggage into a vertical position can place severe strain on their back. Based on this observation, Nair decided to eliminate the inconvenience. "With my design, such unnecessary movements can be restricted and elders can store their goods inside the first compartment

WORLD VIEW

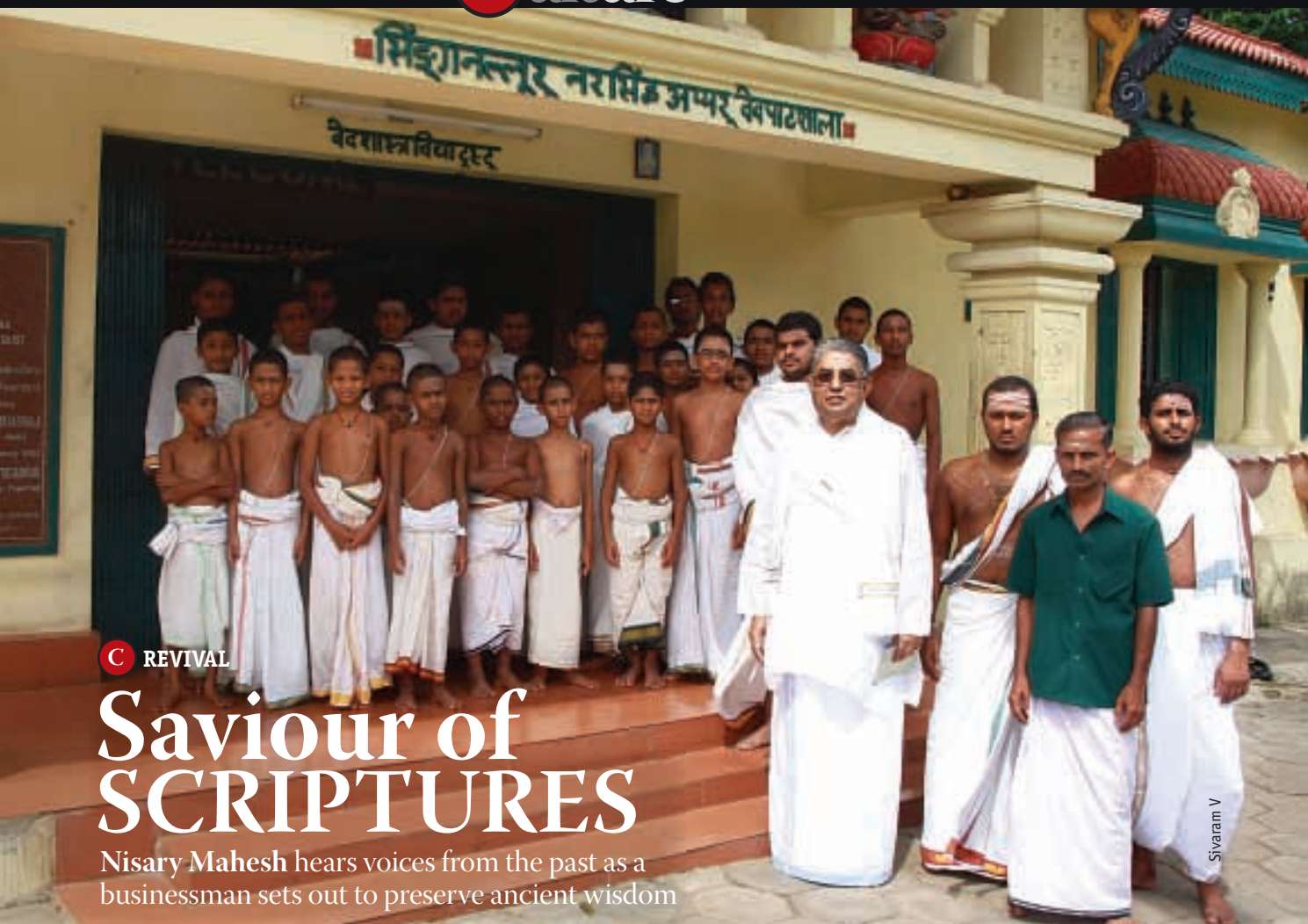
In the US, Kohl department store retails 'spinner-luggage'. Made of lightweight plastic and four all-direction wheels, it makes manoeuvring a breeze. Ideal for silvers and anyone with back and shoulder problems.



without having to bend," says Nair. Another silver-friendly aspect of the product is the handle. Unlike other bags, it is not retractable—it's already out—which means users don't even have to lower their shoulders to pull it. Stanz is also fitted with four wheels for easy gliding without any hiccups.

Nair admits designing the bag was not as easy as it sounds. "It was challenging as luggage design remains a less explored area," he says wryly. "I also wanted to design something that offers maximum utility even when not used for travel." He put idea into action in June 2009 and after many rounds of trial and error added the finishing touches by January 2010. At present, his luggage model is just a scaled down prototype but he is confident of its silver-friendly features. "Seniors get a raw deal when it comes to travelling," he says. "Now, they don't have to bend, break their back or even worry about their belongings getting messy. If I get enough funds I will scale it up!" We can't wait.





C REVIVAL

Saviour of SCRIPTURES

Nisary Mahesh hears voices from the past as a businessman sets out to preserve ancient wisdom

He's not your conventional industrialist with an eye solely on business. Maybe that explains why the Singanallur Narasimha Iyer Veda Patasala, a Vedic school, was the fulfilment of a life's dream for N S Varadarajan, chairman of INDSL Group of Companies. "The entire world can be reflected in the Vedas," he says. "That's why we should take steps to preserve and promote this knowledge or we will lose it to the passage of time."

Varadarajan got working on his dream 15 years ago. Opened in 1996 in Elappully village in Palakkad, the school campus is a sprawling oasis of tranquillity that reverberates with Vedic chants. "We currently have 35 students and three Vedic scholars as faculty," says 65 year-old Varadarajan who visits the school every month. It is administered by the Veda Sastra Vidya Trust, set up by Varadarajan in 1996. Funded by INDSL, the school functions under the

chairmanship of C G Venkataramanan, founder-chairman of the Tamil Nadu Brahmins Association and *dharma-thikari* of Sri Sringeri Sharada Mutt.

Enter the campus and you're instantly transported to a different era. Classes begin at 6 am every day and continue for 13 hours in complete silence. There are three holidays every fortnight: full moon day, new moon day and the days preceding and succeeding these. The school has incorporated modern elements to keep things contemporary, including a digital library with original Vedic texts. Also, English, Sanskrit and Mathematics have been included in the curriculum so students are in tune with the real world. The students come from both rural and urban pockets. "Five *ghanapaati* [the highest title in Vedic scholarship is *salakshana ghanapaati*] who graduated from our school

...Continued on page 67

Sivaram V

C NOSTALGIA

RED SONG

Adab Nawaz visits a building in Mumbai where the Marxist flag is still held aloft by idealism

Past rows of ramshackle houses in the noisy Mominpura area of south Mumbai, there lies an old decrepit building. Inside, old men, many bespectacled, bend over a table where albums of photographs—many barely surviving the ravages of time—lay scattered. They pick up a black-and-white group photo and try to identify themselves as they once were—young and dreamy-eyed, fed on the heavy gruel of Marxism, eager for newness. All of them are now the silver-haired members of Awami Idara, a library-cum-cultural centre of the mill workers who once inhabited the Muslim quarter of Mominpura, Madanpura, Kalapani and Sankli Street in central Mumbai. Like the men, the Idara too is a shadow of its former self, fighting to be relevant in the age of the Internet, social networking and blogging.

Gone are the stirring speeches and passionate poetry that instigated workers to unite and break the chains of capitalism. The old comrades at Awami Idara are now reconciled to capitalism. Recently the Idara called some leading Urdu writers of Mumbai, appealing to them to save one of the few relics of the city's 'progressive' past. "It is difficult to engage the youth for a communist cause," rues Javed Kamil, Idara's secretary. Perhaps Mumbai's only Urdu library (founded in 1952) and run entirely by mill workers, Idara was—for decades—a Mecca for mill workers. After toiling at their looms and spinning machines, the workers dropped by at the Idara to read, listen to writers and watch plays of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). Abdul Qadir, 67, was member of the IPTA's troupe and still remembers a few stirring songs.



"Much before Prem Dhawan and Kaifi Azmi became popular lyricists, they would pen songs for us," recalls Qadir, a former Air Force man. It was Kaifi who named the then fledgling library Awami Idara (public institution).

As it was a hub of communist writers and intellectuals, the Idara naturally came close to the House of Soviet Culture in Mumbai, which helped the Idara in several ways, including lending it a projector and a screen to show Russian films to the masses. After the USSR suffered the seismic pulls of

A gathering of thinkers: (from left) Kanu Ghosh, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Samuel Augustine, Vishwanath Adil, K Abbas; (top right) Communist poet Kaifi Azmi, who continues to inspire members of the Idara even today



perestroika and glasnost, the culture house closed down and the Idara received a letter reminding it to return the projector and the screen to its owner. "We will return it after communism is back in Russia," says Idara's former secretary Comrade Maqsood a little tersely.

Poet Abdul Ahad Saaz remembers attending *mushaira* and soirees at the Idara as a child. "Then *mushaira* attracted big names like Kaifi, Majrooh, Sardar Jafri and Sahir Ludhianvi," he recalls. "Now, these are things of the past." Writer-journalist Sajid Rashid was also a regular visitor to the library in the 1970s. "If I had not visited the Idara so religiously, perhaps I would never have become a writer," admits Rashid, a classmate of underworld don Dawood Ibrahim. Rashid says while progressive literature saved him, it didn't attract Dawood who gradually drifted to the world of crime.

Interestingly, the Idara has grown amid hamlets populated by the Ahle Hadees who practise a puritanical Islam. Rashid says the Idara faded also because it came under the influence of the orthodox. "We never discuss religion here," claims Idara's president Rashid Ahmed, even as the loud sermon of a cleric from the nearby mosque (funded by money donated by a Saudi king) drifts into the room. More than religiosity, the eight-year-long strike led by trade unionist Datta Samant in the 1980s spelt doom for the Idara. Now being run with the donations from some of the boys who benefited from the Idara and are now well-settled in the Gulf, the Idara fights its ideological irrelevance through charity. It distributes books among poor children, organises health camps, and holds talks and *mushaira*. On Labour Day (May 1), the red flag is hoisted even as a motley group of old and tired communists sing songs of revolution: "*Jaaga naya insaan zamana badlega/Utha hai jo toofan zamana badlega*." (The new man has awakened to change the world/the rising storm will change the world.)

...Continued from page 65

Saviour of scriptures

are renowned in southern India and are participating in advanced Vedic programmes," beams Varadarajan, who is excited to see the resurgence in interest in Vedic studies. "Each year we see a growth in number of students applying but we only take those who we think have the potential and commitment to pursue serious research in Vedic studies."

The Trust also sends such students to Tirupati at the Venkateshwara Sanskrit school, which conducts intensive academic research on the Vedas. Varadarajan is already working on future plans. "I want to turn the school into a self-sustaining corpus in the next four to five years," he says. To that, there's only one thing to say: *swaha*.



FULL STEAM AHEAD

Though diesel and electric engines may have left steam engines lagging far behind in time, the smoke and sound of these railway antiquities have never really left our memories. Ashwini Lohani, a divisional manager with Northern Railways in Delhi, has initiated a project that could have railways enthusiasts whooping with delight. He has revived the Rewari heritage shed in Haryana, which was forgotten by time and bureaucracy (though it was inaugurated in 2002 by then railway minister Nitish Kumar). The shed will boast of five tracks that will be devoted to 10 steam-powered locomotives, gathered from different parts of the country. The diligent railways enthusiast is also planning to revive the rail museum and make the Rewari shed a site for those keen on railway trivia. He is busy collecting antique furniture like benches, tables, clocks, lanterns, and literature to display on the walls of the shed. Indeed, the engines are celebrities in their own right—many of them have played a key role in recent movies like *Guru*, *Gadar*, and *Love Aaj Kal*.



C ART

Rush BRUSH

Utkarsh Sanjanwala

Hiro Hingorani's skill is as unusual as his name—he can do full-fledged paintings and sketches in minutes. At 84, the Mumbai-based artist is so confident of his speed that he has even announced a reward of ₹ 500,000 to anyone who can match it! He has made a 30" x 20" portrait in just three minutes; watching his fingers move at an almost manic pace on the canvas is akin to watching a musical virtuoso perform. The octogenarian who has performed in the USA, UK, Japan and Thailand has a packed schedule even now. In June 2010, he enthralled audiences at a live show organised in Singapore. And now he is juggling dates for future shows in hotels and auditoriums in Mumbai. Hingorani's past achievements are equally newsworthy—he participated in the Quit India Movement; was featured in *TIME* magazine for his portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru, which he drew from his own blood; and has sketched blindfolded in front of an audience.

Behind the SCREEN

C CINEMA

IS YOUR AGE HOLDING you back from pursuing a dream you postponed all your life? Madhura Jasraj might just inspire you to go after your goals all over again. The 73 year-old daughter of legendary filmmaker V Shantaram has set a record of sorts for being the oldest debutant director in Indian cinema. After having made two documentaries earlier—*Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj*, on her husband Pandit Jasraj, and *Portrait of a Pioneer* on her stellar father—Jasraj has now released her first full-fledged movie, *Aai Tuiha Aashirwaad*. The Marathi film—a family drama with a devotional theme—has a rich legacy backing it. Its music has been scored by Chetan Desai, great grandson of Vasant Desai, who composed the music for all V Shantaram movies; the playback list features illustrious veterans Lata Mangeshkar and Pandit



Jasraj, and fresh talent such as Jasraj's own granddaughter Ishwari Pandit and Mekhala Khadikar, daughter of singer Jeetendra Abhisheki. "I am proud I have been able to gather voices spread over such a vast continuum of age and experience for my first film," says Jasraj. Though she had to travel all over Maharashtra for shooting, Jasraj made the movie in 27 days. And the experience has only stoked her confidence further—she is now working on the script for her next film.



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Offbeat in PARIS

Lalita Phadkar, 56, visited the City of Light this September with her husband and returned enchanted. She tells us why




Paris in autumn is beautiful. Crisp, cool days. Sunshine alternating with a misty scarce-felt rain. Warm enough to allow jeans and a light sweater; cool enough to encourage a colour burst of scarves, caps and capes. Russet leaves drift down from tree-lined avenues. Grand architecture overwhelms. The city's edgy flavour makes one tinglingly alive.

Divided into Left Bank and Right Bank by the grey slow-moving river Seine, Paris is a walking city; safe enough to wander in, interesting in the contrasts it presents at every turn. Much of the Right Bank is about style and luxury. Broad boulevards, the poshest shops on earth, elegantly turned out people and the incomparable sweep from the Arc de Triomphe up the Champs Elysee to the Place de la Concorde.

It's great, but it does nothing for my emotions. To me it is Business-Paris: power-dressed people, hastening on activities of weight and moment just like in any other city on earth.

The Latin Quarter on the Left Bank, on the other hand, is a ferment of students, tourists, hippies, drunks and intellectuals intent on experiencing, exploring, discovering. Writer



The largest public square in Paris, Place de la Concorde is the place where more than a thousand people were beheaded during the French Revolution

Ernest Hemingway got drunk in the many street side cafes here; artist Pablo Picasso lived on the Rue des Augustins and painted, brawled, loved and argued his way through the cobblestoned alleys of the Quarter; philosopher-feminist Simone de Beauvoir sipped coffee and wrote her existentialist *The Blood of Others* here at the Cafe de Flore. That feverish vibe of Life lived at full tilt still survives.

To be honest, however, it now lives cheek by jowl with trade, commerce and tourist activity. Some once bohemian roads like Rue de la Huchette are today given up entirely to cheap eateries, tourist traps and souvenir shops and should be avoided.

The main thoroughfares of the Boulevard St. Germain and the Boulevard St. Michel are imposingly grand if

rather commercial. However, snaking off them are little alleys and streets, all carrying the promise of the unexpected and memorable for anyone who ventures into the non-tourist unknown. Scattered through the area are 'squares' (called 'places') with benches inviting one to buy a baguette sandwich and a citron tarte from a nearby bakery and eat amid the greenery, flowers, birdsong and beautiful public

art. Often enchantingly ringed with cafes, they are spaces for children to run, old men to snooze, berets tilted over eyes, and locals to play at *boules* (or *petanque*, a traditional game played with metal balls).

One such square, just across the road from the cathedral of Notre Dame, has the oldest tree in Paris, planted in 1602. Stroke its bark gently, the locals say, and the Robinier (so called after the gardener who planted it) will protect you from ill luck for years. Walking on the Boul' Mich', GalloRoman ruins strike the eye from the grounds of the not-to-be-missed National Museum of the Middle Ages, the Sorbonne University intellectualises around its fountains and cafes, the Luxembourg gardens invite you in with their sculpture-lined landscaping full of autumnal flowers.

At the head of this road on one side is a personal favourite: the Place St. Michel. Here towers the 1860 bronze sculpture of St. Michael killing a dragon by Gabriel Davioud, the centre point of a stepped waterfall fountain. It has always been the rallying point for street-protests in the city. In the 1968 students' rebellion that almost brought down the Charles de Gaulle government, the young leaders facing riot police and tear gas, proclaimed

The Latin Quarter is where Ernest Hemingway often got drunk; Picasso painted and brawled; and Simone de Beauvoir wrote on existentialism

this square, in all seriousness, an 'independent state'. Today the Fountain attracts loungers, cheering on buskers of both sexes, debating hotly on how to save the world, climbing high onto the dragons and teetering there for that one perfect photograph, meeting, eating, loving, living.

Across the road is the entrance to the St. Michel metro station. Just how art-filled Paris is hits me as I realise that the entrance and signage are the original art nouveau wrought iron and bronze artistry of Hector Guimard who created all the Metro entrances around the year 1900. I was told, around 80 remain in Paris today; one sign has ended up at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York.

You can't come to Paris and not expose yourself to art—it's everywhere. In the grand museums of course: the Louvre, the Musee Rodin, the Musee d'Orsay, the Centre Pompidou...the list is endless. But way beyond this is the living art of the city: the music, dance, public art and happenings.

One evening we visited the most beautiful chapel in Europe: the Sainte Chapelle whose walls are sheer stained glass without any visible framework. We were there to attend a concert of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. As the chapel filled with music and the stained glass catching the twilight sun glowed with jewel colours, I felt cradled in sheer beauty. This is a cherished memory.

In Paris, music as art doesn't only happen formally. In the heart of the Jewish quarter, the Marais, on the mainly pedestrian Rue de Rosiers, I was buying a falafel sandwich at Chez Marianne's and reading poetry fresh scribbled on its windows. Suddenly, a blue garage-like door opposite opened and two men hauled out a piano. The door closed, one of the men, salt-and-pepper beard, with a red happy face, burst into the most amazing jazz piano with complete abandon. For 45 minutes he had an exuberant piano session amid a street full of laughing, clapping, people. Then he and his companion carried his piano back into his house. No one paid him. He never expected it. I realised I had just witnessed a spontaneous happening. Doesn't get much better than this.

Or maybe it does. Another day, we visited the dim-lit 16th century Gothic church of St. Merri. Thick stone walls, vaulting arches, light filtering through stained glass and falling on flag-stoned floors, cold, dim and old. Gaping at the windows and the side altars, I almost backed, in a moment of black comedy, into the priest leading a procession of coffin bearers a hearse outside. Abashed beyond belief I scuttled out of a side entrance and plunged down some stone terrace-steps into a totally different world.

The Eiffel Tower presides over everything that came before and after it





Ashok Khanna



(Clockwise from left) One of the many outrageous moving sculptures at the Igor Stravinsky Square; autumnal flowers at the Luxembourg Gardens; Sorbonne University

Before me, across the Place Igor Stravinsky, sat the Centre Pompidou, housing the National Museum of Modern Art, temporary exhibitions, performance art venues. Shockingly 21st century in its architecture, its skeleton of brightly coloured fat utility pipes completely encases the building so that the interior is just open spaces. The pipes are colour-coded in a child's bright primary colours: yellow pipes carry the electric wiring, red encases the escalators, blue holds the air-con, and green holds the water utilities. Around the front entrance it is eternal carnival. Street entertainers sing, play instruments; tattooists, contortionists, mimes and acrobats seek to attract the largest personal followings. Passers-by applaud, settle down on the large cemented area, sun themselves and generally have a great time.

Between the 16th century church and the 21st century cultural icon that is the Centre Pompidou, I was caught by the magical Igor Stravinsky Square. Tree and cafe-fringed on one side, the

square is dominated by a large rectangular pool of water. In this pool float 16 moving sculptures that spout fountains as they move. Created by Niki de St. Phalle and Jean Tinguely, the objects are whimsical, colourful and childlike. A large pair of red lips opens and closes spraying water, a colourful reclining child-drawn mermaid jets water from a headlight-like nipple, a clown moves in a rag doll dance of water, while a multi-coloured snake sinuously moves through the pool.

In the Centre Pompidou we saw an exhibition of one of the doyens of the New Realism movement: an artist called Arman. His genre is collection art (found objects often bizarre, displayed together) and destruction events (take a piano, smash it and display the result). One of the exhibits remains in my bewildered mind: it was a drawing room, and Arman had sledge-hammered it. Broken furniture, smashed vases, ripped curtains, shards of glass everywhere, jagged bits of wood, pieces of cloth

A LAZY AFTERNOON

After lunch on a sunny day, catch the underground (Metro) to Anvers on the #2 line between Porte Dauphine and Nation. You are now at the foot of the Hill of Montmartre atop which is the beautiful Basilica of Sacre Coeur, the highest point in the city. There is a staircase up the hill, but you could also catch the cable car, which runs from the Place Suzanne-Valadon, to the side of Sacre Coeur. Admission to this 19th century cathedral is free. Inside, gaze at one of the largest mosaics in the world, *Christ in Majesty*, or sit on a pew and meditate. Then stroll to the Place du Tertre, a square surrounded by cafes, and filled with artists selling their paintings and creating fabulous portraits—in less than an hour. (Picasso sold his first paintings from a shop on this square.) If you feel like a surrealist experience, visit L'Espace Salvador Dali, a lovely museum filled with the works of this eccentric genius. Wander down any of the cobblestoned paths...go where your feet take you. There is a surprise around every corner. Explore.

No tourist to Paris can resist a cruise down the Seine, one of the greatest rivers in northwestern France

and carpet. In the midst of this monumental destruction was a small sign, from the curator solemnly informing the viewer: "Fragile artwork. Do not touch or disturb in anyway." Around me intense discussion on the meaning of this exhibit blossomed; people peered respectfully at the wrecked room, careful not to jog one shard an inch from where it was lying. I realised that I just didn't grasp *avant garde*...but clearly a lot of Paris did.

At least I understood the Louvre, that exhausting temple to High Art. Every visitor to Paris compulsorily visits it; probably actively avoiding all museums for a considerable period thereafter. It is just too big and confusing, patchy too, in terms of quality. For every Michelangelo, Canova or Da Vinci, you have a thousand lesser artists. Ultimately you just see the highlights and stagger away. No wonder Westerners become museum goers. They learn that a museum is about discovery so young.

'Museumed out,' I sagged against the side of the Pont des Arts, one of the numerous bridges that cross the river, all with a distinct character of their own. I gazed up stream at the Ile de la Cite, the island in the Seine where Paris actually began. This is still the beating heart of the city, home to the Notre Dame and to the infamous Conciergerie from where Marie Antoinette went to the guillotine.

The day was sunny, the dark green stalls that run by the Seine selling old books, coins, posters were attracting strollers; ahead of me was the oldest stone bridge across the river, the 12-arched Pont Neuf completed in 1607 and sporting over 200 carved stone masks. To my left loomed the Louvre, to my right the equally imposing cupola of the Institut of France. I wanted a break from the grandeur and magnificence. I wanted a quirky hu-

man touch. Quite suddenly, I realised that both sides of the bridge I stood on was crowded with, of all things, locks. They were common or garden locks, the kind you use to lock your luggage. Made of brass, steel, aluminium, some coloured, some plastic-faced. The writing on some of them gave the whole story: "Norma and Cristoph: Forever." "Miko (Japan) & Terry (UK) now one." Romance was back as I realised that every lock had the names of lovers on it, who had locked it onto this bridge and thrown the key into the Seine as a pledge that their love would last forever. I wondered if years later, some would return to find their locks and remember a peak-day in their lives.

On the last day, we visited Laduree, the restaurant and tea room on the Champs Elysee, makers of the best macaroons in the world. There in the

lush second Empire decor, letting the small round cakes, crunchy outside, soft and smooth inside, melt on my tongue, I silently saluted the artists who make these transient pieces of art. The range of flavours is mind-boggling, the colour palette amazing, the perfumes delicately different. The ambience in which they are served is a recreation of an 18th century salon down to the candelabra on the walls, the pastel-coloured floral wallpaper and the paintings of nymphs and cherubs and cornucopias of plenty.

Before leaving for the airport, I returned to the Boulevard St. Germain, pretended to be a true Parisian, sitting at a little table outside a street-side cafe, drinking wine, eating a Madeleine, watching the world watch me. Then I left. God willing, I shall return, again and again. Beautiful Paris, City of Light: *au revoir* and...thank you.





THE AGE OF HYPOCHONDRIA

Timeri Murari casts a sceptical gaze at the latest strides in healthcare

Last week I had my annual medical check-up, and I'm still breathing. Okay, I stole that line from that iconic movie star, the real kind, Robert Mitchum. Mitchum told the story when one day he was strolling up Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles (movie stars walked back then) and saw Lex Barker, who played Tarzan in many movies, coming towards him. They stopped to chat. Mitchum asked Barker: 'How are you, Lex?' And Barker laughed and replied. 'I'm fine. I've just come from my medical check-up and the doc gave me a clean bill of health.' They talked some more, parted and then, according to Mitchum, Barker took a few steps and dropped dead. Since then, when people asked Mitchum how he is, he replies, 'Still breathing.'

The incident took place back in the 1950s when medical science wasn't as advanced as it is today. Barker would have stuck his tongue out, the stethoscope pressed against his chest, his BP checked and probably a couple of blood samples taken from him. 'You're fine,' the doc would have told him. In my check-up, apart from the old routines of BP and stethoscope, I had an X-ray, an electrocardiogram, a scan of my insides, scan of the heart and I lost a lot of blood to little containers. And then a doctor looks at all this information on my body and, after some reflection, prescribes pills or refers me to a specialist. He did that a year ago and I had to visit the specialist (for which I was billed over and above the check-up costs) and after an examination the specialist asked me, 'Why are you here?' I told him why. He shrugged and waved me

out with 'there's nothing wrong with you.' Thankfully he didn't say 'you're fine.' Irritated by this referral, I told a doctor friend, also a specialist, about it. He told me, 'In many hospitals today, we have to make money and so we refer you to a specialist. If we don't do that we get a note from the hospital head telling us we're not making enough money for it.'

The problem today is that we are overloaded with medical information—in newspapers, magazines, and on television. If I followed all the advice I'd end up a nervous wreck

Since childhood, when a doctor diagnosed me with chicken pox when I had jaundice, I've had little faith in doctors. I did have one I believed in, a gentle old man who was an expert in diagnosis, the whole secret of good medical care. He would talk to me about my books and films while he took my pulse, and I believe that just through touch he knew what tests to run on me. Even great doctors die and once he went, I'm uneasy with the new ones.

Hospital check-ups are assembly line affairs today. You go in through the door, go through the impersonal testing machines—blood, heart, lungs—and you're out on the other side with a file in your hand and undecipherable

comments. I grew more insecure with these tests when I had one in Madras and another check-up a week later in Delhi before I trekked to Mount Kailas. None of the numbers matched. Either a miracle had occurred on my flight or else I had someone else's test results as my cholesterol was perfect and passed the stress test easily. And then, with a perfectly normal BP, the Delhi doctor told me I had high BP and, of course, it shot up as I wouldn't be allowed on the trek.

The problem today is that we're overloaded with medical information—in newspapers, magazines, and on television. Everyone is an expert on what we should eat, not eat, drink, not drink, exercise, but not too much exercise. If I followed all that advice I'd end up a nervous wreck and quit living altogether. Once doctors proclaimed alcohol was bad for you, and now they say it is good to have a couple of pegs a day. See, now I take the advice that suits me best.

Hospitals boast of such state-of-the-art equipment, shiny and enticing as new cars, that even I am tempted to test-drive the machines I see advertised in glossy colour in newspapers. I'm not exactly sure what each expensive gadget does. Thankfully I am not a hypochondriac, for which I am eternally grateful. Yesterday, on the tennis court, when a friend asked, 'How are you?' I replied: 'Still breathing.' I only wished I could imitate that Robert Mitchum drawl.

Timeri Murari, 65, is an author and screenplay writer living in Chennai

PASSAGES

Hissss!

Published in 1900, T K Gopala Panniker's book *Malabar and its Folk* examines ways of life, customs and rituals practiced in Kerala, significant among which was the practice of serpent worship. An excerpt....



Malabar is a country which preserves to this day primitive institutions of a type peculiarly fascinating to the ethnologist. Of the various kinds of primitive worship still practised in the country that of the serpent occupies a prominent place. Here the serpent is deified and offerings of *poojah* are often made to the reptile. It has got a powerful hold upon the popular imagination. Each household has got its own serpent deity possessing large powers for good as well as for evil. A separate spot is set apart in the house-compound as the abode of these deities. This reserved spot is converted into a small jungle, almost circular in shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs, and sometimes medicinal plants also.

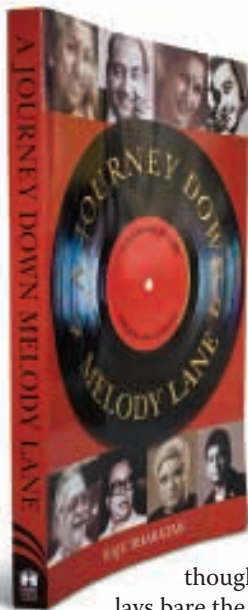
In the middle of this quasi-circular shrine images, usually made of laterite after specified shapes, are arranged in certain established methods and a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside. This spot is so scrupulously reserved that not even domestic animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting

down of the tree, is regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of a low-caste man. Once in every year at least *poojah* offerings are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbudri priests.

Periodical ceremonies called Pambantulle are performed to propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family.... Any individual drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the *poojahs* incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures. The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours, red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk

are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts, eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others. These are properly arranged in the place and *poojah* is offered by the priest with the slow recitation of mantrams, and some holy songs or ballads in memory of these gods....

One striking phase of serpent worship in Malabar relates to the family of Pappanmakkat Nambudris and the singular and effective control they exercise over serpents in general. Their powers are handed from father to son. It is said that this Nambudri household is full of cobras which find their abode in every nook and corner of it. The inmates can scarcely move about without placing their feet upon any one of these serpents. Owing to the magic influence of the family the serpents cannot and will not injure them. The serpents are said to be always at the beck and call of the members of this Nambudri family and render unquestioned obedience to their commands. They watch and protect the interests of the family in the most jealous spirit. In short, these reptiles live, move, and have their being as freely as if they were domesticated animals imbued with supernatural powers.



PLAYBACK SECRETS

A JOURNEY DOWN MELODY LANE

BY RAJU BHARATAN

HAY HOUSE; ₹ 399; 280 PAGES

Raju Bharatan's account of the life and times of Hindi cinema's greatest playback singers and composers is—thankfully—both a critique and a tribute. The author nudges the legends off their pedestals and casts them as ordinary mortals humbled by insecurities, mediocrity, and megalomania. He is never snide or partial

though; he simply uncovers the warts and lays bare the painstaking perseverance that went behind some of the brilliant songs of the past 60 years. His successful stint at *The Illustrated Weekly*, and writing for *Filmfare*, *SCREEN*, and *Hindustan Times* afforded him a close view of the lives, loves and losses of such greats as S D Burman, Mohammad Rafi, R D Burman, Kishore Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Geeta Roy, O P

Nayyar, Naushad, Manna Dey, and Talat Mehmood. The author has devoted a chapter each to all of them and suffused the pages with information on nuances of rhythm and meter that many of us are blissfully unaware of.

Alongside, the nuances in relationships and rivalries that emerge are as stimulating. We find out how Mohammad Rafi lost out to Kishore Kumar during the making of *Aradhana*; how R D Burman withered and flowered under his father's criticism; how Naushad never thought much of the untrained Kishore Kumar; and why O P Nayyar was the only person who had the courage to antagonise Lata Mangeshkar, yet was bewitched by her sister Asha Bhosle. There are many little known stories of relationships—shared and broken—that slip out. And we finally figure out that the lives that the legends led were even richer than the voices they left behind.

—Rajashree Balaram

FASHIONING A MONOLITH

THE FABRIC OF OUR LIVES: THE STORY OF FABINDIA

BY RADHIKA SINGH

PENGUIN VIKING; ₹ 499; 289 PAGES

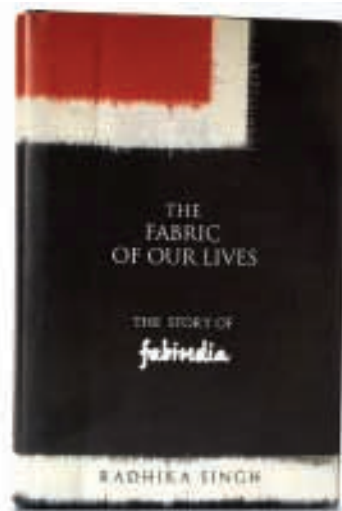
After reading Radhika Singh's *The Fabric of Our Lives*, one is wont to believe that the world is divided into two kinds of people: people who wear Fabindia and those who don't. The clothing brand that is synonymous with ethnic chic in many parts of the world was born in 1960 propelled by the passion of one man: Connecticut-born John Bissell. Bissell came to India on a Ford Foundation grant to advise the government on reworking the design and marketing skills in the handloom sector. He stayed back, besotted by a beautiful employee of the Cottage Emporium, whom he later married, and the exquisite handlooms he had seen in his travels through India. In 1960, collaborating with a network of weavers and artisans, Bissell launched Fabindia, a social entrepreneurship monolith that is now cited as an innovative business model in many management schools.

The four years Singh spent on research informs every page, sometimes to soporific effect when she pores over sales fig-

ures, fabric costs, and administrative details. None of the nitty-gritty, though, can dull the content devoted to the vision of Bissell. The author takes us through the many enhancements in warp and weft; the

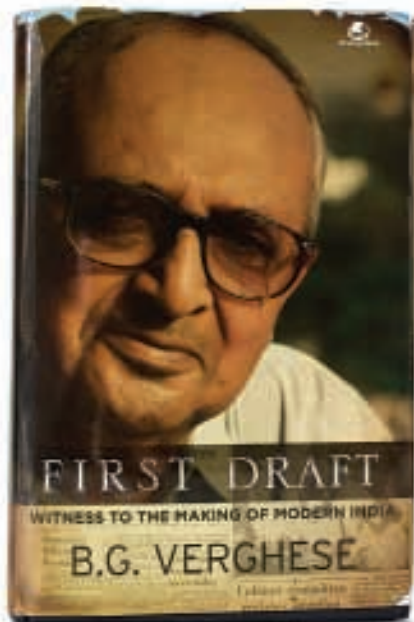
alterations in sleeve lengths in Fabindia *kurta*; the hurdles and triumphs the team negotiated together; and even charming details like the sunlight-warmed lunch box that Bissell so generously shared with colleagues and customers on the terrace of his shop in Delhi's Greater Kailash. It's a success story all right, but one filled with touching sentiment, small joys and big triumphs. As Bissell says: "Fabindia is 90 per cent emotion and 10 per cent everything else".

—Rajashree Balaram



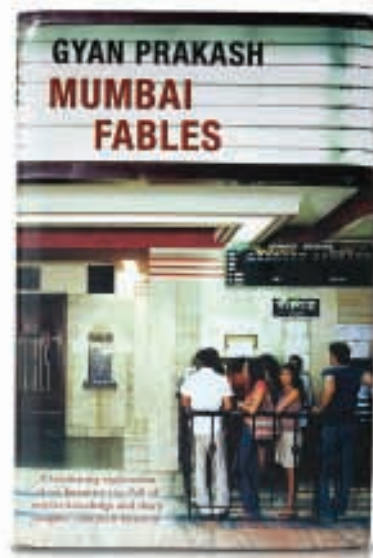
BRIEFLY

When one of the country's most prolific journalists writes a chronicle of modern India's history, it is hard not to take notice. **B G Verghese** has been a mainline journalist working in several leading newspapers for over



60 years. Considered the father of development journalism in India, he has also had two stints in government. In **FIRST DRAFT: WITNESS TO THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA** (Tranquebar; ₹ 695; 573 pages) he intertwines episodes from his career with anecdotes from his personal life. From how Malayali families name their offspring to how Hindi became the national language; from a ringside view on Indira Gandhi (he was her information advisor) to how development issues became a part of daily reporting; Verghese's pen roams far and wide. Through this comprehensive account of India's triumphs, tragedies, sloth and spirit, written with zest and humour, he is both critical of historical figures and hopeful for the country's future. They call journalism the first draft of history—you won't find a finer witness to the making of that history.

Gyan Prakash's MUMBAI FABLES (HarperCollins; ₹ 599; 396 pages) chronicles the history of Mumbai as seen through the eyes of the writers, journalists, planners, architects, artists, filmmakers, political activists and faceless inhabitants who have both shaped it and borne witness to its many dramatic changes. With keen insight into what has made the city the melting pot it is today, Prakash leads us through the 16th century Portuguese conquest of the city and development under the British rule in 19th century; its 20th century avatar as a fabled city on the sea; and the city's transformation from red to saffron following the rise of Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena. There are accounts of tragedy (floods, blasts, terror attacks) and testimonials of triumph with the city becoming defined as a symbol of opportunity and reinvention. And along with the low-down on all the scandals—the land scam exposed by lawyer Khurshed Framji



Nariman and the sensational trial of naval commander Nanavati who shot his wife's lover, to name just two—there is an elegy to the unattained dreams of visionary planners and artists. A gripping, often moving, look at yesterday's Bombay and today's Mumbai.

Former ad writer **Anuja Chauhan** made chick-lit respectable with her debut novel *The Zoya Factor*. Now, she proves she's no flash in the pan with **BATTLE FOR BITTORA** (HarperCollins; ₹ 299; 426 pages).



This one too is a sexy, sassy read with drool-worthy protagonists and a uniquely Indian context. But while *Zoya* was a satire on cricket mania, *Bittora* takes off on our political culture. Sarojini Pande—Jinni to friends—and Zain Altaf Khan are privileged *baba log* with enviable ancestry: her grandmother is a seasoned politician while he comes from royalty. And when they face off against each other to become the Lok Sabha MP from Bittora, a town in 'Pavit Pradesh', their shared history and opposing ambitions collide. Chauhan has a lot of fun with this book, with thinly veiled replicas of major Indian political parties and players, an insider's view of the Delhi Durbar (her mother-in-law is Congress veteran Margaret Alva) and an understanding of idiom that makes you laugh out loud more than once. Political footsie for a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Then: Magazine Pages

Now: Bowl

Grab an old magazine or two and rip all the pages from it. Fold one page in half.

Unfold it; then fold the two edges into the middle. Fold the edges into the middle again and once more. Glue the sides of the paper from the inside on the centre. Roll the strip up into a spiral. Repeat these steps with other pages and tape the start of the

new strip with the previous one. Keep repeating the previous step until you have a big enough disc. The size really depends on how big you want your bowl. Now take the disc and pull the top up and move it around until you have the desired bowl shape. Try using a real bowl as a guide. Now carefully take the bowl and varnish it so it stays strong. Once it dries, you can use it as you please!

FACTS

- » Recycling 1 tonne of paper saves about 17 trees.
- » The US and Canada are the world's largest producers of paper and paper products followed by Finland, Japan and Sweden.
- » In 875 CE, the Chinese invented toilet paper, the first paper not to be used for writing and printing.



Haresh Patel

MORE RECYCLE IDEAS...

Take a magazine page, fold it on the right and then left, continue this with the entire page. Glue it on the centre—your paper fan is ready.

Cut a 4 inch long strip from a page and fold it accordion style. Gather the folds at the centre with a thread, and spread the sides out like a bow. Curl a thin strip of wrapping paper and glue it to the bow. Glue it to gift boxes.

“Saving the oceans can ultimately save humanity”

Rajan Vir, 79, for rekindling maritime consciousness among Indians



Hemant Patil

As founder-president of the Indian Maritime Foundation (IMF), retired Commodore **Rajan Vir** endeavours to raise awareness about the oceans and rekindle maritime consciousness and pride in Indians. IMF was established in December 1993 by Vir and his colleagues who have served in the Indian Navy and the Indian Merchant Marine. The retired seaman and his team conduct annual coastal cleanup initiatives in different parts of the country and spread awareness on India's maritime interests—especially in the field of naval and geostrategic affairs, shipping and ports. They spend long hours and undertake diligent effort researching India's maritime heritage, and publish their observations in a quarterly journal, *SeaGull*, which carries national and international articles on the Navy, Merchant Navy,

Coast Guard, ports and marine environment, along with reports on current issues of maritime interest. IMF also organises lectures on naval careers, history and marine environment in schools and colleges to promote maritime consciousness among children and youth. A few years ago, it also set up the Society of Indian Marine Artists (SIMA) to promote marine art. Members of SIMA participate in workshops and field trips near sea and water bodies in Mumbai, Alibaug, Alandi, Lonavala and Khadakwasla in Pune. After the 26/11 terror attack on Mumbai, Vir has also started conducting lectures and seminars for post-graduate students at the University of Pune on subjects like submarine warfare; underwater technology; search and rescue operations; and terrorism and piracy at sea.

—Khursheed Dinshaw

For further details please contact Baccarose on 022-22817766 or E-mail: azzaro@baccarose.com

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Enrique Iglesias



Conscience. That's what defines us.

We adopted 300 families of Kargil Martyrs.

After all, this was the only meaningful homage we could pay to the martyrs.

We reconstructed Bhimsar-Chakasar and Kilari villages to rehabilitate earthquake victims.

After all, nature's fury must also be met by a matching humanitarian response.

We lend gainful support to the families of the Mumbai terror attack martyrs.

After all, the homes of the brave policemen, the martyrs to the cause of internal security
must never go unsupported.

We host the mass marriage of 101 underprivileged girls every year.

After all, every girl's dream of a marriage must come true.

We immunized more than 2 lac children with pulse polio drops.

After all, children represent the future of this nation.

We support the nation's cricket and hockey team.

After all, a nation's strengths in these sports need to be sustained.

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who together represent India's brightest medal prospects in international gaming arena.

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We rolled out the inaugural edition of the Sahara Indian Sports Awards in 2009.

After all, the finest Indian sportspersons deserve our encouragement, recognition & appreciation.

We feel Bharatiyata is above all religions.

After all, the spirit of Bharatiyata helps foster national integration.

We always put the nation first.

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