

NOVEMBER 2009 Rs 30

# harmony

celebrate age

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# Collective responsibility

Apathy is perhaps our greatest enemy. Consider the fact that less than a year after Mumbai was gripped by the hand of terror, not even half its citizens came out to vote in the assembly elections held in October. The overall turnout was about 46 per cent, marginally higher than the 43.5 percent during the Lok Sabha elections held in April. This, after the vows, pledges and candlelight vigils by hundreds and thousands of citizens who vowed to play a more active role in determining the governance, security and future of their city.

This apathy is not restricted to Mumbai. Elections come and go; more and more people are franchised; there is more political and social activism than ever before; and there are innumerable media campaigns urging people to vote. Yet, come election day, whether it is state government or the Lok Sabha polls, the story is depressingly similar: empty polling stations. We have failed to realise that to make a change, we have to get out and vote.

There is a silver lining here, however. Across the country, the media has consistently remarked upon the zeal of elders when it comes to exercising their franchise. In Mumbai, newspapers reported that silvers showed up in large numbers to vote, unmindful of failing health and disabilities. Among them was Jagannath Vilankar Appa, 75, a resident of Andheri, who proudly told media that he has been voting since 1955 when he was 21 years old and still "feels the same excitement every time". Appa walked for 30 minutes to the polling booth despite a fractured right leg. Kashibai Janu also walked 20 minutes to cast her vote—she is 90 years old. Her take: "We have earned this right through a freedom struggle and every Indian should exercise it."



Donald Woodrow

Every Indian should also have an enabling environment to exercise their franchise. Before the Lok Sabha elections, the Supreme Court had directed the Election Commission (EC) to provide ramps, staircase, banisters and Braille markings on voting machines. Little was achieved then, with the EC citing lack of time as a reason. That excuse doesn't hold water anymore, as Sriram Patnagar, founder-director of BrihanMaharashtra Apang Vikas Sangathana, pointed out to media. This NGO, which is campaigning for universally accessible polling booths, discovered in its survey that while Braille sheets were attached to most voting machines, ramps and banisters were hard to find.

It's a shame—because universal design is essential to social inclusion. This year, in his message on World Elders' Day on 1 October, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon spoke about intensifying efforts to build a "society for all ages". "We need an inclusive society that emphasises participation, self-fulfilment, independence, care and dignity for all," he said. Isn't it time we heed the call?

*Tina Ambani*

## A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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



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**RAY OF HOPE:** Veena Joshi's school in Dehradun imparts free education to poor children

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# column one

It's not 'image' that drives Pandit Jasraj to wear his kurtas in flamboyant silks and his hair in a silvery halo. He hasn't disowned colour or charm because he still feels young at heart. Nothing, however, not even the jewels on his fingers and neck, distracts us from his silken-golden voice. Timeless, as precious as the *parasmani*, his voice transcends barriers of age, faith and belief.

On *Harmony's* cover this month ("The Master's Voice"), he speaks about his addiction to music, *guru-shishya parampara*, disciples with iPods, playing cards, his daughter Durga Jasraj and son Sharang Dev and, of course, his wardrobe. He also reveals his allergy to perfume!

Elsewhere in the magazine are highlights from Harmony Silver Awards 2009, held on 1 October in Mumbai. The end of the event marks the beginning of preparations for Harmony Silver Awards 2010. We invite nominations for next year; watch out for guidelines in the January 2010 issue.

Indeed, planning is the key to success. If you are charting out travel plans for next year, consider Ladakh ("The Hills are Alive"). It's pristine, adventurous and straight out of a dream. This trip could be treacherous, though. So do ask your physician if you should make this journey. The best time to visit is June to August.

There are rarer gems in this issue. A gurudwara in Amritsar (Bhaini Sahib) that has revived rare raga and *tala* in Shabad Kirtan, a couple dedicated to the revival of Mithila art, and the journey of a magazine that has been in circulation for 50 years. Keep reading and writing to us.

—Meeta Bhatti



My grandfather Dattatraya Atmaram Marathe is a subscriber to *Harmony*. Moreover, I believe he exemplifies the spirit of the magazine. He began to swim regularly after he turned 65. Since then, he has participated in many swimming competitions and emerged with flying colours in his age group. His accolades include silver in the 50-m freestyle in the state-level veterans swimming championship in 1997 in Nagpur and the 36th YMCA annual swimming gala in Mumbai in 2008; two golds in the 50-m freestyle and breaststroke at the 5th National Masters Aquatic Championship in Indore in 2008; and bronze in the 25-m freestyle at the Vinod Ghadge Memorial Swimming Meet in 2009 in Mumbai. Consider the fact that he turned 85 this year and you realise just how remarkable these achievements are. What's more, he has inspired many young people, who have taken up swimming under his guidance.

Rashmi Sameer Vedak, Via email



On World Elders' Day, the chief minister and governor of Bihar, like all other states, published messages in newspapers on the need for care and welfare of senior citizens. However, the state is yet to implement the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens' Act 2007. Even the Jharkhand government has come on board but Bihar is yet to do so. I request you and other social organisations to urge the Bihar government and other state governments who have not yet notified the Act to do so immediately so they can make good on their promise to work for the welfare of senior citizens.

P K Kanodia, Bettiah, Bihar

I recently read a copy of *Harmony*. It is indeed doing a great service to the cause of senior citizens. It features very useful information and helps forge a fraternal bond among readers. I venture to suggest that magazines like this should

be bilingual. A Hindi edition of *Harmony* would have the power to reach millions of elders and inspire them to lead an active and productive life by sharing their experiences. I do hope you consider my suggestion.

Triloki Das Khandelwal, Jaipur

Recently, I went out to buy a Birthday gift for my granddaughter. As her job involves travel, I thought a set of travelling bags would be ideal. I selected the bags and used my credit card to pay. When the cashier handed me the cash register slip I was petrified—the amount displayed was a staggering Rs 90,040 instead of the expected Rs 9,040. Choking with rage, I pointed it out to the cashier. Of course, he was profuse with his apologies. He promptly corrected it and handed me a void slip and a fresh slip with the right amount, along with a small discount of Rs 40 to appease my feelings.

The moral of my experience: always beware, be alert and check your bills. Also, check your credit card to make sure that it is indeed your own card that has been returned.

**Shama Vijayan, Pune**

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I read about Harmony for Silvers Foundation and the third annual Harmony Silver Awards in an article in *The Hindu* on 2 October. As your foundation is dedicated to the cause of elders, I wanted your readers to know about 'zero therapy.' This is a way of life that emphasises the role of vegetarianism and the body's own power to heal in the prevention and cure of a variety of diseases and ailments. It lays stress on maintaining the natural equilibrium of mind, body and soul without the presence of unnecessary foreign matter in the body. Zero therapy employs a combination of food and thought biochemistry. You can read more about the therapy, including testimonials, at the website [www.zerotherapy.com](http://www.zerotherapy.com)

**Bharat Chajjer, Chennai**

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My grandfather was employed in the Railways and retired in the early 1940s after more than three decades of active service. After retirement, my grandmother and he settled down in a small village in Kerala as she insisted on it! I was studying in the middle school in Chennai (then Madras) and I used to visit them during my vacations. I would go out with my grandfather to purchase groceries.

Once, when I was 10 years old, we went out to buy jaggery—it was sold in small blocks—from the only grocery shop in the village. He paid 4 *anna* per seer for the jaggery. On the way home, a friend asked him about his purchase. My grandfather told him he had purchased

jaggery at 3 *anna* per seer. When his friend wondered how he paid 1 *anna* less, my grandfather graciously told him to take 4 seer of jaggery at 3 *anna* per seer and took 12 *anna* from him—in the bargain, he lost 4 *anna*. I was amazed and asked him why he sold the jaggery to his friend at a loss. He replied nonchalantly, "I am held in high esteem by the villagers here as I retired from the Railways. In order to maintain that status, I do not mind this loss. Now, my friend will tell other villagers that he could purchase jaggery at a discount from me and others will also take up the offer." That was his way of giving back to the community—what a noble soul he was! Indeed, he was a silver who lived life in the true spirit of *Harmony*.

**K A Narayanan, Chennai**

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I am a 69 year-old professional. I worked for Escorts for 15 years and ran my own textile spinning plant for 20 years. For the past seven years, I have been working as a financial consultant in the fields of portfolio management and insurance advisory.

I am a regular reader of *Harmony* and wanted to share some tips on retirement based on my personal experience. I urge all my silver friends to explore new horizons and develop a hobby that gives you pleasure. Eat right to maintain your health. This doesn't mean giving up all your favourite foods but eating in moderation. Listen to others rather than offering unsolicited advice—this will help you increase your circle of friends and improve your relationships within the family. Most important, always be positive—make sure you always look your best and sport a smile on your face. This will make you, and those around you, happy.

**Shree Gopal Jagnani, Ahmedabad**

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## CONTRIBUTOR



*Seminar*, a monthly journal of ideas and opinions, recently completed its 50th anniversary. Its editor Tejbir Singh looks back on the magazine's journey—and his own with it—in an exclusive column this month ("The Road Less Travelled"). As the 61 year-old tells *Harmony*, "Basically, my life was divided into two; as photographer and documentary film-maker from 1973 to 1987, and as editor of *Seminar* ever since!" Winner of the National Award for the best documentary of the year for *The Kalbelias, Nomads of Rajasthan* in 1980, other credits in his earlier avatar include *Earth and Sky*, a documentary on the Konyak people in Nagaland, and *In Search of Wildlife*, in collaboration with British wildlife artist and conservationist David Shepherd. He served as consultant to UK's Granada Television (UK) for its epic series, *The Jewel in the Crown*. Singh also co-authored the book *With Tigers in the Wild* with Valmik Thapar and F S Rathore. In fact, he is a founder member of the Ranthambhore Foundation, a voluntary organisation that aims to create natural integration between man, nature and wildlife; and was a member of the National Committee on Management of National Parks and Sanctuaries, Ministry of Forest and Environment in 1989-90. Singh lives in New Delhi.





# Thank You

Hema Malini for consenting to be our Guest of Honour  
Anu Malik, Bharat Dabholkar and Farida Jalal

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O» OFFHEAT

## mini REVOLUTION

Women—and the men who enjoy watching them—may be happy to learn that the catchphrase ‘age no bar’ extends to hemlines too. According to research conducted in the UK by popular retail chain Debenhams, **changes in attitude and a shift in social acceptability have led women to continue wearing miniskirts into their early 40s.** This constitutes a marked departure from the retailer’s last survey in 1980, where few women beyond their early 30s dared to show off their legs. “It shows that women now have an increasing confidence in their bodies and are happy to dress accordingly,” Ed Watson, spokesperson for Debenhams, tells *The Daily Mail*. “If this trend continues, there’s no doubt that, over time, women in their 50s will rightly regard a miniskirt as an essential part of their everyday wardrobe.”



O»NEWSWORTHY

## DELHI PLUS

To mark World Elders' Day on 1 October, the **Delhi government brought cheer to silver residents** with some welcome measures. For starters, hearing aids and spectacles will be made available free of cost to silvers at the 21 government-run hospitals in the city. And the Sunday clinics for silvers, which were only available in 10 government hospitals, have been extended to all government hospitals.

What's more, in accordance with the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents

and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which provides for the maintenance and welfare of senior citizens by their families, the government has established nine tribunals to ensure compliance of the Act. The tribunals, which will meet twice a week, will function from nine revenue districts; each tribunal will have a chairman and two members. Speaking at the occasion, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit also announced the opening of 50 more recreation centres for silvers in coming years in addition to the 18 that currently exist.



## Dial a book

**B**ooklovers in Chandigarh rejoice—the library just came home. Under its community outreach programme, the Chandigarh administration launched a **book delivery service for silvers** on the occasion of World Literacy Day on 8 September, in collaboration with the state National Service Scheme (NSS) cell and the Central State Library. Here's how it works: Chandigarh has been divided into five zones; north, east, west, south and central. Every zone will have two coordinators and 12 NSS volunteers. Interested silvers need to call a central number—(0172) 2701269—and give the operator their choice of magazine or book. The request goes to a librarian, who then procures the book and contacts the relevant coordinator. In turn, the coordinator directs a volunteer to pick up the book from the library and deliver it to the silver. Books and magazines can be kept for a period of 15 days; deliveries and collections are on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

**SAFETY ON THE WEB:** MUMBAI POLICE COMMISSIONER D SIVANANDAN HAS LAUNCHED [WWW.HAMARISURAKSHA.COM](http://WWW.HAMARISURAKSHA.COM), A WEBSITE TO REGISTER SENIOR CITIZENS AND HELP THE POLICE, NGOS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS MAINTAIN THEIR DATABASE AND MANAGE SECURITY AND SAFETY. THE INITIATIVE WAS THE BRAINCHILD OF ASHWANI NARULA, PRESIDENT OF HAMARI SURAKSHA SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS.



## O»FIRST RESORT

## A place called home

A few months ago, community activists, assisted by the Bombay South Kanara Association, opened the doors of **Ashraya, a three-storied home for silvers in Nerul, Navi Mumbai.** The home is run on a no-profit-no-loss basis with amenities like a gym, recreational centre, yoga enclave, prayer room, special rooms for the physically challenged, a vegetarian kitchen, and library with a 24-hour Internet connection.

The brainchild of 64 year-old Mumbai-based restaurateur A K



Hebbbar, the project cost of Rs 80 million was raised entirely from private donations, while the City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra contributed the 900 sq-m plot of land. The ground floor will be leased out to a commercial undertaking to meet the expenses of the home. Ashraya, which has the capacity to house 56 silvers, currently has 28 residents.



To learn more,  
go to [www.bskba.org](http://www.bskba.org)



## CHENNAI COMFORT

*Property developer Akshaya Pvt Ltd has launched a new silver-friendly project called Adena in Chennai. Located at Kazhipattur on Rajiv Gandhi Salai with a built-up area of 165,345 sq ft, the complex will have 199 two-bedroom homes. Features include grab bars, ramps, anti-skid flooring, a wheelchair lift, landscaped garden, reading room and yoga room. Prices range from Rs 1.7 million to Rs 2.9 million.*



For more details, visit [www.akshayahomes.com](http://www.akshayahomes.com)

## O»TRENDS

## Centenarian boom

Living to 100 won't be that big a deal much longer. According to research by the Danish Ageing Centre at the University of Southern Denmark, **more than half the babies born in wealthy countries this century are likely to be centenarians.** Life expectancy in most developed nations has already increased by about 30 years during the 20th century and the figure is expected to increase at a faster clip in the 21st century. "If the pace of increase in life expectancy continues as expected, most babies born since 2000 in France, Germany, Italy, the UK, the USA, Canada, Japan and other countries with long life expectancies will celebrate their 100th birthdays," concludes study leader Kaare Christensen in medical journal *Lancet*. "Very long lives are the probable destiny of most people alive now in developed countries. And with sustained economic and social development, we will see the same trend playing out over time in developing countries too."



# Harmony Silver Awards 2009

This year, we brought in World Elders' Day on 1 October with more than just a renewed promise to celebrate age—Harmony Silver Awards 2009 showcased the might and merit of silvers in full glory. Though the event, held at Rabindra Natya Mandir in Mumbai, was scheduled to start at 6.30 pm, guests began to throng the venue an hour in advance. More than 1,300 people turned up for the occasion. And they did not just applaud; they danced, whistled and cheered from their seats and the packed aisles. Playwright Bharat Dabholkar had the audience in splits with

his super-hit satire *The Best of Bottoms Up*. Composer Anu Malik set feet tapping with a seemingly endless barrage of peppy numbers. And guest of honour Hema Malini dazzled with her beauty and grace. Eventually, though, it was the winners who stole the show: ordinary people with extraordinary determination. The 10 silvers selected over three months of rigorous screening stood taller than everyone else, having set a benchmark in their respective spheres. Proof, beyond doubt, that it's never too late to follow your heart, or your dream.



Top row: Jaya Bachchan with Tina Ambani; Mrs Kokilaben Ambani; Dr A C Shah, Chairman, SKNL  
Second row: host Farida Jalal; Dr Jane Barratt, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing (IFA) with K R Gangadharan, Vice President-Asia, IFA  
Bottom row: Vivek Singh, Joint MD, Procim International Ltd; playwright Bharat Dabholkar; author Shobhaa Dé with husband Dilip Dé







Composer Anu Malik with his troupe; silvers from Harmony for Silvers Foundation put up a special performance



Clockwise from top left: Anupam Mishra receives the award from member of the jury and Chairman and Managing Director, Central Bank of India, S Sridhar; Dr Ganesh Devy with Tina Ambani; Sister Jude with Dr A C Shah; Asa Dutta with Dr A C Shah; Sindhutai Sapkal with member of the jury and renowned artist Manu Parekh; Dr Alan Alappat with Tina Ambani; Meenakshi Balasubramanian with guest of honour, actor Hema Malini

Photographs: Vilas Kalgutker & Vinod Bhutkar



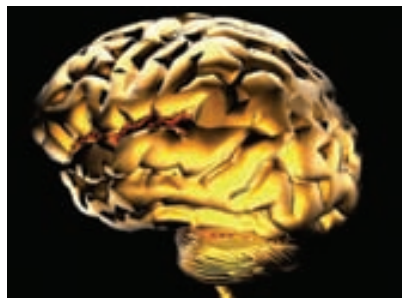


O»ANALYSE THIS

# MORE IS LESS

**WE KNOW THAT WEIGHING A POUND TOO MANY ISN'T GOOD FOR THE HEART.** Now, we learn that **obesity**

**is bad for the brain** too. According to new research at the University of Pittsburgh, excess weight shrinks the brains of silvers, making them potentially more vulnerable to Alzheimer's disease, dementia and cognitive decline. The study, titled *Brain Structure and Obesity*, focused on 94 subjects, aged 70 and older, who were overweight, with a body mass index (BMI) from 25 to 29.9, or obese, with a BMI of 30 or higher. (Normal BMI is 18.5 to 24.9.) They



had no clinical signs of Alzheimer's or dementia when their brains were first scanned. But five years later, a repeat scan revealed that those silvers who were overweight lost 4 per cent of the tissue in the frontal lobes of their brains. And those who were obese suffered twice the brain loss (8 per cent less tissue). The study concludes that obese people's brains look 16 years older than those of lean people, while the brains of overweight people look eight years older. "Weight gain reduces blood flow, nutrients and oxygen to brain tissue, resulting in shrinkage," concludes lead author Cyrus Raji in online journal *Human Brain Mapping*. "Clearly, what's bad for the heart is also bad for the brain."



## McSILVERS!

**W**hile eating at fast-food joints may not quite be what the doctor ordered, working in them may well be a darned good idea for silvers. A recent study by Lancaster University Management School in the UK reveals that levels of customer satisfaction are on average 20 per cent higher in those outlets of fast-food chain McDonald's that employ staff over the age of 60. As website [www.marieclaire.co.uk](http://www.marieclaire.co.uk) reports, more than two-thirds of people surveyed said **older workers connected well with customers**, while 47 per cent said they went the extra mile, and 44 per cent believed silver workers acted as mentors to younger colleagues. "The experience and self-belief that older workers offer can help boost any company's appeal," says Fiona Taylor, 65, who works as a lobby hostess at a McDonald's outlet in Derby. McDonald's



employs over 1,000 silvers across the UK. According to a spokesperson for the company, this survey will prompt them to hire even more. Professor Paul Sparrow, who undertook the study, is not surprised. "For McDonald's, the presence of older employees improves customer satisfaction and, in a service-led business, this drives the bottom line," he tells the website. "Employers must rise to the challenge of adapting to Britain's ageing workforce and this research shows that there can be a sizeable prize at stake for those which succeed."

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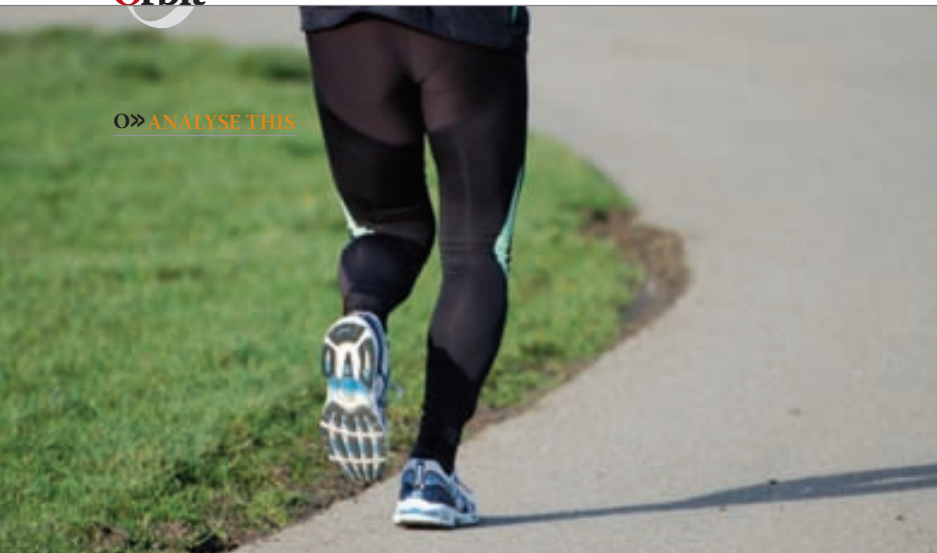
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Andheri (E)	28370794, 28370772	Dahisar (E)	28281409, 28280888	Naigaon	24106850, 24123229
Bandra (W)	26420150, 26415737	Ghatkopar (E)	25128936, 25124906	Thane (W)	25372928, 25363703
Bandra Rec.	26438849, 26438850	Goregaon (W)	28723793, 28765076	Vasai (W)	0250-2340321, 2340839
Bhandup (W)	25667130, 25667139	Kandivali (W)	29671086, 29671125	Vashi	27884401, 27884402
Borivali (E)	28938559, 28905036	Malad (W)	28807088, 28823163	Versova	26342832, 26346248
Bhuleshwar	22408890, 22413642	Nerul (W)	27704121, 27711131	Vile Parle (E)	26144977, 26191318
Dadar (E)	24112232, 24172071			Wadala (W)	24125638, 24172248

O» ANALYSE THIS



## Muscle POWER

A new discovery could put the mojo back in ageing limbs. Researchers from the University of California, Berkeley, and University of Copenhagen, Denmark, have found important **biochemical pathways that influence the ageing of human muscle**. The team analysed data collected from 30 men divided into two groups; the average age of the first group was 22 years and the second, 71. The team put the subjects in leg casts for two weeks to reproduce muscle atrophy. When the casts were removed, they exercised with weights to repair wasted muscles. The study revealed that the younger group's muscle repair was aided by four times more regenerative stem cells; the older group required more

time to repair their damaged muscle and suffered increased inflammation. Further research enabled the team to pinpoint the enzyme 'mitogen-activated protein kinase' or MAPK, which influences a biological pathway directly connected to muscle repair. By treating the older group to MAPK, the team was able to significantly improve its regeneration levels. "Old human muscle can be maintained and repaired by muscle stem cells with the right biochemical signals," writes lead researcher Professor Irina Conboy in journal *EMBO Molecular Medicine*. "A drug that does the same could be given to people while they are young to ensure they remain strong in their 60s, 70s and 80s."

## SPERM COUNT

We learnt in Grade X biology that it is essential to the creation of life. Now we learn that sperm may even be able to help us prolong it. In a study conducted by scientists at Graz University in Austria, **spermidine, a substance found in human sperm, was found to reverse the effects of growing old on mice and worms**. According to them, the substance, which is also naturally found in wheat germ, grapefruit and soybean, decreases cell damage. The study was published in the September issue of British journal *Nature Cell Biology*.

O» MEDIA WATCH

## CHARTBUSTER

Guess who was top of the pops in Britain last month? Dame Vera Lynn, all of 92, became the **oldest living artist to have a No. 1 record** in the country with a compilation of her greatest hits, *We'll Meet Again — The Very Best of Vera Lynn*. Lynn shot to fame with her wartime anthems during World War II, notably *We'll meet again* and *The white cliffs of Dover*. And she consolidated her status as 'Forces' Sweetheart' with her wartime BBC radio show, *Sincerely*



*Yours*, where she would read messages to British troops from their families and perform the songs they requested. Lynn returned to the charts at the end of August. "There are a lot of people who adore her and have one or two songs by her; now they want to own it all," explains popular British broadcaster Paul Gambaccini to Associated Press. "This is what I call tapping a reservoir of love." That love ran deep enough for Lynn to conquer the charts, beating out youth favourite Arctic Monkeys and re-releases from icons like The Beatles and Michael Jackson.





»WILD SILVER

## Ageing stags

British painter Sir Edward Landseer immortalised them in his portrait *Monarch of the Glen*, where they stood proud, resplendent, untouchable. But a new study of wild red deer on the Isle of Rum in Scotland has shown that they are extremely vulnerable to the ageing process, which for them is dramatic and sudden. Scientists at Edinburgh University studied a thousand of the species and discovered that while males showed the first signs of ageing later than females, their decline was much faster. Data taken from the past 40 years showed that after about the age of 10, stags became less likely to father calves. However, the female

hinds, who showed signs of ageing from about nine years old, could go on calving into their late teens.

“Recent research suggests that wild animals show signs of deterioration in old age, just like animals in captivity and humans, but this is the first study to look in detail at the impact of ageing on breeding in wild mammals,” study leader Dr Dan Nussey tells the BBC. “Not only are there big differences between males and females, but the signs of ageing emerge at different times. More work is required to understand what is driving these differences.” The study is published in the August issue of journal *American Naturalist*.

## Of sheep, and stress

STRESS DOES SPEED UP THE AGEING PROCESS—just ask sheep. A 20-year study has revealed that **the sheep who had suffered the most stress aged faster**. Researchers at Edinburgh University found that Soay sheep, natives of the Scottish island of St Kilda where winters are extremely harsh, were more vulnerable to illness in later life than sheep living in more temperate climes. “As we get older, our health tends to decline but, in addition to this, environmental factors make us age,” Adam Hayward of the university's School of Biological Science, says in a media release. “In the case of the Soay sheep, exposure to stress may have weakened their immune system. As sheep live long lives like humans, this gives us a keen insight into human ageing too.”



# 34%

ONLY CYPRUS, LATVIA AND ESTONIA HAVE A WORSE RECORD THAN BRITAIN WHEN IT COMES TO POVERTY AMONG PENSIONERS, ACCORDING TO STATISTICS FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. THE RESEARCH SOUGHT TO EXAMINE WHAT PROPORTION OF PEOPLE OVER 65 LIVE ON INCOMES BELOW 60 PER CENT OF THE NATIONAL AVERAGE—IN BRITAIN, IT WAS 34 PER CENT. THE REASONS: “ROCKETING FOOD AND FUEL PRICES”.

O»LOVE THAT

## WOMAN AT WORK

Like every silver, Astrid Thoenig spent much of her 100th birthday on 24 September, opening birthday cards and receiving flowers. The only difference: she was at work! **For more than 30 years, the newly minted centenarian has been the receptionist at Thornton Insurance** in Parsippany, New Jersey. Working alongside her 67 year-old son John Thornton, and 43 year-old grandson Peter, at the family-owned company, she answers phones, keeps financial records, handles payroll and types up documents. "My birthday is just another day," she tells Associated Press. "I don't feel old, and I don't think old." Born in Bloomfield, New Jersey, this daughter of Swedish immigrants began working shortly after high school and held secretarial positions at banks, lawyer's offices and local government bodies until her retirement at the age of 65. "My grandson got me back to work," says Thoenig, who has been married—and widowed—twice, and used to drive until the age of 98, when she underwent a hip operation. "I credit my wonderful family and my strong constitution for my sharp mind. Indeed, thinking young has helped me take a century's worth of technological changes in stride!"



## h recommends



### DO THAT DIET

Overweight? Don't put off that weight loss programme any longer. New research by the University of Warwick in the UK and Harvard School of Public Health bolsters the view that losing weight and keeping it off helps you stay healthy. According to the study, which analysed data from over 120,000 women, those with a body-mass index (BMI) higher than 25 were 79 per cent more likely to develop a chronic disease as they aged compared to women with a BMI of between 18.5 and 22.9. "This is fresh evidence that adiposity [carrying excess body fat] at mid-life is a strong risk factor predicting a worse probability of successful survival among older women," writes Professor Oscar Franco of University of Warwick in the *British Medical Journal*. "In addition, our data suggests that maintenance of healthy weight throughout adulthood may be vital to optimal overall health at older ages."

## OVERHEARD

"In 20 years, we will have the means to re-programme our bodies' software so we can halt, then reverse, ageing. Nanotechnology will let us live forever. Nanobots will do the work of blood cells thousands of times more effectively. Within 25 years we will be able to go scuba-diving for



four hours without oxygen. Heart-attack victims will drive down to the doctor for a minor surgery as their blood bots keep them alive. Our mental capacity will enable us to write books within minutes. If we want to go into virtual-reality, nanobots will shut down brain signals and take us wherever we want to go. Virtual sex will be commonplace. In our daily lives, hologram-like figures will pop in our brain to explain what is happening."

**Ray Kurzweil, 61,**  
American scientist and futurist  
in The Telegraph



O»H PEOPLE

# The rainmaker

While the monsoon played truant in most parts of the country, the showers were coaxed out from hiding in 60 villages in Maharashtra by a determined 63 year-old. In August this year, retired professor and former Marxist activist **Dr Raja Marathe** introduced the 'cloud-seeding' method to induce rains in villages near Nanded. Pune-based Marathe, who holds a doctorate in electrical engineering from RICE University, USA, had read about the method in a book authored by Professor Shivaji Rao from Andhra Pradesh. In June, he approached the Maharashtra government with the idea. However, when confronted by bureaucratic morass, he decided to conduct a cloud-seeding experiment on his own. He lit a huge bonfire on the outskirts of Sujlegaon near Nanded using firewood and salt. On coming in contact with the clouds, the resulting smoke triggered a chemical reaction that induced heavy rains.

Recognising the threat of deforestation, Marathe has now replaced wood with discarded rubber tyres and is exploring more eco-friendly methods. "The disadvantages of burning rubber are clearly outweighed by the sheer economic ramifications owing to lack of rain," he insists. The diligent silver now plans to convince private firms to invest in cloud-seeding projects; set up a weather modification centre in Marathwada; and explore the use of remote-controlled aircraft to implement cloud-seeding.

Kirti Surve Parade/People

## BIRTHDAYS

- Actor **Julie Andrews**—best known for her role in *The Sound of Music*—turned 74 on 1 October
- Russian prime minister **Vladimir Putin** turned 57 on 7 October
- Indian screen diva **Rekha** turned 55 on 10 October
- Indian superstar **Amitabh Bachchan** turned 67 on 11 October
- Actor **Hema Malini** turned 61 on 22 October

## IN PASSING

Former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh **Y S Reddy** passed away on 2 September in a helicopter crash on Rudrakonda Hills in Kurnool. He was 60.

American agronomist and Nobel Laureate **Norman Borlaugh**, acclaimed for developing disease-resistant varieties of wheat, died of lymphoma in Dallas on 12 September. He was 95.

American actor **Patrick Swayze**, who shot to fame with his romantic roles in *Dirty Dancing* and *Ghost*, died of pancreatic cancer on 14 September. He was 57.

## MILESTONES

**Awarded.** The Nobel Prize in Chemistry to US-based Indian biochemist **Ramakrishnan Venkatraman**, 57, who mapped the structure of ribosome.

**Awarded.** The Nobel Prize in Literature to 56 year-old German novelist **Herta Mueller**, who is noted for her writings on alienation, freedom of speech and dictatorship.



## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

THIS IS THE PLACE TO DO IT. REACH OUT TO FELLOW READERS WITH INTERESTING ANECDOTES, INSPIRING STORIES AND HEARTWARMING MOMENTS FROM YOUR LIFE. WRITE IN WITH FULL CONTACT DETAILS, AND MAKE THIS SPACE YOUR OWN.

## DOLLS AND DETERMINATION

My mother Ratan Bharaktiya is 89 years old and lives in Bengaluru. She moved there with my father when he joined Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd in 1943. A hardworking and devoted homemaker, she spent her entire life taking care of my father and my four siblings, and made sure all her children received a good education. Even today, she wakes up at 4 am and performs her puja till 8 am. Her daily routine includes preparing her meals and washing clothes.

She has no formal education but reads Hindi and Prakrit Jainism scriptures daily. Being a traditional Rajasthani lady, she has always practiced all native rituals. One such ritual is Gangaur, in which clay idols of Shiva and Parvati are decorated and worshipped. Though it was just an annual ritual for her, after my father's death in 1988, when she was left with a huge vacuum in her life, she took it more seriously as a hobby. Since 1990, she has been creating the dolls in papier-mâché using old news-

paper. She soaks the newspaper in water overnight and then grinds it to a pulp on a grinding stone along with fenugreek, which serves as a binder. Then she creates a wire structure on a 9-inch wooden stick, shapes the pulp into an idol around the stick and



Karnawat's mother Ratan Bharaktiya with her dolls

leaves it to dry. After coating the idols with a fine paste of *multani mitti*, she sews clothes for them using leftover scraps of cloth and jewellery from beads and old *rakhi*. For the past two decades, I have watched her make these idols with characteristic patience and dedication. Over the years, she has also diversified into making dolls of policemen, other gods and goddesses, and mythological characters. Till now, she has created over 300 dolls of various sizes and gifted them to our relatives and friends.

Two months ago, she had an acute bout of pneumonia and had to be hospitalised. She struggled for two weeks in the intensive care unit supported by a ventilator. I am proud and happy that even though the illness made her frail and fragile, it did nothing to her spirit. She put up a gritty fight and was back on her feet within a month. Now, when I watch her making her dolls, I am filled with joy and renewed respect for her creative energy. I salute my mother for her zest for life and for showing me that life with all its ups and downs blesses us with many little joys along the way. It's up to us claim them.

—Aruna Karnawat, Jaipur

## MEMORIES OF COMPASSION

Mother Teresa said that we cannot do great things but only small things with great love. I have started with a quote from the great lady, as her sayings have immense relevance to the story I share with you.

It happened during the mass exodus of 1947. During the riots that ensued, people had to flee their homes empty-handed. My family too was the victim of this catastrophe. My father, who had a flourishing business, became

destitute overnight. Like millions of others, we were left homeless and impoverished. We crossed the newly demarcated border of Pakistan into Indian territory, via Ganganagar and from thereon to Abhor Mandi. Abhor is a huge grain and cotton marketing centre. Puran Chand, a grain merchant and philanthropist who lived in Abhor Mandi, had a unique way of providing food to the refugees. Every day, in the morning and evening, he used to boil *moong* (green gram) and *urad* (black gram) respectively in two large woks. I still remember the long queue of refugees eagerly waiting to receive a bowl of whole-



### Baweja savours life's every moment

some gram. We spent a week in Abhor and then moved to Delhi and then Varanasi. Time flew by and my family finally found its footing to resume a well-settled life.

In 1965, I was posted to Punjab as assistant regional manager for the Cotton Corporation of India. I was struck by a strong desire and curiosity to visit the places we had lived as refugees. Guided by an agent, I reached Puran Chand's shop. I recounted the story to my agent and told him that I wanted to pay obeisance to the person who had fed my family. Imagine my surprise when the agent told me Puran Chand was his grandfather! He had passed away, but I saw his photograph inside the shop. I garlanded his portrait and prayed to the Almighty to bestow peace upon the wonderful soul. The agent told me his family ran a charitable trust which, even today, distributes 20 kg of boiled black gram to the needy every day.

Many people might view Puran Chand's gesture as a small act of compassion. But the kindness bestowed by this man provided immeasurable hope and sustenance to thousands of hungry, displaced people. We don't have to move mountains; even small acts of everyday kindness can make a big difference to the world we live in.

—L K Baweja, Mumbai

## ROAD TO FREEDOM

When I received an email from my son, a student of VIT University in Vellore, asking me to spend some time with him, I thought of doing the trip by car instead of taking a flight from Delhi. My closest friend, Surendra Gupta—my dear 'Surli'—who is equally fond of adventure decided to join me. We had been together on treks, camping trips and cycling jaunts before. Surli took time off from his company where he worked as the administration head, while I took a break from my business. We spruced up my Maruti 800 and began our journey on 17 August 2009. Our plan was to go all the way down to Kanyakumari along the eastern ghat and drive back

along the western ghat. We reached Kanyakumari on 27 August via Udaipur, Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Mumbai, Pune, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Hubli, Bengaluru, Vellore, Chennai, Villupuram, Perambalur, Tiruchirappalli, Dindigul, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.

As Surli and I are equally fond of driving, we took turns at the wheel. It was a fantastic experience driving through our wonderful country and seeing the changing landscape, people, dialects, lifestyles—first hand. When we did not get accommodation at hotels, we drove through the night or slept in the car. It was a different kind of pleasure; roughing it out and living life at our own pace. We were amazed at the well-maintained network of highways: wide, free of local traffic and equipped with adequate road signs and reflectors. We stopped at the Nathdwara temple near Udaipur; soaked in the lush greens of Kerala; stopped to take pictures of Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in Maharashtra; savoured fresh *lassi* in Gujarat; gobbled piping hot *vada* from a roadside stall in Madurai; and enjoyed long conversations with locals everywhere. In Kanyakumari, we passed through the villages that were devastated by the tsunami. It was a solemn moment that illustrated the fragility of life. On the way back from Kochi we stopped at a shop and asked for directions. The elderly man who sat at the counter



Gupta (left) and Kumar (right) at Kanyakumari

asked us in heavily accented Hindi, "*Tum do budda log Delhi se kaise drive kiya? Driver where?*" [How did you two old men drive from Delhi? Where is your driver?] We laughed at his wonderment.

It would be difficult to say which part of the drive was most enjoyable. After travelling 7,390 km, we were back in Delhi on 6 September. And now Surli, 67, and I, 58, are planning our next adventure. Old men indeed.

—Shantanu Kumar, Delhi



Dr Jane

# Barratt

## Global community:

By 2050, silvers will outnumber children for the first time in history. To reduce inequality is our greatest challenge ever

On 1 October 2009, I had the honour of joining the Harmony family in Mumbai to felicitate the recipients of the third annual Harmony Silver Awards. It was a night of celebration and humility, grace and pride, and a time to reflect on the tremendous contribution of seniors globally. Seniors contribute to the economic, social and cultural livelihood of the world of today and tomorrow.

As a special feature, I would like to present the commemorations of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Older Persons in each region of the world. Starting in New York at the United Nations, the Secretary General said that "amid global crises, it's even more important to treat older persons as agents and beneficiaries of development". Mr Ban Ki-Moon went on to say that the international community is also devoting increasing attention to the human rights of older persons.

"We must put an end to age discrimination, abuse, neglect and violence against older persons." He also urged the states to put the necessary legal protections in place and urged all partners to help countries develop the capacity and institutions to achieve

this objective. Go to [www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sgsm12500.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sgsm12500.doc.htm) for details.

In the Bahamas, Mr Carl Brennen, undersecretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, announced the celebration of October as 'Older Persons' Month'. He said that "not all elderly are frail, sick, or a burden to society. We must continue to harness their wisdom and let them transfer knowledge, values and culture to the younger generation". The Ministry focuses importance on the physical, social and emotional well-being of older persons. The Department of Social Services provides many services for the elderly. A number of older persons without homes are placed in the

various government-operated senior citizens' homes.

A special project in its infancy is the Urban Renewal Liveable Neighbourhoods Programme in Grand Bahamas and New Providence that have effective programmes for seniors, ranging in ages from 60 to 85 years, to participate in activities in their communities during Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. "We are trying to encourage, strengthen and promote the continued mental, emotional, and social growth of our senior citizens, who are delighted that sincere care, concern and assistance are given to them through this programme," Mr Brennen said.





Mr Masouma Ahmad, head of the social services section of primary healthcare in Dubai, says, "We owe a tremendous debt to our seniors and we should look for ways to work together and improve their lives and build a richer and fairer world."

Mr Ahmad said that the UAE would initiate programmes focusing on the importance of providing care to the elderly in our society and cover various aspects of their health, including their social and psychological well-being. The health programme will include visits to the elderly community centre at Dubai and Rashid Hospitals. It will also provide scientific lectures on geriatric care that will help increase awareness about the implications of population ageing as well as help people understand the role that a community has to play to ensure its elderly are taken care of. Participants will be updated with information about health problems that the elderly face and ways to cope with them, as well as highlight the latest demographic changes and projections for the fast-growing elderly population.

In Australia, chief executive officer Mr Greg Mundy of the peak-aged care organisation Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) said that Australia is gradually recognising the invaluable contribution of older members of the community. This year also marks a turning point in the industry with the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission's recommendations in the aged care sector becoming a significant step towards rehabilitation, vital care and support services for older Australians.

The Federal Government is committed to addressing the shortfalls in aged care, including inadequate funding across residential and community care services, a system that is unable to meet the diverse and compelling needs of older people, and onerous, often punitive, regulations governing the supply of services. ACSA has called on formal mechanisms to pro-

tect rights rather than a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities for Community Care announced by the Minister for Ageing. At the same time, it is heartened with the government paying attention to the needs of so many people who have made Australia what it is today.

In Turkey, chairman Mr Mete Bora and the board of directors of the Turyak Seniors Council Association in Istanbul demonstrated vision, leadership and commitment to caring for seniors and held the country's first international congress honouring 39 senior citizens from across the globe—each honoured elder delivered a paper on the theme 'Bridging the Cultural Gap'. At the closing session, the following framework was announced for bridge-building policies:

- Education in family and in school carries the largest share in building positive attitudes and behaviour starting from early years in life.
- Dialogue among different religions based on a shared ground of ethical principles will play its part.
- Artistic and literary exchanges enable us to reach higher values and peace.
- Positive results in social, scientific and ecological policies throughout the globe should be shared on a regular basis in the global media.
- Business outputs should integrate social and cultural returns with indirect economic gains.
- A common understanding of coexistence means working with 'positive attitudes' and creating 'dialogues' among all cultures that provide examples to choose from best practices, while individuals keep developing their own identity.

The tenets for bridging societies and cultures are:

- Cultural variety is an asset of hu-

manity for ensuring peace among and within societies.

- Long-lived religious values acknowledge the right of cultures and of people to coexist and prosper together.
- A person's right to dignity should be the only criteria when treating people. The keys for it are mutual understanding, respect, and justice.
- We will not generalise and stereotype, but start voluntary bridges starting first from within us.

In Cameroon, Minister of Social Affairs Bakang Mbock Catherine noted that in today's world there is a growing need to fit into society. Elderly persons, by virtue of their age, potential and experience, remain a great asset. Speaking in Bafoussam, the minister was officially launching the 19th edition of the International Day of Older Persons billed for 1 October. The minister said that the elderly, with their tapped and untapped energies, deserve strong motivations and adequate care, as requested by the UN. In Cameroon, the promotion and protection of the well-being of older persons is a major concern and head of state Mr Paul Biya has made it a priority to look after their social well-being. When President Biya addressed elderly persons in Maroua in 1987 he declared, "You are the reference of our nation, we count on your wisdom, on your experience; I am asking you to mobilise our youth and inculcate into them from tender age the fundamental morals values of our culture."

In India, Harmony for Silvers Foundation continues to demonstrate vision and leadership in its plans and programmes to encourage seniors to remain central to the growth, wealth and well-being of the community and society globally.

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

# Silver hymns

John and Faith Singh believe their pension scheme for folk musicians in Rajasthan will help preserve the state's cultural legacy, reports **Nitika Bajpayee**

**T**he beats of classical fusion and a strong pak-hawaj flavour emanate from an open *shamiana*-like setting. A select audience is devouring folk music on a nippy evening in Jaipur. For some listeners, especially foreigners, it's vintage Rajasthan—a culturally rich state where folk music is as old as the dry desert air; and these artists are keeping its lyrical soul alive. After the performance, when the motley group of artistes disperses, casual conversation reveals that life isn't easy for them. In fact, this legacy may be only a heartbeat away from fading into the sands of time. While some are in near penury, others are ailing, and almost all are elderly with little to live on.

Faith and John Singh are determined to offer these silver folk artists a safety net. Since 2002, the Anglo-Indian couple has been working hard to keep Rajasthan's folk legacy alive while turning it into an economically viable platform for these spirited performers. Seven years ago, 62-year-old Faith and John, 68, established the Jaipur Virasat Foundation (JVF), a not-for-profit organisation, which tries to offer elderly performers a new lease on life by modernising their skills through cultural festivals and concerts.

The foundation has promoted an array of performing arts—dances such as Kalbeliya, Ghair, Ghoomar, Gauri, Raika, Jhoria, Terah Taali, Chair and



**Saviours of folk music: Faith and John Singh**

Matka-Bhawai; Kathputli; puppet shows; and songs with instruments like the ghara, kamyacha, algoza, marchang, khadtal, murla, surnai, tandura, surinda, sitara and bhapang. The Jaipur Heritage International Festival, organised in January every year, is the premier event of the trust, whose founder trustees include Maharaja of Jodhpur Gaj Singh, educationist Ashok Agrawal, businessmen Basant Khetan, Vikram Lal Singh and Mahavir Sharma, and publisher of *Seminar* magazine Malvika Singh. Prince Charles is an international patron of the trust.

A 10-day, multi-venue event weaving together the talent of hundreds of craftsmen and performers, the festival is just one among a series of *mela* spearheaded by the JVF. Other programmes include the Jaipur Literature Festival (January), Rajasthan Day celebrations, Rajasthan International Folk Festival (October) in Jodhpur, and annual regional folk festivals held in five cultural zones: Shekhawati, Hadoti, Brij, Mewat and Marwar.

"Once these performers are done with their act, nobody cares about the hardships they face, especially

## To restore the dignity of old folk artists who literally hold the legacy of Rajasthan in their hands, the Jaipur Virasat Foundation has begun a pension scheme

with advancing age,” rues John, who says he will never forget the first time he experienced the music of some of Rajasthan’s great performers. “Why should we think of an artist only when he is performing?” Folk artists who were ‘stars’ in their prime are now marginalised as they are unable to travel long distances to perform. To restore a sense of dignity to these artists who quite literally hold the legacy of Rajasthan in their hands, the JVF has begun a pension scheme.

Started in 2007, the scheme currently recognises the contribution of six silver folk musicians by offering them a pension of Rs 2,000 per month. The foundation short-listed six artists from different genres to receive the pension. John is in touch with

3,000-odd Rajasthani folk artists from whom the beneficiaries are selected. Initially, the tenure of the scheme was 48 months but over time the JVF decided to make it a lifelong benefit. The foundation also plans to increase the number of beneficiaries to 10-14, depending on availability of funds.

“We are promoting the *virasat* (legacy) and *vikas* (development) of Rajasthan as they are two sides of the same coin,” says Faith, who believes the only way forward is to modernise the skills of the Rajasthani folk artists. The trustees are currently in the process of chalking out plans. However, this will require more funds and the trust hopes more corporate houses and philanthropists come forward to sponsor their vision.

### A COUPLE OF DREAMS

John Singh headed the Rajasthan Division of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in the late 1960s. In 1970, with his wife Faith, Singh established the traditional apparel brand Anokhi. In fact, Faith Singh also helped revive the art of block-printing in Jaipur. Through Anokhi, the Singhs provided artists an opportunity for employment. Faith and John went on to revive other traditional arts and crafts of Rajasthan, and have given struggling artists a sense of dignity and employment in a fast-changing world. After handing over the reins of Anokhi to their son Pritam and daughter-in-law Rachel in 2001, they began to devote their time to the activities of the Jaipur Virasat Foundation (JVF). John is associated with the programmes run by the trust, while Faith divides her time between JVF and the Radha Swami Ashram in

Beas. Her other concerns include arts and crafts, urban regeneration and heritage management.

The JVF is not confined to any one aspect of Rajasthani art. It also partners with artists who create murals, miniatures, frescos and lime paintings and provides them an opportunity to be economically independent. Thanks to the efforts of the Singhs, a book called *Discovering Jaipur* has been added to the curriculum of schools in Jaipur to expand awareness of Rajasthan’s heritage among the children of the Pink City.

Another initiative by the JVF is the Heritage Walk, which gives tourists and other visitors a chance to explore the historic city of Jaipur. Beginning at 8.30 am every day, the walk takes visitors to places of cultural importance free of cost.

### OLD MASTERS



**Nemi Bhagat**, 100, doesn’t care to count the number of careers he has pursued all his life. The centenarian looks back fondly at life as a wrestler, acrobat and a horseman in wedding processions before he picked up the flute. A resident of Deeg in Bharatpur, Bhagat learnt the algoza flute from his uncle Ram Prasad at the age of 10. Follow the soulful strains of the flute in Deeg and you are likely to find Bhagat seated in a temple in his village there. He has been playing the flute, singing *rasima* and praying for peace for his country ever since he left his family and dedicated his life to his village temple.

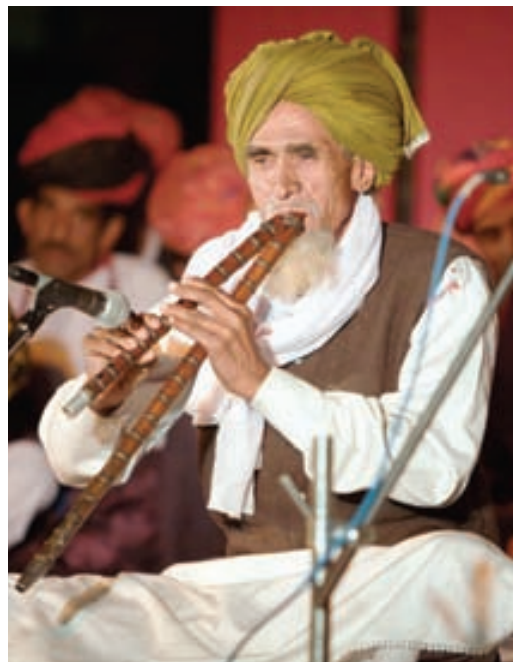
Growing old is not an issue for Bhagat. “*Bahut gayi, thodi reh gayi, ye bhi biti jaye. Taal chuk mat hoiyo kaun daag na lag jaye*” (I have lived enough; I don’t have much time now. I am careful not to commit a mistake as that would outshine all my good deeds.) Talking about his days as a young musician, Bhagat says with a chuckle: “I do not have any formal education. Even my father was not educated, so even I didn’t study. I was very wilful and loved listening to the radio.”





**Padmaram Meghwal**, 80, is the best *bhajan* singer in Badmer, where he lives. He grew up here and learnt to play the tandra (veena) from his guru Sahja Bhai with whom he lived for 10 years. "Music gives me emotional satisfaction and it makes me connect with God," he says. "I mainly sing *bhajan* of Mira, Kabir, Ramdeo, Tulasidas and Sadaram. I somehow believe I am from their clan." Meghwal's performance was applauded by Padmabhushan Koyal Kothari 30 years ago, when he performed at various festivals in India and England. "I am fortunate to have played at so many festivals because Rajasthan is full of artists who don't get a platform to showcase their art." He still does *riyaz* and sings in a temple in his village Guda. On growing older, he says, "With time, my talent has risen to new heights but, yes, ageing does bring its own challenges. I can no longer perform the way I used to, but growing older has not broken my confidence."

**Dhode Khan Fakir**, 75, hails from Badmer district and is a *fakir* by caste. He specialises in the algoza flute. Born in Hyderabad in Pakistan, Fakir has presented algoza recitals across the country. He also won accolades from the government when he staged a recital at Teen Murti Bhavan in New Delhi a few years ago. "I am a *fakir*; my job is to sing and pray for everyone's well-being. I pray for people who are ailing and for anyone who is going through a difficult time. I believe God always listens."



**Karim Khan Langa**, 65, hails from Jaisalmer district and specialises in the surnai, algoza flute and the con-



ventional flute. He learnt the surnai from his guru Inamat Langa and algoza from Murad Khan. Today, Langa is still regarded as the best algoza player in his district. Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Langa has showcased his talent in Russia, England, Paris, Italy, Holland, Korea, Japan and Africa. He has also participated in folk festivals in Rajasthan, New Delhi, Kolkata, Bhopal and other Indian cities. On his professional life, Langa says, "When people notice the culture and art of Rajasthan, it gives me immense satisfaction." He teaches the algoza and surnai to children. "They are the ones who will take our legacy forward."

**Shafi Khan Dadi**, 72, belongs to the Churu district and is an ardent devotee of Ramdeo, folk deity of Rajasthan. He specialises in the tandra and sings *bhajan* of Ramdeo in night *jagaran*. Dadi learnt the tandra from his Guru Chimandas Kamad at the age of 12 and began his singing career at 25. "I sing *shabad vani* of Kabir, Bannanathji, and tell stories of Ramdeo and Mansingh Raja through my *bhajan*." Dadi is a regular at the annual fair of Ramdeo in Rajasthan. "When I sing *bhajan*, I feel the presence of Ramdeo," he says with a smile. "When my father sings, he incorporates instruments like the tandra, chimta, dholak and harmonium," says Dadi's son Chenu. "It sends people into a trance. Such is the magic of his music."



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# Mimlu Sen

## Painting songs:

Sharmila Roy has taken Tagore's cultural heritage to the whole wide world

**G**rave and grandiose in her singing but fun-loving, discreet and ethereal in real life, Sharmila Roy is perhaps the most distinguished and complete artist of our generation. She paints with feelings; her images are figurative, culled from the most intimate areas of emotion. Her colours are bright and vivid, joyous and mellow, a play of graphic techniques with oil painting. She's not only a painter and graphic artist; she is also a singer whose appeal is universal and who has proved her total liberty of spirit. If her paintings are the oars with which she has manoeuvred her life, her songs are the sails that have set her boat afloat in the great waters of humanity itself. Singing and painting have always been yoked together in her life; she's always sung as she painted and painted as she sang. The role of this marvellous woman in taking the cultural heritage of Tagore to the whole wide world has not yet fully been recognised.

An autumn day in Paris. I hurry to my rendezvous with Sharmila at her home, take the suburban train in the direction of Boissy St Leger and get off at Creteil St Maur. The first thing that catches my nomad's eye is a signboard marked 'Musique' over a shop selling musical instruments, indicating that I am now on a fabulous journey, following the meticulous directions she has indicated to me gently on the phone, my soul sister.

I cross a bridge over the river Marne, waters glinting and radiating light. I can't explain this feeling of urgency as I head down the middle road and into the Passage de l'Esperance, the Passage of Hope, towards Sharmila. Quite appropriately too, the building is called Le Halage, a many-layered word: hauling and breathing. Yes, my soul sister surely. Each of us named by our loving and aspiring parents after the heroines of a lesser-known novel of Rabindranath Tagore: *Dui Bon*. Two Sisters. Sharmila and Urmimala, our destinies linked to each other by invisible common threads of literature and life.

We both admit to each other over a cup of Darjeeling tea that our resemblance to the novel ends there. Our lives are different from each other. Over the three odd decades of living in the same city, we've known each other from a distance but always with a terrific and unspoken sense of complicity. She hands me a catalogue and a booklet at my insistence. I'm impatient for the world to recognise this woman's talent and here she is, like a pearl in her oyster, loath to be removed from her ordered, solitary existence with the river Marne swishing by her side and the chestnut trees turning red and brown. She consoles me playfully with a wonderful *mung dal* with a point of *ghee* that tastes of a Vaishnava kitchen from deep in a Bengal village and *saag* and bean and carrots cooked Kerala-style, a curry with tomatoes and yoghurt and a largish helping of rice. I calm down. We are truly two sisters and our origins are from two worlds. I'm from the blue

hills and she's from the red plains. She accepts my explanation gravely.

I derive information from her as she puts away her dishes shooing me off from the kitchen as I offer help. She speaks of her role in Tagore's novel *Gora* and sorrows a little over how his songs have been reduced to becoming a by-product of a certain avid urban culture. Of an album she's produced recently, *Gan O Jibon*, dedicated to all cancer survivors. She reiterates the idea of art as a social tool. We discuss certain themes raised by Tagore, crucial to our understanding of the world today. Of patriotism as opposed to nationalism. Of internationalism and of the notion of personal religion. We discuss gender issues. She is an artist who embodies an attitude, a posture in life.

In my simple and insignificant way, she murmurs. But her feats are far from simple and insignificant. Her web stretches from Turkey where she's sung the poetry of Nazim Hikmet who died in exile, and has worked with Kudzi Erguner, the great player of the ney. In 1982, she collaborated with Peter Brook on his play *Mahabharata* and later, in 1989, participated in the film—her Vedic hymns enthralled the world. Sharmila sang in a Byzantine church in Topkapi to the kamantcheh of the late Mahmoud Tabrizi Zadeh—her Sufi soul began to find its purest expression. This depth of soul we re-discovered when she collaborated on the soundtrack of *Bab'Aziz* by Nacer Khemir, based on a Bengali translation of the poetry of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. Here, she was accompanied



by the Armenian kamantcheh and the song of Salar Aghili and by John Boswell on percussion. She also recently collaborated with Jean Saspotes, the star dancer of the late Pina Bausch; sang on an album of the iconic French singer Juliette Greco; and is now working on an album of songs of Jacques Prevert and Emily Dickinson. In the past, she has produced and directed Tagore's dance dramas, *Chandalika* and *Rakta Karabi*. And sung a collection of modern compositions by such poets as Sunil Gangopadhyay, Bishnu Dey, Shamshur Rahman and others.

Sharmila is literally a giant.

She studied in Patha Bhavan, the experimental school established by Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan, between 1955 and 1965. Her classmate, Shivaditya Sen, recalls in an essay titled *Alor Pyashi Shey Je* (thirsty for light is she) that she was the daughter of Kshitish Roy, writer and prolific translator of Tagore's poetry into English, and Uma Devi, a brilliant exponent of Tagore's songs and a theatre person. He remembers her leaving all her classmates behind in her search of new horizons, unknown cadences, fresh insights. Photographs of her parents and sisters, and her daughters surround us. They are also the subjects of her expressionist paintings. She lives in the intimacy of delicate, fugitive memories.

Even as a child she could sing from the *Upanishads* with equal facility as from the songs of Lallan Fakir, take inspiration for her paintings from Nandalal Bose and Jamini Roy but also Picasso and Matisse. Her activities were prolific. She started a nature club and a reading group around the famous *Sandesh*, one of the most popular children's magazines in vernacular Bengali. After school, she graduated in English literature from Lady Brabourne College in Kolkata in 1968. Her musical training, which began in Patha Bhavan, continued with Suchitra Mitra. She then returned to Santiniketan to join Kala Bhavan, the

art faculty formed by Nandalal Bose, where she studied drawing, painting and art history and specialised in graphic arts as a national scholar between 1968 and 1975 under the guidance of Somnath Hore.




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**If her paintings are the oars with which she has manoeuvred her life, her songs are the sails that have set her boat afloat in the waters of humanity. She's always sung as she painted and painted as she sang**

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Shivaditya Sen remembers her being deeply influenced by the humanistic approach of Hore and the presence of the great sculptor from the grass-roots of Bankura, Ramkinkar Baij. He recalls the soft eastern light in the studios at Kala Bhavan, the grating of the etching tools on the lithographs and Sharmila's glorious voice lifted in song, generating an energy that she finally processed into becoming the multiple-faceted gem she is today. Sharmila obtained a French government scholarship to study the art of etching and viscosity printing with S W Hayter and Krishna Reddy from 1975 to 1979 at the Atelier 17 and went on to do her doctoral studies

in the history of art at the Sorbonne, Paris III. She taught fine arts and art history at the Sorbonne Paris XII from 1992 to 2000.

I first met Sharmila in Krishna Reddy's atelier in Vanves in 1976. She was discreet, sympathetic, a good listener to tales of my travels below the bottom line. Then, when she sang, I was moved to my bones, struck by lightning. I sobbed my way to sleep that night. The song she had sung was from Satyajit Ray's film *Jana Aranya* in 1975. *Chaya ghonaiche bone bone...* shadows deepen in the woods. I'd heard my mother sing that song so often in our mountain home in Shillong as the pine trees rubbed against each other in a colossal roar.

Why did Sharmila's music have such a deep impact upon me?

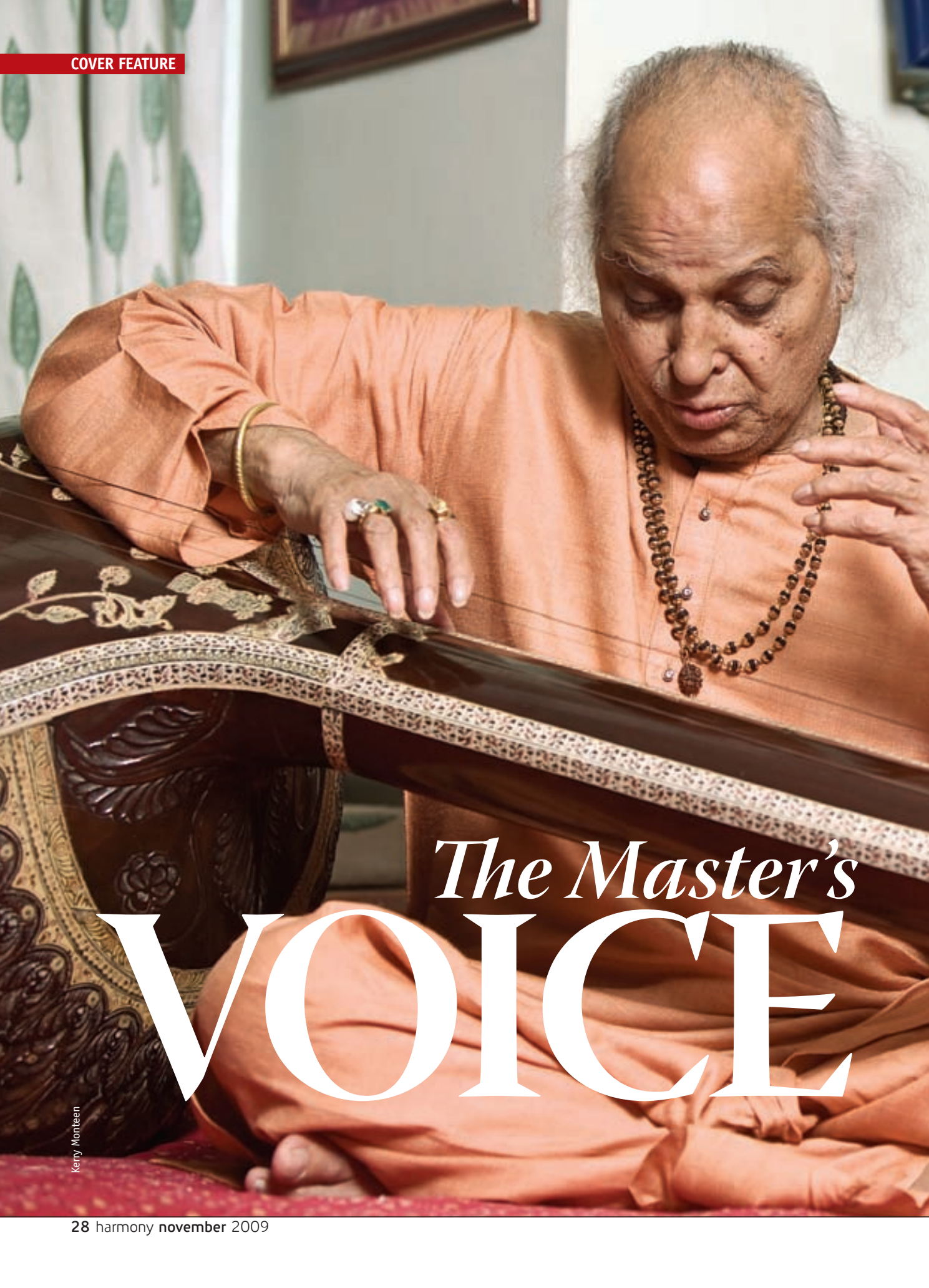
Looking back, I realise she is what I'm made of, that I'd literally soaked in the songs of Tagore, just an embryo floating in amniotic waters in my mother's womb, for she, like most Bengali women of genteel families, devoted many hours of the day to singing Rabindranath Tagore. My father mocked her and the company she kept. His roots were in a farmer's culture and he distrusted this 'other' urban Bengali culture that developed around Tagore. I must say that I'd inherited some of my father's scepticism. I abhorred the mass production of demure ladies who pumped daintily on harmoniums and sang Tagore's songs while disaster befell our land and its people. I really preferred to listen to the real stuff, folk songs and *kirtan*, or classical Indian music from the north and south. The contemporary rendition of Tagore's music had always seemed to me a sort of pale imitation of all these musical forms, callow and superficial, overproduced.

Till I met and heard Sharmila.

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*Mimlu Sen is an author, musician, and translator. She lives in Paris*

COVER FEATURE



# *The Master's* VOICE

Kerry Monteen



Two months ago, Pandit Jasraj sang to packed houses in New Jersey. In October, he mesmerised audiences in San Francisco. Now he is on his way to perform in New York, and then again in New Jersey. Clearly, the world can't get enough of his voice, which is only growing richer with time. **Rajashree Balaram** meets the 79 year-old Hindustani classical maestro who thinks music is just another word for prayer

First things first. Pandit Jasraj is allergic to perfume. As we walk into his four-bedroom flat in Versova in suburban Mumbai on a rainy September morning, he greets us abruptly: "Keep your distance if you are wearing perfume. It affects my voice." The instruction would have sounded terse coming from anyone else. But uttered by Panditji—seated at his dining table, wearing a short-sleeved white muslin *kurta*, his eyes sleep-deprived and his fuzzy white hair casting a dishevelled halo—it sounds anything but curt, especially when he flashes his roguish smile. His voice is gentle even as he admonishes his young household help when she hurriedly takes away his cup of unfinished coffee. Minutes later, he thanks her profusely when she warms up his third large cuppa. He throws a minor tantrum when we ask him to change into formal clothes for photographs. And later indulges us by changing into not one, but three outfits for an elaborate photoshoot on his terrace through an insistent drizzle.

The contradictions in his demeanour are enchanting, but what holds you spellbound is his voice. As he does his *riyaz* (practice) in his bedroom, strumming on the tanpura gifted to him by his father-in-law, filmmaker V Shantaram, you feel strangely privileged, almost grateful, to be standing in close proximity to this voice, one renowned for its ability to rise and fall effortlessly over all three-and-a-half octaves. The reverberations fill the room and you begin to understand why the world puts the man on a pedestal—Padmabhushan, Padmavibhusan and Sangeet Natak Akademi plaque on his walls; a scholarship instituted in his name by the University of Toronto; an auditorium in New York named after him; and the venerable title of Sangeet Martand (musical wizard) among many, many others.

Panditji wears the accolades like a cherished cloak around him. At 79, he is still discovering new facets to his voice. Last year, he made his foray into Hindi cinema with director Vikram Bhatt's horror flick *1920*, for which he sang for the promotional video. "It was a fresh, exciting experience," he says. Indeed, his zest for life is touching and his views on music and musicians passionate. Both leave an impact that's as indelible as his voice.

#### IN HIS WORDS

**The first time I realised that I wanted to become a singer was when I heard Begum Akhtar.** There was a small tea shop where they played Begum's songs on the gramophone, very close to our house in Pili Mandori, a small village in Haryana. "*Deewana banana ho to deewana bana de, varna kahin taqdeer tamasha na bana de*". I was so enamoured with Begum that I used to often skip school and loiter around the shop to hear her. It was her marvellous voice that first introduced me to the full force and power of music. I knew then, almost instinctively, that that is what I wanted to do with the rest of my life: sing. Years later, when Begum attended my performance in Pune, I was trembling with trepidation. When I finished, she walked over to me and said "If I had been younger, I would have loved to learn singing from you." Life couldn't have been more benevolent to me.

**Everything I am today, I owe to my brother Pandit Maniram, who was my guru.** My father Pandit Motiram, who was designated as the state musician by the last Nizam of Hyderabad, died when I was four. My brother trained me. We are the fourth generation of singers from the Mewati *gharana* that has its origins in Mewat in Rajasthan. My brother and I often performed for royalty. The Maharaja of Sanand in Gujarat, Jaywant Singh Waghela, was an ardent connoisseur of music and one of our chief patrons. In fact, I have learnt a lot about the intricacies of music from Jaywant Singhji.

**I used to accompany my brother on concerts as a tabla artist.** Later I gravitated to singing. I remember waking up at daybreak and putting in 14 hours of *riyaz* every day. My passion for music also has a lot to do with where I come from. People rarely associate Haryana with art and culture but I would like to tell you that the state has 42 villages named after raga.

**I have been a music teacher for a large part of my life.** In 1947, after Independence, when a lot of princely states merged, it was difficult to sustain royal patronage. In the resulting upheaval my brother and I moved to Kolkata. My brother set up a small school, Sangeet



Shyamala, where I was appointed music teacher. Sometimes I used to get a few assignments with All India Radio for which I was paid Rs 40. My first public performance was at a musical conference in Nepal. I was 22 years old. I was part of a large delegation from India comprising dancers and instrumental artists. The conference cemented my status as a classical vocalist. The king of Nepal, Tribhuvan Vikram, felicitated me after my performance.

**Some of the most humbling moments of my life were also the proudest.** In 1963, I sang at the Radio Sangeet Sammelan, a musical conference that was a luminous gathering of the best talent from India and Pakistan. When I was singing on stage, the great Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, as was his habit, was prowling in the audience. It was a bit unnerving for me. After I had sung for about an hour, he came up stage and hugged me. His booming “*Shabbash*” still rings in my ears.



**The best compliment I have received in my life was from Pandit Bhimsen Joshi.** He once told me, “Jasraj, when I look behind and see you following me I feel immensely happy and at peace.” To me, he is the greatest singer that we have today. Apart from him, I have always admired Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ali Akbar Khan and Pandit Omkarnath Thakur. I consider myself fortunate that I had the opportunity to listen to their voices and be part of the same era. Another singer I admire is Lata Mangeshkar. Once while taking a nap in the afternoon, I woke up with tears streaming down my cheeks. When I heard the song playing on the radio, I finally figured out the reason behind my intense emotional reaction—Lataji was singing *Prabhutero naam....*

**The great M S Subbalakshmi [Carnatic vocalist] once said, “God resides in Jasraj’s voice.”** That compliment will always stay close to my heart. I associate everything that is holy and divine with singing. It goes back to the time when I was 14 and my brother had lost his voice briefly. Maharaja Jaywant Singh Waghela had invited us over

to his estate in Sanand. When he realised that my brother could not sing, he took us to the Kali temple in his palace. He went inside the sanctum sanctorum and shut the door. After some time, he came out and told us that my brother would be able to sing only if he sang for the gods. That night, my brother sang from 12 midnight to six in the morning. After that episode, I have been a lifelong *bhakt* (devotee) of Kali. Music is my prayer. If I do not invoke the gods, how will I be able to say my prayers?

**Music is the only thing on earth that is truly secular.** It does not speak any one language and yet breaks all barriers. When I perform on stage, I may be accompanied by a Muslim on the tabla, a Sikh on the tanpura and a Brahmin playing the harmonium. But for those few moments while we are performing together on stage, we are not known for our caste or community but only the music we create. We praise, criticise and encourage each other without

bias. Every religion employs music to communicate to the Almighty—whether it is Sufi strains or Christian hymns. There is a rhythm to our ethnic identity that we fail to recognise and respect. Finally it all emanates from the same source: the One up there.

**Music is a blessing that does not merely begin and end with one’s voice or instrument—it is a way of life.** In 1977, I spent a few days at Ali Akbar Khan’s house in New York. Those days were suffused with music. Khansahib’s students used to come over and there would be music all night long. When I woke up in the mornings, I’d find Khansahib washing the dishes, left in the sink by his students. When I offered to help, he would turn me down. I used to be a bit annoyed at his students for being so thoughtless and impolite. But Khansahib would shrug off my concern and say that he enjoyed the musical banter too much to be upset by the menial task that followed it. I realised he had risen above the constraints of ego and fame and had gained the greatest virtue of all: a touching humility that was immensely inspiring.

**With his inspiration and guru elder brother Pandit Motiram (seated)**

**I follow the guru shishya parampara with my disciples.** They live with me and learn from me. I do not charge a paisa for the tuition. Neither personally, nor through my music schools in Pittsburgh, Tampa and New Jersey in the US. All three schools are managed by my disciple Pandita Tripta Mukerjee. I look out for purity and honesty in a person's voice. If it reaches out to me, I am prepared to devote my time and energy to teach that person. In the process, I end up learning a lot from my disciples. Once, Ankita, a little girl who had travelled all the way from Nanded to attend my concert, came backstage and told me to teach her how to sing. I was amused at her audacity. She simply said, "When I heard you sing, I knew that you would be the person to teach me to sing." Her confidence and ability to make her own destiny shook me. Ankita has lived at my house for the past few years, like many disciples before her.

**I get annoyed when people ask me about the level of commitment of today's young generation.** It's almost as if the interviewer expects me to deride them for being frivolous. I think the generation today is intensely committed and passionate about their calling. Today, youngsters have better tools at their disposal. For instance, my brother used to spend long hours teaching me a raga, and I would barely manage to remember 40 per cent of that the next day. Today, my disciples have an iPod that records what I am teaching them. They then go over it again and again through the day and the next day when I meet them, they have mastered it to a greater degree of perfection than I could have at their age. But how can I begrudge them the technological advances that they are surrounded with? As long as technology helps them become better artists, I have no complaints.

**I feel sad that we take our musical gifts so lightly.** At my music schools in the US, I have many students who are foreigners. Though they are all devoted to Indian music, I



Music does not speak any one language and yet breaks all barriers. When I perform on stage, I may be accompanied by a Muslim on the tabla, a Sikh on the tanpura and a Brahmin playing the harmonium. But on stage, we are not known for our caste but only the music we create. Every religion employs music to communicate to the Almighty

have observed that they are unable to pitch their voice through all seven *sur* the way we Indians do—the Africans do it beautifully though. I hope we learn to respect the abundant talent we have in our country. And I am not just referring to budding talent. There are many old singers and musicians who are ignored by the government and struggle to make ends meet. I am trying to reach out to them through the Indian Music Academy that my daughter Durga and I launched in 2006. We have set up scholarships for needy talented youngsters from small towns, and are also trying to help out senior musicians. But I strongly urge the government to set up a pension for senior musicians who may not get a regular income anymore.

**Earlier, like all parents, I too felt that my children should have taken my legacy forward.** But today I am immensely proud of what they have achieved. When they were little we used to sit and sing together. Durga would play the tanpura and Sharang would be on the tabla. Today, Sharang is a respected music composer in his own right and Durga runs a music company that encourages Indian classical music. Durga uses my surname while Sharang prefers to be known as just Sharang Dev. I don't respect one more than the other for the choices they have made. I am proud that my daughter cherishes her father's name, just as I am proud that my son cherishes his individuality. As parents, we rarely realise that for all our unconditional love, sometimes we unfairly expect our children to mirror our lives, our likes, dislikes and lifestyle. I have learnt to accept my children for what they are. Acceptance comes with wisdom and wisdom comes with time.

**Every relationship deepens and strengthens over the years.** Even my marriage has had its share of friction like most. Madura and I have survived through controversies and ups and downs. Of course, we have had our share of fights. We both have a nasty temper. But I admire her for standing up for what she believes in. She is no doormat.



**Music acted as a catalyst to our attraction.** I met Madura in 1954 when I had come from Kolkata to Mumbai for a concert. She is a trained classical singer, so she always appreciated the finer nuances of music. She would come backstage at my concerts and praise me. I still remember the way she would twirl a lock of hair between her fingers—in the charming way that women have—as she spoke to me. I could not muster the nerve to propose to her as she came from such an illustrious background. I was still struggling to make ends meet as a singer at All India Radio and coaching students in Kolkata. Despite her reserved demeanour, she was the one who told her father about me and made the first move. Madura has amazing perseverance and courage. Even today, she is busy doing her own thing and has a mind of our own. Now, she is directing a Marathi film—she has not slowed down at all.

**The process of ageing is challenging; it does not have to be boring.** Why do we let age leach all colour from our lives? For instance, I have always loved wearing silks when I perform and continue to do so. I love the richness and purity that it exudes. And I feel we are influenced by what we wear. I like bright colours—mustard yellow, red and cerulean blue. I don't think there are too many musicians of my age who wear such flamboyant attire for their performance. I also appreciate beauty in all its forms, whether it is a beautiful flower, a painting or a lovely woman—don't let Madura hear that! Seriously, we need to find a way to rejuvenate ourselves. It could be anything that makes us happy.

It's either that or we shrivel up inside. I enjoy playing with the children in my building whenever I get the chance. I let go of all inhibitions and simply set the child in me free.

**I take brisk walks across the length of my house from one room to another.** My daughter Durga often joins me on these walks. It's good fun because we keep sparring and exchanging witty repartee on the way. I cannot stick to a fixed exercise regimen because of all the travelling that I do. When it comes to food, I avoid onions, garlic and oily food. Though I have no blood pressure or sugar complaints, my diet is strictly dictated by the rigours of singing.

**I love everything that keeps the past alive.** I enjoy watching movies like *Veer Zaara* and *Jodha Akbar* that showcase the subtlety and delicacy of a bygone era. I don't go to the theatres anymore. I just rent a DVD; sometimes of course, I end up sleeping in the middle of the movie [chuckles].

**I cannot deny the little aches and pains of growing age.** Sometimes I cannot hold my breath for as long as I could earlier, though I can still put up a marathon performance for six hours. When I do my *riyaaz*, I have the habit of laying out a sequence of playing cards before me. If I hit a point where I am unable to get my *sur* right, I keep changing the order of the cards and continue singing, and somehow, strangely, I manage to overcome the difficult spell. I know it's eccentric. But what's life if we do not have our little mysteries?





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FOOTSTEPS

# Daddy's Girl

Kerry Monteen

Durga Jasraj did not follow the path taken by Hindustani maestro Pandit Jasraj. Instead she followed her heart and made her father proud, reports **Rajashree Balaram**

**I confess I have shamelessly taken liberties with my surname [laughs].** For instance, when I was a child, my father's disciples treated me like a princess. My mother always insisted I take the school bus. But I had a tendency to linger at the breakfast table and often ended up missing the bus. As I waited outside my house with a forlorn expression, invariably one of my father's disciples would drop me at school in a taxi without my mother's knowledge. Even at school, my teachers, who were my father's fans, used to treat me with kid gloves.

**Though Bapu had a whirlwind schedule, he always made up for the lack of time and attention.** When he was home, our house resembled a playground. He, my brother and I would play chess, badminton and cricket all day.

**He treated his disciples and me with the same stern discipline.** Whenever we performed at a concert, I was not offered any special treatment. In fact, I think he was more generous to his disciples. If I slipped up even once while playing the tanpura, he would throw me a disapproving look.

**By the time I was in my teens, I could pinpoint the rare instances when my father faltered in his performance.** He had instilled a keen understanding of music in me. I could identify the minutest error. When I could identify the flaws in the performance of a maestro like Pandit Jasraj, imagine how unforgiving I would have been towards my own output! I ended up comparing my voice to my father's and always found it wanting. I expected too much from myself too soon.

**I don't feel upset or hurt when the media makes unkind comparisons between me and my father.** Children of all great artists are expected to take the legacy forward. However, having grown up in a family where excellence

is the norm, I was not prepared to be an average classical singer. When I realised my voice was not as perfect as I wanted it to be, I gave up my pursuit.

**Though it was marvellous watching him perform, I wanted to forge my own identity.** I used to accompany my father to all his concerts. One day, when I was going through a bad phase in my life—owing to my divorce—I simply told him I did not want to accompany him on his international tour; I just needed time to think my way ahead. Bapu did not utter a single word of protest. I think he understood what I was trying to tell him.

**He has never imposed his choices on me or my brother Sharang.** We have always had the freedom to follow our heart. So when I stopped being part of his troupe, he did not question me. Nor did he question me later when I took up modelling or hosted the musical programme *Close-up Antakshari*.

**My greatest moment was when he complimented me on stage.** I founded the company Arts & Artistes to encourage classical musical talent. Two years ago, I had organised a felicitation ceremony for the luminaries of Indian classical music. While I was seated on stage my father in his speech said, "I would have been proud if you had become a classical singer. But today I am even prouder that you are giving wings to so many classical singers." His words still remain the most cherished compliment of my life.

**I always weigh all my actions against my father's name.** I respect the hard work and perseverance that have gone into making him the legend he is. And I am incredibly proud of my surname—not because of the fame or influence attached to it but for the values and virtues it represents.

**I am always amazed at Bapu's generosity.** He never tires of giving,

whether it is his time or his belongings. Sometimes, though, it can be exasperating. When I was in my teens, I had gifted him a scarf. While performing at a concert, one of his fans asked him if he could have the scarf as a memento. Bapu casually took it off his neck and handed it to him. Needless to say, I was seething when he came home and told me about it.

**People say my mannerisms are exactly like my father's.** Both of us are very passionate and sensitive. So naturally we have our share of arguments. Though we strike a truce through mutual reconciliation, I admit I can never say 'no' to my father's wishes.

**It is not easy to cast him in any mould.** He has travelled all over the world and imbibed the best. He is extremely simple at heart yet very worldly wise. And though he values tradition deeply he has a very liberal outlook. He is not easily scandalised by radical or controversial ideas.

**There is a childlike curiosity to him.** He loves to play with children in the building. And he is always attuned to what's happening around him. When I am stressed out, I just join Bapu on a weeklong concert tour. I have discovered that's the best way to rejuvenate my soul.

**Even at midnight, he is open to discussing ideas with me.** Even if he is abroad on a hectic concert tour, he offers to do it over telephone or email. I make it a point to discuss all important ideas with him. And every time, he brings a fresh perspective to my outlook. Part of it is wisdom and experience and part of it is his ability to look at life differently.

**I don't brood over ageing.** But when I am 80, I want to look back and know that I did a wonderful job of raising my daughter. And I want to be as enthusiastic about life as my father.



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## This and that

**DR PUSHESH PANT** SERVES UP AN ECLECTIC MIX OF NUTRITIOUS TREATS THAT PACK PROTEINS AND VITAMINS

### Tuna Tikki

*Grilled tuna patties*

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes

**Cooking time:** 15 minutes

**Serves:** 4

#### INGREDIENTS

- Tuna (canned): 150 gm; can be replaced by any firm boneless fish (poached, steamed or boiled for five minutes)
- Potatoes: 100 gm; boiled and mashed
- Onion: 1, medium-sized; peeled and chopped
- Ginger: 1 inch piece; scraped and chopped very fine

- Green chillies: 2; deseeded and chopped
- Mixed herbs or aromatic *garam masala*: 1 tsp
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Low sodium salt to taste

#### METHOD

Mash the fish and mix with the boiled potatoes. Add mixed herbs, salt, onions, green chillies and ginger and blend well. Divide into equal portions, roll into small balls and flatten into patties. Line a non-stick pan with a thin film of oil and heat on medium flame. Pan-grill the patties in batches, turning carefully once crisp and lightly browned.



#### FRESH FACT

Cats love tuna. And there is a good reason why you should eat more of it—tuna is an excellent source of protein, omega-3 fatty acids and Vitamin D.





## Mushroom Pulav

*Rice with a burst of mushrooms*

**Preparation time:** 30 minutes

**Cooking time:** 30 minutes

**Serves:** 4

### INGREDIENTS

- Button mushrooms: 200 gm
- Oyster mushrooms: 200 gm
- Dried black mushrooms: 50 gm
- Baby carrots: 100 gm
- Cherry tomatoes: 100 gm
- Long-grained rice: 100 gm
- Bay leaf: 1
- Cloves: 2-3
- Cinnamon: 1-inch piece
- Brown cardamom: 1
- Oil: 1 tsp
- Low sodium salt to taste

### METHOD

Clean and soak the rice in water for half an hour. Drain and keep aside. Wipe the button mushrooms clean

and cut in halves. Chop stems. Scrape the carrots; wash well and dice. Line the base of a non-stick pan with oil and glaze the cherry tomatoes. Remove and reserve. In the same pan, put the bay leaf, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom. Stir till they change colour. Then, add the mushrooms and cook on medium flame in their own juices for about five minutes, stirring regularly. Add carrots and rice grains. Pour in a level cup of vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Sprinkle salt and reduce the heat. Cover and cook until the liquid is absorbed. Set the rice in a mould and fill the hollow in the middle with cherry tomatoes.



### FRESH FACT

If you are watching your waistline, gorge on fresh mushrooms all you want. Low in calories, and high in selenium, mushrooms help lower the risk of prostate cancer.



# Rajma Ke Shami

*Kidney beans in a unique avatar*

**Preparation time:** 60 minutes

**Cooking time:** 15 minutes

**Serves:** 4

## INGREDIENTS

- *Rajma* (red kidney beans): 200 gm
- Potatoes: 50 gm; boiled, peeled and mashed
- *Chana* (split chickpea): 25 gm; roasted and powdered
- Onion: 1, small; chopped fine
- Ginger: 1-inch piece; scraped and chopped fine
- Green chillies: 2; chopped fine
- Aromatic *garam masala*: 1 tsp
- Black pepper powder: a pinch
- Mace or powdered nutmeg: a pinch
- Clove powder: A pinch
- Kashmiri red chilly powder: a large pinch
- Dried mint powder: a large pinch
- Bay leaf: 1
- Brown cardamoms: 2

- Oil: 2 tbsp

- Low sodium salt to taste

## METHOD

Soak the *rajma* in water overnight. Pressure cook with bay leaf and cardamoms added to the water along with the salt and red chilly powder. When well cooked, drain and discard the bay leaf and cardamom. Grind to a coarse paste. Sprinkle the powdered spices and blend with the mashed potatoes and *chana* powder. Put the oil in a non-stick pan and lightly stir-fry the mash. Mix chopped onions, chillies and ginger. Remove and cool. Divide in equal portions and roll into small tight balls with moist hands and press into patties. Shallow-fry on the same pan, turning once carefully till lightly browned with a crispy crust.

## FRESH FACT

*Rajma* is rich in protein and contains soluble fibre that helps clean up the digestive tract. Don't binge, though, it also causes flatulence.





# 1 GLASS *too many?*

ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG SILVERS IS A MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM THAN WE THINK, SAYS **DR SAMIR A CHAUKKAR**

Until recently, alcohol abuse among the elderly was largely ignored or overlooked. This was because many imbibe in the privacy of their homes and even when family, friends or professionals discover there's a problem, they are reluctant to confront the person.

## CAUSES FOR ALCOHOLISM

Excessive use of alcohol in later life is often caused by changes in work status, family relationships and health.

**Retirement:** Work is the primary source of one's identity. For those who have not developed other interests and relationships, retirement means loss of routine, co-workers, activity, income and feeling of being productive. Some people consume alcohol

in reaction to loss of self-worth, responsibility and income following retirement, while others drink out of boredom. Further, some may find themselves in new leisure situations where 'social drinking' is expected.

**Relationships:** Many turn to alcohol owing to feelings of loneliness, which become unbearable when children leave home, a spouse passes away, or friends move away or die.

This could be from fear of angering the person, lack of knowledge about alcohol problems in later life, or the older person going into denial. However, people are increasingly seeking help as they realise that alcoholism can be treated successfully at every age.

**Poor health:** Loss of physical health can limit mobility and lead to a negative self-image. While some people may use alcohol to block emotional pain caused by loss of physical capabilities, others may use it as a sedative to lessen chronic physical pain.

## DETECTING THE PROBLEM

Though changes in drinking patterns, behaviour or physical condition may indicate a drinking problem, not



everyone who drinks regularly is an alcoholic. People need help if they:

- Drink to calm nerves, forget worries or reduce depression
- Lose interest in food
- Gulp down drinks fast
- Lie about their drinking habit
- Drink alone more often
- Hurt themselves or someone else while drinking
- Were drunk more than three or four times in the past year
- Need more alcohol to get 'high'
- Feel irritable when not drinking
- Have medical, social or financial problems caused by drinking

### EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Alcohol impairs alertness, judgement, coordination and reaction time, thus increasing risk of falls and accidents. Over time, heavy drinking can cause permanent damage to the brain and central nervous system, as well as the liver, heart, kidneys and stomach.

Alcohol can make certain medical problems difficult to diagnose. For example, effects of alcohol on the cardiovascular system can mask pain, which may otherwise serve as a warning sign of a heart attack. It can also produce symptoms similar to those of dementia such as forgetfulness and reduced attention. It mixes unfavourably with several prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Prescription drugs may intensify the older person's reaction to alcohol, leading to rapid intoxication. Alcohol can dangerously slow down performance skills (driving, walking), impair judgement, and reduce alertness when taken with drugs such as:

- Minor tranquilisers like Valium (diazepam), Librium (chlordiazepoxide), Miltown (meprobamate)
- Major tranquilisers like Thorazine (chlorpromazine), Mellaril (thioridazine)
- Barbiturates like Luminal (phenobarbital)
- Painkillers like Darvon (propoxyphene), Demerol (meperidine)

- Antihistamines found in prescription and over-the-counter cold remedies

Alcohol can cause anti-convulsants (Dilantin), anti-coagulants (Coumadin) and anti-diabetes drugs (Orinase) to metabolise more rapidly, producing exaggerated responses. Aspirin causes bleeding in the stomach and intestines in some people and alcohol can aggravate this. A combination of alcohol and diuretics can reduce blood pressure, causing dizziness.

### GETTING HELP

Alcoholism, often referred to as a 'family disease', can damage the family as much as the alcoholic person. Fortunately, older problem drinkers have high chances of recovery as they usually continue the treatment programme once they seek help.

If you suspect a silver in your family is an alcoholic, let the family doctor know there's a problem. Read about alcoholism and speak to medical practitioners and counsellors familiar with older alcoholics. Support groups such as Al-Anon (for relatives and friends of alcoholics) or Adult Children of Alcoholics can be a valuable source of educational information and emotional support. Alcoholics Anonymous has open meetings that anyone can attend—closed meetings are limited to AA members. Many communities have programmes designed specifically for women. After the alcohol problem is confirmed, convince family members, and then convince the older person that a problem exists. You may face hostility, anger or even rejection. But the sooner the treatment starts, the sooner life will improve.

### TREATMENT OPTIONS

**Long-term residential programmes:** The person is admitted for three to nine months or sometimes longer.

**Short-term inpatient programmes:** The person is admitted to a hospital or clinic for 10 to 30 days.

### HELP AT HAND

**To learn more about support groups in your city, contact:**

#### Alcoholics Anonymous

National Headquarters,  
Mumbai: 022-23075134  
022-23016767 (10:30 am-6:30 pm)  
**Email:** [gsoindia@vsnl.com](mailto:gsoindia@vsnl.com),  
[gsoindia@gmail.com](mailto:gsoindia@gmail.com)  
**Website:** [www.aagsoindia.org](http://www.aagsoindia.org)

#### Kripa Foundation

Mumbai: 022-26405411  
**Website:** [www.kripafoundation.org](http://www.kripafoundation.org)

#### Dr Samir Chaukhar

022-6511 8823; (0)9892166616  
**Email:** [drsamirac@rediffmail.com](mailto:drsamirac@rediffmail.com)

**Outpatient programmes:** The person lives at home but regularly attends scheduled activities, often daily.

**Support groups:** The person attends meetings for mutual education and support; Alcoholics Anonymous being a prime example of this approach. Unfortunately, very few treatment programmes deal specifically with older persons.

### SUSTAINED SUPPORT

Sometimes a person may take a drink after months of being sober, thinking he or she is cured or can now handle alcohol. Although it's discouraging to see a person return to drinking, such relapses don't necessarily happen. They often help a person to accept that abstinence is necessary because of their powerlessness over alcohol.

Providing support becomes difficult when the person is in denial or returns to drinking. But continued support and understanding are important so that alcohol does not become the only source of solace for the silver.

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*Dr Samir A Chaukhar is a consulting homoeopath and addictions counsellor based in Mumbai*





Dr Anjali

# Mukerjee

## Liver maintenance: Tips to strengthen one of your key organs

**I have had repeated bouts of jaundice and my bilirubin level is above normal. Please suggest an appropriate diet plan for my condition.**

One of the most dynamic organs that protect the body, the liver is one of the most important human organs. It helps remove waste, metabolises nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals, and neutralises toxins released from the body. It is also the site for breakdown of haemoglobin, the by-products of which are released along with bile. In diseases such as hepatitis and cirrhosis, the liver's efficiency in flushing out waste products diminishes, resulting in build-up of compounds like bilirubin. In less severe form it is called jaundice and gives the eyes and skin a yellowish tinge. Some symptoms associated with liver disease include extreme weakness, headache, nausea, weight loss, and constipation.

**For the liver to function properly, we must ensure that it is cleansed and strengthened. Here are some useful guidelines:**

About 40 per cent of your food should be raw—fresh fruit and vegetable juices. Raw foods have a cleansing and rejuvenating effect on the liver. Eat dark-green leafy vegetables and red and orange-coloured fruits like papaya, pomegranate, pineapple, oranges and sweet lime. They contain live enzymes that will heal your liver and cleanse the bowel. Raw vegetables make your body alkaline and this is most important if you have had repeated bouts of jaundice.

Avoid dairy products and non-vegetarian food for three to six months till your liver function becomes normal.



Eat *dal*, nuts, seeds, whole grains and egg whites to boost protein intake.

Avoid fried and sugary foods, products made of refined flour and rich greasy curries as they will come in the way of your 'liver repair' programme.

Have light meals consisting of two or maximum three courses as heavy meals place a load on the liver. For ex-

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Raw foods like leafy vegetables and red and orange-coloured fruits have a rejuvenating effect on the liver

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ample, you may eat whole wheat or *jowar chappati* with vegetables. Add *dal* if you don't feel satiated. Or eat just *dal* with vegetables.

Use coconut oil to cook your meal. It contains medium chain fatty acids that are easy to digest.

Beverages containing caffeine like coffee, energy drinks and tea tend to aggravate the condition further and should be avoided.

Alcohol in any form is strictly forbidden as the liver in a diseased condition will not be able to metabolise it. Instead, it will build up toxins in the system and damage vital organs including the brain.

The increased requirement of vitamins and minerals may not be fulfilled by your regular diet. To speed up recovery, add value to your diet with nutritional supplements easily assimilated by the body.

Avoid spicy food. When suffering from jaundice, the ideal options are baked, steamed and grilled foods.

Foods prepared should be of soft to medium consistency depending on the level of tolerance.

#### Tips for speedy recovery

- A cup of wheat grass juice on an empty stomach helps strengthen the liver.
- A glass of tomato and carrot juice helps improve the body's immunity as well as liver function.
- A glass of water added to 25 ml lemon juice helps in early recovery of damaged liver cells.

Following some of these simple dietary tips can ensure speedy recovery from jaundice. However, before making any dietary changes, it is best to consult your family physician. The ability of the body to fight back infections also decreases with age and it is advisable that you take a good amount of rest.

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Nutritionist Dr Anjali Mukerjee is the founder of Health Total, a nutrition counselling centre  
Website: [www.health-total.com](http://www.health-total.com)



## WEIGHT WATCH

DR JOE LEWIS ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ON DIET, WEIGHT AND EXERCISE

**Q** I have put on considerable weight after I underwent knee replacement surgery. Please suggest an exercise regime for me.

**A** After going in for knee replacement, you need to work towards bringing mobility back into your life. The most important step is to exercise the knee and leg muscles to regain motion and prevent stiffness. Once you have finished your rehabilitation programme, there are plenty of exercises you can do to lose weight. Whenever activity is compromised, there is a tendency to put on weight, which can place a lot of strain on the knee joint. Even 5 per cent weight loss can bring significant benefits. It is a lifestyle readjustment, so consult a good dietician and physiotherapist to revise your diet, activity and habits.

First make sure you have a good pair of shoes. Your weekly programme should aim to cover at least 200 minutes of physical activity. This could comprise aerobic and strength training exercises. Aim to walk for 30-40 minutes four days every week. Visit your neighbourhood gym to use the stationary bicycle, treadmill or elliptical trainer. Water aerobics are also advisable. Avoid high-impact exercises like jogging, jumping or skipping rope.

Alternate your aerobic routine with strength training (with resistance bands, which you can do at home at your own time) or weight training. For lower body exercises, it is best to use lighter weights and more repetitions. Invest in a low-cost home gym facility. This will enable you to do many more exercises in short bursts throughout the day, instead of doing a long session of 40-50 minutes at a gym.

Central to knee replacement is improvement of quality of life by building strength, coordination and stamina—so you never feel as if your knees were replaced.



Dr Joe Lewis is head of research and development at Kaya Life, a chain of professional weight-control centres (SMS Life to 54646)



If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee or Dr Lewis, write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)

# Track memory

**E**arly detection of Alzheimer's disease will soon witness a breakthrough. To track the effect of memory on brain structure with a new method, scientists from Tel Aviv University have focused on spatial learning and memory.

After a diffusion imaging MRI, participants played a race track videogame 16 times—circling the track in less time with each game. After two hours, another MRI was conducted to measure the marked difference in the brain microstructure. Memories of the virtual race track had affected the hippocampus, motor and visual areas of the brain. Contrary to common belief that the brain takes days or weeks to change its microstructure, the new study shows that it can change within a few hours. The study shows that **“memory is rapidly changing the structure of the cells, and it may lead to a lasting effect on the brain,”** according to lead author, neurobiologist Dr Yaniv Assaf, who believes this development could also be used to detect the disorder in early stages. “An absence of capacity for changes in the brain could make patients vulnerable to dementia,” Dr Narayanan R, psychiatrist at Neurology and Psychiatry Clinic, Chennai, tells *Harmony*. “We carry out different cognitive tests and brain mapping to detect dementia. This research is still in preliminary stages and we can come to a conclusion only after large-scale tests.”





## SOCIAL DIARY

**LEADING** a socially active life during old age is a smart way to ward off disability and (possibly) even death. A new study conducted at the Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago evaluated the consequences of social activities like playing bingo, attending church regularly, joining social organisations or just chatting with friends on developing disability. According to the study, **older people leading socially active lives can reduce their probability of disability by two-third.** Studying 96 silver patients over a period of five years, researchers found that staying socially active reduced the risk of developing disability by 65 per cent and death by 40 per cent. As the rate of age-related motor function decline slows down, silvers stay healthier, for longer. "Isolation is the root cause of most ailments," agrees Professor Dr Vinod Kumar, geriatrician at St. Stephens Hospital, Delhi, speaking to *Harmony*. "All geriatricians advise senior citizens to be socially active as it not only helps the brain to function easily but reduces the risk of isolation."

Experts are ready to formalise a **new drug to reduce appetite.** According to a new study by Yale School of Medicine, the prolylcarboxypeptidase (PRCP) enzyme in the brain regulates the alpha-melanocyte hormone responsible for hindering food intake.

promotion

## Bridging the gap



Dr Kanir Bhatia  
Diplomate of The International  
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### ***Q1. I want to replace my missing upper front tooth. Should I go for a dental bridge or an implant?***

Though a dental bridge can serve you satisfactorily, implants provide better support and usually result in more stable tooth replacement. For a bridge, the healthy teeth adjacent to the missing space will have to be trimmed down to make place for the supporting crowns. With an implant, the missing root is first replaced and a natural looking tooth replacement is fixed onto that. Today, unless one is replacing an old bridge or the adjacent teeth need crowns in any case, implants are the first choice in tooth replacement.

### ***Q2. I fractured my front tooth and have to remove it. Can I get an implant and new tooth immediately?***

Immediate implant procedures have become very common these days especially for front teeth. Here, after extracting the tooth, the implant is placed at the same time. As FDA has approved immediate loading for Nobel Biocare implants because of their special surface coating, placement of a temporary crown immediately after burring the implant is possible in the same sitting. Hence the patient can get a replacement on the day a tooth is removed.

### ***Q3. Will my implant crown feel natural?***

Dental implant-supported teeth look, feel and function like natural teeth. The dental implant itself is buried inside the bone and never seen—it's the crown, bridge or denture fixed onto the implant that the patient sees and feels. Also, as Nobel Procera provides customised tooth (coloured, high quality aesthetic crowns), the patient is able to walk out of the surgery with a beautiful smile.

### ***Q4. What is 'Bone Grafting' and will I need it before implants?***

Successful placement of implants depends on the presence of bone of sufficient quality and quantity. This is not always present in every patient. It was previously thought that in areas where there was insufficient bone it was not possible to place implants. There have now been great advances made in procedures to increase the amount of available bone either by use of autogenous bone (belonging to the patient) or a range of artificial substitutes or a combination of both. These grafting techniques are simple and often carried out at the time of implant placement. For areas where there is significant lack of bone, more complex grafting procedures can be carried out to restore bone volume. In such cases, grafting may have to be carried out and left to heal for 4-6 months before implants are placed.

## RENAL RESCUE

People suffering from advanced chronic kidney disease (CKD) don't need to look further than their kitchen cabinets. A recent study conducted at Royal London Hospital (RLH), published in *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology*, suggests that a **daily dose of sodium bicarbonate or baking soda can slow decline in kidney function in some CKD patients**. During the research, 134 people suffering from



advanced CKD and low metabolic acidosis (bicarbonate) levels were divided into two groups—one group was given a small daily dose of sodium bicarbonate in the form of a tablet. A greatly reduced rate of decline in kidney function—about 60 per cent slow—was noticed in the group on bicarbonate dose; these patients were also found less likely to develop end-stage renal disease (ESRD). Only 9 per cent faced rapid progression of kidney disease compared to 45 per cent in the second group. Speaking to *Harmony*, Dr G K Malhotra, nephrologist at Clinic Kidney Centre in Delhi, says, “Researches abroad have very different parameters. Consuming sodium bicarbonate daily or in large quantities could increase blood pressure and cholesterol levels. CKD patients need monitoring; just giving them a daily bicarbonate dose can lead to deterioration of the condition.”



## Good NIGHT!

Scientists from the University of Queensland and Princess Alexandra Hospital, Australia, have developed a **new computer programme to diagnose sleep disorders**. Presented at the Australasian Sleep Association Conference in Melbourne, the programme also analyses snoring patterns that may help diagnose the specific disorder. During the study, snoring patterns of 20 patients suffering from sleep apnoea and 66 potential patients was recorded and successful diagnosis made in almost 94 per cent of the cases. Experts believe an accurate device to diagnose sleep apnoea from such recordings will force GPs to make an upward revision of the number of people that may have this condition and not presume that it only affects obese, middle-aged men. “Snoring is caused when there is obstruction of breathing during sleep,” Dr Rahul Chandhok, senior consultant psychiatrist at Fortis Hospital in Noida, tells *Harmony*. “Though the research seems rather productive, we have to wait before drawing any conclusion that people who snore are patients of some sleep disorder.”

## Pressure check

An **anti-ageing gene called klotho can come to the rescue of those suffering from high blood pressure**. Researchers from University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Centre have concluded that klotho, which reduces with age in the body, can play a pivotal role in regularising high blood pressure or hypertension that often leads to strokes, heart attack, heart failure, arterial aneurysm or chronic kidney failure. During the study, published in journal *Hypertension*, one injection of the gene was given to the hypertensive research lab models. After the second week, the noticeable decline in blood pressure levels continued steadily for 12 weeks, helping the team to conclude that klotho can be used in gene therapy for hypertension. “Hypertension is the root cause of many ailments,” Dr Narsa Raju, cardiologist at Heart Clinic in Hyderabad tells *Harmony*. “But this study was carried out on lab models, and we cannot just start using the therapy on our patients. Taking klotho either orally or by injection without medical guidance could also prove hazardous.”







Shameem

# Akthar

## Back in shape:

Yoga is the best therapy for upper back problems

Upper back problems have reached pandemic proportions because of work styles that force us into a fixed posture throughout the day. Excessive use of gadgets like televisions and computers has also contributed to this outbreak. The deadly combination of dislike for exercise and attachment to the couch has further weakened the upper back. However, a yoga regimen focused on relieving contracted muscles, increasing blood flow to the neglected region and rejuvenating the musculo-skeletal system can heal the area.

In Chinese therapies and acupressure, the maximum energy meridians are said to pass through the neck region, making it crucial to our well-being. If this spot is weak, infectious diseases are said to enter the body through it. As Ayurveda expert Dr David Frawley writes in his book *Yoga and Ayurveda* (Motilal Banarasidass Publishers),

“Tightness in the upper back and chest weakens the appetite, which is determined by the *prana* [energy] in the head and mouth.” Common causes that could damage the area include sudden jerks or an accident, age-related degeneration and, as mentioned above, bad posture. Related symptoms that can help you track upper back degeneration are tension headaches, upper limb pain and vertigo.

Of all therapies dealing with neck and upper back problems, yoga works best, observes Dr Swami Karmananda, in *Yogic Management of Common Diseases* (Bihar School of Yoga). “*Asana* restore the pranic balance in the neck, leading to regeneration of damaged tissues and reversal of abnormal bone growth,” he writes. Among spinal problems, upper back issues respond most positively to yogic therapy. In acutely painful conditions, complete rest is generally advised before a phased therapy of practices is taught. However, in the resolving phase it is best to incorporate gentle yogic moves to ensure that healing blood circula-

tion is maintained, to carry repairing agents to the site of pain. Managing your diet to remove refined, sugary or spicy food and adding wound-healing foods rich in Vitamin C will further facilitate repair.

Yoga practices that are therapeutic for the upper back include neck rolls (*greva chakra*) and shoulder rolls (*skanda chakra*); upper body stretches like the palm tree (*tadasana*) and swaying palm tree (*trikaya tadasana*); and bends, initially with supports, like the forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), head to knee pose (*janu sirsasana*), the hare pose (*shashankasana*) and child pose (*balasana*). Later, the challenge can be upped in a phased regimen that includes the mountain pose (*parvatasana*), crescent (*ardha chandrasana*) and the lying thunderbolt (*supta vajrasana*). Simple twists like the beginner’s version of the half-spinal twist (*ardha matysendrasana*) and *bharadwajasana* (Sage Bharadwaja’s pose) all help. Yoga *nidra* meditation also irons out stress, which can create muscular contractions.

### YOGIC MOVES: Head to knee pose (*janu sirsasana*)



Haresh Patel

Sit with both legs out in front of you. Fold your left leg at the knee to place left sole on the inside of the right thigh. Inhale. Raise both hands overhead. Exhale and lower head, dropping your hands towards the right leg, holding it where you can. Breathe normally. Hold for a few seconds. Repeat thrice. Rest. Repeat the entire sequence for the other leg.

**Benefits:** This pose provides powerful spinal traction and releases contracted muscles in the upper back. The back of the thighs, legs and calves also stretch powerfully, thus subtly but surely correcting posture, which is misaligned in all back problems.

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)

# The God within

The power of love is mightier than the love of power, says **Sri Chinmoy**

The Upanishads, the sacred Vedic lore of India, tell us that a weakling can never realise the highest Absolute. *Nayam atma bala hinena labhyo*. The soul cannot be won by the weakling.... If we at all want to dive into the inner life, if we want to be guided and moulded by the soul, we have to be extremely strong. The strength we need is not so much physical strength, but the strength of self-discipline, the strength of self-enquiry, the strength of self-withdrawal from the life of the senses, the strength of self-effacement in the world of offering, and self-fulfilment in the world of aspiration and meditation. The Upanishads again inspire us most profoundly: *Uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodatha....* Arise, awake, realise and achieve the Highest with the help of the illumining, guiding and fulfilling Masters. The path is as sharp as the edge of a razor, difficult to cross, hard to tread—so declare the wise sages.

But the Upanishads in no way want to discourage us. On the contrary, this sacred message will always inspire us to run towards the Goal. But we have to know that only he who is awakened can run toward the ultimate Goal. The Goal, God realisation, cannot forever remain unattained or unattainable. Today's impossibility will not always remain an impossibility. If the seeker's cry is strong and powerful, the Smile from above is bound to dawn.

In our day-to-day life we constantly exercise power, either in accepting or rejecting reality. When we use power to accept reality with a view to transform it, if necessity demands, this power is called the soul's power, the power of the Source. But if we exercise power to reject the world situation, to reject the possibilities of the world, to reject this world because we feel that

its sufferings and turmoil are past correction, then our own transformation and illumination will always remain for us a far cry.



**When we cherish hope, we must know that we are invoking an inner or higher power. Today's hope turns into tomorrow's actuality**

Each human being gets the opportunity to invoke power in various ways. Every day he gets the golden opportunity to invoke power with his hope. Hope is nothing but concealed power. When we cherish hope, we must know that we are consciously or unconsciously invoking an inner or higher power. Today's hope turns into tomorrow's actuality. Today's dream is bound to be fulfilled in tomorrow's reality. As hope is a power, so also is expectation a power. We expect many things from ourselves and from the world. We feel that today's expectation

is going to bring down tomorrow's realisation. But in the spiritual life, we play the role without any expectation whatsoever. We feel that our role is to perform divine service, but not to expect the fruits thereof. If we can love, serve, pray and meditate with utmost sincerity, purity and self-offering, our God-appointed realisation is bound to dawn. It will far transcend our highest expectation and far surpass the flights of our loftiest imagination.

Power is one aspect of God; Love is another. In the ordinary life, power is power and love is love. But in the spiritual life, in God's Life, Power and Love are inseparable; they are like the obverse and reverse of the same coin. Now, if we do not properly understand the power of love and the love of power, we run into the most deplorable difficulties. Before we realise the highest transcendental Truth, what we have is the love of power. But after we realise the Truth, we come to feel that there is only one thing in our life, and that is the power of love. As long as we remain in the world of desire, we cherish the love of power. But the moment we enter into the world of aspiration, dedication and illumination, we come to realise the power of love. The love of power destroys the Palace of Truth within us. The power of love builds the Palace of Truth within us and creates the Kingdom of Heaven within and without us, bringing down Infinity to play in the heart of the finite. When the power of love replaces the love of power, man will have a new name: God.

*From Sri Chinmoy's speech at University of Maine, USA, on 25 January 1974. Sri Chinmoy was an Indian spiritual teacher and philosopher whose teachings emphasised religious tolerance, inner peace and daily meditation*



## First Aid

&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt; second careers

**“I felt I had to do something that would keep me mentally active and also be of some service to the neighbourhood”**

S P AMBROSE, 81



# The Times OF HIS LIFE

V Ramesh

I retired in 1986 as additional secretary from the Ministry of Shipping and Transport. Seconded by the government to International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Hyderabad before retirement, I continued working there as assistant director general till 1993. I was 65 then. After settling down in Chennai, I decided to do something to stay mentally active. A former colleague, K S Ramakrishnan, suggested the idea of starting a neighbourhood newspaper. A bureaucrat all my life, I was not exactly a writer but I agreed immediately.

With my residence doubling up as an office, the *Adyar Times* and *Anna Nagar Times* were launched in October 1993. Soon *Anna Nagar Times* began

to break even, while *Adyar Times* ran into huge losses. Eventually, my partnership with my colleague split. However, I persevered as I felt the newspaper would encourage people to get involved in local issues. The eight-page free weekly—it comes out every Sunday—had a circulation of almost 6,000. The moment we levied a subscription charge of Rs 8 every month, the subscription plummeted to 50 per cent. It continued on payment basis for about 12 to 15 months till we began to break even.

Though a professional journalist (Wilson D'Souza) was employed as editor, my responsibilities as executive editor and publisher included visiting the printing press at Aminjikarai on Sunday mornings to collect the

copies for distribution. Today I have 16 newspaper boys to do this. Despite competition from other neighbourhood papers, the circulation of *Adyar Times*—now 20-24 pages—is 41,000.

The *Adyar Times* Charitable Trust was set up in 1997-98 as I felt the extra money being earned could be used to support local charities. One of our main projects is to keep the Marina beach clean. We also employ lifeguards as there are regular cases of death by drowning. In 2005, I handed over my responsibilities as publisher to my son A David Ranjan. Wilson D'Souza is still the editor, while I continue to be managing editor. Though I don't go to the office regularly, I keep a tab on the overall functioning.

—As told to Anjana Jha

## FAST TRACK

EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR QUERIES AND CONCERNS ON JOBS AFTER RETIREMENT



**I took voluntary retirement to start my own business in buying and selling used cars. I have good contacts in Delhi and can invest up to Rs 500,000. Do you think it's a feasible idea?**

Starting a sale-purchase business of used cars requires a fair amount of financial backup and administrative skills. Running such a business is difficult unless you have premises in an automobile market, at least Rs 1 million to invest, and staff backup. You have to set up a workshop and employ at least three to four people with basic training. Mechanics are required not only to examine the condition of cars available in the second-hand market for you to purchase, but also for necessary repairs and modifications to ensure they are in good condition when sold to customers. It's important to ensure quality control to build credibility and bring in more clients. You need to invest a large amount of money as a reasonable number of cars should be available for sale. Before starting, it would be a good idea to visit a Maruti True Value showroom and interact with the staff. Be prepared for your investment to be blocked for at least two years with very few returns.

—Sanjay Kumar

*Kumar runs a car sale-purchase business in Delhi*

**I am a retired government officer living in Patna. I own a ground floor flat in a market locality. Would starting an STD/ISD booth be a good idea?**

As your house is strategically located, running a STD/ISD phone booth could be very lucrative. To set it up, you need to register with telecom authorities like MTNL, BSNL, Airtel or Tata Indicom. You must obtain sanction for special STD/ISD tariff plans—this can be quite tedious as there are many such outlets in Patna. Once you get approval, you can start working on the basic requirements. You would need to dedicate an area in your house for the booth and make two or three cabins to give customers privacy. Make it look attractive as you will face competition from others in the area. If you have adequate space, keep a photocopier and fax machine in the shop. All this would entail a minimum investment of Rs 100,000 to Rs 200,000. Stocking cold drinks and snacks can attract more clientele. Though mobile phones have dented what once was a booming business, the returns can still be high.

—Parminder Gogia

*Gogia owns a STD/ISD booth in Ahmedabad*

**I will retire from the dispatch department at India Post in a few months. Could you suggest a suitable career option?**

You could start a courier service. Despite global players like DHL, FedEx and First Flight, this sector is still untapped and can bring in good profits. First, decide the kind of service you want to provide—only letters and packets or heavy merchandise. If you wish to deliver goods like heavy merchandise, liquids and medicines, obtain a license from local authorities. Second, decide whether you want to go domestic, international or both. List out the destinations according to town, city and district to assess the investment involved. Then liaise with big courier companies. Starting a full-fledged courier company requires huge investment. The partner companies could send your letters or parcels to the intended destinations and charge you a basic commission. This way you won't need a data management system to track delivery. Also, this would help you start the enterprise without much investment and running around.

—Santosh Kapoor

*Kapoor runs a courier company in Kanpur*



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*The first time you rode the bicycle.*  
*The first crush you had at thirteen*  
*The first drama you got a part in*  
*The first day at college*  
*The first date you went on*  
*The first kiss*  
*The first time you proposed*  
*The first job interview*  
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# LIGHT the way

You don't have to grope your way through that dark passage or staircase in the middle of the night any more. Cosmo Floors, a leading flooring solutions company, has launched Eyeleds—a spiffy range of LED lighting—that can be embedded into your floor tiles. The 6.5-mm lights are flat, energy-efficient and easy to install. The range includes Colour Eye (colour changing LEDs), Eyeleds Outdoor Professional (for gardens and lawns), Eyeleds Quartz (for textured flooring) and Eyeleds for interiors.

Available in round and square shapes, the lights can be fixed on carpets as well as concrete, granite, wooden and laminate floors. They are tiny but tough—they can last over 100,000 hours and withstand weight up to 285 kg. They are also water and dust-resistant and consume little energy; a round fitting takes up 0.3W and the square one 0.6 W. As they are energy-efficient, you can leave them on for longer hours unlike normal light fittings. The product comes with a three-year warranty.

**Price: Rs 4,000 to Rs 15,000 (not inclusive of the transformer, extensions and cords)**



Cosmo Floors



## Too many old visiting cards lying around?

- Cut out a colourful glossy picture from a magazine and glue it on the printed side. Use the card as a gift tag with your message on the blank side.
- Cut unwanted visiting cards into thin strips, label with coloured pencil and use as tags to categorise documents in your filing cabinets.





Anjali Rego

# Joint venture

Anjali Rego meets the Karns, who are reviving the ancient art of Mithila painting

In Tokagachi in Japan, there is a Mithila art museum that houses 850 Mithila paintings. The museum regularly invites Mithila artists from India to experiment with new methods. Unfortunately, in India, where the art originated, the government is doing little to promote the art. However, Delhi-based Mithila artists Satyanarayan Lal Karn and his wife Moti refuse to be discouraged by this apathy. The Karns—both National Award winners—plan to start a Mithila art academy in Bihar.

Mithila art originated in Mithila, the land of goddess Sita. It involves tight, intricate workmanship and is classified into two categories—floor drawings or *aripana* and wall drawings or *bhitti chitra*. Common themes include festivals, rituals and social life of ancient Maithili people. Floor drawings are done on special occasions like births, *mundan* (first haircuts), thread ceremonies, marriages and deaths, while wall drawings are simply decorative.



**REVIVAL** Rs 20,000 and Rs 25,000.

Traditionally, the art is handed down from mother to daughter. Moti's mother, Karpoori Devi, is a National Merit Certificate winner while Satyanarayan's mother is Padmashri Jagdamba Devi. Satyanarayan was nine and Moti seven when they started painting. Today, the two work together on each painting—starting from different sides of the same canvas. According to 56 year-old Satyanarayan, who works with Bal Bhavan in Delhi, they are generally inclined to themes related to society, religion and nature. No painting can be replicated, and prices range between

Staunch purists, they prepare paints by grinding flowers and leaves, and use broomsticks as brushes. "We never buy flowers, or pluck them," says Moti, 49. "We pick them when they have fallen naturally." The couple has two children. While their younger son is interested in the art, he is more inclined to modern themes. For an art that is practiced by only 150 artists in India, that's still good news.



Harikrishnan Menon

# The ardent IMPRESARIO

P K DEVAN IS DETERMINED TO TEACH THE WORLD ABOUT KATHAKALI, REPORTS **RAJASHREE BALARAM**

When P K Devan's brother, renowned Kathakali artist Ananda Shivaram, first performed in Australia in 1947, no hotel was ready to accommodate him. He ended up sleeping in a theatre. Wounded by the racial discrimination, Devan pledged to enlighten the world about Kathakali. For the past 40 years, he has been an impresario for Kathakali performances at the See India Foundation established by his family in Kochi. The racism his brother experienced has found its retribution in the guestbook at the Foundation, which features the names of celebrities and eminent people from all over the world, from model Cindy Crawford and Hollywood actors Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman to Nobel laureate and author Gunter Grass.

The 81-year old adds his own touch of drama to the ambience, with his deep voice and generous handlebar moustache. As the Kathakali artist moves in fluid movements



**DANCE**

in ornate attire on the lamp-lit stage, Devan sits in one corner, his face hidden in the shadows of dusk, narrating the plot and explaining the delicate and complex nuances of gesture and expression.

He has done this every evening for the past 40 years. The show begins at 6 pm every day set against a background score of drums. The first 45 minutes—when the artists apply their makeup—are as much a treat to watch as the performance itself. "I can't bear synthetic paints and use only vegetable dyes, hand-crushed in a pestle and mortar," says Devan. Now, he is also working with a crusader's zeal to maintain the family museum, Gurukulam Heritage Foundation, in Kodungalur in Kerala that displays over 2,000 masks, accessories and garments associated with Kathakali. "I am looking out for a corporate sponsor to oversee the place, so I can leave the world in peace knowing that my legacy will continue," says the bachelor.



# Stamp of respect



Uttam Kumar, the 1950s Bengali matinee idol, continues to be a hero in Kolkata. Days after Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee renamed the Tollygunje metro station Mahanayak Uttam Kumar station, the Department of Posts issued a stamp in Kumar's memory in September. Kumar now ranks along with Kishore Kumar, Ritwik Ghatak, S D Burman, Guru Dutt, Prithviraj Kapoor and Hemant Kumar to be im-

mortalised on a stamp. Along with the commemorative stamp, the Department has also issued a booklet and two picture postcards of the actor. These are available at the philatelic bureaus in Kolkata, Siliguri and Port Blair.

**C** CINEMA

## Golden bonds

After a long hiatus, last month actor Amol Palekar returned to the big screen with Marathi film, *Samantar* (parallel folds). Jointly directed by Palekar and his wife Sandhya Gokhale, *Samantar* covers the journey of two lovers who are separated by destiny in their youth only to be thrown together in the autumn of their lives. Palekar plays an industrialist shackled by fa-



miliar responsibilities and immense wealth yet lonely at heart. Sharmila Tagore plays his long-lost sweetheart—a quiet, reclusive sculptor. The movie sensitively examines the choice to end one's own life, the loneliness of silver years and how some memories don't fade with time but only sharpen with the years.

# Piano heaven

Want to see the world's best pianos? Walk into Furtados music shop in your city. Set up in 1865 in Mumbai, it has grown from a family enterprise to a professionally run company with 14 stores and franchisees in north and south India. Though all outlets store a huge variety of musical instruments,

**C** MUSIC their pianos, ranging between Rs 1.2 million and Rs 10 million in cost, are the highlights of their product portfolio. Recently, the company has created a database of 500 music teachers and offers references free of charge to schools and colleges. The company also sponsors college music festivals and publishes the complimentary music quarterly *Play*. To find a Furtados shop near you or learn more about the company and its activities, go to [www.furtadosonline.com](http://www.furtadosonline.com)



## MUMBAI ON THEIR MIND

A family blog that brings together the past, present and the future

The family that 'blogs' together stays together. You are tempted to rewrite the old proverb when you meet 70 year-old Janaki Krishnan; her daughter, Deepa, 40; and granddaughter Aishwarya, 16. The three share a group blog: [www.mumbai-magic.blogspot.com](http://www.mumbai-magic.blogspot.com). Though

**C** HERITAGE it was Deepa who came up with the idea in 2006, Aishwarya and Janaki started contributing a year later. Janaki, a retired teacher, was inspired to write actively when her first article on Mumbai's Koliwada market was published in *HT Café*, the daily supplement of *Hindustan Times*.

The blog, in essence, is a paean to Mumbai, featuring little-known streets and monuments: the obscure Jewish synagogue in Masjid Bunder; the vegetable market in Vashi; a tiny *attar* (perfume) shop in Crawford Market; the knife sellers in Zaveri Bazaar. Many posts related to places are written by Deepa, who organises city tours through her firm Mumbai Mag-

ic Tours. Janaki's writings are steeped in nostalgia and interesting details of everyday life: the 'season' of making pickles; remembering her mother on Mothers' Day; oil baths of yore; and finding the perfect banana to match her family's diverse taste. And Aishwarya, who believes her grandmother is her "emergency number", writes about everything from travelling in

local trains to taking riding lessons and monsoon in Mumbai. All three often discuss possible subjects for the blog and have inspired more members in their family to write. "My uncle wrote a funny piece about people falling asleep in Mumbai trains and my grand-uncle wrote about a rare flower that bloomed in a terrace garden near his house," says Aishwarya.



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

## Museum CALLING

Though we all take pride in our past, are we doing enough to preserve it? The question sits more uneasily on our shoulders when we visit the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial in Ahmedabad. The museum lies in shambles with garbage in its premises, peeling walls and chipped floors. It offers



rare insight into the life of Sardar Patel through portraits, political cartoons, newspaper clippings, relics and Patel's personal belongings. The heritage structure, sprawling across 7 acre, originally known as Moti Shahi Mahal was built in 1618-1622 as a palace for crown prince Shahjahan. Though the prime minister has decided to sanction Rs 170 million to renovate the place, you don't have to wait till it is revamped—visit the museum now to increase footfall and pledge your support.



# Pure PUNJAB

Vandana Shukla is mesmerised by the strains of long-forgotten Punjabi classical music in a small commune in Ludhiana

**TRADITION**



Courtesy: Bhaini Sahib

Punjab occupies a prime position in contemporary Indian fusion with its rambunctious *bhangra*-pop numbers. But a small commune of purists near Ludhiana is holding on to a fading legacy of classical Punjabi music.

Residents of Bhaini Sahib wake up to the melodious strains of rare stringed musical instruments in the silence of the dawn. In Bhaini Sahib, *Asa ki Baar* (time of hope), the early morning prayers recited from the *Guru*

*Granth Sahib*, are played in accompaniment to the dilruba, rebab and taar shehnai. Subtlety underlines even moments of joy and excitement—loudspeakers are never used here for weddings or any other celebration.

Bhaini Sahib is a very small commune of Namdhari Sikhs, a sect that believes in a living guru. Their present spiritual head, the octogenarian Satguru Jagjit Singh, has committed his life to preserve the dying tradition of soothing ancient classical music in

a land renowned for its robust, boisterous spirit.

For Singh, the task on hand is nothing less than a mission. About 150 children from all castes and socioeconomic brackets receive training here. While their peers elsewhere are engaged in video games and surfing pop and rock chartbusters, the young here spend hours mulling over permutations of *tal* like 17-and-a-half *matra* (beat), seven-and-three-quarter *matra*, or 10-and-three-quarter

*matra*; considered a remarkable feat even for maestros.

Music at Bhaini Sahib offers a haunting background score to righteous living. Every day, young disciples wake up before daybreak for two hours of rigorous *riyaaz*, after which they are allowed to go back to sleep. There are two more music classes through the day. School-going children resume their classes at 4 pm, and there is another session that begins at 10 am. The commune provides pupils food and the best of everything to aid their pursuit of excellence. Instruments for children are specially customised; the miniature sitar, sarod and dilruba are a bewitching sight. Though one is wont to cast an indulgent, even slightly amused, eye at the cherubic students, their sheer mastery stuns you into rapt silence.

Their flawless performance has a lot to do with the finesse they are exposed to. While many music professors from different universities come here to learn extinct instruments like rebab and dilruba, Bhaini Sahib is also home to visiting faculty, such as Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Pandit Rajan and Sajan Mishra, and Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. Some students have also learnt Kathak from Pandit Birju Maharaj. On completion of training, the illustrious pupils come back to the *dera* (commune) to train young disciples.

Competitive spirit is conspicuous by its absence at Bhaini Sahib. No one is given permission to play or record music for commercial purposes. The mantra is simple enough: music is *seva* (service). And Bhai Mohan, Sukhdev, Ustad Harbhajan Singh and Rajesh Malaviya are some gifted musicians who now train the young to carry forward this rare tradition.

This tradition has been given safe harbour by Satguru Jagjit Singh, whose passion for the preservation and propagation of *gurumat sangeet*



Disciples wake up at daybreak for daily practice; sarod maestro Ustad Amjad Ali Khan with wife Subbalakshmi visit Bhaini Sahib

knows no boundaries. He even got drawings of extinct instruments like the saranda and rebab—which were traditionally played with the Gurbani—from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and commissioned instrument makers to reproduce them with uncompromising exactitude. And he sent artists to Lahore to track the descendants of the rebabi, who had migrated to Pakistan during the Partition—taking with them the tradition of rebabi music. Thanks to Singh's passion, today students at Bhaini Sahib are able to sing, play and preserve rare padtaal, dhrupad and dhamar compositions that were lost in the dust of communal turmoil.

"If I had to struggle for my bread and butter, I wouldn't be pursuing such intricacies of music," says Rajesh Malaviya, a disciple of Ustad Zakir Hussain, who teaches tabla and pakhawaj at Bhaini Sahib since 1992. "Satguruji is doing what the government should have been doing to preserve tradi-

tional music." Echoing this sentiment are vocalists Rajan and Sajan Mishra, who attribute their success to Jagjit Singh, who convinced them to leave their job in Delhi to pursue music. While the Mishras have devoted their lives to music, Suba Sandeep Singh has devoted his life to heal others through music. He plays the taar shehnai and sings *halla da diwan*, the traditional style of singing Gurbani. Many youth in his village who were addicted to drugs—a menace in rural Punjab—now seek tranquillity in classical music. "Music is a healer and purifier of the soul," says Singh, who also teaches meditation techniques at a local school in Bhaini Sahib.

The serenity of Bhaini Sahib is all pervasive and leaving here is not easy. The soft call of ragas like *patmanjari*, *suha* and *maaj* touch a deep chord and serenade you to return. Indeed, you realise that music this pure does not come easy—maybe that explains why it's so precious and timeless.





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# *The hills are alive...*

*Harmony* reader **Dr Ketan K Gokhale** revisits Ladakh, this time with a band of fellow ‘young silvers’—and returns even more enchanted  
**Photographs: Samar Jha**

**T**he jostling crowds, heat and dust at Jammu railway station brought us back to reality with a bang. After 12 days spent in the serene, stark splendour of Ladakh, where majestic ranges, mountain deserts and picturesque lakes coexist in perfect harmony, it was clearly time to go home.

It wasn't my first trip there—Ladakh's unique beauty had mesmerised my wife Vaishali and me in 2000. So when our friends Samar and Anjana invited us to explore eastern Ladakh with them, we agreed immediately. Our common friends Rajesh and Shobha

also decided to join the party. With all of us being ‘young silvers,’ driving through more than 1,300 km of difficult terrain in altitudes that could leave anyone breathless was quite a challenge—but we were up for it!

Our journey began on 27 July with a flight from Delhi to Kullu. From the airport, we drove down 40 km to Manali in an Innova, one of many that served as trusted steed through our intrepid journey. Two relaxed days at the Railway Holiday Home—perched on a hillside at almost 7,000 ft—provided our acclimatisation. Manali was at her prettiest with rains painting the

countryside—apple and pear trees laden with fruit—in verdant shades. The weather was pleasant and only light woollens were needed. Unfortunately plans to see the Hidimba Devi temple, famous for its remarkable woodcarving, didn't work out.

On Day 3, we set out around 7.15 am on the Manali-Leh road, the second overland approach to Ladakh—the other being the Srinagar-Leh highway. Our target was to cover the 185-km distance to Patseo by evening. The clear morning and smooth going for about 35 km to Gulaba made us forget the incessant rain of the previous day





till a truck mired in mudslide blocked traffic for an hour. Reaching Marhi around 9.30 am, we had a breakfast of delicious *alu paratha* at Himalaya Dhaba and photographed some beautiful wild flowers growing by the roadside. We noticed vehicles stalled on the road climbing up. Our driver Vicky, a young lad from the Lahaul-Spiti valley, was confident it would clear in no time but his optimism was misplaced. Within 10 minutes of starting, we were part of the queue. Vendors materialised selling tea and snacks. One claimed his roasted corn was grown by Dharmendra in Hema Malini's farm, while another joked that he'd left his native Kanpur where bathing more than once a day was required whereas once a year was enough here!

Coincidentally, we had stalled next to a plateau where gliders from a local paragliding association were conducting rides. Shrieking joyously, they floated down 500 ft suspended below colourful parachutes, landing in Marhi. Though tempted, we opted to enjoy the experience visually.

It took seven hours before the landslide was cleared. We crossed Rohtang pass (13,000 ft), 62 km from Manali, at 6.30 pm. The roads were so bumpy that it took us an hour and 45 minutes to cover the 18-km stretch to Koksar. We drove on to Keylong 35 km ahead and spent the night there. It was 11 pm when we finally located the HPTDC hotel Chandrabhaga and had our first meal since breakfast that morning.



#### FACT FILE

##### When to go:

The best season is early June to early October, when Ladakh is in full bloom.

##### Getting there:

**By air:** Indian and Jet Airways operate regular flights from Delhi to Leh; Indian, Jet Airways and MDLR airlines operate flights from Delhi to Kullu.

**By road:** The Srinagar-Leh highway (434 km) and the Manali-Leh (473 km) road are two overland approaches to Leh.

##### Where to stay:

Leh has a variety of accommodation, mostly family-run hotels. Tariff in high-end hotels ranges from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,500 for a double-bedded room, inclusive of meals. Tourist infrastructure is not adequately developed in other areas but there are some resorts, hikers' huts, guesthouses and hotels.

##### For details, contact the Jammu & Kashmir Government Tourist Office:

Room No. 14/15 Front Wing, Hotel Janpath, New Delhi-110001;  
Tel: 011-23744948

25, World Trade Centre, Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Mumbai-400005;  
Tel: 022-22189040



A paraglider at Marhi; the intrepid silvers (left to right) Samar, Anjana, Vaishali, Dr Ketan Gokhale, Shoba and Rajesh; (opposite page) Chang La, the third highest pass in Ladakh; *kiang*, the local wild ass

We started Day 4 at 8 am after our vehicle was refuelled in Koksar, the only fuel station on this 430-km route. Irrigated fields along the river Bhaga formed green splashes against barren mountains as we drove through the Lahaul-Spiti valley. We passed Patseo, 75 km from Keylong, and stopped briefly at Suraj Tal, an emerald blue lake surrounded by snow-clad peaks. The landscape throughout was amazing. Flat-roofed brick houses nestled in villages clinging to the mountain slopes. We spotted yaks and mountain goats, and Samar identified several birds. We occasionally passed foreign tourists on motorbikes and bicycles piled with camping gear.

Just before stopping at Sarchu (110 km from Keylong) for lunch around 1 pm, we halted at the 16,050 ft Baralacha-la (*la* means pass in Ladakhi). Stacks of flat prayer stones lined the road, to which we too added our piles and our prayers. Sarchu is a popular night halt as it provides tourist accommodation in tents. The low oxygen had given the ladies a headache; they had ignored the antidote of drinking lots of water. We rested on mattresses and had soup, rice and *dal* while two locals drank beer!

The army camp at Sarchu heralded the Pang plains. A tableland of sand with no roads as such, its width varies from 3 to 8 km while the length is over 30 km. It was like driving through a desert with distant vehicles appearing like specks surrounded by sand clouds. Chilly winds swept away our plans to visit Tso Kar (*tso* is lake) and we continued on, driving through Lachulung-la (16,600 ft). Darkness was falling when we noticed some youngsters from Thailand standing next to an SUV with a flat tyre and jammed spare. I searched for my torch as Vicky stopped to help. The effort left me breathless, while the exertion made Vicky's nose bleed. We crossed Taglang-la (17,582 ft), the highest pass on this route and the second highest in the world—Khardung La is said to be the world's highest motorable pass at 18,380 ft—before descending 30 km to Rumtse to finally reach Karu at 10.30 pm. We had clocked 320 km that day! From here onwards, we were in army territory, the guests of Brigadier Somnath Jha—the local brigade commander and Samar's younger brother—and his wife Chitra.

Day 7 dawned bright and clear. As we had been acclimatised in Manali, we

planned to cover the 75 km to Tangste valley by lunchtime. At the halfway point, our oxygen and blood pressure levels were checked at the army outpost at Chang La, the third highest pass in Ladakh (17,356 ft). We also had a welcome cup of tea and snacks, including *momo*, a hot favourite in Ladakh! We reached our hosts' residence on the banks of river Tangste well in time for a glass of pre-lunch beer. The prefabricated shed-like buildings belied the comfortable interior. We spent three lazy days gearing up for the next leg of our journey.

Our only outing was to Pangong Tso in Lukung, 35 km away. We saw wild goats called Ladakh urials camouflaged against the landscape and stopped to offer biscuits to marmots (large ground squirrels) made less timid because of tourists. Our first glimpse of Pangong Lake was unbelievable. At a height of 14,443 ft, the amazingly blue expanse is 138 km long and between 2 km and 5 km wide; one-thirds in India and the rest in China. Sunshine and clouds dappled the water blue and emerald in turn. We went to the edge of the lake full of water birds on a small army boat.





## Near the 'magnetic mountain' on the way to Alchi, our driver showed us how its magnetic elements could pull our vehicle over a short distance

On the eighth day of our holiday, we headed for Chushul, 131 km away, driving through the Harong plains. We saw many *kiang* (local wild ass) that were as graceful as horses. We also noticed six black-necked cranes, an endangered species that only breeds in Ladakh. After lunch at the Chushul army mess, we visited the Major Shaitan Singh memorial nearby. The officer and 114 men had fought valiantly at Rezang La during the 1962 war; only four survived.

We first glimpsed the river Indus, looking more like a stream, as we approached Loma, 72 km away. Driving along the river, we witnessed the changing moods as it traversed verdant farms and picturesque villages. Another 60-odd km—the roads were good here—brought us to the army guesthouse at Chumathang by evening. Bathing in water from the famous sulphur hot springs in this area did much to wash away our tiredness! I woke up often during the night with a choked feeling that deep breaths or *pranayama* would set right. During

the trip, everyone used the portable oxygen cylinders we'd carried except Samar and Anjana. The next day, we had packed lunch at Tso Moriri, about 82 km from Chumathang. Known for its migratory birds, the beautiful lake seems to reflect every shade of blue. On our return, we spent a quiet evening at the guesthouse playing cards.

Day 10 was the 240 km journey to Leh, stopping at two monasteries en route. One of the largest monasteries belonging to the Drukpa order, the Hemis Gompa is 45 km south of Leh. Founded in 1630, the woodwork and murals are impressive while the museum gives the visitor a good idea about Ladakh. Thiksey Gompa is about 17 km short of Leh. Perched on a hilltop, it is the most beautiful among the monasteries in the area. Besides the three-storey-tall statue of Maitriya Buddha, there are statues of the thousand-armed Avalokitesvara, Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhisattavas. Around 80 monks live here, many of them young boys. A film unit shooting a Tollywood serial looked

incongruous in the surroundings! After a late lunch, we shopped for silver jewellery and woollen shawls. We returned to the guesthouse only after dinner. On our way back, we met a French lady on her 16th visit to Ladakh. She was trekking from Alchi, 69 km west of Leh, to Manali.

Instead of seeing the palace and monastery in Leh, we decided to visit Alchi. On the way, we passed the famed 'magnetic mountain'; our driver switched off the engine to show us how its magnetic elements could pull the vehicle over a short distance! The religious enclave at Alchi, believed to be built by Kashmiri sculptors around the 11th century, was taken over by the Lekir Monastery during the 15th century. On our return, we plucked apricots from the fruit-laden trees.

On 7 August—Day 12!—we left Leh with heavy hearts, boarding a flight to Jammu. At Jammu railway station, we boarded a train for the 10-hour trip to Delhi. So many thoughts warred in my head: joy at having experienced such pristine beauty; relief that the trip went off without any health emergency; pride that the 45 minutes of daily *pranayama* I had prescribed held everyone in good stead; and a resolution that I, along with old friends and new, would definitely return.



# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Editor **Tejbir Singh** looks back on 50 years of *Seminar* magazine

Just out of school, I found myself climbing the stairs to the office of *Seminar* magazine in Malhotra Building on Janpath in New Delhi. The founder editors, Raj and Romesh Thapar, were the parents of a girl I was friendly with in school, so naturally I was apprehensive. Subconsciously perhaps I was keen to make a good impression, but wondered what they would make of a young boy keen on reading a serious magazine. Being clever people, I was sure they would see through my little subterfuge. But that did not deter me from going to the office to pay my subscription. Little did I know that in coming years I would be climbing the same staircase every day for over four decades.

*Seminar* was born in Bombay in September 1959, and it was only a few years later that it moved to Delhi for personal rather than professional reasons. It was early in their working lives that the Thapars realised the importance of presenting different points of view around a single subject. It was this core belief in the basic intelligence of people to make an informed choice when they thought of the idea of a symposium on paper. In the words of the founders, the idea was "to gather the facts and ideas of this age and to help thinking people arrive at a certain degree of cohesion and clarity in facing the problems of economics, of politics, of culture".

In the September 1999 issue, President K R Narayanan explained: "It was the heyday of Indian democracy. The excitement of practising democracy in the developing society of India, with all its diversities and intricate

social and economic problems in the full flood of intellectual and political freedom was a heady experience for the country. Raj and Romesh caught the mood of the country and ventured into the *Seminar* project with a sense of intellectual adventure and a mission of understanding, clarifying, expounding and interpreting this mood and the major issues clamouring for articulation."

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**Not only has *Seminar* weathered the challenge of generational change, it still holds firm to the values of its founders**

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And so the Thapars proceeded to draw in writers, artists, sociologists, lawyers, philosophers, economists, anthropologists, military men, linguists and political scientists to write on diverse problems. There were issues on food and self-sufficiency, the five-year plans, industrialisation, music, theatre, population, education, health and others on defence preparedness, the role of women in society, whether India should go down the nuclear road. "Truth, *Seminar* unabashedly made the straight point, had many facets; it dared to explore each of them," stated Ashok Mitra, former West Bengal finance minister.

The editors of the journal faced an unusual challenge in 1976 when served with a pre-censorship notice. Despite its small circulation, it appears that

the authorities were upset at the analysis being offered about the state of our society. Citing the Mahatma in a letter to all subscribers, the editors explained their decision to shut down the magazine rather than subject its readers to a less than frank opinion. Fortunately, the decision to hold elections and lift pre-censorship came six months later, and the magazine's journey resumed.

A decade later in 1987, both the founding editors died. Malvika, their daughter, was clear that the magazine would continue. It was a very different India, in an environment of great flux. While the world outside was convulsed by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ascendancy of the idea of globalisation, the society within saw religion assuming a greater role in our public discourse and politics. These times also saw the opening up of the economy chronicled by the emergence of the electronic media.

*Seminar's* hand-designed covers now moved to a new technology and soon the magazine was on the Internet and available to readers across the globe. As we look back at the 50-year journey there is a feeling of quiet satisfaction. Not only has *Seminar* weathered the challenge of generational change, survived, even grown, it has managed to hold firm to the core values of the founders—a belief in free expression, a diversity of views, the ability of readers to make an informed choice. Both Raj and Romesh would be pleased.

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*Tejbir Singh, 61, is the editor of Seminar magazine. Singh lives in Delhi*



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## PASSAGES



# HIDDEN HARMONY

AN EXTRACT FROM *HINDU MUSIC*, COMPILED BY SOURINDRO MOHUN TAGORE IN 1875

The sarangi, though described as small in size and rude in shape, has a harmonious and powerful tone. Yet it has been one of India's most ignored musical instruments. In 1875, a Col PT French recognised that its "tones are perhaps nearer in quality to the human voice than those of any other instruments with which I am acquainted".

"These are the ordinary violins and fiddles of India and are played in the same manner, though differing from them in some respects, as the instruments in use with us. Of these, the saurangi is the most commonly employed. The sarrooda may be called the tenor of second fiddle, and accompanies the saurangi in chords, played by the bow, or by hand as a guitar. The

saurangi has four strings of cat-gut; it is played with a bow, and execution upon it by accomplished performers is frequently striking and pleasing, while the tones are nearer perhaps in quality to the human voice than those of any other instruments with which I am acquainted. Considering its small size and rude shape, the tone is much more sweet and powerful than would be conceived from its appearance and this may be accounted for in two ways. First, that the sounding board is of parchment, stretched over the wooden frame; and second, that below the gut-strings which are played upon, there are 11 others of fine steel wire, tuned exactly with the scale and thus the effect of the notes played is perhaps increased by vibrations upon the wire not beneath. The saurangi

is used by Mohamedan musicians more than by Hindus; and I imagine it may have been introduced into India by the Mohamedans, possibly from Persia. It forms an excellent accomplishment to the voice; and an old friend of mine, an excellent musician and violin player, the late Captain Giberne, Bombay Army, used to prefer one of these instruments to his own violin for concerned pieces in which the violin took a soprano part. The capability of the saurangi for the execution of chromatic passages and harmonies is, to some extent, equal to our violin; but it would be quite possible to improve the native instrument without altering its character, and in such case it might prove a useful addition to our own orchestral effects."



# KAMA'S SUTRA

RANDOM HOUSE INDIA RECENTLY LAUNCHED KAMA KAHANI, INDIA'S FIRST HISTORICAL ROMANCE SERIES IN ENGLISH. FOUR OF THE AUTHORS SHARE THEIR INSPIRATIONS

**G**hazal in the Moonlight takes place in 18th century Lucknow. I loved having the opportunity to recreate that period, to set my story against the backdrop of the Nawabi court with all its intrigues. I read a lot of books about the history of Lucknow; I wanted to get the details of the architecture and politics exactly right. I also used my research as an excuse to watch Muzaffar Ali's *Umrao Jaan* a dozen times and, of course, I re-read the book as well. But once I had a good sense of the time and place, I tried not to write with my research materials all around me. After all, *Ghazal in the Moonlight* is a romance, not a treatise! I wrote by the window so I could see the ocean and the flowerbeds, and I allowed myself to get swept away by the narrative. I hope the book invites readers to surrender to their own imaginations, to travel to one of the most gorgeous cities in the world at the height of its splendour.

—Alessandra Shahbaz, *Ghazal in the Moonlight*

**B**efore embarking on this project, I had read some Danielle Steele, some Georgette Heyer, and some Mills and Boon. Then I decided to read about Ranjit Singh's 18th century Punjab, the historical era I had chosen as the backdrop for *Passion in the Punjab*. It worked. I relied heavily on the grandeur of this place that burgeoned with beauty and magnificence. I watched romantic comedies and historical dramas; read classics and contemporary tales of romantic entanglement. Rani, the heroine of my novel, is a princess in Ranjit Singh's fort. But at the heart of it, she is a woman any one of us could relate to. She struggles with her sense of self; she suspects her lover and also adores him. She does things she is not proud

of and makes lots of mistakes. We all have a little of Rani inside us.

—Kiran Kohl, *Passion in Punjab*

**M**one of the 568 princely states before Independence. Overnight, his world crumbled when his state was absorbed into India after Independence. He refused to leave his palace for a single minute. And rumour has it he 'gave' his Buick away to a man who had presented him with a bottle of

the historical and cultural details of the era form a large part as well. As individuals, my protagonists are strong and independent but together they share a journey where both end up being transformed for the better.

—Sanyogita Rathore, *Mistress to the Yuvraj*

**T**o be as historically accurate as possible, a lot of research was necessary for *The Zamindar's Forbidden Love*. But it wasn't difficult—it



Haresh Patel

rum. My mother's *daai* would recite tales of diamonds as large as a bird's eggs and of sprawling majestic forts, when handsome Nawabs and dashing Maharajas ruled India. That inspired the romance in my novel. A few conversations with my mother about Rajput festivals, long discussions with Narendra Singh Sarila, author of *Once a Prince of Sarila*, and a few hours spent digging up long-discarded outfits in the storeroom was the extent of my research. Besides the romance,

eventually became fun! Even though what I've written is a historical romance, I hope readers relate to the timeless feeling of love and emotions in *The Zamindar's Forbidden Love*. I want my readers to travel back in time through Madhu and Som. Sure, the background, clothes and even behaviours have changed over the years. But there is also something very real in the story and that is the humanness of love—that is not something that ever changes. Love is really timeless.

—Jasmine Saigal, *The Zamindar's Forbidden Love*

The Kama Kahani series is available in bookstores across India. All titles are priced at Rs 150



## REALITY CHECK

### *GHALIB AT DUSK, AND OTHER STORIES*

BY NIGHAT M GANDHI

TRANQUEBAR; RS 200; 175 PAGES

You would expect a woman who spent her early childhood in Bangladesh, adolescence in Pakistan and adulthood in India to have experienced myriad realities that would make for rich stories. The fact that Nighat Gandhi is also a professional mental health counsellor is a bonus, imbuing these stories with a keen insight. A few of these tales are set in Pakistan (Karachi), while others play out in Ahmedabad and Allahabad. No matter the setting, though, the characters in each story are recognisable from the fringes of our own lives. A conflicted father; exploited shop girl; disgruntled wife...you have heard the echoes of their laughter and tears and Gandhi reminds you that their dilemmas are not so distant from your life. Further, she pushes the marginalised into your line

of sight, forcing you to confront their desires and dreams, however uncomfortable. "You think of me as incomplete," the crippled protagonist of the title story "Ghalib at Dusk" tells the object of his love, while she gazes at him in shock and denial. "I know what desire is. I know what torture love is. I have lain awake at nights and felt mad with desire." There is an unflinching honesty to each simply written story that brooks no literary license in order to supply the obligatory twist in the tale so common in this genre. In fact, there is a despondence and pessimism that underlines the entire collection. This is real life folks, unvarnished—Gandhi's gentle way of telling us to wake up and smell the coffee.

—Arati Rajan Menon

## HEADS AND TAILS

### *SAM'S STORY*

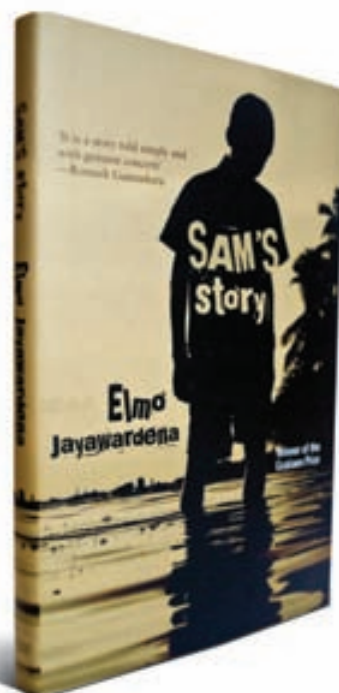
BY ELMO JAYAWARDENA

PENGUIN; RS 299; 173 PAGES

From a remote Sri Lankan village that either tapped rubber from trees or dug sand from rivers, Sam hated the bending and digging that sand-diggers must do all day. Too young and dim-witted to remember to fix coconut shells under sliced-up rubber trees to collect the milk, he got thrown out of the job he thought he could love. So Sam landed up in Colombo at the 'River House' as a houseboy. His time and life soon filled up with banter with Leandro the cook, trips to the barber with his 'white' master and feeding green balls to his master's fish. The scars of a warring country didn't show on Sam but they were there—on his heart. Election battles in his village, a jobless sister, a river that overflowed now and then, and days when there was no money and

food often haunted Sam. These were things he couldn't forget even if he wanted to. His life as a houseboy was eventless, almost boring—all he did was serve drinks to people who spoke about nothing but the war. With no one to talk to, he soon got used to loneliness. Until one day he was called back home. Madiya, his younger brother, showed his back to the militia and came back too. The days that followed reeked of death and fear. The only thing that kept him tied to his village and the River House at the same time was the war. Unlettered and ignorant, Sam leaves his fate to flow with the unruly river in his village and tells his own story with great simplicity; yet it cuts the swathe too hard.

—Meeta Bhatti





## BRIEFLY

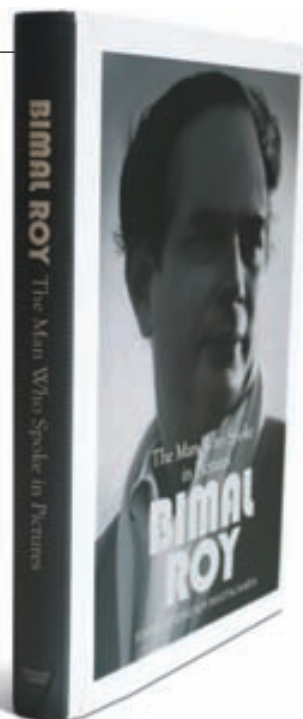
**Padma Viswanathan** is that rare breed of writer that has you at hello. Her debut novel **THE TOSS OF A LEMON** (Tranquebar Press; Rs 499; 619 pages) is the literary equivalent of a cosy quilt you draw closer and tighter around you as the night progresses.



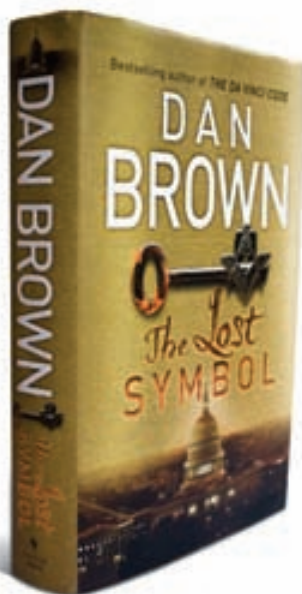
Set in southern India at the turn of the 20th century, this generational saga charts the life of Sivakami, a girl “who looks capable of bearing great burdens”. These include marriage at the age of 10, widowhood at 18 and the task of rearing her two children—Thangam and Vairum, whose names mean gold and diamond respectively—while continuing to respect the boundaries set by her traditional Tamil Brahmin community. Through these fascinating characters, Viswanathan offers the reader insight into Brahmin culture against the backdrop of social and political churn. Rather than attempting to score brownie points from the politically correct by denouncing the caste injustices that form a central part of this novel, she lets harsh realities and arcane practices speak for themselves, and sticks to telling her story. That, in itself, is an act of courage.

## THE MAN WHO SPOKE IN PICTURES:

**BIMAL ROY** (Penguin Viking; 256 pages; Rs 499) is not just **Rinki Roy Bhattacharya**’s homage to her father, but an insight into one of India’s foremost filmmakers. Hailed as a pioneer by Satyajit Ray, Roy’s first film *Udayar Pathe* revolutionised Indian cinema. Perhaps the first to touch the black-and-white screen with shades of grey, his sensitive understanding of human conditions and ability to illuminate mundane characters are reflected in classics like *Do Bigha Zamin*, *Devdas*, *Sujata* and *Madhumati*. Some of India’s leading literary and cinematic celebrities like Mahasweta Devi, Tapan Sinha, Ritwik Ghatak, Nayantra Sahgal, Shyam Benegal, Khalid Mohammed and Gulzar trace his journey from cinematographer to director through anecdotes and essays in the first two sections of the book—‘Bengal’ and ‘Bombay’. The third section—‘Beyond Borders’—includes articles by names like Meghnad Desai and Rachel Dwyer. Written as a tribute on his birth centenary, the book succeeds in placing Roy—whose films continue to inspire Indian filmmakers—“in the context of the Indian cultural legacy where he aspired to belong to and where he certainly belongs”.



Few books have been as anticipated as **Dan Brown**’s **THE LOST SYMBOL** (Bantam Press; Rs 699; 509 pages). Following his adventures in Rome and Paris in *Angels and Demons* and *The Da Vinci Code*, the world’s favourite symbologist Robert Langdon is back, still wearing his Mickey Mouse watch and pointing out secrets hidden in plain view. This time, his focus is Washington DC and the mythology of the Freemasons order. The pace is frenzied as Langdon searches for a hidden Masonic pyramid that holds the secret to the wisdom of the ancients. In the balance lies the life of his mentor Peter Solomon, who is held captive by Mal’akh, the predictably loathsome villain. Along for the ride is Katherine Solomon, Peter’s sister and ‘noetic’ scientist. If you’re wondering, Brown didn’t make that up—noetics is an honest-to-God discipline that explores the idea that human consciousness can affect the physical world. Unfortunately, all this coolness can’t disguise the fact that *The Lost Symbol* just doesn’t crackle like its predecessors. DC Tourism is sure to love it though—now, wait for the walking tours to begin.





# THE VOICE OF THE BLUE GUITAR

Vrinda Nabar on the intangible power of the word

It's hard to believe that a whole year has gone by since the terrible events of last November, events that Mumbaikars still recall with a horror bordering on disbelief. In the months that have followed we have tried to move on with our lives—sadder, but not necessarily with the greater wisdom that should perhaps have accompanied the experience. For me it has been humbling to encounter people who had known loss, suffering, even a fortuitous escape. To look into their eyes and see knowledge I can only imagine as I clumsily fumble for the right words and remember how the Victorian poet Tennyson had voiced the hopelessness of expressing emotion through "matter-moulded forms of speech" when mourning the death of his dear friend Arthur Hallam. Other writers have said the same thing in different ways, and though one part of me agrees with them, I also know that language is full of possibilities—that, as the philosopher Wittgenstein once said, the unutterable is unutterably contained in what has been uttered. It is this intangible power of a half-phrase, a disjointed sentence, a metaphor that defies literal translation, that can reach out in countless ways to those one is comforting.

Because literature was my subject, I turn to it naturally whenever my own homespun efforts seem to lack lustre. And so, talking to a friend who hardly seemed to listen, so overwhelmed was she by the magnitude of her personal tragedy, I found myself using poetry to get some sort of a response from her. I surprised myself initially by choosing the most unlikely of poets, American poet Wallace Stevens (1879-1955).

Stevens is hardly a people's poet and even those who occasionally turn to poetry in English would rarely forage among his work to choose an apt quotation. At another level, however, Stevens, who can write among other things of *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, is full of the most amazing revelations. I found myself telling this woman who was just picking up the threads of her life of the ways in which Stevens spoke of finding order in chaos and retrieving some hope thereby. Of his iconic poem *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, one of the most ambitious things he wrote, which represents the essential Stevens—one who emphasised that life was open to infinite interpretations.

**It is the intangible  
power of a half-phrase,  
a metaphor that can reach  
out in countless ways to  
those one is comforting**

*The man bent over his guitar,  
A shearsman of sorts.  
The day was green.  
They said, "You have a blue guitar,  
You do not play things as they are."  
The man replied, "Things as they are  
Are changed upon the blue guitar."*

As I read these lines, a little movement, a tentative clearing of the throat made me stop and listen. The words were slow coming but when they did they were all over the place. I heard of grief and loss but also of social pres-

ures and expectations and how they made it impossible to move on, which is why I speak at the start of this column of the greater wisdom that can and does elude us when we revisit moments of tragedy, turning those we seek to comfort into prisoners of, not *their* but *our* own, image. It is not they but we who often refuse to let go, making normalcy seem outrageous and uncaring.

Chameleon-like, a symbol of whatever one chooses to see in him, it took the man with the blue guitar to give my friend the courage to point that accusing finger at a community that had swamped her resilience. The lines quoted are above all an assertion of non-conformism, the man's faith in both his vision and the potential of change an acknowledgement of the need for responsible acceptance of individual differences, a norm that holds for every kind of real life situation, from the clash of cultures to generational conflicts, from work-defined crises to interpersonal relationships between life partners, parents and children, and friends, from ways of grieving to not seeing grief as an end in itself. A touchstone that marks the way as we grow older, making it possible to validate our convictions while allowing for other points of view. For we are all of us—the lover, the believer, the poet, the painter – a "part", a "tenacious particle" of a giant whole, as Wallace Stevens wrote elsewhere: *the giant ever changing, living in change*.

Vrinda Nabar, 61, is a Mumbai-based feminist writer



I am a 56 year-old HIV care worker. I would like to help the elderly in whatever capacity I can. You can contact me at:

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Tel: 022-24180859/  
65934441

I am 64 years old. My hobbies include travelling and going for long walks. I wake up at 3 am every day and walk to Aarey Colony in Goregaon. I am a member of the Aarey Walkers' Club. I am interested in getting in touch with silvers who

share similar interests.

**Vasant A Shinde**  
C 5/55, Satsang Bharati  
Co-operative Housing  
Society, Upper Govind  
Nagar, Malad (East),  
Mumbai-400 097  
Tel: 022-28758850

I run a diagnostic service in Mumbai that offers health monitoring services for elders, diagnostic services for diabetes, hypertension record maintenance, home delivery of medicines, talk therapy, collection of pathological samples from home and a special counselling service to overcome loneliness.

**Dr Kusum Doshi**  
At Home Medicare

**Services,**  
1 Ankita Apts, Nehru  
Road,  
Vile Parle East,  
Mumbai-400 057  
Tel: 022-26141334  
E-mail: kusumdoshi@  
hotmail.com

I am 71 years old. I would like to bring it to the notice of senior citizens that you can avail mediclaim from a government insurance company, up to the age of 80, even if you are suffering from an ailment. Please contact me to know more about the procedure.

**Dinesh Bhachech**  
Shapatya Bungalows,  
Gayatri Krupa,  
Behind Taksh Bungalows,  
Vasna Road,  
Vadodara-390 015  
E-mail: dinesh\_bhach@  
yahoo.com  
Tel: 0265-2251081,  
9327211853

I am 55 years old and interested in collecting coins and currency of Indian and overseas origin. Anyone who has a collection and wants to part with it or knows someone interested in doing so can contact me at the following address.

**V S Narayana Swamy**  
Building 8-B, 302,  
Neelam Nagar,  
Mulund East,  
Mumbai-400 081  
E-mail: s.sivaiyer@  
yahoo.co.in  
Tel: 022-21634236

I am 61 years old, married and have two children.

I am a member of Dignity Foundation. After 38 years in banking, I am now retired, well settled and eager to help lonely seniors by offering companionship and moral support.

**Manohar R P Rao**  
C-15 Trupthi Apartment,  
Mahatma Phule Road,  
Mulund East,  
Mumbai-400 081  
Tel: 9969038909

I am a 75 year-old yoga teacher. I have been practicing yoga since the past 40 years. My hobbies include fitness and exploring nature.

**Kanaiyalal Goradia**  
Zaveri House, 1st Floor,  
293, Tardev Road,  
Nana Chowk,  
Mumbai-400 007  
Tel: 9322220013,  
022-23875213

I am 71 years old. I would like to inform all seniors that on vigorous and persistent follow up by the All India Non Pensioned cum Senior Citizen Retirees Association in Bengaluru, the 2nd Pay Revision Committee for Central Public Sector has recommended financial and health care benefits for retirees. For details, please contact Mr Das at 080-25227715 or Mr Abraham at 080-25455160.

**B S Das**  
19 (Old 511)  
1st Cross 'B' Block,  
4th Main, Vinayaknagar,  
Airport Road,  
Bengaluru-560 017  
Tel: 080-25227715



I am 73 years old. I am looking for a travelling companion to accompany me on a tour all over India and abroad. I have already travelled all over the UK, New Zealand and Australia. I like collecting clippings on spiritual teachings and old coins, photography, listening to old songs and making new friends.

**Rajinder Kumar Jayswal**  
Sector C, Pocket-I, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

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was laid with the financial and technical support of the West German government after the signing of the first Indo-German agreement in Bonn. Inaugurated by Professor Humayun Kabir, then union minister for scientific research and cultural affairs, it now ranks among the 'Institutions of National Importance', as adjudged by the Government of India. IIT Madras celebrates its golden jubilee this year.

### THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: **NOVEMBER 1959**

- On 16 November 1959, *The Sound of Music*, with music and lyrics by Rodgers and Hammerstein, premiered in New York City at the Lunt Fontanne Theatre in Broadway. Mary Martin starred as Maria von Trapp, a role that was later immortalised on film by Julie Andrews.
- On 18 November 1959, William Wyler's iconic film *Ben-Hur* premiered at Loew's Theatre in New York City.
- On 19 November 1959, the Ford Motor Company announced the discontinuation of the unpopular Edsel.



# Experience

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### TOTAL COVERAGE

Now you can pay for your doctor's visits, medical bills, diagnostic tests and maternity-related expenses through medical insurance. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority has given its nod to 21 players in the life insurance sector to meet all medical expenses of customers; at present, only expenses incurred during hospitalisation are covered. Insurance companies like Apollo DKV, Star Health and Allied Insurance are already out with modified insurance plans that cover expenses incurred for dental care, spectacles and even hearing aids. All good things come for a price though—to avail of such comprehensive coverage, consumers may have to shell out almost twice their annual premium.

## BLEACHOREXIA

*n.* An obsession with having one's teeth whitened.

Also: - **bleach-orexia**,

- **bleachorexic** *n*, *adj.*

**Example:** Overuse of teeth whiteners appears to be the dental profession's biggest concern. Excessive bleaching can dehydrate teeth temporarily, making them extra sensitive. As well, peroxide, which soaks through enamel to break up stain-forming molecules, can irritate gums if used too aggressively. People who want teeth whiter than nature intended, reaching repeatedly for the peroxide, suffer from **bleachorexia**, a word coined by the American Dental Association.

—Deidre Kelly, "Price choppers: Get pearly whites for 99 bucks", *The Globe and Mail*, 24 September 2009

## mumblecore

*n.* An independent film genre characterised by low-budget production values, unknown actors, and a constant stream of low-key, semi-improvised dialogue.

**Example:** I use the term comedy advisedly, since the mood of this cautiously surreal, absurdist movie is predominantly glum. Much of the time its 28 year-old protagonist, Brian Weathersby (Paul Dano), who works as a sales clerk for an upscale Manhattan mattress company, wears a slightly stricken expression on his otherwise poker face. Mr Dano's low-key performance types Brian as a close spiritual relative of the polite young men who drift through **mumblecore** films.

—Stephen Holden, "The swagger of fathers, the drift of children", *The New York Times*, 3 April 2009

## PUT-POCKETING

*pp.* Putting an object into a person's pocket without that person knowing it.

Also: - **putpocketing**, —**put-pocket**, **putpocket** *n.*

**Example:** London police warned Friday that an advertising campaign for a mobile phone operator involving former pickpockets actually slipping money into people's pockets could cause trouble. In the **put-pocketing** stunt for TalkTalk, a total of 100,000 pounds will be 'given back' to recession-hit Brits by a 20-strong team of former pickpockets.

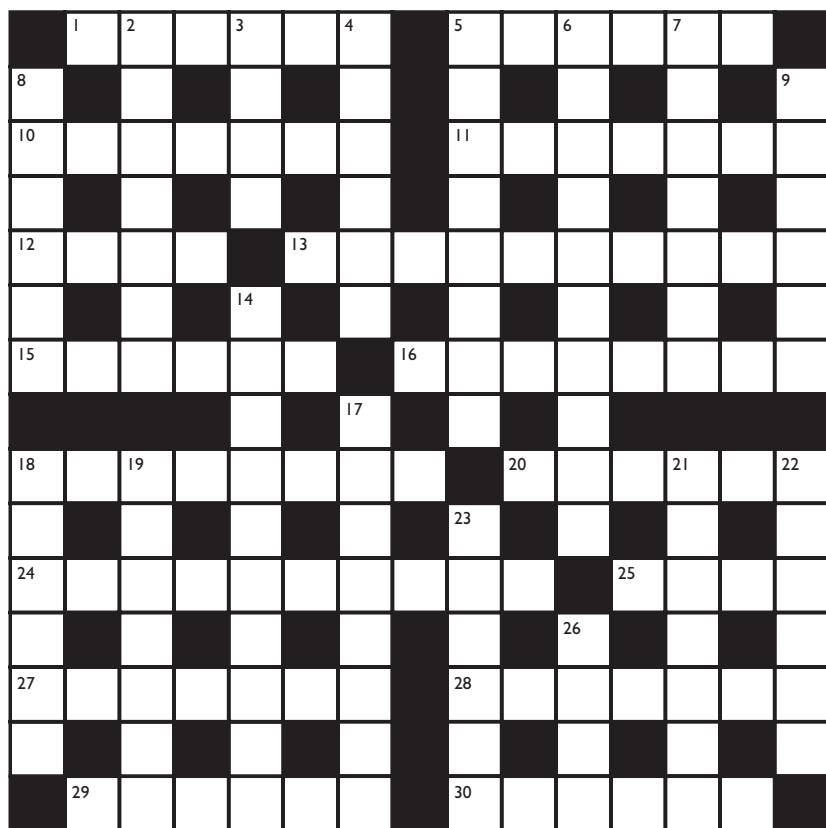
—London police oppose 'put-pocketing' stunt", Agence France Presse, 21 August 2009



You cannot change your destination overnight—but you can change your direction overnight.

— American motivational speaker Jim Rohn



**EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 61****BY RAJU BHARATAN****ACROSS**

- 1 Whose idea of a joke is it to suggest that this urban maidservant is the strong and silent type? (6)
- 5 The horny one in bed does (6)
- 10 Lord knows what's in store here! (7)
- 11 Strike in which you are not prepared to stand up and be counted? (7)
- 12 Walls have them (4)
- 13 Beauty of being from the Garden City? (6 4)

- 15 The left arm of Bishan Singh Bedi was where it came to exploiting a patch (4 2)
- 16 Journey's end, now that you've done 'time' in the States (8)
- 18 A cad retreating, he is first and last a cause of worry (8)
- 20 That on his brow, even as he occupies this, suggests how worried Mahindra Singh Dhoni is as India captain today (6)
- 24 Stage of year in which, financially,

you are neither here nor there (5-5)

- 25 What Salil Chowdhury gamely claimed to be of music (4)
- 27 In short, Local Apparent Noon at either side (7)
- 28 Slander as 'by itself'? (7)
- 29 Little birds we lost (6)
- 30 This compiler working on a tennis crossword is? (6)

**DOWN**

- 2 Experience not overcome (7)
- 3 A toss-up it is whether you do (4)
- 4 List an act by way of fixing (6)
- 5 Memorable moment in Anil Kumble's career, apt it is to end it all (4 4)
- 6 What you have to be to rise from the smallest role in films (5 5)
- 7 Rote held by pin for health? (7)
- 8 Navjot Singh Sidhu does to differ (6)
- 9 Funny part of it in cast (6)
- 14 Catchable by no stretch of the imagination? (3 1 6)
- 17 Fellow friends at your feet? (8)
- 18 The moral force behind magazine journalism (6)
- 19 Guide to the moving plane's having no gas problems? (7)
- 21 Sent for where it's the case of a fatal road accident? (1 6)
- 22 Side one after one (6)
- 23 Mrs going about in a succession of towers
- 26 Just refused to keep mouth shut? (4)

For answers, see Page 79

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

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





## SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 61

**ACROSS:** 1 Mumbai (Mum/bai); 5 Bleeps; 10 Godowns (God/owns); 11 Sitdown; 12 Ears; 13 (B) Saroja Devi (from the Garden City of Bangalore); 15 Spot on; 16 Terminus (Term/in/US); 18 Headache (He/A/dac/he: A cad retreating: *he* is first and last); 20 Crease; 24 March-April; 25 Pele ("I am the Pele of Music!" said Salil Chowdhury); 27 Atlanta (At/LAN/ta: in short, LAN is *Local Apparent Noon*, at either side); 28 Asperse (as/per se: *per se* meaning *in itself*, hence: as 'in itself'); 29 Owlets (6 letters of *we lost* rearranged); 30 Setter

**DOWN:** 2 Undergo (under/go: *Not overcome*; undergo means *experience*); 3 Bowl; 4 Instal (*List an*, 6 letters of *instal* rearranged); 5 Best Over; 6 Extra smart; 7 Protein (*p/rote/in*: *rote* in *pin*); 8 Agrees (*to differ*); 9 Antics (meaning *Funny part of it*, in cast: 6 letters of *antics* rearranged); 14 Not a chance; 17 Chappals (*Chap/pals*: *Chap* meaning *fellow*, *pals* meaning *friends*, hence *Fellow friends*); 18 HIM-MAT; 19 Airflow; 21 Eleven (11: *one after one*); 23 Minars (*M/in a/rs*: *Mrs* going about *in a*, Minars, a succession of towers); 26 Spat

## SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

### SHAPE UP

2	4	1	3
1	1	2	4
3	4	4	1
1	2	3	3

□ = 1 ☆ = 2 ● = 3 △ = 4

### SYMBO-LOGICAL

■ = 30 ◆ = 11 ★ = 10 ▲ = 1

### BOYS IN THE BAND

Name	Job	City	Age
Daniel	truck driver	Cleveland	21
Darren	pizza delivery	San Francisco	22
Greg	carpenter	Seattle	19
Patrick	waiter	New York	20

### SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

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

### SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

	11	20	27	6	10	12			30	34
27	6	4	1	5	8	3		17	9	8
25	5	6	7	1	2	4		10	8	2
	12	3	9		24	5	2	7	1	9
	19	7	3	9		20	3	8	4	5
		8	5	3	10	5	3	8	5	3
	32	29			6	2	8	29		
18	7	9	2	4	1	3	19	9	3	7
7	6	1		18		11	10			
			13	8	5		8	3	15	
21	4	6	8	3		8	2	1	5	
				18						
25	8	2	5	7	3		8	2	6	
					11	15	2	6		6
10	2	8		31	9	2	8	6	1	5

**“In whatever way we can, each one of us should try and make the world a better place.”**

**Tapan Dasgupta, 70, Kolkata, for making his neighbourhood the best it can be**



SHILBHADRA DUTTA

**T**apan Dasgupta does not like to be known as an activist or a good Samaritan. But when things go wrong for the 10,000 residents of Golf Green Complex in Kolkata—where he lives—he’s the man they turn to. Whether it is getting a fuse fixed, hospitalising sick neighbours or prodding municipal authorities to implement better civic amenities, the former banking professional never tires of lending a helping hand. Last year, he cut through bureaucratic red tape and helped start a bus service from Golf Green to Howrah station. A few months ago, Tapanda—as he is fondly called—served a legal notice to the West Bengal Housing Board to prevent the construc-

tion of a high-rise on land intended for a local school. Last year, he set up a community centre in his neighbourhood equipped with a library, indoor games facility, banquet hall and police outpost. Dasgupta also organises regular blood donation camps in the area in memory of a helpful IPS officer who died in an accident. Though his wife and son complain about his hectic schedule, they are supportive of all his endeavours. Recently when he read a newspaper article about a hawker’s daughter in rural Bengal who had fared brilliantly in her SSC board exams but could not afford to go for higher studies, he tracked her down and offered a generous donation. Here’s a man willing to go any distance to spread a little sunshine.





Carnival



White Rann



White Rann & Black Hill



Pingleswar Beach



Resort-Mandvi



Mandvi Beach



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