

# harmony

celebrate age

NOVEMBER 2004 Rs 20

## Just Married Silvers Tie the Knot

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Mothers & Daughters

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**STILL ON STRIKE**  
Raj Singh Dungarpur

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# Ask for answers



ritu nanda

**ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPECT** and transparency are a few words that have been on my mind lately.

America votes for a president this November, and I watched the two US presidential candidates going head to head in three televised debates. The merits, or otherwise, of George W Bush and John Kerry aside, what really took me aback was the way both these men were grilled by their countrymen, on a variety of topics, in an atmosphere that was both civilised and disciplined. They were asked to account for almost every action taken and every word spoken in their careers in public service. Strictly 90 seconds per answer, even if you are the leader of the most powerful nation of the world.

I also recently watched Michael Moore's documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*, a damning indictment of the Bush presidency and the events that led up to its attack on Iraq. I was impressed—not just by the film but also by the fact that such a partisan film was allowed to be made, and screened in theatres all

across the US. The White House, obviously, was not pleased—but that's democracy at work.

We have a lot to learn. In India, the corridors of power are strict no-entry zones. There is little transparency or accountability at the highest levels, whether it's politics, society or industry. Recently, the chairman of our own censor board was sacked summarily, no reasons given. The whims and fancies of a few determine the fates of many. There are no checks and balances. And then we wonder why more accomplished people don't come forward and contribute to public life. Why would they? Who supports them when they fall out of favour?

You may wonder what all this has to do with *Harmony*. The answer: everything. For our initiative to get somewhere concrete, government and society have to work together. True. We need public officials who keep their promises. But even more important is for us to insist on it. In the UK, silvers have come together and produced the 'Pensioners' Manifesto',

demanding higher pensions, a free public transport scheme, and more. Their message is clear: don't underestimate pensioner power.

It's time silvers in India grew more aware, not just of their rights, but of the power they wield. For politicians, you are a valuable vote bank; for the market, a significant consumer segment. If you choose to, you can leverage this potential towards obtaining a government that delivers, a society that caters to your needs instead of ignoring them.

It's much too easy to criticise the system—what's hard is to look within and see what you, in your own little way, can do to change it. Insist on accountability and transparency at every level. Let your voice ring out loud. *Harmony* promises to amplify it further.

**Tina Ambani**

## A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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FREE OFFER

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## column one

It takes much perseverance and determination to find a new companion when you're over 50. The good news is that those of us who are determined to find one usually succeed. With the help of personal ads and matrimonial websites, many mature single men and women are looking for love—hopefully in all the right places. Consequently, the incidence of marriage and cohabitation among the over-50 in India is increasing.

Case studies in this month's cover story "Say Yes"—some with a few decades or more of matrimonial road-time under their belts, others who are headed for a marriage for the first time—indicate that 'until death do us part' is passé and marriage could be just as meaningful the second time, or even the third.

In our health story, "Men on Pause", we answer the question: Is there really any such thing as male menopause? Celebrating mothers is "Mama Mia", a visual extract from Sonal Ambani's book, *Mothers and Daughters*. Ambani lost her mother to ovarian cancer and her book supports an important cause: early cancer detection.

On a celebratory note, there's "Menu for Happiness". The cuisine is Buddhist, yet it doesn't straitjacket you with prohibitions and prescriptions. A rich and resplendent culinary repertoire, it has the best from India, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Tibet. In other words, feast and fete. *Harmony* wishes you a very Happy Diwali.

—Meeta Bhatti

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Cover photo by **Meenal Agarwal**

**R**eading *Harmony* every month gives me great pleasure. Your October issue was packed with superb articles, ranging from the debonair sports stars of yester-years to options for savings schemes. Further, I congratulate you for bringing to our attention news about the identity cards being issued to seniors in Mumbai by the Maharashtra government in your October issue. I request you, however, to lobby on behalf of non-Mumbai residents to get such cards issued for us too.

**JOHN ALEXANDER**

Nagpur

*We will definitely take this up soon. Keep reading Harmony.*

—Editors

**H**armony has style as well as substance with a wide range of topics for 'silvers', a beautiful word that you have coined. I was happy to see your write-up about the Senior Citizen's Welfare Association (SCWA), Mira Society, Salisbury Park, Pune, in the September issue, under the title, "My Other Family". However, I wish to bring some errors to your notice. SCWA was started in 1998 with my initiative. I was elected secretary and Lt Col (retd) B K Tambay was elected president. The late Mrs Coomie Vakharia was our most senior member, aged 95. She did not start club meetings in her bungalow as you mentioned.

**KUSUM GOKARN**

Secretary, SCWA, Pune

*The error is regretted.*

—Editors

**T**hank you for covering the Salt Lake Senior Citizens' Association (SLSCA), and other associations in Mumbai,

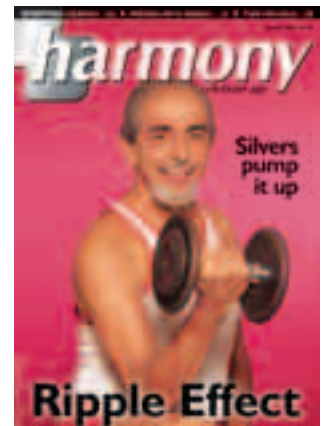


**I**nspired by *Harmony*, we silver citizens above 55 years of age have formed the 'Lohsai-Mangaon Silver Elders' Association' to meet every month and discuss personal problems, social problems and civic problems in a heart-to-heart exchange of ideas and experience. Your magazine has become a splendid source of hope and happiness to all our fellow silver citizens across the country, giving us both pleasure and pride in celebrating age. *Harmony* is a complete magazine that has something instructive for everyone in the family. Thank you so much.

**AADIL JEHANIRJI PATEL**

Raigad

*The letter of the month wins a gift from Vimal*



Ahmedabad, Pune and Chennai, in your September cover story. It was a fine way to commemorate World Elder's Day on October 1.

**A K CHATTERJEE**

General Secretary, SLSCA, Kolkata

**I** was so excited to see the September issue on the stands and couldn't wait to get home and read it. The articles are all excellent and very informative. Silvers are slowly becoming a faceless mass. Now, we have a whole magazine devoted to us, and we are a force to reckon with. You've made it clear that that we have not reached our 'use by' date yet. Thank you.

**GEETHA THACHIL**

Chennai

**I** read the article "Guru Cool" on Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in the September issue of *Harmony*. Each of us needs to trust in someone who can guide us through crises and offer us sound

advice. Having a guru is a question of faith. Faith is the key to being a good disciple. Gurus may not always land up when one needs them. They may arrive only after a long search, if at all. Sometimes, you can find answers just by looking within yourself.

**MAHESH KUMAR**

Mumbai

**I**n your August issue, in the editor's note, you say the magazine had offered "a grim presentation of the sorry state of affairs of silvers at every level". This is, in fact, is not wholly true. In my experience, for every one who is suffering, there are at least six happy, content, well-looking-after seniors. If you go to rural India, you will be even more surprised to see how seniors are cared for and respected.

The whole thing is based on one's attitude. A saying that has kept me happy for the past 85



years is: 'There is so much good in the worst of us, there is so much bad in the best of us. It ill behoves some of us, to talk about the rest of us.' Seniors have to learn that happiness lies in their own hands. They have to understand and appreciate the needs and expectations of all those around them too. Families and society should be the primary players in caring for the elderly. The government, which doesn't even find the time for basic governance, should keep its hands off. Equally, the media should highlight more success stories rather than the odd bad incident.

**COLONEL (RETD)  
M S KRISHNAMOORTHY**

*New Delhi*

**C**ongratulations for introducing such a wonderful magazine. This informative magazine for seniors gives us a new vision of life after retirement. I am now 58 years old and will retire after two months. *Harmony* shows us how we can remain active and useful, even after retirement.

**CHANDRAKANT MISTRY**

*Mumbai*

**H**armony is very useful for seniors who want to do something constructive after retirement. I enjoyed reading about R K Laxman in your August issue. You give us a true picture of famous silvers and their lives, urging us to live our lives well.

**GHANSHYAM H BHAGHIA**

*Mumbai*

**Y**our article on Vishranthi, the home for the aged in Chennai, in the August issue brought back memories of a visit that I had undertaken to the home in the early 80s. I still cherish the warmth and affection that many of the residents of Vishranthi showered on us in the few moments that we spent with them. It was evident that they yearned for affection and a few words of solace, and this had been denied to them by their kith and kin. It is this noble spirit that keeps these senior citizens going. *Harmony*, even though it is just a few issues old, has done much to highlight the need to give space to the elderly who will always remain an inspiration to the younger generation.

**C V ARVIND**

*Bangalore*

## contributors



Author, independent documentary producer and teacher at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, **Pushpesh Pant** has written books on Buddhism, Himalayas, the Ganga, and Indian cuisine. Founder of the Academy for Natural Nutrition, Pant says his obsession for food goes back to childhood. "My father was an epicure, and mother a superbly gifted cook." He has joined hands with culinary consultant Jiggs Kalra in the past, producing the serials *Zaike Ka Safar* and *Dawat* for television and co-authoring books on aphrodisiac foods and classic Punjabi cooking. "Being a single parent helped hone my skills in the kitchen," he says. "Now, my son is a brilliant cook. He's inherited the culinary gene and his wife enjoys the food made by us willing slaves in the kitchen."



### AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

- I** You had an experience related to money or finance which others can learn from
- I** You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- I** You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- I** You want to share your hobbies and interesting travel experiences with others
- I** You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren

Mail us at 4th Floor, Maker Chambers IV, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)

## CLASS ACTION

CHETAN THAKKAR



The classification of senior citizens on the basis of age alone does not help the cause. The Delhi government has proposed a new classification of 'destitute senior citizens' to go beyond just providing concessional bus and railway passes. A new sub-directorate in the Social Welfare Department will be created to deal with all matters pertaining to silvers. The unfinished status of the National Policy on Older Persons, four years since its inception, makes us ask: Will this remain on paper too? After all, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment already has a directorate that deals with everything related to senior citizens, from documenting their concerns to addressing them. Hopefully, the sub-directorate in Delhi's Social Welfare Department will work for a change.

## SILVER MISSION

When the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme was launched in August, one of the concerns was its mode of access—it was initially available only through the post office. Serpentine queues made Mumbai-based tax consultant A N Shanbhag call it "the right scheme handled by the wrong agency" in *Harmony's* October issue. Good counsel seems to have prevailed. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the scheme to public-sector banks and the State Bank of India and its associated banks operating the Public Provident Fund Scheme. The RBI has now asked state-owned banks to start operating the scheme with effect from November 11, 2004. Small savings agents working under the standardised agency system are eligible to mobilise deposits under the scheme, and half a per cent of the deposit shall be payable to such agents as commission. The mission isn't accomplished yet though. We want the rate of interest made non-taxable.

## HEALTH ASSURED

Union Health Minister Dr Anbumani Ramadass has announced that the ministry will soon streamline the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and make it "elder friendly". "The modernisation drive," as Anbumani calls it, will include having specialist doctors on duty at CGHS dispensaries, a separate department for seniors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, and a proposal to set up a National Institute of the Aged. The ministry has also asked the National Board of Examinations to introduce a post-doctoral fellowship in geriatrics. And if any state feels it has few seats in MD courses in geriatrics, then all the government needs to do is approach Dr Ramadass—he promises to listen.



## STOPOVER

If you book your air ticket for a one-way journey, you can't claim the concessional fare for senior citizens. Consumer Education and Research Society (CERS), a consumer organisation, has challenged this in court. The petition, which requests a directive to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, has been admitted by the Gujarat High Court. It requests revoking the condition that stipulates people over 62 to stay in a place for seven days for concession on a confirmed return ticket. Air travel concession to seniors was introduced in 1999. The petition alleges that withdrawing this is retrograde. Introduced on July 7, 2003 by Indian Airlines, Jet Airways and Air Sahara, the new scheme took away all the earlier benefits indirectly, says the petition. It doesn't help that IA recently relaxed the condition of minimum stay at the destination from seven days to two nights. Seniors normally travel for a short period or at short notice in exigencies like sickness or the death of near and dear ones. Booking a ticket seven days in advance may not be possible in these circumstances, the petition says. We agree. ■



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when you should stop  
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## News and views from around the world



### A NEW KIND OF OLD

On its 40th anniversary this October, the Chicago International Film Festival introduced a new film competition category—the Silver Images Generations Award. It carries an annual \$5,000 prize for the film that best portrays realistic and multi-dimensional images about older adulthood. The idea is to inspire people of all ages to accept the rewards and challenges of growing older and reinforce the idea of ‘a new kind of old’ where older people are not necessarily feeble and frail but remain active and productive. In shorthand, this is being popularly described as 60 = 30, where today’s 60 year olds are equivalent to 30 year olds as far as attitude and energy go.

The award is the creation of Terra Nova Films, a company that has been promoting this alternate cinema for some 25 years. Check out their website [www.terranova.org](http://www.terranova.org) for their catalogue of films and documentaries which are as avant-garde as dealing with the changing nature of sexual relations between couples when one of them has Alzheimer’s. The films can be purchased online.

### SMART CALL

Cell phone companies are finally shifting focus away from the youth. Their latest innovation: phones for the elderly. In Europe, both LG and Orange have come out with models that, believe it or not, are meant to do only one thing—make and receive calls. Doing away with phone cameras, phone TVs, Internet capabilities and even sms or text messaging has led to a pared-down design that is easy to use and cheaper to buy—making the cell phones very attractive to pensioners. Special features include large keypads, automatic answering in

case of emergency and ‘hearing loudly’ with an integrated loudspeaker. At an extra cost, you can even get GPS (global positioning system) to locate elders in case they get lost. Additionally, if a senior suffers from an unforeseen health problem or medical emergency, with the touch of a button, a direct call can be placed to his hospital or insurance company. Some models also run with only three large buttons with easy dialling for key contacts. There are no plans for bringing these phones to India yet.





FRAM PETTIT

## GRANDMA'S GIFT

Civilisation, it seems, is the legacy of grandmothers. Anthropologist Rachel Caspari of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, USA, has an explanation for why humans suddenly showed signs of complex culture 30,000 years ago after millennia of primitive living. Caspari and her colleague Sang-Hee Lee examined ancient human skulls from various parts of the world to determine the age of adults living

over the past few million years. And their research threw up the first evidence supporting the so-called "grandmother hypothesis" — the idea that grandparents accelerated the appearance of successful civilised communities.

They found that around two million years ago, only one in 10 Australopithecines, (DASH) an early hominid (DASH), who made it to adulthood, survived to twice the age of sexual maturity. By the time of Neanderthals, some 130,000 to 30,000 years ago, this ratio has increased to four in 10. "And then suddenly between 30,000 to 17,000 years ago, there were two older adults for every young adult," says Caspari. She suggests that the older faction, particularly post-menopausal women, sparked a cultural revolution as having elders around to rear the young would have provided a survival advantage—as it does even today when both parents bring in an income while grandparents help look after the children. Elders would have also passed down valuable cultural knowledge and survival skills, making early human society stronger and forging better kinship relations across generations.

## SILVER STRENGTH

For the first time in Britain, pensioners have come together as an electoral lobby. Recently, in one of the biggest coordinated protests ever staged in the country, thousands of senior citizens came together to present the first ever Pensioners' Manifesto to more than 150 British MPs. John Brown of Borehamwood Pensioners' Rights, the group that started it all, says: "There are a lot of older people who feel they have been let down by all the political parties. We will no longer sit back and accept what we are given. We have told the candidates that if they want our votes at the next general election, they will have to support the Pensioners' Manifesto."

The manifesto demands a free nationwide public transport scheme, rise in basic state pension every year in line with average earnings, increased localised business rates and localised income tax. Almost 16 per cent of Britain's population is over 65. If all of them come together as voters, politicians can ignore their voice only at their own peril. Why don't we develop a manifesto for silvers in India?



FARZANA COOPER

You can read the pensioners' manifesto at <http://www.seniornetwork.co.uk/campaigns/manifesto.htm>



Welcome to a new section where you, our readers, can share your thoughts and experiences on anything under the sun. Write in, and make this space your own

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## victories



### BHATT KICKS BUTT

I am 60 now. I started smoking as a college student in 1960. During my undergraduate days, I smoked four to five cigarettes a day. When I was appearing for my MA exam, I was smoking about 10. And when I was appearing for my civil services exam, my smoking increased to about 20 a day. By 1984, I was smoking about 40 cigarettes a day. After I finished my daily quota, I would switch over to a pipe. In the meantime, I also tried rolling my cigarettes but soon gave up as I found that I was spending most of my waking hours rolling cigarettes.

Smoking became part of my life. If I was happy I smoked, if I was having the blues I smoked, if I was in tension I smoked, if I was relaxed I smoked. I smoked before meals and naturally after them, I had a drink and I smoked, I went to the loo and I smoked.

And then I started noticing things. I had ashtrays in all the rooms at home. When I slept during the night, I dreamt that I was smoking. When I entered the office in the morning, I could smell the stale smell of last evening's smoke. If I laughed, I could not continue, as midway through the laugh I started coughing. And I started panting after climbing a flight of stairs. I could not enjoy anything even mildly hot, whether *chaat* or a main dish. My tongue was always burnt. And it started affecting my monthly budget.

I tried to give up smoking twice. Each time, I reverted to ground zero. Ultimately, once and for all, I decided to quit. These are the steps I took:

- I had two tins of aromatic Dutch pipe tobacco and a few pouches of Indian tobacco. I went to one of my friends (Mr Tiwari) and gave him all of it.
- I gave all my cigarette packets, including some packets of Rothmans that a friend had got from abroad, to another friend.

### Smoking became part of my life. If I was happy I smoked, if I had the blues I smoked

- I decided, come what may, I will not smoke a single cigarette in the day, however strong the urge.
- I also decided that I would not pick up another habit in its place, like chewing tobacco, taking *pan* or *zarda*.

Let me tell you what happened afterwards. The first week was manageable. But during the second week, all hell broke loose. I just couldn't go on. I took leave from the office for the entire week. I was lying in bed most of the time. I was tense and irritable. To add to my tension, I had to go for a 14-month sabbatical to England. Cigarette dispensers were strewn all around the university campus (as were the condom dispensers). Drop a pound coin and ping, the pack drops. However, I'm proud to say that I did not smoke a single cigarette during my stay there.

Was it worth all the trouble? I would say an emphatic 'yes'. My weight has been a source of concern to me; it shot up as my appetite increased, and I am now an unhealthy 85 kg at 5'7". But the other problems have gone: the wheezing, the coughing, the loss of taste for good and spicy food. Of course, there are other problems that come with a sedentary lifestyle and age. I have an artificial knee and a stent in one of the minor arteries, but I still consider that in the long run I am fine. Now, I take an almost sadistic delight in the banning of smoking in public places.

—A K Bhatt, Mumbai

# with love

## SIDDARTH AND I

One of my fondest memories comes from my vacation in Atlanta, USA, last winter, visiting my daughter. My six-year-old grandson Siddarth goes to elementary school. One day, he was given a school assignment to write a few words on the topic: 'I am happy when...' Siddarth chose the topic, "I am happy when my *tatayya* (grandfather) is here". He wrote, "I am happy when my grandparents are with us. I am happy that my *tatayya* can come out on the street to pick me up when I return in the school bus on days I do not have sports. My *tatayya* helps me in having a bicycle ride. I sit with him to show how I play games on computer. We have a great time in the evenings." He got the first prize and it was printed in the *Atlanta Journal*, the newspaper that had sponsored the assignment. It was a proud moment for him, and me.

—S Venkataratnam, Mumbai



Photo courtesy: S VENKATARATNAM

S Venkataratnam with his wife  
S V Jayalakshmi and grandson Siddarth

# top tips

## NO BURNT MILK

It's so familiar. You set a pan on the stove to boil milk and light the gas. Just as you are about to pour milk in it, the doorbell rings and you rush out to attend to the visitor. You come back and pour milk in the pan. And the milk smells, no matter what you do with it later. Now, there's a solution. Put the milk again, yes again, on the stove. Add a washed betel leaf to the milk and let it boil for another two minutes. Now, smell the milk, taste it. The burning smell has vanished.

## NON-STICK DOSA



Have you ever taken the trouble to make a dosa only to have it stick to the *tawa* and burn? Don't fret. The next time you decide to make a dosa, first take an onion. Cut it horizontally into half and rub the cut half on the hot *tawa*. Pour the mixture on it and proceed to prepare your dosa. Add a little oil on the sides, and you have a dosa that doesn't stick!

## HALWA WITH A TWIST

Prepare *gajar* (carrot) *halwa* in your usual way. But instead of using any synthetic flavouring, add small pieces of orange rind at the cooking stage. You will love the zing.

—Indu Rani, New Delhi

We reserve the right to select articles in order to offer fair representation and relevance to readers of Harmony. Articles will be edited to suit space and editorial considerations

# Calling for compensation

A Bangalore-based body is fighting for social security rights for millions of non-pensioners across India, says

**Aruna Chandaraju**



ABHIJIT GHOSH

**A** senior, happily passing the ball to young men playing mud soccer; or barefoot on a glinting beach, watching boats sail by. Insurance companies love using these images to address newly minted retirees. Not everyone is in the same boat, though. For the members of the All India Non-Pensioned cum Senior Citizens Retirees' Association (AINP), for instance, the immediate goal is just to keep their heads above water.

As its name suggests, the Bangalore-based organisation has non-pensioners as its members. It was set up as a registered body three years ago with 100 members, mostly from Bangalore,

who decided to share a common platform to represent their problems, and lobby for their rights. Today, there are 800 members across India, right through the ranks, from former executive directors and general managers to the labour force.

## **MAKING ENDS MEET**

The organisation recently filed a Writ of Mandamus for their social security rights and it was admitted by the Supreme Court on July 9, 2004. Their plea is to get the government to offer a higher rate of interest for seniors to suit the rising cost of living. They also seek coverage under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), a

privilege that central and state government pensioners enjoy, along with protection by Pay Commission revisions.

Ernest Abraham, AINP's 69-year-old convenor and general secretary, retired from Hindustan Cooper Ltd, a Bangalore-based private company, as deputy chief engineer a decade ago. He trusted his provident fund and gratuity with a bank and the post office. But the falling interest rates failed him. From 14 per cent in 1991, the post office rate has fallen to 8 per cent, while his bank offers him 5 per cent as compared to 13 per cent 13 years ago. They say even 9 per cent interest from the recently intro-



duced Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme can not make up for the loss; simply because they don't have enough money to invest for a long term. "The problem is compounded by rising prices and physical and financial dependency on our children," he says. "Also, some children prefer to stay separately." Abraham rues the fact that most of the money they get is spent on their health, and sometimes even their parents' health.

The members of AINP also run the risk of eroded savings. "Periodic expenses like medical emergencies, house building or renovation and a child's marriage can't be met without a sustained income," says Abraham. He points out that it's even hard for many members, especially those from the labour force, to pay the nominal Rs 300 annual membership fee—the organisation is hardly in a position to afford experts who will give financial advice.

### A NATIONAL CONCERN

The problem is huge—a recent survey conducted by a news magazine revealed that by 2020, the number of senior citizens without pension would rise to about 120 million, from about 63 million today. But, despite all odds, AINP is determined to make a difference. The organisation's executive committee, comprising 20 members, meets at members' homes once in two months, with an average attendance of 15 Bangaloreans. The annual general meeting is held once a year, with around 160 members attending it from across India. N Ramprasad, the organisation's 71-year-old president who retired 13 years

ago from NTC Ltd, a Bangalore-based private enterprise, attributes the low turnout to old age and debility. Those who can't attend the meeting confirm their solidarity through letters and telephonic contact, wanting to know how the writ is proceeding.

The legal option was the last recourse. Earlier appeals and meetings with the prime minister, finance minister and members of parliament of the previous NDA government failed to achieve anything concrete for the AINP. They were either indifferent or expressed helplessness.

The organisation's members fail to understand this apathy. Says Abraham, its general secretary: "By cushioning some older persons with Pay Commission revisions and CGHS, and hurting others with reduced interest

permit increasing the insured amount after the age of 60, even if the buyer is ready to pay a higher premium. Also, pre-existing ailments and out-patient treatment is not covered under Mediclaim."

This raises the question: Wasn't the non-pension clause a part of their contract? Krishna and Sivaramaiah admit that this was the case. "We would have happily lived off the interest," is their argument. "Being covered by the CGHS would have helped too."

### CALL FOR ACTION

For now, the mood is one of discontent—members insist they want to live with dignity, not in penury, and certainly not as dependents. Some are demanding ex-gratia payment from their employers after Indian Oil Company and the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

## A recent survey indicates that by 2020, the number of senior citizens without pension would rise to about 120 million

rates, the government is telling us that some senior citizens are less equal than others." Adds B Sivaramaiah, the organisation's treasurer, "A special higher rate of interest should be permitted for non-pensioned seniors." While Abraham retired at a salary of Rs 6,000, 74-year-old Sivaramaiah retired from HAL as finance manager in 1990. "Buying a Mediclaim policy is restricting," says S Venkataram, another member who retired from HAL in 1987. "Sixty years is the maximum age limit with coverage up to 80 years only. It doesn't

announced the facility for their employees. Others whose companies shut down sick are demanding compensation. "In the name of imitating the best economic policies of the West, they have introduced economic reforms with reduced interest rates but did not take the West's social security system which indeed compensates," argues Maheshwaran Nallathambi, 60, who retired in 1994 from MECON India Ltd. "The government owes us this much for our service to the nation." ■

*To contact AINP, see page 95*

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# The age of innocence



DABOO RATNANI

**GRANDCHILDREN ARE LIKE** insurance. They ensure continuity over generations, an enduring legacy. I have two grandchildren from my daughter Shweta: Navya Naveli, 7, and Agastya, 4. They live in Delhi and I wait for their visits eagerly. We try to make sure we are always there for their important functions, be it a school play or a birthday.

For some reason, I find that you pay much more attention to your grandchildren than you did to your children. When your children are born, you are busy trying to stand on your own feet. By the time the grandchildren come along, you are already established, and you have a lot more time. You follow their progress a lot closer. When their tooth falls off, when they learn to talk or walk, or even play the piano...every little incident is of great importance. And grandchildren also really enjoy the company of grandparents. Every time they have a problem, or they want something, they run to the grandparents because they know they can get anything from them. Jaya and I are always engaged in pitched battles with their parents, Shweta and Nikhil, who insist that we spoil them too much.

When Shweta had her first child, everything else in the house was forgotten. Jaya and I were two overgrown nannies waking up in the middle of the night and

making sure that everything was in order. Recently, my grandchildren spent 10 days with us when their parents were abroad. The atmosphere of the house is transformed; your routine is forgotten. The servants walk around with their faces lit up, there's noise, laughter. Everybody is rejuvenated by their presence.

What really amazes me is how knowledgeable today's children are. My granddaughter is seven, but we feel she's 75. Sometimes children in their honesty and

mind." I guess she meant that he's mature enough now and found his bearings so she gave him her approval. She was six!

They are aware about what *Nana* and *Mamu* do, who they are. Though I remember one interesting incident when Agastya, then two, first became aware of seeing me on TV. I had just walked into their house in Delhi and he looked at me, then looked at the TV and said, "But you're supposed to be there. How can you be here?"

## To have someone looking up to you wide-eyed once again is like recapturing the past

innocence can be quite mature. I remember when we took Navya to see one of Abhishek's films. Before his recent success, he had a spate of unsuccessful films. We didn't know what the fate of this one was going to be.

After the movie, when we were driving back, naturally all of us were discussing the film and Navya was in the backseat, since it's safer for children to be there, listening to it all. Quite unexpectedly, she spoke up. "Excuse me," she said. "Can I say something?" I said, "Yes." She said: "I think *Mamu* has acted as though he finally knows his

I love the feeling of joint families, the house full of children and *bahus*. I have one son and I am waiting for him to get married and have children. I like that idea of a busy house. So whenever Shweta, Nikki and the kids come, it's the happiest time for us.

The best thing about grandchildren is their innocence. You know it's not going to last forever and that's what makes it so precious. When your children have grown up and started disagreeing with you, it's wonderful to have someone who looks up to you wide-eyed once again. It's like recapturing the past. ■

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*Amitabh Bachchan, 62, is an actor and goodwill ambassador for UNICEF*



# A life in five acts

Some of India's finest authors first found encouragement from Professor P Lal.

**Anjana Basu** looks at a life filled with art, drama, lessons and encounters

**T**he books piled around the room have grown higher since I last saw them. In the middle sits a tall straight line of a man in white. The only colour comes from the books, bound in sari fabric, vibrant oranges, pinks and scarlets with the gold 'Writers Workshop' crest on them. Professor Puroshottam Lal's Writer's Workshop is now 50, though the room and the man have not significantly changed in all the years that I have seen them.

At the age of 75, Professor P Lal, as he's known by everyone, has been through four acts of a life filled with art, drama, lessons and encounters. Over the past four decades, countless writers have drifted through this room at his residence in Lake Gardens, Kolkata, in a steady trickle, bringing with them manuscripts in English which they hoped he would publish. Vikram Seth, Nissim Ezekiel, Pritish Nandy, Jayanta Mahapatra and Ruskin Bond are among the authors who first found encouragement for their art here. Now, the literary 'names' are the boast of publishers worldwide. Writer's Workshop still has a catalogue

of 3,700 books, an average of 100 new titles a year, which is more than most. The professor is the editor, proof checker and publisher, his secretary is a three-tiered standard iron Godrej filing cabinet and the outlet a dark little stall outside the gate—the Book Nook, as it's called.

His journey began in 1958, when a group of seven young writers who were tired of not being

English writing were gone with the British Empire. The challenge, Professor Lal says, therefore became even greater.

At first, no one would review a Writer's Workshop book, so they began to review each other's books. And the books kept coming, one after the other until it was obvious to everyone that Writer's Workshop meant business. In those days, there was no Penguin

## Now in 2004, I'm publishing the Vikram Seths of the future —**Professor P Lal**

published got together to try and change the status quo. Apart from P Lal, the group included Deb Kumar Das, Anita Desai, Sasthibrata Chakravarti, William Hull, Jai Ratan, Kewlian Sio and Pradip Sen. They decided to follow in Byron's footsteps and get themselves published by subscription. The whole thing became even more of a challenge because they all wrote in English. The Bengali intellectuals who ruled Calcutta thought processes in the 1950s were convinced that the days of

or HarperCollins India, so Writer's Workshop was the only resource that most writers of Indo Anglian literature had. The word 'Indo Anglian' was another coinage and featured in the title of the first book of poems brought out by Writer's Workshop in 1958, *Modern Indo Anglian Poetry*, edited by P Lal and K Raghavendra Rao.

Ruskin Bond, one of the early writers published by Writer's Workshop, comments: "P Lal helped put Indian writing in English on the map in an era



**Professor Lal amid his beloved books**

when many people were trying to throw the English language out of the country."

Gradually the number of writers grew. "I was 16 when I first met Professor Lal," says writer Prithvi Nandy, "and my entire career as a writer and a creative person can be attributed to the support and encouragement he gave me, not only as a publisher but as a guru. I owe whatever I've achieved to this man."

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni of *Mistress of Spices* fame, whose first book was also published by Writer's Workshop, says: "Professor Lal encouraged me to go on writing."

Recognition was slow in coming, but it did come. In 1970, Professor Lal received the Padmashri. In the same year, Tulamiah Mohiuddin, the Writer's Workshop binder, received the National Award for best-bound book for William Hull's *Visions of Handy Hopper*.

"Hand-constructed, bound in sari silk and printed by hand" wrote a reviewer. There are stories, a stray whisper, possibly apocryphal, about a woman who wanted a whole set bound in pink and never mind who wrote what, because they set off her newly decorated walls so well.

In 1981, as another kind of milestone, P Lal published Vikram Seth's first book of verse, *Mappings*—no one at the time wanted to publish Seth. "I took my poems to him," recalls Seth. "He brought them out promptly and well. Whenever anyone asks me who my first publisher was, I always say Writer's Workshop. If anyone is willing to publish Indian writing in English, I say good luck to him!" And now in 2004, "I'm publishing the Vikram Seths of the future," says Professor Lal.

On all those Sundays over the decades, he and his writers would get together in that room

in the middle of all those books and discuss poetry, literature and life. The room can seriously name-drop. It has seen the likes of Mulk Raj Anand, Pearl S Buck, Nirad C Chaudhuri, Christopher Isherwood and R K Narayan. The Professor displays a 1966 letter from W H Auden that says, "I have the happiest memories of meeting you in Calcutta."

But Professor's Lal's life has other aspects to it. There has to be more than one aspect, he says, otherwise you're wasting your talents.

The second act: the trans-creations. Most people who are aware of literary trends think P Lal invented that word, though it actually came from Coleridge. Before that it was all translation, a literal plodding word for word things that totally killed any lyricism in the originals. Says writer Khushwant Singh: "No one can deny P Lal's scholarship."

Lal has been translating the *Mahabharata* for almost 30 years, shloka by shloka. Why? Because, says the Professor, unlike the world of the Greek and Latin epics, the culture of the *Mahabharata* is still alive and kicking. "The epic is a gentle commentary on life," he says. "It is also a war correspondent's report." Two-thirds of his transcreation is complete. The rest will take another few years. In the meantime, the Professor reads it to 50 members of the

**When we asked poet, translator and Bengali scholar William Radice his impressions of Professor Lal, he wrote a poem exclusively for *Harmony***

P L, P. Lal – his first initial  
 Betrays no hint of anything special,  
 Yet friends all know he would not be  
 the same  
 Without the destiny of his name.  
*Purusha-uttama, sandhi*-combined,  
 Means not just the best man one can  
 find,  
 But also the One Person revealed  
 When the radiant rind of the sun is  
 unpeeled  
 And a core of generous beauty  
 gleams.  
 Here was a man who fulfilled his  
 dreams:  
 With each *Mahabharata sloka*, his pen  
 Comes closer and closer to that day  
 when  
 Those words will be P Lal's epitaph,  
 With the myriad books, like strands  
 in a scarf,  
 Of Writer's Workshop gorgeously  
 keeping  
 The future warm and our spirits  
 leaping!  
 For how can any true writer hope  
 Without dreams of such  
 cheerfulness, strength and scope?

Sanskriti Sagar, a cultural group, every Sunday. Professor Lal has also been staging the *Mahabharata* Sunday after Sunday at the G D Birla Sabhaghar auditorium.

The third act: the teaching. He is still Honorary Professor at Xavier's with a captive audience at his disposal. Profsky, as his students call him, wafts in, dressed in white and delivers Eliot with the deadpan drama of a master poker player. So deadpan that his students have been known to swallow the most atrocious jokes thinking it all serious academics. Old students talk of a man with "Prospero's magic wand" who mesmerised them. Subhas Chandra Saha, a former student, says, "He could turn a class on précis writing into a tantalising challenge."

The fourth act: a total collapse out of the blue early in 1989, on what should have been a normal poetry reading at the World Poetry Festival in Toronto, but one that turned into a four-month hell. From a suspected ulcer came a total failure of kidneys, pancreas and liver. With no medical insurance, he was put on three months of dialysis in the Borgess Medical Center in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

After 100 bottles of blood, endoscopy, intravenous injections and a tracheotomy, his bills came to \$400,000. At this crucial juncture, a notice appeared in the *New York Review of Books*: "An international effort is going forward to raise a subscription to help defray some of Professor Lal's hospital expense. Anyone wishing to make a contribution may do so by drawing a cheque



Photos: SHILHADRA DATTA

payable to Borgess Foundation, 1521 Gull Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49001, USA." The appeal was just one of several that went out, requesting those who knew Professor Lal to spread the word. Mercifully, says Lal, it worked.

After he returned to India, Professor Lal began work on a book called *Lessons*. The book asks four vital questions: Why are we here? What should our priorities be? Why do our trusts—bank balance, blood relatives, God—fail in a crisis? What gives us strength? The professor gives us the answers that he worked out for himself. The book meticulously acknowledges everyone who helped him. It quotes extracts on death confrontations from sources of wisdom. The Professor narrates the story of Jewel Lammers, the nurse whose quiet prayers filled him with the desire to live again.

Will there be more than four acts to the Professor's life? Quite possibly. There are new poems waiting to be written. The *Mahabharata* waits to be finished. Writer's Workshop is in its 50th year and there are more Anita Desais and Vikram Seths waiting in the wings. ■





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Last 5 Years <sup>†</sup>	29.16%	6.25%
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# Saty



HARESH PATEL

# yes

Thousands of single silvers, regardless of their previous marital status, are looking anew for partners to share their lives with.

**Anuradha Kumar** on why marriage is a good idea at any age

In this country, love is a song at 20 but a confession at 50. Despite all the adversity of traditions and perceptions, men and women across India are increasingly sending poignant applications to marriage bureaus seeking suitable partners. At an age when the job profile is to bless marriages, some want to claim the right to be blessed in a lawful union.

But marriage after 50 is at once a delicate matter and a perilous campaign whose foot soldiers are assorted marriage-makers who zealously guard the privacy of their clients, a motley battalion of plump housewives armed with ceiling-high file cabinets; retired couples doing 'social work'; and bureaus with marigold-festooned receptions. There are slick websites too which promise the biggest freebie of all—a life partner. Though they do advise, "paid memberships will increase chances by 12 times".

### THE NEW INTEREST RATE

Matrimonial websites have been the most reliable trackers of this trend. On *Bharatmatrimony.com*, a site set up in 1997, members in the age group of 50 and over increased by 15 per cent last year. "Right now, we have 15,000 profiles listed in the 50



**Tapan and Maureen Ghosh found true love after 50**

SHILBHADRA DATTA

plus group—4,144 singles, 3,632 widowed and 6,975 divorcees, 280 separated," says Murugavel Janakiraman, the Chennai-based CEO. *Shaadi.com*, another popular matrimonial site, lists 6,000 profiles of eager candidates from the same segment with a somewhat similar break-up. This forms a miniscule part of the portal's membership of 2 million people but as Shrinath M, the group product manager, explains, "Most people in the 50 plus age group are already married. So there cannot be any comparison."

Though *Shaadi.com* chiefly makes its profits from the vast numbers of hopefuls between 25 and 35 years, this new target group "is something we should look at". It's an embryonic trend but enough to make a marketing manager sit up and think.

The marriage bureaus, which come in all shapes and sizes, and have more personalised interaction with customers compared to online bureaus, have similar experiences. At CAMB, a leading Bangalore marriage bureau, proprietor T G Sivaraj says, "Two





SHRIDHAR RAJU

**Shubha and Hari Mahanti recovered from their divorces to find happiness**

years ago, we had only six applicants between the age of 50 and 74. Today, we have 20." In Delhi, around five years ago, Sycorian Matrimonial Services used to see about 10 such enquiries every year. "This year, we have already been approached by 80 clients," says Praveen Kumar Aul, general manager, marketing. "The trend of seeking a companion after 50 through a matrimonial bureau is

relatively new. Earlier, people preferred to marry someone within their own family and social circles."

Everybody in the marriage business agrees that the numbers are only going to increase. According to Madhumati Singh, a Delhi-based psychologist, the reason is a more globally aware India that is getting familiar with, if not

whole-heartedly accepting, concepts such as surrogate motherhood, single parents and late marriages. "Earlier, we as individuals were happy with very little, happy to live at our family's behest," she says. "Today, more and more people want to live life on their own terms."

Maureen and Tapan Ghosh fit this description perfectly. He was two marriages down, and she was recovering from one, when they met at a friend's party one evening in Juhu in 1991 when both were on a holiday. Tapan liked the champagne lifestyle of Mumbai and so did she. Though a run of unfortunate relationships had left them shaky and they were convinced marriage was not for them, that one meeting shook them out of their certainties.

Tapan calls it "love at first sight" though Maureen was initially more wary. They both returned to their respective cities and jobs—Kolkata and auditing for Tapan, Delhi and advertising for Maureen—with each other's addresses noted down. After a year or more of letter writing, Maureen decided to return to her hometown Kolkata. "It was only because of Tapan," she confesses.

Even then, it did not automatically mean marriage. Though they agreed that they were in love, to test the waters further, they lived together in Tapan's apartment in Astor Court. For a few years. The neighbours were cosmopolitan and discreet, the relatives supportive, and they were grateful for that. Finally in 1996, they tied the knot.

Ask them whether they would still have gone ahead had no one approved, and their answer is most probably.

Praveen Kumar Aul from Sycorian Matrimonial Services says that late marriages are more frequent in society's upper crust and Tapan and Maureen—he collects Swarovski and she collects Lladro—belong there. "Most of Sycorian's 50-plus clients are professionals and belong to the upper middle class strata," says Aul. But the trajectory of most path-breaking trends is such that these start in the upper classes and then trickle down.

### WHEN FAMILIES OBJECT

Many people, even from strongly traditional communities and religions such as the Gujarati and the Vaishnavs, are seeking partners today, applying to bureaus or putting their profiles on the Net, mostly without their photographs.

The embarrassment of seeking out a ritual that is essentially meant for the young is still extremely strong. "Often they are too shy to even talk to us at the bureau," says Sivaraj. "Through the Internet, though, they can look for a spouse all over the world, from the privacy of their homes, without revealing their identities." Still, such applications of marriage are rarely made without declarations of guilt, says Sejal Chahcha, who runs a small bureau from her home in suburban Mumbai. A matrimonial lawyer by profession, she got so tired of standing in on divorces "that I decided to do something to bring people together instead". Less lucrative,

but more satisfying. Every day, she runs the entire gamut of marriage—from the first hopeful meetings to the last bleak encounters in court—and calls senior marriages a case of double jeopardy. "What should be a natural, simple and even a necessary process is complicated in our narrow-minded society. In most cases, there is first the stigma of divorce and then late marriage is seen as sinning twice over."

## Marriage bureaus are often asked to send profiles of grooms for the daughter to the residence and profiles of brides for her father to his office

Even in cases of widowed or single silvers looking for spouses, the issue is seen through almost pubescent immaturity, as an act to fulfil sexual needs. And hence, disapproved of. Sometimes children, nervous about their inheritance, become a barrier as they did with Pooja and Krishna Nair's wedding five years ago. The couple met through a home-run wedding bureau in Bangalore. Krishna, then 62, was a widowed, wealthy financial consultant, and Pooja a financially secure single woman of 51. "When his children (two

sons) were told about our decision, they were derisive and laughed it off as a symptom of his 'senility'," Pooja recalls. When the sons were finally convinced that the couple was serious, things turned unpleasant. They insisted that the father make his will bequeathing all his current assets to them, including the house where he was to live with his new wife. Pooja says, "My brother then requested that my husband be permitted at least to give his income from then on to me, his wife, and this the children grudgingly agreed to."

All this thickens the cloak of secrecy that surrounds the search for a partner at a later age. "We have quite a few clients who want 'a groom for my daughter and a match for myself'," says Aul. "In such cases, we are asked to send profiles of their daughter's prospective grooms to their residence and those for the father to his office. And we call only on their mobiles to discuss any match with them."

### THE HEART HAS NO AGE

The few who are willing to talk frankly about their wish to get married are compelled to view marriage as a preserve of the youth and explain themselves through clichés. In Delhi, Roshitashva Sharma, who is eager to try marriage again (*see page 26*) answers "16" when asked his age. Kolkata's Gita Narayani (*see page 26*), who added an extra 'r' to her aid destiny perhaps, says, "Mentally I am 25!" Sharma and Narayani are both over 55, divorced, with children, veterans in a human span but to find love again they must declare themselves 'young at heart'.

Courtesy: MURAD ALI BAIG



Marriage rekindled Tannie and Murad Ali Baig's zest for life

## PRACTICAL MARRIAGES

But in reality, the heart usually takes the backseat in late marriages. All that the young don't understand, or don't say about marriage, surfaces and becomes the ground reality of such unions. "At this age, most people marry for extremely

practical reasons," says Sejal Chahcha. "Men want wives who cook well and keep the house clean and women want financial security." And those who have the money seek a companion who will kill the silence of a lonely house. "There is no such thing as blind love at 50," says

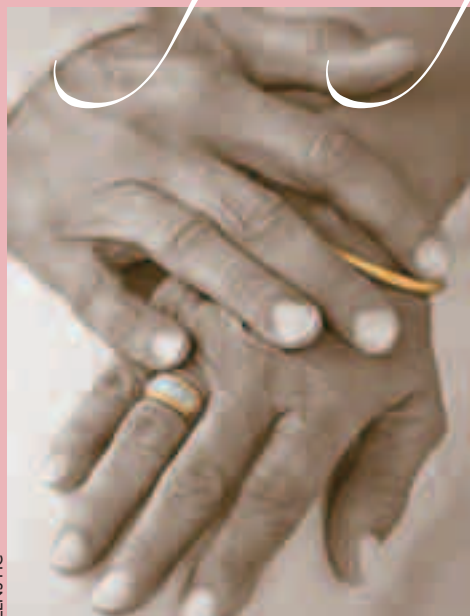
Madhumati Singh. Perhaps it is true that the young marry for the same reasons as the old, but the young do not know the language to say it. The silvers do.

Experts are convinced that practical and realistic marriages are better than remaining single. At an age when the socio-economic profile is changing, when earnings have vanished, it makes sense to pool resources with another person.

Shubha Kakade, 59, and Hari K Mahanti, 65, married in Hyderabad in 1997. For both of them it has been a wonderful second marriage after the first didn't work out. "The quality of life improved for both of us because we have two incomes pooled into one establishment," says Shubha.

Sometimes marriage not only adds quality to life but can save life itself. Samir Parikh, a Delhi

# Singles' guide to marriage



LENS PIC

You can call marriage bureaus and matrimonial websites Cupid's assistants. The god of love will come, shoot and leave but giving advice and preparing two about-to-entangled hearts is not his job, thank you. His subordinates can do the nitty-gritties. And if the hearts come with a lifetime of baggage: the burden of orthodox upbringing, relatives who might object to a new relationship, and the invariable susceptibility to fraud that comes with age, they need advice. If you are over 50 and looking for a partner, here is some counsel from the marriage-makers:

- I Classifieds, marriage bureaus, websites—try whatever works for you. Bureaus are helpful because they take on the job of initial correspondence, which makes some people shy. Websites work for those who want complete privacy.
- I Most marriage-makers say that caste, class, and religion are totally disregarded by people looking for partners late in life. These can work as criteria only when you are in your 20s



psychologist who spoke to *Harmony* (see page 28), says, “The worldwide population of elders is 10 per cent. But they commit 20 per cent of all suicides. Loneliness is the most common factor that links elders across the world.” Tannie Ali Baig, who married her husband, Murad, the Delhi-based editor of *The Auto Magazine*, when both were in their 50s, says marriage rekindles an interest in life. “When you are younger, you have a lot more interests in life. And these keep you busy. But after 50, you don’t necessarily have as many interests. When Murad and I got married, we rediscovered the fun of doing things once again—shopping, travelling, learning dance together.”

Living their lives through inescapable roles, as somebody’s mother, somebody’s grandfather, without a partner to share experiences, insights, “or even just a movie” with, as 63-year-old

Mayank Mistri wrote in his profile, corrodes one’s personal sense of identity. Friends and relatives, however close, have their families as the fulcrum of their lives. There are no emotional spaces in the modern world beyond one’s immediate family. Says psychologist Madhumati Singh, “In our society, an older, single person always stands out. But marriage allows you to get

**In our society, an older, single person always stands out. But marriage allows you to get back into the fold of society, says psychologist Madhumati Singh**

back into the fold of events.” Gita Narrayani, single for over a decade after her divorce, has experienced this isolation. “People are always suspicious of single women. Socially, it’s much easier to be married. You can do many more things than you can on your own.”

Shubha seconds Narrayani’s experience. “Socially, I did not go out very often as a single woman, especially in the evenings. I have more friends as a married woman. Companionship has opened up a whole new set of options because I feel more secure than I ever felt before.”

There must be a reason why marriage is called an institution. Perhaps it is an emotional asylum. ■

—with Anjana Basu in Kolkata, Teena Baruah in New Delhi and Aruna Chandraraju in Bangalore

and have a large number of eligible people to choose from. Don’t complicate your task with these biases.

- If you have a sibling or a friend who wants you to get married, involve them in the process. They will keep your confidence up. If you don’t, remember that most people search alone quite successfully.
- Don’t have a time frame in mind. It will take time to find the right person at this age so be patient and try many avenues instead of only one.
- If you have unmarried children, it’s better to wait till they have settled down before getting married.
- Create a profile of the person you are seeking. You won’t find a perfect, tailored-for-you partner at this age, but do have a minimum set of values you want in a partner. Look out for someone with a positive attitude.
- Don’t settle for just about anybody. Women, be especially careful since there are still men who want dowry and some

who want to get married solely for sexual reasons.

- Once you have found the right person, meet each other many times before finalising the marriage. Use these meetings to put all your cards on the table and decide who’s going to take how much responsibility.
- Plan out every detail of your wedding and include rituals that you missed the first time. Involve your family. Make a ceremony out of it and enjoy it. On your honeymoon, go to places you always wanted to go. Life is giving you a second chance; make the most of it.
- Be ready to make compromises. Compliment each other a lot. And it’s a wise to make a pact about the past. Discuss whatever needs to be said about it before the marriage. Neither you nor your partner should be answerable to each other for what happened many years ago.

—Madhumati Singh (psychologist), Sejal Chahcha (matrimonial lawyer) and Sycorian and CAMB matrimonial bureaus

# Cupid is Fate

**Rohitashva Datta Sharma** and **Gita Narrayani** talk about the complexities of being single and finding a partner after 50



TUA

*Rohitashva Datta Sharma* is probably what matrimonial speak would call tall, wheatish and a professional, with no 'demands'. The unassuming 56-year-old, a BE in Mechanical Engineering from Aligarh who now works in the highly specialised field of non-destructive testing with a fabrication company in Delhi, married someone he didn't know in 1975. That didn't make for a very good start, he says. She was studying nursing. One day, she announced that she had left her family in order to marry him. Left with no other honourable choice, Rohitashva gave in to this "cross-country marriage" — she was Marathi, he from Shahadra in Delhi — and was promptly disowned by his parents. Fifteen years later, they separated; and divorced in 1993. He is barely in touch with his two children — a son and a daughter. He meets his ex-family at social functions but says he no longer has anything in common with them.

*Gita Narrayani*, 59, calls herself a "diehard romantic" and a "total Libran" who believes in horoscopes and Deepak Chopra. "Chopra says there's chronological age, biological age and psychological age. You can't do anything about the first two, but you can about the third. Mentally I'm 25!" says Narrayani, who edited the in-house magazine of a tea company in Kolkata till recently but is now all set to be an entrepreneur. Gita, from a South Indian zamindar family, married out of choice into an old Bengali family at 18 and divorced, again out of choice, when she was in her 40s, four children later. Her sons are married and her younger son and twin daughters live with her. She strongly believes that one day, a new man will step into her life. Though 'technically' her children are fine with that, what they really feel will be revealed when the man presents himself. In the meantime, she is looking, not hard but hopefully.



SHUKRATEEK CHATERJI

## A SINGULAR PROBLEM

**Gita:** “Socially, it’s much easier to have a man around. You can go out at night, do more things than you can on your own.”

People, she says, are suspicious of single women—married couples will not invite them to dinner because they consider them social misfits, perhaps dangerous. The woman might poach on the husband, after all.

**Rohitashva:** After the divorce, he rebuilt his life and is now well settled in his job, but finds that it is not enough. “I think, ‘Who am I working so hard for?’ ” The daily routine leaves him lonely and unmotivated. Without a wife, he says, “my social life is zero. My entire *khandaan* lives in Delhi but no one wants to visit a single man.” He has also been on a diet of Maggi, *khichdi*, *daliya*, *suji*, peas... and would love it if a wife rescues him from that, or “at least manages the maid”.

## MATE BAIT

**Gita:** “I am a great believer in the power of Ganesh,” says Gita. She also added a second ‘r’ to her surname a few years ago, “but it was just for the heck of it”. And yes, she did register herself recently on a matrimonial website, but nothing beyond that. When it comes to finding the right man, she has more faith in destiny than in advertisements.

**Rohitashva:** Three to four years ago, he began searching for a partner. “One day while checking my email, I noticed the *shaadi.com* pop-up ad and decided to take a chance.” And then another one at *bharatmatrimony.com*. His relatives also look out, but “finding a partner is difficult when you are older,” he says. “Everyone

expects you to settle for a social reject. An uneducated girl much below your class, or often someone with liabilities such as three to four daughters to be married off. I am not young enough to feel capable of handling such a liability.”

## BRIDE AND PREJUDICE

**Gita:** There’s no difference between love at 20 and love 40 years later—if it really is love, says Gita. Marriage on the other hand is more complicated. There are the man’s children to be considered, there is one’s

There’s no  
difference between  
love at 20 and love  
40 years later.  
Marriage on the  
other hand is more  
complicated  
—Gita Narrayani

divorcee status. That’s why Gita feels Western men are easier to be with, they allow women the freedom to be themselves. “Not that my ex-husband ever gave me any problems with freedom,” she adds hastily. She has been out with several men over the years, one European, one who was younger than she was. “If two people are mentally compatible, I believe age is of no consequence.”

**Rohitashva:** His experiences with ‘prospectives’ have been both tragic and comic. “All of

them want to know if you are rich! I recall meeting one prospective bride through *shaadi.com* for lunch. Everything was ‘yes-yes-yes’ over the pizza-shizza and then she wanted to see my house. When I took her to see my apartment, which is fairly nice, she was even more ‘yes-yes-yes’ until she found out it was rented. I never heard from her again. They all want a bungalow, car, money...” According to Rohitashva, older women prefer and advertise for younger men, so that pushes him out of the reckoning a bit more.

## THE WISH LIST

**Gita:** “I am looking for a man with integrity and a zany sense of humour. Someone who is affluent, presentable and intelligent and who can match my passion for dancing [she loves the disco] and travelling.” And she remains wary of Indian men, who, she says, can do anything they like and get away with it. “But if a woman is single or has a past then she’s inevitably suspect when the word marriage comes up.”

**Rohitashva:** “I am looking for... hmmm... someone middle-class, around five to seven years younger who is not materialistic, who likes to travel. “But nobody with too many liabilities.” He cannot handle that financially. Other than that, he has no set notions. “What we plan doesn’t always happen. What happens, happens.... I have nothing to lose, everything to gain.” ■

—Rohitashva Sharma interviewed  
by Vatsala Kaul; Gita Narrayani  
interviewed by Anjana Basu



# Marriage demystified

Three experts speak to **Vatsala Kaul** and **Teena Baruah** on emotional, sexual and social aspects of late marriage

## Home alone

Having a partner can sometimes save your life, says **Dr Samir Parikh**

In any age group, same-age interaction is very important. It's a social need. After 50, people are prone to age-related stress and at least one type of illness. Also, they are quite likely to have already experienced bereavement in one form or another, the death of a friend, child, or spouse, which strains emotional immunity. Then, there are the socio-economic changes that come with age, especially after retirement. Not necessarily financial changes, but the role one plays in society. Men who have just retired especially have a tough time dealing with it. It can lead to loneliness. According to research, the geriatric population worldwide is 10 per cent but they commit 20 per cent of all suicides. Loneliness is the most common factor in geriatric societies and this can be cut drastically by having a partner who understands you. Though it is not at all necessary for a

couple to be in the same age group for the success of the marriage, a same-age partner allows for an almost instantaneous identification and empathy that might not be possible across generations. For example, a 60-plus couple's idea of spending the evening together would be very different from a 30-plus couple's.

Culturally, we are an interdependent culture. If you are thinking of getting married, communicate with family members about it. Involve them in the process of looking for a partner and the marriage later. That is how acceptance begins. You did it when you were 18 and brought home your girlfriend. At 50, your children are your family. Their insecurity needs to be addressed. Give them space and time to cope. Most things can be solved through communication.

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*Dr Samir Parikh is a consultant psychiatrist at Max Healthcare in New Delhi*



**Dr Samir Parikh**



**Sandhya Mulchandani**



**Renuka Singh**

Photos: IDRIS AHMED

## Pillow talk

Sex does not become less important with age, says **Sandhya Mulchandani**

The 50-plus generation is not very communicative of its sexual needs, so it can be disconcerting for some to have a new partner. But at this age, people are old enough to acknowledge their needs and expectations without embarrassment. People should not delude themselves into believing that they want a partner just to hold hands. At the same time, they don't need to be sexually aggressive or prove their virility. Instead, the relationship has to be based on care. If you are marrying late, you have a certain amount of freedom and you are in charge of yourself. Also, societal norms don't matter that

much at a later age. So it's good to enjoy sexual intimacy, either before or after marriage. But marriage is important. Live-in relationships are a brilliant idea on an intellectual level but in India, relatives and neighbours may and will snigger at it.

Despite marriage being a priority, India has a large number of single, career women. Some of them remain virgins too. When they find a partner late in life, I see no reason why they won't be as excited to experiment sexually as a 20-something bride. The joy and fulfilment of finding a right partner so late in life is amazing.

Does sex remain equally important in the 50, 60s or even the 70s? This is a subjective matter. There are many people who are well kept and virile at 70. There's a sexual need in every being though we are not willing to talk about it. That's why people often say that they need a companion, while they are actually seeking sexual fulfilment.

But it is also true that at a later age, physical proximity can be just as fulfilling as sex. Holding hands and even the comfort of another body besides yours make a lot of difference.

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*Sandhya Mulchandani is the author of Kamasutra for Women, Indian Man and Love and, Lust: Anthology of Erotic Literature from Ancient and Medieval India with Pavan Varma*

## Family matters

'Privatisation' of marriage is breaking social taboos, says **Renuka Singh**

Marriage, though between two people, is also a social act. We marry because we want someone to participate in our project of life. We need a partner to talk and share our experiences with. In late marriages, when both people already have previous families, matters get complicated. For widows, it is still more difficult. The children are usually against the idea and their own guilt wreaks havoc. In our society, the ideal of the *pativrata* wields great influence. The image of Sita is still very much alive—which, sadly, can stop them from taking that step. However, the institution of marriage has

changed lately. We are now seeing the 'privatisation' of marriage where couples focus more on personal satisfaction. There is a decline of absolute values, like 'marriages should work forever'. This change is most obvious in the middle classes triggered by the education of women and growing number of nuclear families.

For those who are considering marriage, don't break too many taboos at one go. Ensure that your children don't feel threatened financially and talk to them frankly about inheritance and money. Consult a legal advisor,

marriage counsellor and friends, and then take your decision.

Another delicate area in introducing your spouse-to-be to your family. You might be introducing your grandchildren to someone who is taking the place of their grandfather. It's a good idea to invite your partner to meet your family during festivals. Or throw a party. Socialising with the family is important, otherwise your partner and you might get marginalised. But if the situation is such that you have to go against your family's wishes, do it. Eventually they will accept it. ■

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*Renuka Singh is a sociologist at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*





# Still on. strike



Cricket administrator Raj Singh Dungarpur holds forth on his favourite game, its players, politics and his other passions, while **Arati Rajan Menon** listens

**T**here's so much clutter in Raj Singh Dungarpur's sprawling office at Mumbai's Cricket Club of India that, for a second, you almost miss the spectacular view of Brabourne Stadium from the floor-to-ceiling windows. In one corner, a picture of Raj Singh with Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip stands askance on a dusty corner table, set off by a chipped ashtray and salt-and-pepper shakers of dubious vintage. There are piles of newspapers on the floor, files all over the desk, and cricket memorabilia fighting for space with a stained glass Ganesha and prints of birds on the wood-panelled walls. It's a man's room. And Raj Singh's handshake when he jumps up to greet you in his purple Adidas T-shirt and knife-creased grey trousers, is a man's handshake, firm and warm, with a hint of give.

The office comes with the job of president of the club, a post Raj Singh has held for the past 12 years. For a man whose life has been

devoted to cricket, it's one of many such positions over the years, including president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) from 1996 to 1999, manager of the Indian cricket team, and representative of India on the executive board of the International Cricket Council. "Profession has its limits; passion has no limits," says Raj Singh about his love for the game. "If I were paid Rs 50,000 a month somewhere else, I wouldn't do my job half as well." But he took time off from cricket during the recent general elections to indulge another passion: campaigning for the BJP. "I didn't have a choice," he says with a touch of drama. "I believe entirely in their philosophy."

Right now, though, the 68-year-old's immediate priority is bringing floodlights to Brabourne Stadium. "The first Test match in Mumbai was held here in 1934," he says. "Now, cricket follows the lights. I don't want the stadium to be relegated to a

monument that can only hold insignificant local fixtures.”

Raj Singh’s days are spent with day-to-day administrative work at the club, which includes dealing with a steady stream of people passing in and out of his room, much like today. CCI officials interrupt him regularly, seeking the advice of “Raj *bhai*” on letters to be sent and meetings to be organised, some decide to hold their own impromptu meeting in another corner of the room, voices respectfully low. Suddenly, in pops Kiran More, former Indian wicketkeeper, just to say hello.

Cricket Academy (NCA), was set up in May 2000 in Bangalore, with a three-member committee comprising Raj Singh as chairman, former Test wicketkeeper Brijesh Patel and former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar. In December the same year, there was a face-off between Raj Singh and Gavaskar at CCI, with Gavaskar submitting his resignation from the academy. The provocation was Gavaskar’s criticism of the BCCI for allotting a three-day match to the NCA against a touring Zimbabwe team, feeling that more seasoned players should have got the

consider his ways, and opinions, feudal. Some even say he is out of touch with reality, citing his stand on match fixing as evidence. Examples: “Match fixing can’t take place in a team game” and “I’d rather trust Azhar’s word than that of a bookie.”

Mohammed Azharuddin and Raj Singh Dungarpur have their own little history. Following the 1989-1990 tour of Pakistan, where Krish Srikanth led India to a 0-0 draw in four matches, Raj Singh, then chairman of selectors, offered Azhar the captaincy, famously asking him: “*Miyan,*



**On the walls of Raj Singh’s office: Raj Singh with former Australian captain Steve Waugh; the 1986 Indian team; a painting of batting legend Don Bradman with Sachin Tendulkar; an autographed photo of Australian Bob Simpson**

“See, how many people I have to deal with,” Raj Singh scowls, then smiles, loving every minute. He also loves his new role as campaigner. Son of Mahrawal Laxman Singh, the late ruler of Dungarpur, near Udaipur, in south Rajasthan, he is proud of the BJP’s performance in his district. Remind him of the nationwide result, though, and he scowls again, this time for real. “Now, it’s the Italian Congress at the Centre,” he harrumphs.

Raj Singh Dungarpur has never shied away from voicing his opinions, and it has often landed him in the thick of controversy. His pet project, the National

opportunity to display their talent. An incensed Raj Singh had then told a Mumbai tabloid: “Gavaskar should resign for his criticism.” Gavaskar complied.

Again in 2001, Raj Singh came in for flak for his welcome speech to an assembly of foreign coaches at the NCA. He said: “India did not win the World Cup in 1983. Rather, the West Indies lost it.” This, in front of Syed Kirmani and Balwinder Sandhu, members of the winning team, who watched amazed as Raj Singh went on brazenly, even adding, “That World Cup was won by accident.” Many people in the cricketing fraternity privately

*kaptan banoge?*” At the time, there was discontent in the team and a revolt was in the offing against the BCCI over salaries. Critics claimed choosing the more malleable Azhar over stronger candidates, including Ravi Shastri and Kapil Dev, was a wily move to avert the crisis. Whatever the reason, the tactical masterstroke worked. The crisis was averted and Azhar went on to become a successful captain.

Raj Singh has always has the ability to take charge of a situation. “He will not be led; he will lead,” his housemaster at Daly College, Indore, a leading boarding school, wrote in a report

about the 12-year-old. “And then he promptly punished me for playing cricket in the dorm!” he recalls. Raj Singh went on to captain the Daly College cricket team and then the Vikram University Cricket Team in Ujjain, from where he graduated in 1956. He played first class cricket for Rajasthan for 16 years as a fast medium bowler, taking 182 wickets. His finest moment, though, came as manager to the national side: as he recalls the 1986 tour of England when Kapil’s Indians beat England in England, winning both the Test and one-day series, his face lights up.



Tendulkar play on the Brabourne wicket when Sachin made 300 runs. And then there’s an acerbic aside. “I had seen [Sunil] Gavaskar play when he was just a little older. And even he was not half as good as this young lad was.” Dungarpur is happy with today’s Indian team, saying it is the most balanced we’ve ever had—the recent losses merely “an aberration”. He gives a large part of the credit to the foreign component—John Wright, the coach from New Zealand, South African physiotherapist Andrew Leipus and Gregory King, the English trainer.

Dungarpur is a disciplined man himself, and goes for a daily 5 am walk on Marine Drive. “It comes from the public school routine,” he chuckles. He sticks to his routine even on his frequent travels, to the UK, Kenya, the US and Canada. “If it’s snowing in London, I wear a hat and coat and still go.” When in London—he is an honorary life member of the Marylebone Cricket Club, or MCC—Dungarpur stays near the Lord’s cricket ground and spends much of his time catching up with his friends from the game. “Places are not as attractive to me as people,” he says earnestly.

Just like Lata Mangeshkar may not be able to teach you how to sing, good cricketers don’t necessarily make for good coaches

—Raj Singh Dungarpur

It clouds abruptly though when he talks about loneliness. “It was not a conscious decision to remain a bachelor, but now it’s too late,” he says. You’ve heard about how he had promised his parents that he would only bring home a bride of their choosing, and thus was unable to solemnise his long friendship with Lata Mangeshkar. But Raj Singh doesn’t want to rake up the past. A wistful “if I could live my life over again, I would get married. I do regret not having children” is all he will allow.

There’s a fondness in his eyes when he tells you about the time he first saw a barely 14 Sachin

“We have finally realised that good cricketers don’t necessarily make for good coaches,” he says, and then, completely out of the blue, proclaims, “Just like Lata Mangeshkar, the best singer in the world, may not be able to teach you how to sing.” And goes on to speak for five minutes about her talent, how she has toiled hard for years to hone that talent, even taking Urdu lessons to get her pronunciation right; how her discipline is remarkable. Then, there’s a little wisecrack: “Maharashtrians have very bad pronunciation, you see. The moment a Maharashtrian speaks any language, I can tell!” The moment has passed.

He also visits Dungarpur with regularity, where he is converting his ancestral house into a home for orphan children and old couples abandoned by their families. “I may not be Anil Ambani,” he chuckles. “But I can do my bit.” His mobile phone rings, an aide rushes up with it. Raj Singh waves him away, annoyed at the interruption, then carries on: “There’s so much still left to do.” Looking to the windows, he sweeps his hand in a wide arc, taking in the room inside and the pitch outside. It is a regal gesture. This is the kingdom of Raj Singh, scion of Dungarpur, and he wants you to know it. ■



# Mama mia!

**I** will gather together my past and look. I will see a thing that has already happened. The pain will cut my spirit loose. I will hold that pain in my hand until it becomes hard and shiny, more clear. And then my fierceness can come back, my golden side, my black side. I will use this sharp pain to penetrate my daughter's tough skin and cut her tiger spirit loose. She will fight me, because that is the nature of two tigers. But I will win and give her my spirit, because this is the way a mother loves her daughter.

—Amy Tan in *Joy Luck Club*

There's something about mothers. A special touch, a fragrance that suffuses you with contentment, warm arms that say coming home more than four walls ever could. A formidable strength that fights you every step of the way while helping you up the next rung of life's ladder. A force field who trains you to quell the child within you enough to don the mantle of parent yourself, and then sits back and reaps the rewards of grandparenting in an irresistible circle of love.

Yes, there's something about mothers. I lost mine, Suman Prabhakar Sheth, to ovarian cancer on July 9, 2004. She was diagnosed

late, too late—a simple blood test, CA-125, could have saved her life. The idea for my book, *Mothers & Daughters*, came from this experience. I knew I was losing my mother, but I wanted to prevent it from happening to others. I wanted to have people stand up and say: 'Yes, this relationship is so precious, you don't want to lose it prematurely. Go out and get tested. Get that mammogram done; get that Pap smear done.'

Early cancer detection is the gift of a lifetime. Cancer is no longer a death sentence; if you catch it early enough, you have a survival rate of 95 per cent. If a woman is 50 and she has no heart disease or cancer, she can expect to live to 95. The bottom line: you need to get assertive and proactive about your health right now so that the odds will be in your favour.

The women in my book are mothers and daughters from different fields, ages ranging from nine months to 91 years. The photographs reflect the love they share, like all mothers and daughters, an unconditional love you never want to lose.

—Sonal Vimal Ambani

*Sonal Vimal Ambani, an MBA in marketing and finance, is currently doing her PhD in business management. Her book Mothers & Daughters seeks to promote awareness that cancer is manageable, if not curable, if detected early. All proceeds go to the Cancer Screening & Research Trust, whose objective is to inform women that early detection is the gift of a lifetime. Ambani lives with her husband Vimal and two children Anjali and Amar in Ahmedabad.*

## Being her daughter is my greatest



IPS officer Kiran Bedi with daughter Saina

protection and privilege — *Saina Bedi*



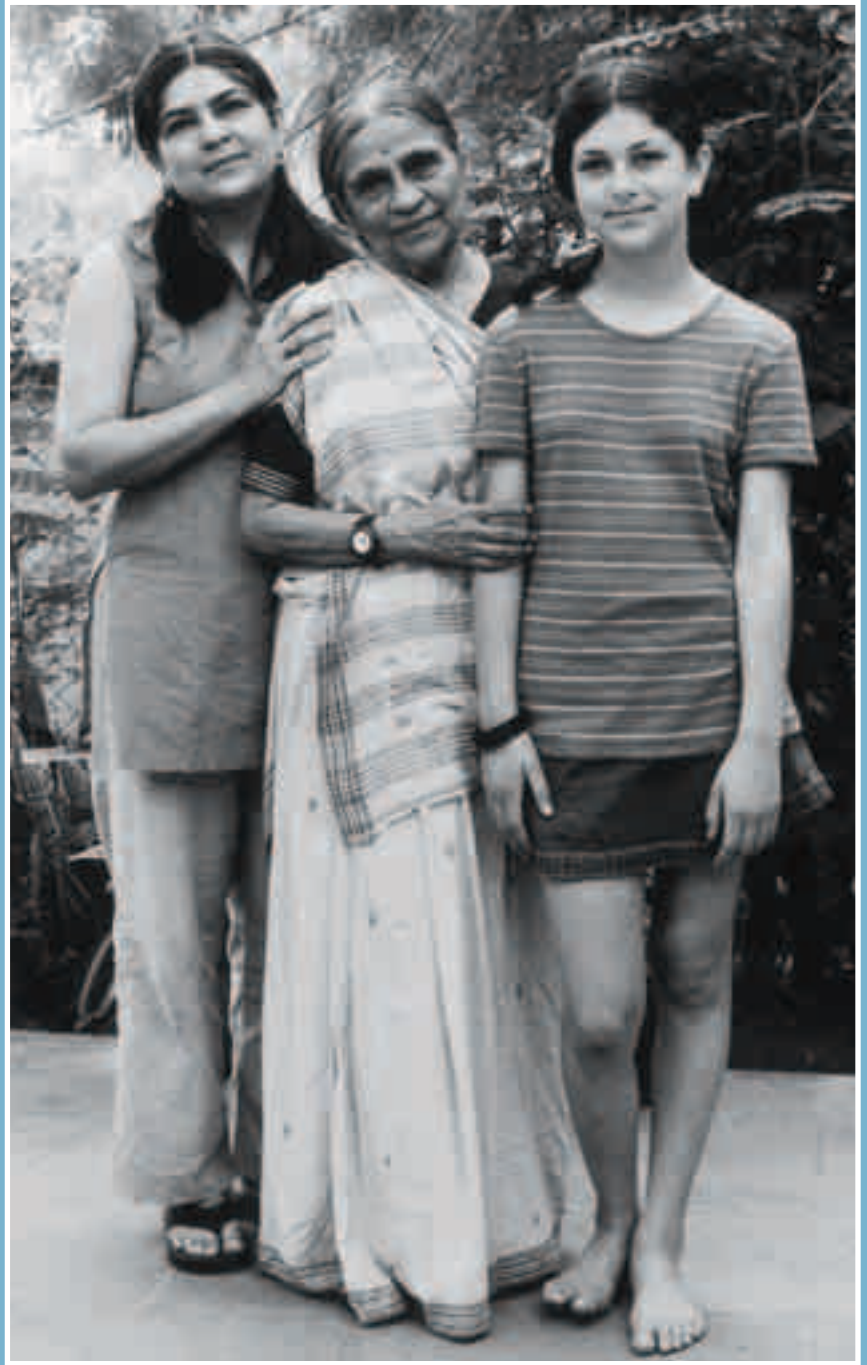




Filmmaker Gurinder Chadha  
with mother Balwant Kaur

My mum is the  
epitome of an Indian  
mother – selfless,  
caring and happiest  
when feeding you  
— *Gurinder Chadha*

Activist Ela Bhatt, centre,  
with daughter  
Ami Bhatt Potter and  
granddaughter  
Maya Winslow Potter



Daughters spend a lifetime  
watching their mothers, taking  
cues about life and living

—*Ami Bhatt Potter*



My mom is my guru, friend, guide  
and inspiration — *Natasha Nanda*

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LIC agent Ritu Nada with  
daughter Natasha





If you can't accept the daughter you  
have, you'll never have the daughter  
you want — *Sheila Dikshit*

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New Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit  
with daughter Latika Dikshit Syed



Our relationships are much stronger  
because we respect each other  
—*Mary Roy*

---

Activist Mary Roy with daughter  
and writer Arundhati



My daughters are two sides  
of the same coin – that's me!  
*—Nafisa Ali Sodhi*

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Actor Nafisa Ali Sodhi with  
daughters Armana and Pia





The day she had her own baby,  
I relived every moment of her birth  
—*Jaya Jaitley*

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Samata Party president Jaya Jaitley with  
daughter Aditi Jaitley Jadeja



Sonal Vimal Ambani



## CANCER FACTS FOR INDIAN WOMEN

According to a study by the World Health Organisation, one in 12 women in urban India will develop cancer in their lifetime. Approximately 40 per cent of new cases of cancer in India afflict women. In the past decade, breast cancer has overtaken cervical cancer as the most common cancer among women in Indian cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. Also, India has the highest rate of cervical cancer in the world. One in every 10 cancer deaths worldwide is in urban India. What's more alarming, 75-80 per cent of patients are in advanced stages of the disease at the time of diagnosis. Visit [www.csrtindia.org](http://www.csrtindia.org) to get more information about cancer screening.

### LEARN MORE

If you are seeking information on cancer, the Internet is your best option. Here are a few useful websites:

[www.acor.org](http://www.acor.org)

This website hosted by the Association of Cancer Online Resources (ACOR) is a collection of online communities that provide accurate information in a supportive environment

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

The website of the American Cancer Society is focused on research and education, patient and community services and patient-based programmes  
[www.indiancancersociety.org](http://www.indiancancersociety.org)

The website provides information on its various activities, branches and other useful cancer links

[www.cancerguide.org](http://www.cancerguide.org)

This website has been created by Steve Dunn, a cancer survivor, and covers individual experiences and a collection of articles on medical literature, clinical trials, cancer statistics, etc

[www.cancerindia.org](http://www.cancerindia.org)

The Gujarat Cancer Society (GCS) website provides substantial cancer-related information and case studies

[www.ncinih.gov](http://www.ncinih.gov)

This focuses on the programme of the National Institute of Health, USA, coordinating a national research programme on cancer causes and prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment

[www.oncolink.upenn.edu](http://www.oncolink.upenn.edu)

A comprehensive website from the University of Pennsylvania Cancer Center that contains information regarding sites, treatment and emotional support as well as current articles, literature and research information

### BREAST CANCER

[www.breastcancer.about.com](http://www.breastcancer.about.com)

This website provides basic information through a series of articles, forums, a newsletter and a chat room

[www.nabco.org](http://www.nabco.org)

The National Association of Breast Cancer Organisations, USA, provides information and assistance to patients and family members

### CERVICAL CANCER

[www.cervicalhealth.org](http://www.cervicalhealth.org)

The Centre for Cervical Health provides information on Pap tests, useful information and resources

[www.vulvarpainfoundation.org](http://www.vulvarpainfoundation.org)

The Vulvar Pain Foundation provides information on treatment, support and research and promotes awareness

### OVARIAN CANCER

[www.ovarian.org](http://www.ovarian.org)

This site provides information on ovarian cancer, its symptoms and treatment

[www.ovariancancer.org](http://www.ovariancancer.org)

A support site for ovarian cancer, it offers details about women diagnosed with ovarian cancer and the survivors

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*Mothers & Daughters* is priced at Rs 1,500. Purchase the book online at [www.csrtindia.org](http://www.csrtindia.org) or call Mahesh Thakkar in Ahmedabad at 079-26465181 and 26465518 or Priyanka Chhabria in Mumbai at (0) 9820333000

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# Men on pause

There is a growing awareness today of the negative impact of falling testosterone levels on mood, energy and sex drive, says **Nilanjana Sengupta**



FARZANA COOPER

**A**s early as 1889, prominent French scientist Charles Édouard Brown-Séquard, then 72 years old, reported that he had recaptured his sexual vim and vigour with extracts of dog and guinea pig testicles. Participants of this rejuvenation routine elsewhere were psychologist Sigmund Freud and poet W B Yeats. This triggered a half-century-long biochemical

stampede to find the male hormone, which in the 1930s resulted in the isolation of testosterone, the chemical responsible for male sex drive. It took another nine years to discover that a 40-year-old man produces 1 per cent less testosterone each year for the rest of his life. Today, while some experts recognise this depletion as a medical condition and call it 'andropause' or the

male menopause, others believe it's simply a part of ageing, referred to as ageing male syndrome (AMS).

The dichotomy doesn't prevent the use of the term 'andropause' to describe the symptoms of an ageing male, a medical term for men over 40—tiredness, lethargy, mood swings, abdominal obesity, reduced interest in sex, poor

concentration, reduced muscle mass and decreased energy. According to the US-based Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, about two in 10 men aged 60 or more the world over have testosterone levels below the normal range of 300 to 1,200 nanograms per decilitre (one-tenth of a litre).

## ANDROPAUSE IS NOT MENOPAUSE

While some equate this progressive decline to menopause, others disagree. "This is not a valid comparison," says Dr Rajan Bhonsle, a sex therapist and counsellor who runs the Heart To Heart Counselling Centre in Byculla, Mumbai. "In women, menopause takes about eight to 10 years to set in and is characterised by a sudden drop in hormones oestrogen and progesterone," he says. "Men, however, experience a more gradual decline. And while menopause signals the loss of fertility (ability to get pregnant) in women, men may remain virile as long as they are alive."

The level of comfort and familiarity vis-a-vis menopause has reached a plane where women know what to expect biologically and are not shy to thrash out doubts or queries. However, a lesser number of men share their concerns about themselves with their partner, let alone reveal the details to a family physician. This problem is perceived as universal among senior men—in India, there are 60 million men in the 45-60 age group and 40 million who are 60 plus. "Research and related awareness campaigns in the West started much earlier. Here, the idea is still on the fringes," says Dr Narayana Reddy, Chennai-

based sexologist, who has counselled over 10,000 men in 23 years of practice.

## THE FACTS AS THEY ARE

A pilot study by the Chennai-based Indian Andropause Society—it was set up by Dr Reddy in January 2004—indicated that almost 80 per cent of men with symptoms do not seek any medical advice, 38 per cent undertake self-treatment (basically, pop vitamin pills) and 20 per cent seek advice from an expert, which includes urologists, psychiatrists, sexologists, endocrinologists, consulting physicians or family physicians. Almost 42 per cent of men perceive these symptoms as part of ageing, and not as an end of virility, as andropause suggests.

Another recent study, conducted by Mumbai's Blackstone Research for hormone manufacturer

Organon India, among 40-plus men in four metros reveals that andropause sets in at 35 years among New Delhi men, at 41 years for those in Mumbai, while men in Kolkata and Chennai experience physical slowdown at 45. The prime culprit: a poor lifestyle. Men between 35 and 45 experience increased work pressure and have very little time for family or exercise. "Ironically, the term andropause is not included as a proven condition in the World Health Organisation's medical encyclopaedia," says Dr Bhonsle.

However, convinced about the threat, Dr Reddy opened the doors to India's first andropause specialty clinic at Apollo Hospital in Chennai (*for address, see page 95*) on the eve of World Elders' Day—September 30. "Only when a

## FOOD FOR THE BODY

- Don't cut down on fat indiscriminately. Red meat and alcohol consumption, however, should be reduced. Recent studies by Penn State University, USA, find that an extremely low fat diet may reduce testosterone levels. Unsaturated fats in peanuts and olive oil are more beneficial
- Some experts believe that a high protein, low carbohydrate diet may decrease testosterone too. Ideally, they say, the level of protein intake should be about 16 per cent of daily calorie intake
- Ideal diet: healthy fats from seafood, fish and lean meats; green leafy vegetables like spinach, broccoli and fenugreek; and lots of water



## FOOD FOR THE MIND

- Don't trivialise symptoms like fatigue, irritability and relationship problems
- Keep yourself intellectually stimulated. Solve crossword puzzles and take part in quizzes or follow them on TV
- Exercise thrice a week for at least 30 minutes
- Try meditation to accept changing situations
- Devise your own constructive methods to combat loneliness

physician is aware of the condition called andropause will he work in that direction and ask for blood hormone estimations," says Dr Reddy. He adds, "If the hormone assay reveals a deficiency of testosterone, it's diagnosed as andropause."

### READING THE SIGNS

"Alcoholism, chronic conditions such as diabetes and some drugs used to treat hypertension and depression can also lead to a low sex drive, one major problem that an ageing man experiences," says Dr Saroj Gumaste, sexual

Besides blood hormone estimation, you can know whether you are andropausal by getting your serum total measured. This is the total amount of testosterone in the body—free, as well as bound by sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG), a protein that increases with age. The more SHBG you have, the chances that you are andropausal are greater. "This testing facility is available in most of the hospitals in India," informs Dr N K Mohanty, consulting urologist at Safdarjung Hospital and Medical College in New Delhi

needed with careful monitoring of results. There is, however, a debate over the absorption of supplemented hormone and the risks involved—oral preparations have reportedly damaged the liver in some cases. There are different modes of therapy being practised in the West (*see box*).

In November 2003, the US-based Institute of Medicine reviewed the current evidence surrounding TRT and concluded that the long-term effects of replacement remain unknown. In his 19 years of practice, Dr Bhonsle has also never prescribed TRT to any of his ageing patients, feeling its potential risks far exceed the benefits. "TRT is known to stimulate the growth of prostate cancer that is already present, and it also increases rage in men."

Dr Reddy admits testosterone administration can produce complications in some. "But it is the physician's judgement that counts," he says. "The doctor has to decide who's better off with TRT." A patient with an enlarged prostate, a recent history of heart attack or stroke, liver dysfunction or congestive cardiac failure with low red blood count cannot be prescribed TRT.

## TESTOSTERONE REPLACEMENT THERAPIES

- I Skin patch:** Applied daily to the upper arm, back, thigh, scrotum or abdomen. Easy to use, it helps maintain testosterone level in the body. But the skin could get irritated, and some people don't respond to absorption well enough. Not available in India
- I Injections:** Periodicity varies from one to three weeks. Given under medical supervision, they may create abnormal highs and lows in hormone levels. Every injection costs Rs 250 to Rs 500
- I Testosterone buccal system:** A tablet that releases testosterone is placed in the upper gum area of the mouth. It should stick to the gum or cheek, where it stays for 12 hours and dissolves. It may fall off earlier, but shouldn't be chewed or swallowed. Not available in India
- I Gel:** Applied daily to the skin on the shoulders, upper arms, and abdomen. In some men, though, the testosterone released doesn't get absorbed well enough. Not available in India
- I Oral medication:** Rarely prescribed because it can severely damage the liver. However, a particular oral capsule called 'Testosterone Undecanoate' bypasses the liver mechanism, and causes no damage. The cost: around Rs 900 per month

and reproductive health consultant and member of the Mumbai-based Council of Sex Education and Parenthood International. Liver disease, cholesterol and deficiency of thyroid activity can also cause changes as can certain medications like beta blockers—drugs that slow the heart rate and reduce contractions of the heart muscle—and pain killers.

### PRESCRIPTIONS FOR HELP

Like Hormone Replacement Therapy for women, Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT) is in practice. Conducted by urologists and endocrinologists across the country, it replaces testosterone orally and through injections. To ensure safety and effectiveness, a full assessment—blood, fat, liver, kidney and prostate profile—is

More facts on andropause will be highlighted at the first Asia Pacific Conference of Sexology in Mumbai, to be held at the Taj Mahal Hotel from November 20 to 22, 2004. International experts will attend the conference, where research papers on testosterone, erectile dysfunction and andropause in India will be presented. Watch this space. ■



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# Menu for happiness

Forget insipid food. **Pushpesh Pant** uses timeless

Buddhist recipes to compose a gastronomic symphony

**H**osh o harwas tab o tawan to  
jaa chuke, ham bhi jaane wale  
hain, samaan to ja chuka”.

(Alertness of mind, desires, vim and vigour have departed, all one by one; the luggage dispatched, we too are on our way.)

Poet Mirza Ghalib obviously wrote this Urdu verse when he was ailing. His zest for life, however, remained undiminished. Never one to go gently into the night, he raged and roared against the fading of light. One day, all of us are likely to find ourselves in the same boat, with acuity of vision painfully lost and quality of life seemingly compromised.

Alas, the palate will still be receptive then. Adishankara, the great 7th century philosopher, realised how difficult this situation can be. “*Angam galitam palitam mundam, dasham vihinam jatam tundam, tadapi nuamunchati ashapindam.*” (Time has taken its toll—all the muscles have wasted away and the crown turned grey; gone are the teeth; why, then, does the appetite stay!)



**Dal-palak ke cheele**

Those who do not design their diets well run the risk of ruining their remaining happiness forever. Remember what happened to sage Vishwamitra, who allowed himself to be seduced by the *halwa* brought by the celestial nymph Menaka? The promise held out by Chyavanprash makes many elderly men chase conjugal bliss past their

prime, but one does not know whether the venerable old ascetic Chyavan, who had Ashwini Kumar concoct this powerful potion for him, actually benefited from it after marrying the young princess Sukanya.

An ideal mood manipulator, food is also said to rein in your senses, heal your body and your

mind. My personal favourite for this is Buddhist food. The sublime aromatics of Indian cuisine, the chromatic creativity of the Thai, the harmonious fusion of Sri Lankan and Indonesian cuisine and the rustic ruggedness of the basic Tibetan diet offer a dazzling range to choose from. From hot soups and crunchy salads to *lamay*,



*tempura*, *momo* and relishes to accompany rice or noodles, myriad curries and desserts, the Buddhist culinary repertoire is rich and resplendent. I recently put these together in a book, *Buddhist Peace Recipes*.

Buddhist food doesn't compromise on spices or oil. After all, what's life without

some sugar and spice? The problem is that advancing years force you to focus on the therapeutic aspect of food. Even if we are recklessly carefree, our loved ones begin to straitjacket us with prohibitions and prescriptions. The moment our fasting sugar notches another point, out goes the sugar, with much of the starch and most of the carbohydrates. And when the blood pressure monitor goes up, salt becomes taboo. Fats, red meats and eggs are banished from the gourmand's, or the glutton's, life by cruel cholesterol; and the slightest deposit of uric acid banishes spinach, lentils and tomatoes from meals.

Everyone knows that weak stomachs cannot digest strong meats. This, however, does not mean that diets for older people should be confined to insipid porridge. If it must be *khichdi*, let it be *lazeeza*, a regal version with lentils, *arhar dal*, non-husked mung, and a touch of nutmeg, asafoetida (*hing*) and cumin seeds (*jeera*). It could be cooked in flavoured vegetable stock and garnished with dried fruits like pine nuts. Akbar welcomed his beloved son Salim with this delicacy on his triumphant return from the Deccan war fields.

Compose your own gastronomic symphony. Ayurveda is full of tips about matching the *satvik*, *rajsik* and *tamsik* in harmony with seasons and state of health. While boiled, steamed and mildly aromatic foods suit the *satvik* personality type (cerebral and spiritual), non-vegetarian and resplendent (spicy, grilled, baked or lightly fried) foods suit more energetic and physically active

people, the *rajsik* type. And deep-fried, strongly sweet, sharp and pungent foods, and even stale foods, are ideally meant for *tamsik* people—those who have to do physical labour. Call it *guna* (benefits) or *tahseer* (effects), we are what we eat.

The secret of producing custom-made meals every day for even the most fastidious eater lies in ensuring a variety of colours, aromas and flavours—wheat flour, mixed grains, small quantities of *ghee* made with cow's milk, dried fruits, most vegetables and fresh fruits, honey, and aromatic herbs. This calls for substituting one ingredient with another, a subtle variation in the recipe or different presentations. An old Urdu couplet reads, "*Aankhon se zuban ka kaam liya*"—replace the treacherous tongue with the eyes.

Here are three exclusive Buddhist food recipes that let you enjoy your feast without impairing your health...

## DAL-PALAK KE CHEELE

### INGREDIENTS

Spinach (palak): 300 gm; washed, cleaned and chopped

Non-husked mung dal: 100 gm; soaked overnight

Green chillies: 5 to 6; deseeded, if used mildly

Sweet corn kernels (fresh or canned): 4 tbsp

Carrot: 1 medium-sized; washed, scraped and cut in thin strips

Spring onion: 1; sliced thinly

Tomato: 1; diced

Yellow bell pepper: 1; cut in small diamonds

Cooking oil: 1 tbsp

Salt: to taste

Mixed dried herbs (optional): 1 pinch





Photos courtesy: PUSHESH PANT

**Bharwan chooja**

## METHOD

Blend the spinach and *dal* together in a mixer/blender. Add some water to obtain pouring consistency. Put oil in a non-stick frying pan and pour the batter and spread it out evenly and as thinly as possible to make a pancake. Cook on medium heat, turning gently with a wooden spatula. Remove to a plate when set. Lightly sauté the vegetables in the same pan after plunging these in a pan of salted boiling water for 30 seconds. The tomatoes and bell peppers don't require this treatment. Add salt and the herbs, if required. Place a small amount of filling comprising boiled vegetables in the centre and fold in medium-sized packets. Serve with the remaining herbed vegetables of choice.

## BHARWAN CHOOZA

### INGREDIENTS

*Chicken breasts: 750 gm; trimmed and slightly flattened, washed and patted dry*  
*Juice of one lemon*  
*Garlic cloves: 4, finely chopped*  
*Kashmiri mirch, oregano and paprika: 1 tbsp each*  
*Olive oil: 2 tsp*  
*Salt and freshly ground pepper: To taste*  
*Mozzarella cheese: 100 gm (optional)*  
*Accompaniments:*  
*Assorted boiled vegetables*  
*Buttered herb potatoes*

### METHOD

Place the chicken in a shallow dish and cover it with lemon juice. Combine the garlic and the spices with the oil and massage the mixture into the chicken breasts.

Cover and marinate for two to three hours at room temperature or in a refrigerator overnight. Preheat the oven to 200° C /400° F. Place the chicken in a shallow roasting tin, top with a little cheese and roast for an hour. While roasting, pierce the thickest part with a pointed knife. Alternatively, pan grill the chicken on medium heat for 5-7 minutes on each side. Glaze with a small dab of butter for a hint of flavour.

## KUSHAMNADA

### INGREDIENTS

*Pumpkin: 1 kg*  
*Nigella seeds (kalonji): 1 tsp*  
*Cumin seeds (jeera): 1 tsp*  
*Mustard seeds (rai): Half tsp*  
*Fennel seeds (saunf): 1 tsp*  
*Fenugreek seeds (methi): Half tsp*  
*Asafoetida (hing): 1 pinch*

**The Buddhist culinary repertoire is resplendent, rich and varied, and doesn't compromise on spices or oil**



*Kushamnada*

Lemon juice: 1 tbsp  
Jaggery (gur): 50 gm  
Salt: to taste  
Mustard oil: 2 tbsp  
Red chillies: 4-6 for tempering  
Green chillies and coriander:  
for garnish

### METHOD

Boil the pumpkin after cutting it in chunks and mash it. Heat the oil in a pan. When hot, dissolve the *hing* in it and add the other spices. Stir the mashed pumpkin well, pour lemon juice, add grated jaggery and salt and cook for two to three minutes. Temper with red chillies fried in half tbsp ghee. Garnish with coriander and green chillies. ■

*Pushpesh Pant is a documentary producer, author and die-hard foodie*



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# Feet on the ground

Shobha Koser has not let her brush with cancer, paralysis and gangrene stop her from following her passion for dance, says **Teena Baruah**

**S**hobha Koser is not in the A-league of Indian classical dancers. But the 60-year-old Kathak dancer does a great job of promoting dance in a city that rarely spares a thought for art. She teaches Kathak and hosts a weekly *baithak* at Pracheen Kala Kendra, in Sector 35B, Chandigarh. Started by Shobha and her husband M L Koser, Pracheen Kala Kendra is 35 years old and doubles as a launch pad for their students. Koser retired as the principal of Nehru Memorial Government Postgraduate College in Mansa (Patiala) in 2002 and is now pursuing her doctorate in folk dances and folk music of Punjab from Agra University, and working on a book on classical dance forms. There have been some pauses in her 50-year love affair with dance, though. Pauses that Koser says make life more endearing.

A year ago, Koser cut her feet during a performance in Pune. The wounds nurtured an infection that, within two days, turned into blue blisters. She immediately rushed to a local



I want to die on stage while dancing, in true *filmi* style  
— Shobha Koser

hospital—the doctor insisted that it was gangrene and that she get operated immediately.

“Gangrene, the death of soft body tissue, is usually associated with wounds, as in stories you hear of people losing their limbs as the result of untreated war injuries,” recalls Koser wryly. “My wounds

certainly weren’t so bad.”

Gangrene can be caused by an untreated bacterial infection, a minor injury or a blood clot, all of which affect blood circulation. Diabetes and high cholesterol tend to aggravate the problem. At the time, Koser insisted on a second opinion. But when she reached Chandigarh, the pain was unbearable. “By that point, I didn’t care whether I was operated upon or killed,” she says. Two operations and 60 sleepless nights later, her feet began to heal gradually—doctors say it’s harder for seniors to recover from gangrene than younger people.

Koser drew strength from the trials of the past—it’s been a life of close calls and near misses. She still remembers vividly how, in 1989, after a long practice session, she felt a deep pain in her left leg. She ignored it for three weeks until one day she couldn’t move the leg anymore. The doctors at a local hospital in Chandigarh recommended a complicated spinal surgery after they detected a small growth in her vertebrae. “I underwent lumbar puncture, a





**Dance has always come first with Koser**

painful diagnosis done by collecting a sample of cerebrospinal fluid by inserting a needle into your lower spine, but refused to get operated fearing that a minor medical error would turn me into a vegetable,” she says, recalling her partial paralysis. “I remained in the bed for six months and got totally out of shape. I was sure I would never be able to dance again.”

She even contemplated suicide. “I thought my life was over,” she recalls. And then Koser turned to her mind for sustenance, willing herself to believe that she would dance again. The positive thinking worked wonders. After a few sessions of acupressure, she began to motivate herself to dance for 10 minutes every day. Recovery soon followed, and

once she was back on her feet, she hosted a special show for all the doctors who treated her.

The Kendra hosted a similar show in 2001, when Koser recovered from cervical cancer after 21 chemotherapy sessions. “I had begun to wonder why crisis always came to my doorstep! I even got a priest to conduct a *havan* at home. But when I began *riyaz* again, all my fears were automatically brushed aside.”

They resurfaced when Koser met with a near-fatal road accident in Jammu in August. “I have performances coming up in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi next month, and I couldn’t practice for a month after the accident,” she says. “Anyway, artists are made of a softer mould. We break easily but

mend as fast.” Koser broke her left foot in the accident, but recovered in a month.

Now what bothers her is being treated like a porcelain doll. “Koser *saab* [her husband] is always telling me when to sit, when to stand and when to work. It can be very irritating.” But she understands. “We’ve been together for 43 years,” she says. “We also become selfish with age and keep worrying what will happen to us without our partner.”

Having faced death square in the face, Koser doesn’t worry about these things. “I have to prepare my daughter and my daughter-in-law to take over the institute after I quit dancing,” she says, adding mischievously, “Anyway, I want to die on stage while dancing, in true *filmi* style.” ■

# Wrist watch

Shameem Akthar tells you how yogic exercises can combat problems that arise from overuse or disuse of the hands



**HUMAN HANDS CAN CREATE** the most intricate piece of art, save life through delicate surgery, toss up a delicious meal, play challenging games and express emotions. We continuously use our hands, but do we care for them enough?

Playing golf or tennis, typing, gripping a knife while chopping, knitting, and playing musical instruments can all cause tenderness of the wrist. Add to this age-related arthritis and fractures, and wrists are just as prone to such collapses as the hips.

Women are particularly susceptible to weak wrists. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and Repetitive Strain Injury, which attack all age groups, are other lifestyle hazards. These happen when the hands are overused, leading to painful inflammation of the tendons or a 'synovial sheath' (which covers the joints) in the wrist and hand region. Other accompanying problems include loss of the lubricating liquid at joints, and bone shrinkage accompanied by muscular shortening, which deform hands, affecting not just their grip but overall efficiency.

Yoga believes holistic health ensures working out all body parts, preventing a collapse by anticipating potential hazards. For general wrist strength, simple hand exercises (see box) are helpful. However, as you

advance in yoga practice, you will notice that the wrists are challenged in practically all the poses, be it the shoulder stand (where the body is propped up and supported on the wrists), or *surya namaskar* poses like the 'plank' or the 'downward-facing dog', where the upper body is supported entirely on the wrists. Even simple standing postures like the 'triangle' (*trikonasana*)

and the 'tree' (*tadasana*) manipulate the wrists into disciplined strength.

Wrist rotation can be done anywhere—waiting at the bus stop or even while watching television. Remember, though, that doing even such simple moves in an absent-minded fashion will have only a fractional benefit. Focus on the body part, and it will respond. ■

## Yogic moves

### **Manibandha chakra or wrist joint rotation**

Sit up straight and hold out your right hand. Slowly clench the fist and unclench five times. Clench again. Slowly rotate the clenched fist in a clockwise direction, drawing a circle with it. Do this five to 10 times, breathing evenly. Repeat in anticlockwise direction an equal number of times. Now repeat the entire sequence with the left hand. If pressed for time, both hands may be done together, but care must be taken to focus on even breathing, the drawing of well-rounded circles and synchronising movements. Initially, it is best to try each hand separately. After a number of days of sufficient practice, care must also be taken to keep the hand out straight, without folding at the

elbows. This helps to simultaneously strengthen the entire hand. Despite its extreme simplicity, *manibandha chakra* is extremely therapeutic, strengthening the wrist and preventing all wrist-related problems that arise from overuse or disuse of the hands. It may be done several times during the day, especially to relax hands after overuse.



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

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## ADVANTAGE AGE

Here's a performance enhancer you didn't hear about at the Olympics—age. According to a long-term study by Yale University's School of Medicine, runners older than 50 improve their performance more quickly than younger runners. "You can maintain a very high performance standard into the sixth or seventh decade of life," said lead researcher Dr Peter Jokl, a professor of orthopaedics at the school. The 16-year study—from 1983 to 1999—of 415,000 top runners in the New York City Marathon found that the average times of older age groups improved more than the average times for younger age groups. Women aged 50 to 59 showed the greatest improvement, running the marathon as a group more than two minutes faster each year. Male runners aged 50 to 59 improved about eight seconds

each year. The study reinforces the notion that many older people grow weaker not simply because of age, but because they do not use their muscles as much as they did in their youth.



Courtesy: THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

## REGAIN CONTROL

Surgery may not be the only option for women seeking to relieve severe stress urinary incontinence. According to a study conducted by Dr Richard C Bump, with Eli Lilly Research Laboratories, in Indianapolis, USA, the drug Yentreve (duloxetine) may lead to significant relief. For the study, 109 women between 33 and 75 years of age were randomly assigned to duloxetine or an inactive placebo daily for eight weeks. All the women had loss of urine control that occurred only with physical stress such as coughing or lifting, experienced 14 or more episodes of incontinence per week and were scheduled for surgery.

Compared with the placebo, duloxetine significantly reduced the frequency of incontinence episodes and decreased pad use. The effects were seen within two weeks of starting treatment. After eight weeks, 20 per cent of duloxetine-treated women decided to skip the surgery compared with none of the women given placebo. Side effects of Yentreve included transient mild to moderate nausea, constipation, headache and dry mouth. The drug has previously been shown to be effective in women with mild to moderate stress urinary incontinence.

## RED ALERT

Giving blood transfusions to patients with acute heart problems nearly triples the risk they will die or suffer a heart attack within a month. This was the conclusion of research conducted by Duke Clinical Research Institute in Durham, North Carolina, USA. Researchers believe the blood used in the procedure is often depleted of substances such as nitrous oxide that help deliver oxygen to the body's tissues. Transfused blood also may increase inflammation and further constrict blocked arteries and make the heart pump harder. Overall, the analysis of three studies with more than 24,000 participants found 29 per cent of the heart patients who got a transfusion died or had another heart attack within 30 days, compared to 10 per cent of heart patients who did not get a transfusion. The risk of dying was 8 per cent among transfused patients, versus 3 per cent for those who were not.

Transfusions are given to patients who have anaemia because of bleeding or a deficiency of oxygen-carrying red blood cells. But the report, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, does not call for an end to transfusions for heart patients. Instead, author Dr Sunil Rao of the Duke Clinical Research Institute urges greater caution when deciding whether to transfuse anaemic patients, and suggests another study to determine the best approach.

## SWEET WARNING

People with diabetes now have a new warning system to alert them to impending heart disease—the Haemoglobin A1c test. Two studies have recently suggested that people with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes should regularly take the HA1c test, above regular sugar checks. The test looks for glycated haemoglobin, also called glycosylated haemoglobin, and is a measure of how well blood sugar is controlled.

A study at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA, reanalysed the data from 13 studies involving nearly 10,000 people from North America and Europe and found those with higher levels had higher risks of heart and artery disease. A one-percentage point increase in HA1c predicted an 18 per cent increase in risk for total cardiovascular disease and a 28 per cent risk for peripheral vascular disease—clogged arteries in the legs, for instance.

## WALK OF LIFE



LENS PIC

Your daily walk keeps not just your body but your mind healthy too. Two recent studies say those who take regular walks are less likely to suffer dementia than those who have little exercise.

The first study, conducted by the University of Virginia Health System, tracked the habits and mental functioning of 2,257 men aged 71 to 93 years and found those who walked less than one-quarter mile a day were 1.8 times as likely to develop dementia than men who walked at least two miles a day. The second study, involving women at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, found that those who exercised regularly—such as walking at an easy pace for 1-1/2 hours a week—were less likely to suffer mental decline. “For older women who are able to engage in several hours per week of physical activity, say walking at least six hours per week, their cognitive function seemed to be comparable to that of women several years younger,” said Jennifer Weuve of the Harvard School of Public Health. According to Abbott, more active people also tended to eat a better diet than sedentary people, which could help preserve mental acuity.

## HEALTH AT STAKE



Gambling could have you smiling all the way—and not just to the bank. A phone survey in the US revealed that elderly people who said they gambled occasionally were more likely to rate their general health as good or excellent than those who never gambled. Gambling is the biggest social activity among nursing home residents in the US, and around one-quarter attends bingo games at least four times each month.

Dr Rani A Desai and her colleagues from Yale University in Connecticut interviewed a representative sample of 2,417 adults and found that 50 per cent of the elderly had gambled during the past year, and older recreational gamblers were more than twice as likely to say they were in good or excellent general health than older non-gamblers. The reasons for the findings, published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, remain unclear but the research team suggests that the elderly may benefit from the “increased activity, socialisation and cognitive stimulation that are related to engaging in gambling”. Word of caution: these results do not apply to compulsive gambling, affecting around 5 per cent of adults, or younger participants. ■

# Break down the barriers

Easy mobility for silvers is a long-felt need in India. Finally, public and government initiatives towards easy access have begun to evolve, finds [Nilanjana Sengupta](#)

**F**or 70-year old Ahmedabad resident Kantibhai Shah, his own home is a minefield. After falling down thrice in the space of two weeks, he is scared to even get out of bed at night for a glass of water. The last time he tried that, he tripped on the threshold separating the kitchen from the rest of the house and had to be hospitalised.

A fall is one of the most common reasons for accidents among silver citizens. Orthopaedics estimate that about 40 to 50 per cent of such accidents occur in the familiar surroundings of one's own home. "Lack of proper lighting, wet bathroom floors and crowded accommodation account for at least 70 per cent of all fractures among silvers," says Dr Sudhir Warriar, orthopaedic consultant at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital.

The usual response to such situations is to restrict one's movements - a far from ideal alternative. "It leads to anxiety, apprehension and finally depression," says Dr R N Jerajani, Mumbai-based consulting psychiatrist. "Ultimately, the person could cease to trust his family."

## **BUILD SAFE**

For Shah and countless others like him, a barrier-free apartment could well be the answer. *Better Care of Elderly*, a booklet released earlier this year by the Voluntary Health Association of India with HelpAge India, states that seniors may at one time or another become temporarily or permanently disabled. To enable a healthy and independent life, a thoughtfully provided environment free of barriers can make the difference. The chapter,



"Safe Environments", has specific suggestions to achieve this end that can be incorporated in the 'built environment'—like marking the first and last steps on a stair flight with contrasting paint, simple and uncluttered furniture layout, and anti-skid rubber mats or floors in the bathroom.

Doing away with thresholds at doorways and introducing grab rails or hand bars in Kantibhai Shah's room would enable him to move around more easily while reducing the chances of an accident. And it won't cost the earth—minimal





Photos: BAJIRAO PAVAR



**In Mumbai, an action group has offered suggestions for making public places more accessible**

modification is not an expensive proposition. Consulting an orthopaedic specialist in addition to the architect can help you determine your options.

Implementing changes at a planning level, however, is the optimal route. “This will save unnecessary demolition later,” points out Abhishek Ray, Mumbai-based architect and a keen votary of barrier-free environment. Amending by-laws governing building regulations and government and civic intervention can allow for such provisions. In the French town of St Quentin-en-Yvelines, for example, the city administration grants a construction permit only if the designs adhere to stringent access norms. In Ottawa, the capital of Canada, property tax is not

hiked if improvements are made in homes to increase accessibility. And in the UK, NGOs secure funding to help silvers renovate their homes.

## POLICY MATTERS

Things are very different in India. Here, the term ‘barrier-free environment’ has come into use only in the last decade. The landmark Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, commonly known as the Disability Act, enforced in 1995 and the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) released in 1999 acknowledge the need for easy access to services and public places.

## Improper lighting, wet toilet floors and crowded rooms account for at least 70 per cent of all fractures among silvers

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the nodal ministry for the welfare of older persons, takes up the matter of barrier-free environs with the Ministry of Urban Development once every four months at an inter-ministerial council meet. For its part, the Ministry of Urban Development has circulated ‘Model Building By-Laws’ among the various state governments and municipal corporations.

“Not much can be done in buildings already constructed,” says Kalpana Narayan, deputy secretary of coordination in the Ministry of Urban Development. “But most new constructions are being fitted with ramps and other facilities providing easy access.” Since 1999, the Ministry’s Delhi Urban Art Commission does not approve the construction of any new public building that disregards access guidelines under the Disability Act issued by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). But the job of ensuring the implementation of the guidelines lies with the local bodies—DDA or the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has not only made the metro accessible by installing grab rails and fitting clear signage inside the coaches but has also constructed an overhead ramp at Tis Hazari station, fixed handrails inside toilets at stations, and installed ticket gates exclusively for disabled passengers.

Looking ahead, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has roped in the Council of Architecture, New Delhi, to discuss the concept of a universal design in cities and new townships that would respond effectively to any user—irrespective of whether the person is a silver, pregnant, disabled, carrying heavy loads, weak or ill. “Inclusion and not exclusion is the agenda here,” says G K Singh, deputy secretary, social development, in the ministry. Barrier-free designs have also been introduced in the curricula of architectural schools.

“There is awareness but there is still a long way to go,” says P R Mehta, outgoing president of the Council of Architecture. Architect Abhishek Ray feels the onus lies on society. “It is almost banal to always look towards the government,” he says. “It is the environment that renders someone disabled.”

### EXAMPLES OF A BARRIER-FREE ENVIRONMENT

- Marking the first and last steps on a stair flight with contrasting paint
- Uncluttered furniture layout at home
- Anti-skid rubber mats in bathrooms
- Anti-skid floors in public places
- No thresholds in doorways
- Grab rails on hand bars in rooms and in trains
- Proper ramps in public places
- Better signage
- Ambulifts at airports

Something that 61-year-old Ranjit Sengupta discovered to his chagrin last week. The retired bank officer tripped over an uneven part of an under-construction footpath outside Churchgate Station, Mumbai. The fall injured his hand and forehead, narrowly missing the eye. What mortified him was the pitiable attitude of the hospital staff when he went in to seek treatment after the fall. “I felt victimised,” he says.

Meanwhile, the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment gets ready to chair yet another inter-ministerial meeting. “Considering the fact that the policy took 10 years to be drafted, its slow implementation comes as no big surprise,” says Dr Kalyan Bagchi, president of the Society for Gerontological Research, a Delhi-based NGO working for senior citizens.

### SILVER LINING

There are signs of hope though. A 1998 Supreme Court judgement in response to a PIL filed by Delhi resident Javed Abidi, a wheelchair user and convenor of Disabled Rights Group and executive director of National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), directed all airports to install ‘ambulifts’—platforms designed to accommodate a wheelchair that can be elevated by the press of a button. He also proposed the use of aisle chairs—smaller wheelchairs to fit the aisle of an airplane. The order was restricted to the 14 metro or international airports.

While aisle chairs are being used at most airports, there has been no initiative to install ambulifts. “Hyderabad airport, supposedly covered by the judgement, does not have an ambulift, while the one in Mumbai’s international airport is not in use,” says Abidi.

The visit of English physicist Stephen Hawking to Delhi in 2000 also jumpstarted matters somewhat. Led by NCPEDP, ramps were built by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) at Qutab Minar, Humayun’s Tomb and Red Fort. The ASI issued a statement in 2001 saying all heritage buildings would be made user-friendly. Braille signage and ramps have already come up at the Golconda Fort in Hyderabad.

In 2002, Abhishek Ray and Able Disable All People Together (ADAPT), a citizen’s action group, evaluated more than 50 public places in Mumbai for accessibility. Their suggestions include redesigning toilets, building ramps adhering to the correct slope and handlebars, non-slip floor finishes and better signage. Action is awaited on the 2003 High Court order to fit 30 BEST buses with lower chassis that will enable a lower floor. BEST has sought two years to decide whether they will build new buses using an indigenous design or follow a model proposed by ADAPT. And down south, the Kerala Senior Citizens’ Forum recently urged bus operators to ensure that foot steps are not more than one-and-a-half feet.

The most positive news, according to Dr Bagchi, is the new-look Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment. “There are new faces and a new minister,” he says. “Now, at least they have begun talking about initiatives.” It’s about time. ■

बूंद बूंद में विश्वास



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The Purohits use their newfound skills to find the perfect groom for their niece Neha on the Internet.

**Sachin Kalbag** tells us the happily-ever-after

right person to spend her life with. Despite her search for financial independence and desire to work with the best companies, Neha wanted to settle down, raise a family.

**T**he Purohits live in a three-bedroom flat in Mumbai. For several people they know, this is cause for envy. Add to this the fact that both their children are in the US, in secure, high-paying jobs with the world's leading software giants—Microsoft and Oracle. The two refuse to move to the US to stay with them, saying it would affect their children's domestic harmony. Besides, now that they are net-savvy folks, staying in touch is a breeze.

But the truth is, they are lonely. Which is why, when Mr Purohit's younger brother from Nagpur sent his daughter over to stay with them because she had got a job in the city, the Purohits were thrilled. Neha is a bubbly, vivacious 23-year-old, comfortable in her own skin, and has never displayed the nervousness of a small-town-girl-wanting-to-live-in-a-big-city. Apart from her job in Mumbai, the other reason she chose to move here—she confided in me—was to find the

When she mentioned this to her uncle and aunt, Mrs Purohit got as excited as she was when her own daughter was getting married. For her, weddings mean meeting people, buying gifts, and displaying her highly undervalued skills as event manager. Mr Purohit, on the other hand, feels weddings are a chore. "What a waste of time," he would often complain. "The same time could be used to watch TV, read books, and, of course, surf the Net. And, just think, with the money you save, you could buy a car!"

I have my sympathies for the man. He wages a lonely battle against wasteful expenditure. "Neha should find the right man for herself, without us getting into the picture," he insisted. He was right. Little did he know, however, that the solution was at hand. In fact, right in his study.

It did not take me long to introduce him to matrimonial sites on the Web. And Neha, who used the Net only for research and sending mail, could suddenly see a whole range of possibilities open up. But she complained that she didn't have the time—or the patience—to surf endlessly for a mate. Enter Mrs Purohit. At 65, she still found the energy to look for the right man for her niece. It was no mean task, trawling matrimonial websites for hours and hours. But she was glad to do so—it just gave her more time to practice her Net skills. "I always believed in traditional matchmaking," she chuckled, "but now I feel that if it is online, it must be good!"

Her first three destinations were *shaadi.com*, *bharatmatrimony.com* and *jeevansathi.com*. It's easy to learn why matrimonial sites in India are so popular. They are fast, reliable and allow prospective brides and grooms to know more about each other without having to meet each other. Mrs Purohit was doing exactly that.

On each site, she had to fill out a form to 'put up' Neha's profile. She could also choose whether to put up Neha's photograph alongside details about her background, personality, likes and dislikes, and what she was looking for in a partner. This was

the subject of much debate in the household. While Mrs Purohit hemmed and hawed, Mr Purohit thought the idea was ridiculous. "Unknown boys will see what she looks like," he snorted disapprovingly. Ultimately, Neha made the decision. "I want to see the men's pictures so it's only fair that they see mine."

Once Neha's profile and picture were up, Mrs Purohit started a serious manhunt. To her delight, she found that the sites were smartly classified into various communities and mother tongue — right from Islamic to Catholic, Assamese to Marathi and Telugu. There were even region-specific searches, like the US, Canada, the UK, etc. You could choose by age, community, sect, complexion, occupation, astrological data, lifestyle habits, and even special cases where the prospective bride or groom is

Neha could spare only the weekends to go through her aunt's shortlist. She further narrowed the choice down to 14. The Net allowed her to save time that she would have otherwise spent on meeting the candidates. She started chatting with the 14 online whenever she could make the time, and she soon discovered what their views were on different issues, especially on women, careers, and so on.

It took Neha two months to narrow her search to just three people. From then on, it was only a matter of meeting them in person. Another month later and after meeting each person twice, and she had made her decision. It was to be Shekhar Adhikari: self-made businessman, 27 years old, with a pleasant personality, and a completely rational and positive outlook towards life and people. After the Purohits met Shekhar,

## Matrimonial sites allow singles to learn about each other without having to meet

handicapped. There are also plenty of testimonials from couples who found their soul mates on the site.

For Mrs Purohit, it was a data mine. And just like an accomplished miner, it took her little time to narrow down the search to 23 grooms from the three sites. Best of all, you can also 'see' the boys without actually meeting them because their photos are posted online.

Mr Purohit ventured: "But Shekhar is quiet and mild-mannered, not like our Neha, who chatters non-stop." He was completely drowned out by his excited wife, who was thrilled at her new status as successful matchmaker, that too in cyberspace, and was already busy organising the meeting between Neha's parents and Shekhar's. "Opposites do attract, don't they?" she chuckled, and passed around the *laddoo*. ■

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*Sachin Kalbag is executive editor of Digit, a technology magazine. Next month, the Purohits gear up for the Christmas and New Year Holidays and search for the right travel package online*

# Home truths

**Legalpundits** answers questions on where you stand on your property rights

**Q** My mother had purchased a flat in suburban Andheri in Mumbai on a 20-year loan from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in 1976. Two years later, she let a family friend become its caretaker. It was all in good faith and no legal documents were signed. However, the person filed for tenancy in 1982. We then filed a case against him, seeking his eviction from my mother's flat. The matter is pending in the Small Causes Court in Bandra. The share certificate is in my mother's name. The flat's monthly outgoing is also paid by her. She is now 64, widowed, diabetic, surviving on costly medication, and unable to pay the legal expenses of the case. She needs the flat for her personal use. Can she get it back? Is there anything one can do to expedite the case? Also, can she claim compensation for the rent from 1978 to 2004 at the market rate along with the legal expenses?

**A** From what you say, your mother is certainly entitled to get the flat back for her bonafide use. In order to expedite the hearing in the Small Causes Court, she should make an application for an early hearing because of her age and health. The High Court issued a circular on August 12, 1999, saying that litigants who have crossed the age of 65 are entitled to early hearing of their cases. Your mother should apply, clearly



BAJIRAO PAWAR

mentioning that the benefit of the circular should be extended to her in view of her health even though she is not 65 yet. Many such cases have been filed and granted a quick hearing. Attach a copy of the circular to the application. Your mother is also entitled to claim 'mesne profits', i.e. compensation for wrongful occupation from the caretaker from 1978 to 2004.

**Q** We live in a building with 15 flats. Ours is not a cooperative housing society,

though. My wife and I, both senior citizens, are joint owners of our apartment. Among other things, its accommodation by-laws stipulate that the apartment should be used only for 'residential purposes'. To supplement our income, my wife gives private tuitions to a few children at home. We are now being accused of contravening the condominium rules. Are we legally in the wrong?

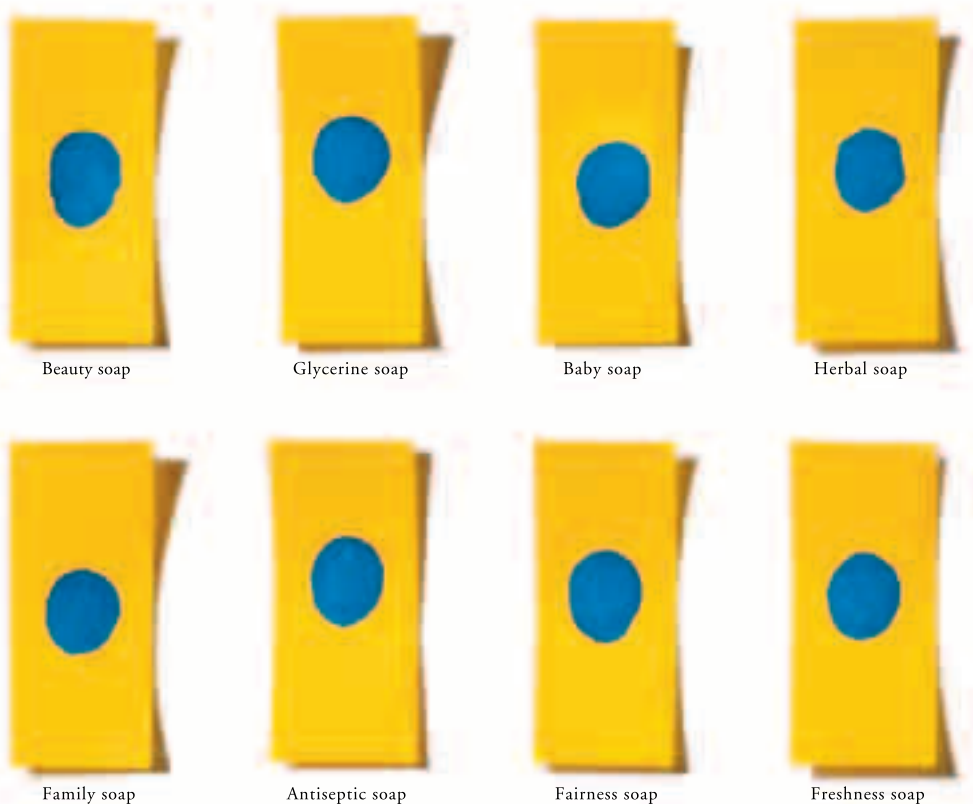
**A** Regulation 49 of the Development Control Regulation for Greater Bombay 1991 permits use and ancillary (supplementary) use as indicated in the development plan. The predominant purpose is residential. Taking tuitions is an ancillary use to the residential one. Under Regulation 51(i) of the Development Control Regulation for Greater Bombay 1991, 'customary home occupations' are permitted within the area meant for residential use. Taking tuitions at home comes under customary home occupations. Under this clause, you can even work out of home—like many lawyers or chartered accountants do. Only if you convert the entire flat into a school or educational institution would you be flouting the law. You are not contravening condominium rules by taking tuitions at your apartment. ■

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*Courtesy: Legalpundits International Services Pvt. Ltd. For advice from Legalpundits, mail us or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) or fax at (022) 22852217. Harmony takes no responsibility for advice offered*



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# Looking glass



ASHESH SHAH

IT HAS BEEN FIVE MONTHS OF FUN, LAUGHTER and sharing. Of breaking out of shells and cementing friendships. Now into its sixth month, the Harmony Interactive Centre at Girgaum, Mumbai, feels the need to take stock of the run so far. It is time for introspection.

Every evening, social workers at the centre follow a ritual when they spend some time with silvers, talking informally about activities, facilities, shared interests and generally about their lives at home.

Taking this informal forum forward is a three-part survey comprising psycho-social queries, a test to assess depression levels and questions to gauge the role of the centre in members' lives. Drawn up by a seven-member panel, the survey will measure responses by 50 to 100 silvers, men and women, chosen on the basis of the duration of their membership. Older members are likely to outnumber newer ones, as they would have more to say on the centre.

To be administered on a one-on-one level, a social worker will ask each of those selected the survey queries and jot down their experiences, thoughts and ideas. With more than 80 points to be covered, each member will spend about an hour, to elaborate on their views. A month is an optimistic estimate for completion of the survey.

For the rest of the members, the centre will continue to be an extension of their lives. The festival season is full of opportunities to have fun. There's excitement in the air—echoing the spirit of *Harmony*. ■

Six months on, and the centre takes stock

## THIS MONTH

**FITNESS** Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays; 10.30 am to 11.30 am (men); 4 pm to 5 pm (women). Yoga classes conducted by instructors from Kaivalyadham Centre, Marine Drive

**MUSIC** Thursdays; *bhajan* from 4 pm to 5 pm. Marathi *sugam sangeet* from 5 pm to 6 pm

**GROUP THERAPY** Wednesdays; 4 pm to 5 pm (men); 5.15 pm to 6.15 pm (women); conducted by Dr Anjali Chabbria and Aruna Prakash

**BLACK MAGIC** Nov 1; 5 pm to 7 pm. Talk on dispelling myths surrounding superstitions and black magic by Sandeep Pawar of Andha-Shradha Nirmulan Samiti

**THE ART OF LIVING** November 2; 5 pm

**FUN COOKING** Nov 5; 5.15 pm; Chinese recipes

**FOR YOUR MIND** Nov 6; 5 pm to 6 pm. Talk on mental health awareness for silvers by psychiatrist Dr Harish Shetty

**GRANDCHILDREN'S DAY** Nov 15. Fun activities for members and their grandchildren

**RANGOLI COMPETITION** Nov 18

**SPIRITUALITY** Nov 22-25; 4 pm - 5.30 pm. Discourses by Brahmacharya Satvik Chaitanya from the Chinmaya Mission

**COMMON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**  
November 27

**SELF DEFENCE** Nov 30. Gospi Capadia will demonstrate self-defence techniques and talk on safety for silvers

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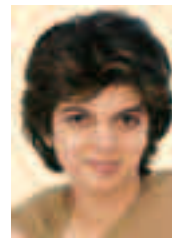
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# Relight the fire

Time takes its toll on relationships. **Dr Anjali Chhabria** tells you how to re-establish a connection with your spouse



**Q** Before my husband retired a year ago, he was very sociable. We used to take a holiday together every year, see a film once a fortnight and eat out at least once a week. Now, he wants to sit at home and watch sports all day. We didn't even take our holiday this year. He just wants to potter around the house in an unshaven, slovenly state. I feel he's wasting away all the time that we could be spending together.

**A** Individuals who are occupied with work unwind by socialising or taking a holiday. But if a person is not working, the motivation to socialise or de-stress may not be there. Your husband is on a well-earned holiday enjoying sports on TV and does not feel the need to shave, as he does not have to go anywhere. Instead of nagging him, remind him about the pleasant times that you have shared with him and how you miss going out. Make future plans with his approval and gently coax him into joining you.

**Q** My eldest daughter died five years ago. Ever since then, my relationship with my husband has taken a turn for the worse. We never really got along and this has driven us further apart. I am a housewife and he is retired. And he spends a lot of time with various gurus now, which I feel is very foolish.

**A** The death of a child is one of the most difficult tragedies to deal with at any age. Though you may have coped with it, your husband is still trying to find answers where there are none, and is hence visiting these gurus. He needs to accept what has happened and deal with it. Put your past problems aside and allow him to express himself freely without telling him he is being foolish. Insist that you both spend time with your other children, if any, and close friends. Start doing more things together, and with your friends and family members. If all this still does not have any effect, take him to a psychiatrist as he may be suffering from clinical depression.

**Q** I retired a few months ago, excited at the prospect of finally having time for the family. But my children only find me a nuisance. They never talk to me or tell me what's going on in their lives. And my wife is so busy with her kitty parties and friends that she hardly spares me a glance. The other day, I heard her complaining to the maid about how much extra cooking there is because I am around all the time.

**A** Remember, it is you who have retired, not the rest of the family. They may just be

following their normal routine. Don't feel disheartened about your relationships. Talk to your family about how you are feeling and clear up misunderstandings. Use your time productively and involve yourself in new activities. This is the time to have all the fun you ever wanted to have but couldn't find the time for.

**Q** I am a homemaker with two children, a son and a daughter, both of them married. After my husband retired, he has started spending more time in the kitchen, directing me on what and how to cook. He interferes in everything and nitpicks. It's very difficult for me because the kitchen is my domain.

**A** Often wives experience more post-retirement blues than their husbands. It's hard to suddenly see your husband around the house, maybe even irritating. But look at things his way. He is just trying to keep himself occupied and in control. If he is interfering with your daily routine in the kitchen, ask him to help you out with housekeeping. It will take the load off you and also make him feel useful. Don't worry, there can only be two outcomes: he will do most of the housework or he will stop interfering. It's a win-win situation for you! ■

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*Dr Anjali Chhabria is a Mumbai-based psychiatrist and psychotherapist. If you have any questions for her, mail us or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) or fax at (022) 22852217*

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

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# A climb of faith



The Jain temples of Palitana stacked atop the Shatrunjaya Mountain in Gujarat form one of the most beautiful architectural complexes in India. **Shefali Vaidya** does the trek

It was show time at Palitana. Unseen hands erased the darkness ever so gently like a child wiping his slate clean with a wet sponge.

Slowly, an outline of temple spires began to appear on the horizon as the sun peeped

cautiously over the broad shoulders of the Shatrunjaya Mountain. The marble flesh of the temple walls shimmered and glowed, a hesitant rosy pink at first, gradually deepening to a deep golden rust. The sun was playing to the gallery at Palitana.

The Jain temples of Palitana are a bunch of temples, 863 in all, made of marble. Stacked crazily atop a craggy mountain called the Shatrunjaya, which means victory over enemies, the exquisite Palitana temples form one of the most beautiful architectural complexes in India.

Many believe they are on a par with the Khajuraho or Ellora group of temples.

The mountain is located at a distance of 1 km from the small town of Palitana, about 60 km from the city of Bhavnagar in Gujarat. At first glance, Palitana looks like a typical Indian small town, sleepy and with grubby knuckles, a forgotten stitch on the western hem of India.

But Palitana was a regional capital of the erstwhile state of Kathiawad and a prosperous merchant town at one point in history. Today, however, little evidence remains of the town's past glories other than its rich tradition of appliqué work. In the old market in the heart of town, shops groan under the weight of exquisitely appliquéed bed and table linen.

I arrived in Palitana as a part of a tour group on a spiritual sojourn to Saurashtra—the best time to

visit is from November to March. We were a group of 30-odd people and I was the oddball, the only one with a non-karmic purpose. The tour itself was a 'hold-all' tour organised by

## Shatrunjaya Mountain, associated with the first of the 24 Tirthankaras, is one of the holiest spots on the map of devout Jains

Gujarat Tourism with a hectic itinerary covering assorted temples, beaches, forts, Ashokan edicts, sites of ancient civilisations and, for some odd reason, modern cremation grounds! By the time we reached Palitana, we had visited so many temples that my spiritual cup of joy was quite running over. The Palitana temples were one of the last stopovers on our agenda.

We arrived in Palitana on a late Saturday afternoon and checked into the Gujarat Tourism hotel.

All the women from the group spent the evening furiously shopping for the perfect appliqué bedspread or that elusive 'chutney-coloured' divan cover. At dinnertime back at the hotel,

everyone gloated over their purchases and compared prices with predictable results. The bargain queens of the group went to bed with smug, self-satisfied expressions on their face, while the rest of us retired feeling faintly stupid.

Next morning, our tour guide Mr Shah woke us up at the unearthly hour of 3.00 am to start our trek to Shatrunjaya. There were muttered grumbles in the air as everyone reluctantly got out of their warm, cosy beds. After a quick cup of thick, sweet Gujarati tea, it was a sleepy looking group that boarded the bus, and it was almost four in the morning when our bus trundled to the base of the Shatrunjaya. I huddled closer into my jacket and looked apprehensively at the array of steps that seemed to melt into the inky darkness of the night. The climb looked formidable.

Stars winked at us as we commenced the climb. We were not alone in our quest. Along with us were frail *saadhvis* in coarse white saris, aged *munis* leaning over their walking sticks, prosperous-looking businessmen in silk dhotis and the occasional foreigner.

Left, the beautiful temple complex; below, the route to enlightenment



Photos: PRANJAL PATEL



Shatrunjaya Mountain is one of the holiest spots on the spiritual map of devout Jains. The mountain is associated with Adinath Rishabhdev, the first of the 24 Tirthankaras or holy men of Jainism. Jains believe that Adinath attained enlightenment atop this mountain. Almost all the temples on Shatrunjaya belong to the 'Swetambara'

softened by easy living. I discovered how out of shape I was as I huffed my way up the 3,000 steps hacked haphazardly into the hill. Soon I was perspiring profusely despite the nip in the air. I realised why the tour guide had insisted we start in the pre-dawn darkness. Most of the climb lies in the open with almost no shade. The sun would

we finally reached the main gate of the temple complex. Below us, tiny lights still twinkled in the tiny town of Palitana and immediately above us towered the marble crest of the Shatrunjaya Mountain shining in the first rays of the sun. The entire group stood as one person, lost in the beauty of the moment.

## The temples at Palitana are quite ornate with carvings of celestial maidens that are as voluptuous as any in Khajuraho

(literally, white clad) sect of Jainism, where the monks wear simple, white robes. On the other hand, the monks of the 'Digambara' sect (literally sky clad, or naked) carry asceticism to the point of rejecting clothing.

Climbing Shatrunjaya is easier said than done. For believers, the climb is a true test of faith, as they have to follow a strict code of conduct. Pilgrims have to complete the climb barefoot without consuming either food or water along the way. Eating is permitted only on the way back, and the menu is pre-decided too. Just outside the main gate of the temple complex, women from nearby hamlets wait with little clay pots of thick, sweet curd—say no to it, and you will regret it later.

The climb atop Shatrunjaya can be particularly agonising if you are an average city dweller

be merciless later in the day. As I sweated my way up the steep hill, I half envied the people making the trip in a *doli*—a cross between a palanquin and a portable wooden armchair. There are hundreds of *doli wallahs* operating at Palitana helping seekers to keep their date with divinity.

As we climbed higher, the stars grew faint and then faded altogether. It was past 6 am when

The Palitana temples were built over a period of almost 600 years. The earliest temples are believed to have been built in the 11th century. Over the years, worshippers from the wealthy Jain community adorned the hill with newer temples. Today, the scrub-covered shoulders of Shatrunjaya are completely enveloped by these marble flowers of faith.

The main temple, said to have been built in 1213 by Kumarapala, a wealthy Jain trader, is dedicated to Adinath. The atmosphere inside is ethereal. The sanctum sanctorum of the Adinath temple resonates with the sound of constantly



Clockwise from below, a stunning aerial view; intricate carvings on a temple wall; a snapshot of eternity

chiming bells and mellifluous chants of '*Om namo Arihantanam*', the Jain mantra of worship that means: 'I bow to the conqueror of inner enemies to conquer my weaknesses.'

A gentle light from hundreds of oil lamps casts a flickering glow on the towering marble image of Rishabhdev, bedecked with priceless diamonds and glittering in the semi-darkness of the temple.

Palitana temples are famous for their intricate carvings. For a religion that places such a high premium on austerity and abstinence, the temples at Palitana are quite ornate with carvings of celestial maidens that are as voluptuous as any in Khajuraho. Also remarkable are the cleanliness, decorum and dignity. There are no priests offering you a shortcut to salvation at a price, no hawkers peddling the usual religious paraphernalia, no beggars, no plastic bags festooned from trees and none of the squalor and



cacophony that one usually finds near popular places of pilgrimage anywhere in India. Palitana is all about tradition and tranquillity.

At the end of the day, as light began to ebb, Mr Shah hurried us to begin our climb back. Tradition has it that the descent must begin before sunset. No one can spend the night on the sacred mountain. The temples of Palitana must welcome the night in absolute silence and solitude—just as they have always done. ■



## FACT FILE

**WHEN TO VISIT:** The best time to visit Palitana is from November to March

**WHERE TO STAY:** The best bet for accommodation is the 16-room Hotel Sumeru, run by Gujarat Tourism (0284-8252327). AC rooms cost Rs 700 per night plus tax, while non-AC rooms cost Rs 300. There is also a 15-bed dormitory at Rs 75 per bed. Outside Palitana, Bhavnagar, 51 km away, has a range of hotels catering to all budgets. Bhavnagar also has a lake, some royal palaces and temples that are worth a look

### HOW TO GO:

**BY AIR:** The closest airport is at Bhavnagar, with regular daily connections to Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmedabad

**BY TRAIN:** Palitana has a small metre gauge railway station with connections to Bhavnagar

**BY ROAD:** Palitana is well connected to almost all major cities in Gujarat, and Mumbai. There are hourly buses for Bhavnagar. Regular buses also ply for Ahmedabad. From Bhavnagar, one can also hire taxis to Palitana—the trip costs Rs 500



# Flower power

Khoma Ghosh, a resident of Santiniketan, proves that while money might not grow on trees, jewellery certainly does, writes **Anjana Basu**

**T**here is a riot of flowers everywhere, filling trees with an ever-changing kaleidoscope of shape and colour. The most natural thing in the world is to reach out and pluck them, arrange a hibiscus blossom in the hair or twine a jasmine

garland for the neck, something we see even today. However, flowers played a far more complicated role in the *Kama Sutra* days, when flower garlands, wristlets and anklets decorated beauties and dandies. When the ladies of gentle, or not so gentle,

families would sit and twist flowers into elaborate jewellery for a wedding or festival.

The pastime still lingers in Santiniketan, where Khoma Ghosh, 76, learnt the art as a student at Kala Bhavan, an art





Photos: SHILBHADRA DATTA

**Khoma Di makes jewellery bloom**

school, in 1940, well before the university was set up. Noted artist of the Bengal school Nandalal Bose was the headmaster of Kala Bhavan then and his daughter Gauri Bhanja took classes. Tagore's daughter-in-law Pratima Devi took an active interest in the activities. Dances and plays were an integral part of Santiniketan life and the stage décor, and costumes were the responsibility of Kala Bhavan students.

Simplicity and beauty were the keywords, so dancers and singers went onstage adorned with flowers. Part of it, Khoma Ghosh says, was because Santiniketan was originally set up as an ashram. The rest was because of Rabindranath's

lyrical influences. She remembers sitting in class stringing buds on the point of her needle.

Delicate flowers will not do, you need ones that are slightly hard, like *rangan* or *akundo*, the flowers of the giant milkweed, which have graphic seashell shapes and delicate lilac shading. In fact, fully bloomed flowers are never used for making jewellery, only buds that are still hard and compact. These also have to be backed by leaves that are equally durable, like the narrow jade-green glossy ones from the jackfruit tree. After all, a tiara can't be seen to wilt in mid-*mudra* onstage. It has to survive movement and the heat of stage lighting.

For that matter, forget dance. Take a "bride viewing" or a bed decorated with flowers for the wedding night, says Khoma Di, as she is fondly called. The flowers have to survive strings of ceremonies and the press of people. She laughs and says, "Not everyone approves of what I do." Feminists, she says, without naming names, used to laugh at her and tell her that her art was designed to exploit women since it was mainly used for bride viewing. That, she insists, is not true. Besides, "What's wrong with a bride viewing? People fall in love and get married too."

The tools for this dainty craft, apart from flowers, consist of needle and thread, some

cardboard to back the leaves and, perhaps quick fix adhesives. "In those days, we used a different kind of gum," says Khoma Di. For an old lady, she is indomitable, managing to thread the needle without any help. Buds have to be separated from stems, the centres of the milkweed flowers, delicate spirals touched with mauve, have to be split apart. A rough hand won't do it, nor will an impatient one, because if you damage the flowers, you will have to go running out into the garden again to collect your 'jewels'.

Nowadays, milkweed flowers don't grow everywhere. The *mali* is sent by cycle-rickshaw to pick them from a wild patch of forest three or four lanes away. A niece is sent with a basket to collect white buds that when strung together will look like a pearl chain. The whole process has a lyricism about it, *apsaras* running here, there and everywhere over the green grass to pick flowers in the early morning and then sitting with the spoils fashioning them into many stranded necklaces, earrings and bracelets. To make a bracelet, of course, you need a twist of fine wire that replaces the needle and thread.

The *mali* returns with the flowers and is then put to work separating the buds and the leaves. The buds, wet with rain, are rushed in from the garden. Soon, the drawing room is filled with leaves, flowers and twists of wire. And, while all this is going on, Khoma Di goes about her business of day-to-day living.

The carpenter comes to take an order for a door and is so entranced by what he sees that he

## Buds & beads



**Choose flowers that are slightly hardy, like milkweed flowers or jasmine, with buds that are still hard. These need to be backed by durable leaves, like the narrow jade-green ones from the jackfruit tree. Then, you need needle and thread, some cardboard to back the leaves and quick-fix adhesive. The leaves have to be cut into shape around a piece of card and then sewed or gummed to both sides of the card. If you're in a hurry, the needle and thread are the best option since the flowers stay in place.**

rushes off to get some more giant milkweed blooms from a secret plot known only to him. A student of Khoma Di drops in and starts making packets out of jackfruit leaves in which to store the ornaments. Three needles disappear in the pile of leaves and petals, never to be seen

again. The *mali* tries to find them, going through the heap petal by petal, but the task is obviously beyond anyone's ingenuity.

As a hobby in Santiniketan, or anywhere with a garden or a flower market nearby, it requires little investment. Milkweed flowers are not a must—any hard flower or bud, even the traditional jasmine can be used. Trial and error will tell you whether the flower or leaf will stand up to being pricked with a needle, or the advice of a *mali* or garland-maker. As an anti-stress device, it is ideal because the flowers will not be rushed.

Kala Bhavan, now part of Viswa Bharati University, has discontinued its flower jewellery-making classes these days, which is why Khoma Di still finds herself in demand for special occasions like the tree-planting ceremony on Tagore's death anniversary. She would be delighted to teach people but says softly that the young have very little time these days—they're always in a hurry. And adds that, after all, it is a very old fashioned kind of art. Doordarshan came up from Kolkata to film her at her work six months ago and she recalls that she sat up the whole night getting her jewellery ready—she didn't see the show though.

As we are leaving, Khoma Di takes us into the garden and shows us her special pride, a white lotus that has just bloomed. "I would have preferred it if you had photographed that instead of me," she tells us. So we photograph her with the lotus in the softly falling Santiniketan rain. ■



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## FICTION: MIRA & THE MAHATMA

By Sudhir Kakar; Penguin; Rs 395; 265 pages

**F**action', defined as a mix of fact and fiction, is a pretty unimpressive word, even one that is sometimes sniggered at by 'serious' biographers. Psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar's book on the complex relationship between Madeline Slade, Beethoven fanatic and daughter of a British admiral, and Mahatma Gandhi is 'faction' too, but one that elevates the word to a far more edifying level.

Kakar uses autobiographical accounts, letters, diaries and eyewitness accounts to piece together Madeline's extraordinary spiritual quest. He fills in the gaps with what he calls 'imagination', a "peculiar amalgamation of fantasy and acts of empathic identification". What emerges is a story where fact is often stranger than imagination.

The book primarily revolves around nine years—from 1925 to 1930, and from 1940 to 1942—when



Slade and Gandhi's worlds were most entwined. Navin Prasad, a young student in Ahmedabad deputed to teach her Hindi at the Sabarmati Ashram—and Kakar's alter ego—tells you how Madeline arrives at Gandhi's door, where he promptly christens her Mira. Ashram gossip at the time had it that he had named her thus because "her story paralleled that of the legendary Rajput princess, with Bapu replacing Krishna in the modern Mira's heart".

### WRITER'S BLOC

*Sudhir Kakar talks to Arati Rajan Menon about his book that is creating controversy for its 'human' portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi*

**What made you want to write a book about Madeline Slade, or Mira, and Gandhi?**

It was basically my fascination with people who have made creative use of the tension between body and spirit. Both Madeline Slade and Mahatma Gandhi exemplify this. And I loved the idea of using letters to tell a tale. As it is, letters are becoming increasingly obsolete as a method of correspondence in this digital age.

**Your book is an amalgamation of fact and fiction. How real is Navin Prasad, the raconteur of the tale?**

The character of Navin Prasad is based on a real person, a



student-teacher from Ahmedabad called Sumangal Prakash, who spent a lot of time at the Sabarmati Ashram with Mira and the Mahatma. But through the book I develop the character to become my proxy.

**There seems to be a sexual tension pervading the book. How would you describe the relationship between Mira and Gandhi as it evolved?**

Mira saw Gandhi as the interpreter of her spirit. But eventually she began to mix up the body and spirit while

Gandhi was always much more aware of the danger of doing that. That's why, as their relationship progressed, he made a conscious effort to keep her at a distance.

**It appears that for Mira, the idol always seemed to be more important than the ideal...**

That's an astute observation. Yes, it's true. And Gandhi realised that too.

**But her idol lets her down. You describe her finally retiring to a solitary existence in Baden, Austria. Is she, essentially, a tragic heroine?**

I wouldn't quite describe her as that. She lived her life passionately. True, her quest was something that could never be fulfilled and thus was doomed to failure. But the quest itself was admirable and gave her great joy, not just sorrow.

Kakar's Gandhi is abundantly human, his behaviour unpredictable, sometimes even verging on the bizarre. From his tirades against wife Kasturba and his obsession with finding the perfect diet—even going through a man's faeces with a stick to find out what caused his stomach upset—to the time he slaps a German woman when she accidentally brushes against him, the Mahatma seems to be a man constantly battling his own demons.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in his evolving relationship with Mira. She allows herself to be consumed by Gandhi, seeing body and spirit as an inalienable whole. For his part, Gandhi allows Mira to get achingly close and then, when he feels the danger, pushes her away. Did the Mahatma, dare one venture, lead her on? Kakar doesn't say it. But Gandhi does, in his own, 'real' words. Some examples: "I shall miss our evenings together but I must not get attached to them...You must not cling to me as in this body. The spirit without the body is ever with you....Resist me when you must. I do not

want you to impute infallibility to me... You are on the brain. I look about me, and miss you. I open the *charkha* and miss you..."

Despite the task of social service that she plunged into wholeheartedly, these mixed messages ultimately devastated Mira, a woman for whom the idol was always more important than the ideal. Her subsequent infatuation with the revolutionary Prithvi Singh Azad—an earthy passion far from her 'abstract yearning for Gandhi—and his rejection of her was the final straw. Ultimately, in a poignant and telling end, she retires to Baden, Austria, spending her last years retracing the steps of Beethoven, her first idol.

The beauty of this book is that Kakar never attempts to presume too much, letting the facts talk, filling in the silences sensitively, never sensationally. This one will raise a few hackles. Nevertheless, faction writing just found itself a new poster boy.

—Arati Rajan Menon

## THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF POWER: AN INSIDER'S STORY

By P C Alexander; HarperCollins with the India Today Group; Rs 395; 480 pages

**D**on't let the qualifiers about objectivity and humility in the preface distract you: P C Alexander hurts badly. He hurts because he does not have the job Abdul Kalam now has, of president of India, busily about in a grand palace on Raisina Hill, planting trees, charming the children of India and generally co-opting the vision thing. It's a cap on a life well and fully lived.



And Alexander hurts, because he feels he was badly let down by the Congress—in particular current External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh. Alexander accuses Singh of leading a hatchet job on his chances of becoming president by poisoning Sonia Gandhi's ears. All because Alexander, once Indira Gandhi's all-powerful principal secretary, accepted the previous NDA government's offer of a second term as governor of Maharashtra. This, according to Alexander, eventually led to his becoming a Rajya Sabha MP, instead of the person who addresses MPs at joint sessions of Parliament.

Alexander's autobiography has glimpses of his childhood in Travancore, the steady climb up the ladders of the IAS, but his bitterness is an unfortunate overlay on ringside glimpses of moving and shaking. The trick is to home in on the juice, such as the truth as Alexander sees it with regard to the storming of the Golden Temple during Operation Bluestar. There are sidelights about vindictive former presidents and snippets about Indira—even hand-scribbled notes—that only a true insider can have. This grand topping of backroom politics and administration could quickly become a prescribed whodunit in political science class. And that may even dislodge the presidential chip.

—Sudeep Chakravarti

# Thrillers among us

New suspense writing on the shelves



Conspiracy, symbols, codes, religious texts... Sounds familiar? **THE RULE OF FOUR**, though, makes Dan Brown's runaway bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* seem positively basic. Two seniors at Princeton University—one prompted by passion, the other following in his father's footsteps—set out to uncover the secrets of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a mathematical labyrinth coded in seven languages published in 1499. As intriguing as the Renaissance mystery at the heart of the tale is the account of the cut-throat world of academe by Ivy Leaguers **Ian Caldwell** and **Dustin Thomason**. Their deliciously elegant prose lures you in, and rubbishes the claim that a popular read can't be intelligent.

**Century; Rs 516; 372 pages**

**HOUR GAME**, David Baldacci's latest, features two former Secret Service agents Michelle Maxwell and Sean King, introduced in Baldacci's last, *Split Second*, who investigate a series of murders in sleepy Wrightsburg, Virginia. The killer's propensity for leaving watches at the crime scene and

bizarre *modus operandi*—each murder bears the stamp of a notorious serial killer from the past—keep the reader hooked as does the palpable chemistry, on the razor's edge of platonic, between the turbocharged Maxwell and the circumspect King. This one has it all—heroes you cheer for, action and suspense that never let up, plot twists at every turn, and a humdinger of a final revelation that you never saw coming.

**Warner; Rs 440; 437 pages**

Just when you think **Ken Follett** has done to death sweeping sagas that stretch over decades, he surprises you with **WHITEOUT**, a crisp tale that spans three suspense-packed days in non-descript Inverburn, a Scottish town. As a blizzard buffets the town, the family of Stanley Oxenford, the suave director of a pharmaceutical research company, gathered together to celebrate Christmas, is corralled by a trio of thugs seeking to make off with a deadly virus. To the

rescue comes Toni Gallo, Oxenford's security chief and love interest, while dark family secrets come tumbling out of the closet and unlikely heroes are discovered. The momentum, right to the end, remains white-hot.

**Macmillan; Rs 490; 395 pages**

Finally, an elegy to the talents of **Sidney Sheldon**. The author of racy reads like *If Tomorrow Comes* and *Windmill of the Gods* delivers a damp squib with **ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE DARK?** We follow two "beautiful" yet truly boring women across the world as they try and uncover the reasons for their husbands' brutal murders—both were scientists working on a hush, hush weather project that in the wrong hands could prove catastrophic—while the villain tries to catch and kill them. No vestige of storyline, plot twists or smart writing. Another sure sign that Sheldon has completely lost his plot: there's no steamy sex either. ■

**HarperCollins; Rs 355; 423 pages**

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- One-on-One is a free readers service only for bonafide readers of Harmony.
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- Maximum number of words allowed per One-on-One is 30.
- All forms should be sent by ordinary post only. No registered post or courier shall be accepted for One-on-One.
- Only one entry per person shall be accepted.
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**For office use only**

- |                                    |                                  |                                       |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Advt. No. | <input type="checkbox"/> Heading | <input type="checkbox"/> No. of Words |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

# Bad medicine

Amita Malik finds the *babu* culture in our government health services a bitter pill to swallow



**THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT** Health Scheme, or CGHS as it is popularly known, started off with excellent intentions. Inaugurated soon after Independence, it covered government employees of all categories, from peons and sweepers to ministers. In return for a small percentage cut every month from their salaries, everyone is entitled to treatment from dispensaries near where they lived, and even treatment abroad, although the last has been more applied to privileged people like former prime minister V P Singh, treated overseas all these years.

What makes a difference is the petty *babus* who dole out medicines as if they are doing a great favour. I shall recount a recent personal experience to illustrate how someone who is 80-plus and very ill was pushed around.

The specialist who was treating me at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences prescribed, to be started immediately, what is classified as a life-saving medicine. First, I went to my dispensary to collect it. For one week, they kept on saying the medicine was “not available”. When I went back on the Monday of the second week, the storekeeper said, “We don’t give it, you have to go to the Stores Department in Gole Market.” “Why didn’t

you tell me?” I asked. “We were on *hartal* last week,” he grinned.

Armed with my application to Stores, duly recommended by the dispensary with a photocopy of my health card and the prescription by the AIIMS specialist, I was told after waiting for one-and-a-half hours that the photocopies also had to be attached. I showed the originals, but they did not budge. We raced back to the dispensary and reached Stores at 12.55 pm. “We are going for lunch at 1 pm and will come back in one hour,” said the clerk. At 2.30 pm they said, “Come back in 15 days.”

Shocked, I made my painful way on my arthritic knees to the first floor where a large arrow in red indicated “LIFE SAVING DRUGS”. I entered a room with three *babus* sitting in a row scratching at files. I stood in front of the first one who didn’t even look up. “*Suniye*,” I said. “*Sun raha hoon*,” he replied. “But you are writing,” I said. “*Sun raha hoon*,” he repeated. “I am an elderly lady and in great pain,” I said, “Can I have a chair?” “*Kaam ka baat karo*,” snapped the *babu*. “Okay,” I said, “How can anyone wait 15 days for a life-saving drug? A heart patient can die.”

The *babu* shoved back my papers and I soon learnt the clerk was right. The Ministry of Health at Nirman Bhavan takes a minimum of 15 days to sanction life-saving medicines.

Luckily, the distributor of my essential medicine in India gave me a month’s supply against my cheque, which he said he would return to me when I got my government supply and returned his bottle. I got the medicine from the government exactly one month after my specialist prescribed it. Had the distributor not helped, I might have passed out. And that after several more trips back and forth, forms to be filled in triplicate, more rudeness, and hours of waiting. And I am a privileged person. Which peon could have found a kind distributor or would be in a position to deposit a four-figure cheque?

Dr Anbumani Ramadass, the present Minister of Health, is an eminent doctor and has already paid surprise visits to medical institutions. Perhaps it is time he visited a few CGHS dispensaries and the CGHS Stores Department, whose director never answers the phone and is never in office. No wonder the *babus* reign supreme. 🇮🇳

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*Amita Malik, often referred to as ‘the first lady of Indian media’, is a columnist and film critic. If you have any comments on this story or would like to share your own experiences with readers, mail us or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## LOVE TRIP



FRAM PETIT

Promise yourself a vacation without the family tagging along. Mumbai-based travel company Maniccha has come up with holiday packages for couples in their 50s, called 'Honeymoon at 50'. The options: eight days and seven nights in Kashmir (Rs 12,000 per person, from Jammu); a 10-day trip to Malaysia (Rs 45,555 per person, all inclusive); a week in Mauritius

(Rs 45,000 per person, all inclusive); and eight days in Nepal (Rs 12,000 per person, from Kathmandu). Costs include sightseeing, all meals, transfers and accommodation. While the Malaysia and Mauritius rates include airfare, you have to bear the cost of travel to Jammu and Kathmandu from your city. Maniccha offers to book the tickets for you.

Cut out this item and take it along when signing up for a Maniccha trip to get a special discount of Rs 1,000 per couple. If you live outside Mumbai, mail the cutting along with your demand draft. This offer is available till December 31. For details, log on to [www.maniccha.com](http://www.maniccha.com) or contact 022-24440409/8938, 24462874.

*For address, see page 95*

## SUGAR CHECK

Four simple steps and five seconds is all it takes to check your blood glucose level. Roche Diagnostics, a German company dealing in medical products, has



Courtesy: ROCHE DIAGNOSTICS

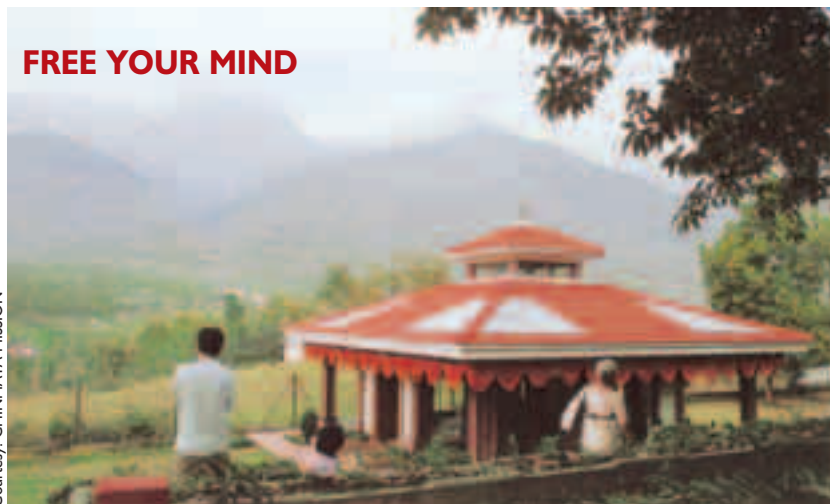
introduced Accu-Chek Active, a blood sugar level monitor, to Indian markets. It comprises a remote-like meter, a device to prick your finger for blood collection and a test strip to measure the glucose level. It is a painless method, with results displayed in five seconds. Other such meters in the market have one pencil-like instrument to serve all the three purposes—Roche claims its product is less cumbersome and more accurate. After your doctor has shown you how to use it, you can do it yourself at home by following the instructions on the cover. The instrument can store



the last 200 readings with corresponding time and date, and comes with a unique lifetime warranty. Priced at Rs 4,200, there is a special rate of Rs 2,400 available on orders placed before November 30. Accu-Chek Active is available at all leading chemist shops across the country. For more details, call the toll free number 1600-114546.

*For address, see page 95*

## FREE YOUR MIND



Four days and three nights of prayers, discourses and interactive sessions at a sprawling ashram overlooking Dauladhar Mountains in the Himalayas, with nature walks thrown in. That's the trip being offered by Swami Nikhilananda, head of Chinmaya Mission in New Delhi, to Tapovan Ashram at Sidhbari near Dharamshala

from November 25 to 28. It is here that the founder of Chinmaya Mission, Swami Chinmayananda attained *samadhi* in 1993. The cost: Rs 7,500, not including travel. Boarding and lodging are on a twin-sharing basis and the rooms have clean linen and attached baths, with running hot and cold water. November 12 is the cut off date

to apply. That done, you can book your AC-III tier ticket from Delhi to Pathankot and a taxi from Pathankot to Sidhbari at an approximate cost of Rs 3,000. The ashram will arrange pickup from both Amritsar and Jammu, the nearest airports. Contact Neelu Daulat Singh on 011-31025539, 098119-98140 or at [daulat@vsnl.com](mailto:daulat@vsnl.com)

## FOR THE RECORD

Today, vinyl records are never seen on music store shelves. But if you love the scratchy sound of the needle traversing fine circular grooves, you can lay your hands on an LP record in flea markets and bazaars. The cost: anything between Rs 20 and Rs 85.

**Kolkata:** Shops dotting either side of Free School Street, off Park Street, are packed with curios, old music systems, books, periodicals, record players and cassettes. Some second-hand shops here sell record albums. You can even find Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis from the 1950s here, or Beatles, Stones, Grateful Dead and Hendrix originals from the 1960s.

**Delhi:** Shop No. 256 in Old Delhi's Meena Bazaar has one of the biggest collections of vinyl records from all over the world. Music companies like HMV often come searching for yesteryear Hindi film tunes here. The shop also records rare songs on to your own CDs or cassettes for you.

**Mumbai:** Search the street-side market at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus and you'll find Abba, Police and The Doors on vinyl. Shop No. 56 at Chor Bazaar's Mutton Street has Gujarati and Marathi songs on LP, besides Pandit Ravi Shankar and Zubin Mehta. If you are looking for turntables, your best bet is the Music Lounge (022-26002012) in suburban Bandra costing between Rs 15,500 and Rs 19,000. ■





## H E R O E S

**LOVE 88**

**Dorothy 'Dodo' Cheney** has been serving up winners with her racket for eight decades now. This 88-year-old's latest ace was at the 24th International Tennis Federation World Seniors Championships. She beat Lou Cille Scoggins 6-2, 6-2 in the championship match of the women's 85-and-over bracket. Seven hundred

seniors participated in the two-week tournament held in the last week of September at the Philadelphia Cricket Club. Last July, this south California resident was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, where she rubbed shoulders with tennis greats Steffi Graf and Stefan Edberg, who were also inducted.

Cheney has won the largest number of United States Tennis Association (USTA) senior titles—over 340. She even has 20 Grand Slam titles, another USTA record. Her advice to senior players: "Play tournaments. Having something on the line is the only way you keep getting better. And play through your injuries, so you won't take too much time away from the game."

**ON YOUR MARK**

On October 5, **Mark Junge**, 61, celebrated his 3,400-mile, cross-country bicycle journey from San Francisco to New York

City with a celebration in Times Square. What makes his trip really special is that this retired historian and sports photographer from Wyoming, Texas, has blood clots in his lungs and needs oxygen 24 hours a day to survive. He was diagnosed with atypical pulmonary embolism in 2002.

"I thought my dream of biking across America was crushed when my pulmonologist said I had to go on oxygen over a year ago," he said. To his rescue came HELiOS, the liquid oxygen system he uses. Instead of carrying a 15-pound metal canister on his bike, Junge simply needed to wear a 3.6-pound, 10-inch-long liquid oxygen canister on his waist. His wife of 38 years, Andrea accompanied him in a support vehicle providing logistical assistance. He started his trip on June 12 hoping, "to inspire those who, like me, want to live their lives as they envision they should be lived."

**ZOHRA'S ZING**

At 92, **Zohra Sehgal** is India's oldest brand ambassador—she sparkles in the recent advertisements of a digital hearing aid. The first nonagenarian cover girl, she dazzled in *Harmony's* August issue. And on October 1, the International Day of Older Persons, she was among 11 people to be honoured with the 'Chirayushya Samman', by Anugraha, an NGO working for the welfare of the elderly. Sehgal was feted for promoting 'active ageing'. The award—a trophy, citation and shawl—was presented by Meira Kumar, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment. Sehgal attributes her happy and healthy longevity to an organised and disciplined lifestyle, layered with generous doses of humour. "I am lucky to have this fountain of energy within me," she says.



## FORTUNE SMILES

Talk about being on the A list.

**Vidya Manohar Chhabria**, chairperson of the Dubai-based Jumbo Group, is the only Indian to make *Fortune's* list of 50 Most Powerful Women in International Business. She retains her position from last year at No. 38. The 56-year-old took charge of the \$ 2 billion group, which controls Shaw Wallace Distilleries and



Breweries, among other companies, in April 2002, after the death of her husband, founder Manohar 'Manu' Chhabria. *Fortune* credits her with resolving a two-decade-old dispute with the UB Group. "The challenge lies in reorientation of strategy so as to remain ever-contemporary," said Chhabria to the press. "This will embolden us to strive further and reach higher."

## I N P A S S I N G



### MOTHER INDIA

She was the long-suffering mother who moved generations of moviegoers to tears. Actress **Nirupa Roy** passed away on October 13 in Mumbai following a cardiac arrest. She was 73. Roy made her debut with the Gujarati film *Ranakdevi* in 1946 and went on to act in over 200 films. She first played mother to Dev Anand in *Munimji*, released in 1955, and proceeded to make the genre her own. Amitabh Bachchan was her favourite son, though—she played his mother in superhits like *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar*, *Suhaag* and, most memorably, *Deewar*. She also acted in critically acclaimed films such as

Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zameen*. Her last film: *Lal Badshah*, was released in 1999, where she played—no surprises here—Bachchan's mother.

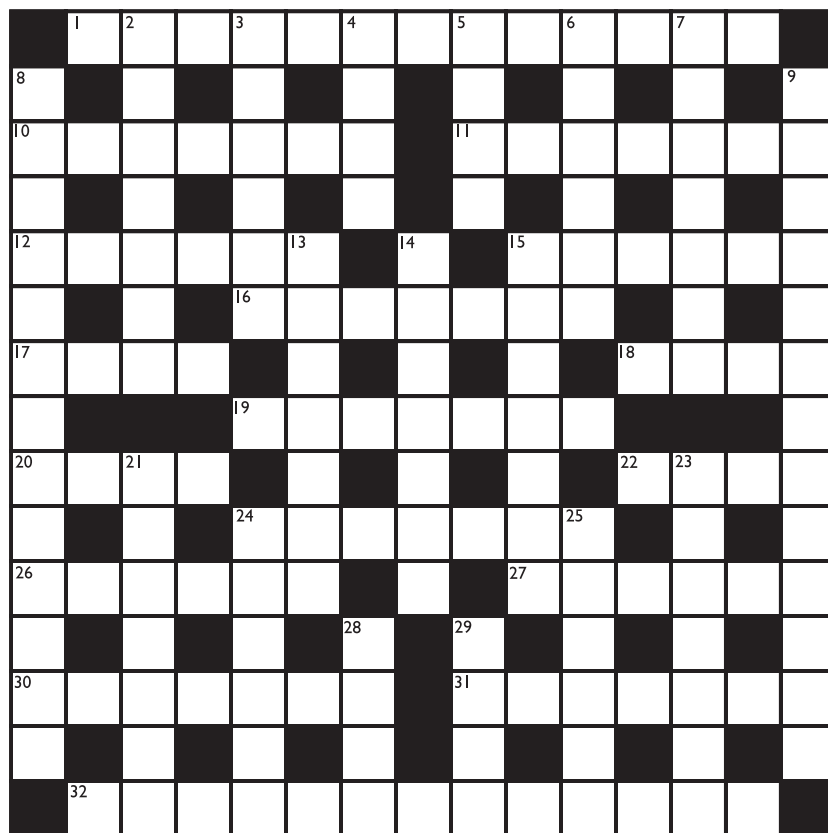
### MAD ABOUT MOVIES

One-man film archive **Abdul Ali** passed away last month at the age of 79 in his hometown Mumbai. His passion was to rescue and restore vintage films. Ali *bhai*, as he was fondly known, got hooked onto the movies as a schoolboy in Vapi, Gujarat, in the 1940s. He later worked in Mumbai as an LIC officer. But every spare moment would find him at Chor Bazaar, in studio godowns and laboratories or at the roadside vendor chasing the whiff of a long-lost rare show reel, poster or booklet. In February 1968, he set up the Cine Society in a crammed Opera House office, which, till today, continues to salvage and exhibit old classics like *President*, *Street Singer*, *Achhut Kanya* and *Bandhan*. "If I don't remember these masters, who will?" was his take. The archivist never received public recognition but friends suggest that a film museum set up in his name would be the best tribute. To contact Cine Society, see page 95



### CAPED CRUSADER

Superman in more ways than one, American actor **Christopher Reeve** passed away on October 10. The 1978 superhero movie catapulted him to fame, but he later took on a variety of roles to "escape the cape". An equestrian accident in May 1995 changed his life. He broke his neck and was paralysed from the neck down. But he stunned doctors with his sheer determination to recover. In 2000, after four years of effort, he was able to move his index finger. After a specialised workout, he regained sensation in other parts of the body too. And he vowed to walk again. "I refuse to allow a disability to determine how I live my life," Reeve proclaimed. The 52-year-old went on to become a crusader for stem cell and spinal cord research. Reeve fell into a coma after a cardiac arrest, following an infection in a pressure wound caused by the paralysis. ■



### EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 3

By Raju Bharatan

#### ACROSS

- 1** Allergic to opposition, the Bangalore unit of the BJP is not one to let any grow under its feet (8, 5)  
**10** A would-be cheesecake 'chairwoman'? (1, 6)  
**11** Churn it out only Shyam could (7)  
**12** Rash embracing princess, something to relish raw (6)  
**15** Asha B's Boy (6)  
**16** Calibre of archer William Tell emerged as in aiming for the apple of his eye (3-4)  
**17** Airy Star of Tomorrow (4)  
**18** A side player here, whoever thought the notion of Mandira

as Sony Cricket Presenter would wash! (4)

- 19** Image written about in fancy (7)  
**20** Your compiler's weighty *Chambers Dictionary* presented to him by his crossword mentor Alan Cash (4)  
**22** Figure you have to be if you are to tennis-elbow Sachin out of Team India (1, 3)  
**24** Sunday as viewed through AFST's Looking Forward, Looking Back DD prism (7)  
**26** Let nil turn stone (6)  
**27** Union, aptly two-thirds of it is symbolic of Ho Chi Minh (6)  
**30** Healing process urging the *Malka-e-Tarannum* to perform, reverting to what she 'spelt' (7)

**31** That of an idea there certainly was in Maggie's calling Jiggs 'Insect!' (3, 4)

**32** Black Power determines, ultimately, who is in office here (3, 5, 5)

#### DOWN

- 2** The very opposite of what you mean by *bandh* (4, 3)  
**3** When Zaheer Khan does, viewers now urge him to step in and stay for a while (2, 4)  
**4** Walls have them (4)  
**5** He is now singing, now bowling fast, on TV (4)  
**6** Brook a single conceded? (6)  
**7** Leading Indonesian authors (7)  
**8** Key role played by the Indian Gnat in neutralising the Pak Jet during the September 1965 War (5-8)  
**9** 'Place' Parveen Babi as the Cover Girl attracting international notice (4, 4, 1, 4)  
**13** *Rice Plate Chalu Aahe* (3, 4)  
**14** If perchance you are a would-be 'setter' so using the square above, start at 'top right' or 'bottom right', if you hope to complete the crossword! (2, 1, 3)  
**15** Toughts urging Nandita to keep moving without speaking? (7)  
**21** Shaving cream turning no into march (7)  
**23** Eliot drawing away from his own initials, Ladies and Gentlemen (7)  
**24** Indian News follower on the screen (6)  
**25** Omer embodying Hollywood actor of the 40s-50s (6)  
**28** India's missile gain (4)  
**29** Game in which the two teams finish neck and neck? (1, 3)

For answers, see page 95

Raju Bharatan is the originator of the Sunday Cryptic in *The Times Of India*

**TIPS FOR BEGINNERS:** There are a variety of clues employed in cryptic puzzles. For instance, the anagram. One anagrammatic clue could be: Stipulated as empty truisms. Stipulated is the 10 letters of platitudes rearranged to make an anagram. Another type of clue used is the palindrome. For example: A TOYOTA reading as ATOYOT A when viewed backward, or when viewed up in a Down clue. Next, there could be a clue (8-letter answer) reading: Begin to tell what I did in the restaurant. The solution: INITIATE (IN IT I ATE). The solution to the clue, An organised series of operations to promote a soft drink, is CAMPAIGN, the CAMPA part of it covering the soft drink. At times, what looks a straight clue could prove tricky. For example, It's slightly more than a foot in length, has SHOE for its answer. Or the solution to the clue, Mrs Ram, could be SITA. Madagascar could split into Mad Aga's car, Franciscan into Franc I scan, Abracadabra into A bra, cad, a bra. The possibilities are endless.

# brain gym

## NUMBER GAME

Each of these series starts with a hint to lead you onto the next number in the series. Use a calculator if you must, but keep in mind that these need less math and more lateral thinking.

1. How about a big hello?  
23 5 12 3 15 13...
2. Timing is everything.  
100 365 24 60
3. Sometimes numbers are no more than they appear to be.  
3 3 5 4 4 3 5 5 4
4. Occasionally, things are presented to us in an unusual, yet completely logical order.  
2 5 12 23 30 17 8 ?

## DOUBLETS

Writer and poet Lewis Carroll invented four steps to turn more into less. He called the technique a doublet: 'MORE, lore, lose, loss, LESS.' Today, though, these puzzles are also known as step-words, 'laddergrams' or word chains. Only one letter must be replaced in each step, such that each step forms a valid word.

Try out these four-step doublets:

- Milk to Pail
- Well to Done
- Mice to Rats
- Camp to Site

*These puzzles are taken from [www.think.com](http://www.think.com) and [www.puzz.com](http://www.puzz.com). For solutions, see page 95*

# memorise it

Writer Emily Dickinson lived in seclusion, but lived a passionate life. She wrote in a letter in 1870: "I find ecstasy in living, the mere sense of living is joy enough." With her inclination for intensity came a playful and childlike sense of whimsy and humour. Both themes add to the dramatic quality of this simple and inspirational poem.

## HOPE IS THE THING...

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,  
And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.  
I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

# say it out loud

Feeding is a very important ritual for me. I  
don't trust people who don't like to eat.

—Gina Gershon, American actor

If this is coffee, please bring me some tea;  
but if this is tea, please bring me some coffee.

—Abraham Lincoln (1809-65)

We live in an age when pizza gets to your  
home before the police.

—Jeff Marder, American comedian

Oh, the tiger will love you. There is no  
sincerer love than the love of food.

—George Bernard Shaw in *Man and Superman*



## laugh lines

While proudly showing off his new apartment to friends, a man led the way into the living room. "What is the big brass gong and hammer for?" one of his friends asked.

"That is the talking clock," the man replied.

"How does it work?" the friend asked.

"Watch," the man said, and proceeded to give the gong an ear-shattering pound with the hammer.

Suddenly, someone screamed from the other side of the wall: "KNOCK IT OFF, YOU IDIOT! It's TWO in the morning!"



A man walks into a bar after a day at the office, sits down and orders a beer. He grabs a handful of peanuts from the bowl on the counter while sipping on the drink, and as he starts to chew he hears a voice say, "That's a beautiful tie, is that silk? Very NICE choice!"

Wondering who would make such a strange comment, he looks around and doesn't see anyone near him who could've been speaking to him. With a shrug, he sips and munches some more.

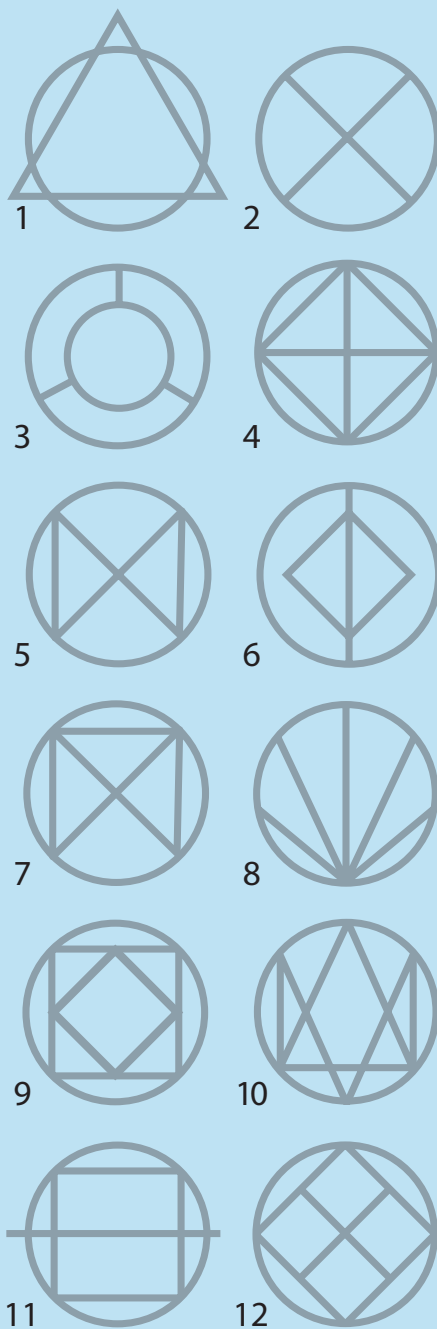
Next, he hears a voice: "Those shoes are stylish. Are they Italian leather? They look great!"

He whirls around again but sees no one near him. He glances nervously around and then at his shoes, which he tucks self-consciously under the stool. Wondering if he's drinking too fast, he grabs another handful of peanuts. This time, the voice continues with, "That suit looks FANTASTIC! Is it an Armani? Very nice!"

He immediately calls the waiter over and says: "Look. I keep hearing these voices telling me how great my tie, my shoes, and my suit look. Is my drink getting to me?"

"Oh," the waiter nonchalantly replies, "Those are just the peanuts, sir. They're complimentary."

## visual challenge



### THE UNICURSAL MARATHON

Which of these figures are unicursal? That is, they cannot be drawn with just one continuous line without going over the line twice or crossing it? You will need a pencil for this one.

*This puzzle is taken from the website [www.puzzle.com](http://www.puzzle.com)*

## CALLING FOR COMPENSATION PAGE 12

### ALL INDIA NON-PENSIONED CUM SENIOR CITIZENS RETIREES' ASSOCIATION (AINP), Ernest

Abraham, Founder/Convenor cum General Secretary, 466, 5th B Main, 2nd Block, HRBR Layout, Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore-560043. Tel: 080-2545 5160.

## MEN ON PAUSE PAGE 46

**APOLLO HOSPITALS**, 21, Grems Lane, Off Grems Road, Chennai-600006. Tel: 044-28292111/3333/0200/4302. Fax: 044-28294429. Email: ahela@vsnl.com

## H RECOMMENDS PAGE 88

### LOVE TRIP

Maniccha Travel Consultants Pvt Ltd, 1, Kamani Mansion, Guru Nanak Marg, Behind City Lights Cinema, Mahim, Mumbai-400016

### SUGAR CHECK

Roche Diagnostics, B/2 Amarchand Mansion, 1st Floor, Madam Cama Road, Mumbai-400039  
Website: www.roche.com

## H PEOPLE PAGE 90

### MAD ABOUT MOVIES

Cine Society, 33-J, Girgaum, Mumbai-400004. Tel: 022-23820451

## HEADSTART SOLUTIONS PAGE 92

### CROSSWORD

**ACROSS:** 1 Congress grass (reference to parthenium, common in Bangalore); 10 A Keeler (Christine sitting so revealingly on that chair); 11 Manthan ('The Churning': A Film by Shyam Benegal); 12 Radish -- Ra(Di)sh; 15 George (reference to Boy George as Asha's Boy); 16 Top-spot; 17 Riya (Airy is the four letters of Riya rearranged, reference to Riya Sen); 18 Soap; 19 Imagine: Imag(in)e - Image written about (around) in, imagine means fancy; 20 Tome (To me); 22 A Ten; 24 Ravivar: Looking Forward, Looking Back, Ravivar it reads; 26 Lintel (turn to get Let nil - lintel meaning stone); 27 Soviet (Viet part of it linking with Ho Chi Minh); 30 Nursing: Nur sing - Noor Jahan originally spelt Nur Jahan on the HMV disc; 31 The germ; 32 The White House

**DOWN:** 2 Open Day; 3 Go last (a call to No 11 Zaheer to also go and last); 4 Ears; 5 Sami (Adnan and Mohammad); 6 Runlet (run let - single conceded), runlet means brook; 7 Suharto (authors is the seven letters of Suharto rearranged); 8 Sabre-rattling (reference to the Pak Sabre Jet); 9 Once upon a time (that *Time* magazine cover featuring Parveen Babi); 13 Hot meal; 14 As a grid;

15 Goondas (Go on Das); 21 Monarch: M(on)arch - no turning into march; 23 TOILETS - TS remains, once you read TOILE in reverse (drawing away) as ELIOT; 24 Review (reference to Indian News Review); 25 Romero (Cesar) - R(omer)o embodies Omer; 28 AGNI (gain is its four letters rearranged); 29 A tie

### BRAIN GYM

Doublets (there may be more than one solution to each)  
Milk, mill, pill, pall, pail  
Well, dell, doll, dole, done  
Mice, mite, mate, mats, rats OR Mice, mite, mate, rate, rats  
Camp, came, same, sate, site

### MATH SERIES

- 5:** The series numbers the letters of the alphabet that spell WELCOME.
- 60:** 100 years in a century, 365 days in a year, 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes in an hour, and 60 seconds in a minute.
- 3:** Each number is the number of letters in the word for each number from ONE to TEN.
- 3:** After adding 1 to 2, the first number, an additional number is added to each resulting number, yielding 3 (1+2), 5 (3+2), 8 (5+3), 12 (8+4), 17 (12+5), etc. The first number is written on the far left, the second number is on the far right, the third number is second from the left, the fourth number is second from the right, and so on.

### THE UNICURSAL MARATHON

Now using Figure 4, we'd like to explain why it isn't unicursal.

It has exactly four points (nodes) where an odd number of lines are branching out (five at each), and one node in the centre of the pattern with an even number of branches (four). Every time you go through a node not stopping at it, you must use a pair of its branches. Therefore, at each of the four nodes on the periphery of the pattern, one branch in any case will be alone. When we use this branch, our line either starts from this node or just finishes at it. Thus we have four points (nodes) where the line has to start (or finish); it doesn't matter how you draw it. But a continuous line has only two ends, so the puzzle can't be solved.

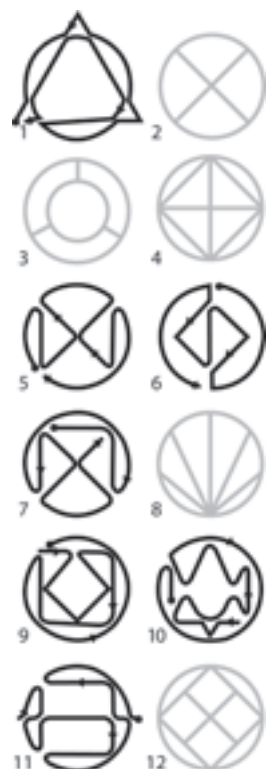




Photo: JASBIR MALHI; Coordination: TEENA BARUAH



*Retired bureaucrat N Khosla, 82, has two passions: to be a footloose backpacker and to preserve biodiversity. Khosla has two homes. One is in Panchkula, near Chandigarh, and the other is in a Bajaj Tempo traveller, equipped with a kitchen, fridge, tent, medicine cabinet, solar-operated lights, four beds, an air-conditioner, bathroom and a music system. Twice a month, Khosla packs mango saplings from his hometown and sets off to discover India. On his way home, he brings back saplings from his travels—Alphonso from Ratnagiri, Ramphal from Daulatabad and hundreds of brinjal saplings from Coorg. Khosla bought his first caravan in 1989, wanting to explore the country by road together with his wife Bimla. He sold it off two years later, after she passed away. A decade later, Khosla was back on the road.*

“Last year, I spent a night on the banks of Phewa Lake in Pokhara, Nepal. I parked my caravan, took out my music system and hummed along with Lata Mangeshkar. This year, I have already travelled 7,000 km across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. I picked up some salt from Bhavnagar in Gujarat, discovered the magnificence of Ajanta-Ellora and the Vijayanagar Empire in Karnataka and visited the home of music legend Kumar Gandharva in Dewas, Madhya Pradesh. During all this, I collected saplings of rare plants to plant in my garden back home. If these plants disappeared from the face of earth, you will find them in my backyard.”

—N Khosla



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