

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

NOVEMBER 2011 ₹ 30



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Yesterday once more

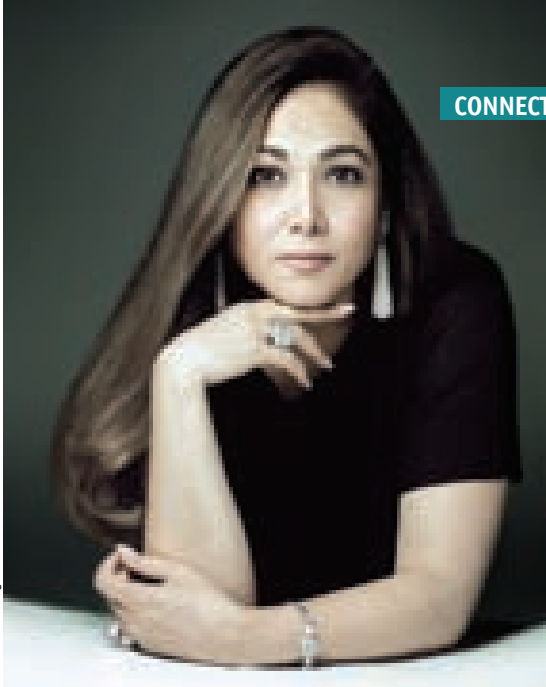
If time travel were possible, what would you tell your younger self?

That's the intriguing premise of *Dear Me: A Letter to My Sixteen-Year-Old Self* (Simon & Schuster), a collection featuring celebrities—from actors and authors to artists and rock stars—who get the opportunity to speak to the teenagers they once were through words. The end results are insightful and inspiring; some exhilarating as they celebrate a life wonderfully lived, some deeply poignant as they speak of avenues not taken.

It set me thinking. I remember myself at 16, impetuous, callow, brimming with energy and verve, eager, even anxious, to take a huge bite out of life and savour every flavour. Even with the luxury of hindsight, I realise there's nothing fundamental I would like to change about who I was then—or indeed who I am now. But there are certainly things I wish I had known and understood better.

Foremost among them is the need to spend time (much, much more time) with our parents. We all take our parents for granted, just as our parents did with theirs. It is an unwritten rule of love, I suppose; the one relationship that exists and thrives instinctively without the need for a social, legal or moral construct. And it is the one relationship that sustains us through every

Suresh Natarajan



phase, every meander of life. However, life has a way of taking us over, consuming our time, depleting our energies, pushing us on a treadmill that gives us scant opportunity to pause and contemplate, let alone dedicate ourselves to the primeval bond.

By the time we begin to truly realise the import of this bond and seek to reengage ourselves with the lives of our parents, so much sand has already slipped through the hourglass and the fragility of life becomes a frightening reality. I know I won't be the first, or the last, to realise this. In fact, this comprehension, from my own experience and that of my friends, was one of the prime catalysts for the establishment of Harmony for Silvers Foundation.

I know I can't be 16 again and live life over. But I will still write that letter—and give it to my children. Because the cycle of life, love and learning remains eternal.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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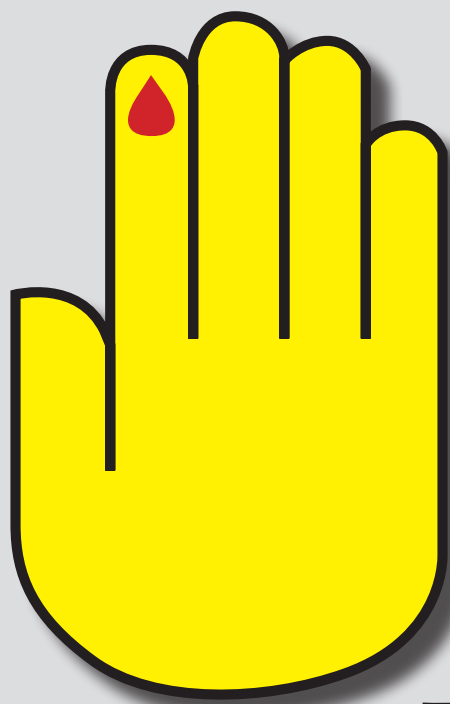
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cover feature

Bitter truths on the rising burden of diabetes—and how the disease has India in its grip

Cover imaging by **Jit Ray**

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MAGICAL MOMENTS

Vasant Jadhav looks back on a lifetime of magical tricks

ART OF TOGETHERNEES

A Kerala-based couple discover their artistic side after retirement

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column one

The ant with a sugar crystal on its back from children's stories might well be the perfect metaphor for the world's current diabetes burden. Though research has gone ahead to prove that eating sugar has nothing to do with the onset of diabetes, the gravity of the situation couldn't be better represented. It's Blue Circle Day or World Diabetes Day on 12 November. We don't need one day in the whole year to bring home the reality of the rising problems associated with the disease. What we need is a clearer perspective, better understanding of its ramifications and greater awareness. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* hits the nail on the head with "Bitter Truths" on the cover. It's our own little effort to answer some of the important questions surrounding diabetes, which has reached the level of an epidemic but still doesn't get the attention it should.

Besides being informative, this month's cover feature is also indicative of how we can turn a disadvantage on its head. For this reason, the highlight of the issue is a feature on four people who abhor waste ("Trash Craft"). They turn their garbage bins into personal laboratories and work up ideas on how to process waste into old clothes, solid kitchen waste and, of course, plastic. The result is a cleaner microcosm, many more of which would mean a better world.

By way of diverting their energies to neighbourhood causes, our silvers also use their time and skill well. Indeed, using what you have learnt and practised for years is on top of the list for our readers and subjects alike. As examples, read the stories of Satish Kumar Kohli ('Second Careers') and Ammini Ramachandran ('Soul Food and Soul Mates') and be inspired!

—Meeta Bhatti

The magazine *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has always been synonymous with silver empowerment. The dedication of your team in bringing out this magazine shines through each and every page. This is why I am delighted to share this with you. In India, we generally have a condescending approach towards public-sector and government organisations. But a recent experience changed my perception.



The occasion was the 56th annual conference of the Insurance Institute of India, which was held in Thiruvananthapuram between 23 and 25 September 2011. The host was the Thiruvananthapuram Insurance Institute, which was celebrating its golden jubilee. On 25 September, a cultural programme was organised. Before it began, the Insurance Institute honoured all its past office bearers, most of whom had worked for the Life Insurance Corporation of India and had done honorary work for the Insurance Institute. The master of ceremonies, Mr Radhakrishnan Pillai, himself a silver, announced the names of every office bearer and each person's unique strengths.

For the silvers honoured, it was a momentous occasion; some even brought their grandchildren. The entire atmosphere was charged with emotion and nostalgic fervour. I don't want to compare the public sector with the private sector but in an era where the threat of dismissal and recession looms large, it was remarkable that the loyalty of silvers was rewarded—much after they had retired. As I was witness to the event, I thought I must share it with a magazine, and who else but *Harmony-Celebrate Age* could fit the bill?

G Venkatesh Via email

I wanted to thank *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for the thoughtful article covering Arise Free India (AFI) and its work in your October issue ('Etcetera', "1971: Part 2"). I cannot help but wonder about the opportunity of a symbiotic relationship between AFI and Harmony and would love to explore the same.

Deepak A Parekh Chair, Board of Directors, Arise Free India

seniors' homes across 4 acre next to SOS Children's Village near Tirupati. The project will include outreach activities in rural areas. If any readers of the magazine and active senior citizens are interested in knowing more about the project and getting involved, please email me at bc_harinath@yahoo.com.

Prof B C Harinath Sevagram

ERRATUM

In 'Orbit – Second Careers' in the October issue, we featured ExpertEase, a free job portal for silvers ("Click Work"). The address of the portal was printed as www.seniorexperts.com. The actual address is www.seniorexperts.org. The error is regretted.

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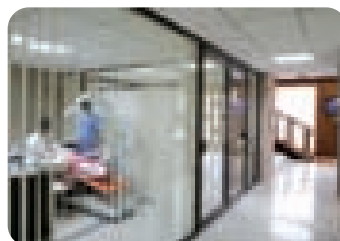
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► **FACE OFF**

Love you, honey

After all the exotic ingredients making their way into anti-ageing creams, here's one that is refreshingly simple: honey. And it appears to have trounced the competition. As London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, a face pack made from **Active Chilean Rainforest Honey, which costs a relatively modest £ 8.49 (₹ 650) a jar, claims to reverse the ageing process by up to 10 years** by smoothing fine lines on the face, neck and hands; tightening the skin; reducing stretch marks; and preventing sun-burnt skin from peeling. The edible honey, derived from a region in southern Chile, has been used by local tribes to treat wounds and skin ailments for centuries. According to a clinical study in 2009 by the Royal College

of Surgeons in Dublin, this variety of honey, which is not pasteurised, is naturally acidic, high in antioxidants, and releases a small amount of hydrogen peroxide that fights bacteria that commonly infect wounds. The study concluded that the honey's anti-ageing properties could lie in the presence of enzymes that break down scar tissue and make ageing and sun-damaged skin more elastic. "Since it was launched in the US in April, sales have grown by 400 per cent," says Jamie Christie of The Active Honey Company, which markets the honey. "We expect the same response in the UK. It's one of the most exciting skincare products to hit the shelves for a decade. It has just one drawback when used as a face cream—it's a bit sticky!"



Oktoberfest!

Here are some of the measures announced across the country for silvers on the occasion of **World Elders' Day** on 1 October:

- The Karnataka government announced that people over the age of 60 (from the earlier 65) will now be recognised as senior citizens and avail the resultant benefits in finance, travel and other amenities across the state.
- In a draft policy, the Maharashtra government proposes to lower the age of 'seniority' from 65 to 60 years; categorise silvers in three age groups (60-70, 70-80, and 80 and above) for financial

benefits; set up a quota for silvers in state-sponsored housing projects; establish concession at state tourism guesthouses; and institute better facilities and toll-free help lines.

- The Delhi government announced monthly DTC bus passes for silvers in the National Capital Region (NCR) on a nominal payment of ₹ 50 for travel in non-AC buses and ₹ 150 for travel in AC buses. There will be no income ceiling (unlike earlier) for issuing these passes to silvers over the age of 60. Further, free travel for the blind will be extended from non-AC buses to AC buses in NCR.

OFF-TRACK: SENIOR CITIZENS' GROUPS ACROSS BENGALURU CAME TOGETHER IN SEPTEMBER TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE UPCOMING METRO RAIL IN THE CITY. THEY CONTEND THAT IT HAS BEEN ENGINEERED TO BE INHOSPITABLE AND UNFRIENDLY TO SILVERS, WITH NO BUILT-IN SEATING ARRANGEMENTS OR MEDICAL FACILITY ON THE STATION PREMISES.



Care in KERALA

For silvers in Kerala, 2012 will begin on a bright note. As part of the National Programme for the Health Care for the Elderly (NPHCE), the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) will launch **clinics for geriatric care** across the state. Beginning with clinics in Pathanamthitta, four more districts will be covered by the end of next year. By 2015, the entire state is expected to have regular geriatric clinics at the primary health centre (PHC) level. "The general hospital at Pathanamthitta will not only have a geriatric clinic but also a geriatric ward with 10 beds for inpatient care," Rajeev Sadanandan, state health secretary, tells media. There will be facilities for laboratory investigations and provision of medicines. Existing specialities like general medicine, orthopaedics, ophthalmology and ENT will also provide geriatric services. Family healthcare providers will give special attention to bedridden silvers, provide linkage with other support groups and day care centres operational in the area and arrange for supportive devices from PHCs. While PHCs will run weekly geriatric clinics and maintain a record of silvers from the first visit, community health centres (CHCs) will run geriatric clinics twice a week and house a rehabilitation unit for physiotherapy and counselling. Additional staff such as rehabilitation workers and physiotherapists will be recruited. Cases that cannot be handled at the PHC, CHC or district hospital will be referred to a larger city hospital.

SOFT TARGETS

Fraud against the elderly has reached such alarming proportions in the US that an entire institution has been created to study and combat it. Stanford University's Centre on Longevity and the FINRA Investor Education Foundation recently launched a new interdisciplinary **Research Centre on the Prevention of Financial Fraud**. The California-based centre will be a resource for law enforcement, the government and research groups studying how Americans lose billions of dollars each year to fraud. "The elderly are clear targets of fraud and



their victimisation is widespread but the factors that go into making people vulnerable are not well understood," says Laura Carstensen, the centre's founding director. "Even people who did everything right are finding themselves in situations where their savings are being stolen. Our early findings show that older people are not necessarily targeted because they are frail and helpless but because they often have more money." The Centre will hold its inaugural conference, 'The State and Future of Financial Fraud', on 3 November in Washington DC.

DIY

THE TSAO FOUNDATION, A NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION, HAS LAUNCHED PROJECT SELF-CARE ON HEALTH FOR OLDER PERSONS IN SINGAPORE, WHICH WILL EQUIP 400 SILVERS (FOR STARTERS) WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO MANAGE THEIR OWN HEALTH. THIS INCLUDES TAKING CARE OF THE BODY'S VITAL ORGANS, DEVELOPING A HAPPY MIND, ASKING DOCTORS THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, AND MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC DISEASE.

Mortal GAINS

If we could just look beyond our own self-interest, we would realise that the concept of ageing is actually good for our species. A path-breaking study devised by the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil has shown that **we may actually have 'evolved' ageing to help us survive.** Using computer simulations of two 'competing populations'—one mortal, one immortal—the team proved that under some conditions, it could be an advantage to age and die. The computer models behaved very differently over time; initially, the 'immortal' species (who only died when killed deliberately or by accident) had an advantage but as more random elements were introduced (like mu-



tations) the mortal population that endured death through ageing had an advantage. "A species that grows old can drive immortal competitors to extinction," writes study leader Andre Martins in journal *Evolution*. "This counter-intuitive result arises from the pruning caused by the death of elder individuals. When there is change and mutation, each genera-

tion is slightly better adapted to new conditions. If human beings were ever to become immortal, we could eventually be exterminated by rival species who had the 'advantage' of growing old and dying. Thus, there is a clear advantage for the ageing species to adapt faster—and this adaptability somehow compensates part of the detrimental effect of death."



CITIES OF JOY

Cool doesn't automatically equal comfort, at least as far as silvers are concerned. For instance, while New York and Los Angeles are the acme of urban cool, they fail to make the list of the **Top 10 cities for senior living in the US**, according to a new survey conducted for insurance company Bankers Life and Casualty Company. Silvers ranked cities based on criteria such as healthcare, economy, social

life, environment, spiritual life, housing, transportation and crime. "We weren't interested in another study on where to enjoy your retirement, but instead wanted to find cities that did the best job in providing the services and support seniors need," says Scott Perry, president of Bankers Life and Casualty Company. "The top-ranked cities aren't what come to mind when you think about where to spend your golden years, but they scored high in

the criteria most important to people over the age of 65." The honours go to:

- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Denver, Colorado
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- San Francisco, California
- Portland, Oregon
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Newark, New Jersey

Making a connection

Doreen Burton, 75, has a date with two 16 year-old boys every Saturday morning—they come to the activities centre at her care home in Leicester and help her scan all her old photographs, some of them dating back to the 1950s and most featuring her late husband. They also upload these pictures for her on free network Finerday (www.finerday.com), where she shares her digital archive with friends and relatives across the world. "It's amazing to see these old pictures come alive once again on the computer," she tells *The Times* of London. "And spending time with these two lads is the icing on the cake! I bake a batch of muffins for them every time they are here."

Credit for Burton's evident happiness goes to **Adopt a Care**

Home, a British initiative that gets students into care homes to help silvers get online. Launched this March, the project is the brainchild of former nurse and care home manager Lilla Harris and her partner Howard Bashford, who also established Finerday, which aims to encourage social networking among silvers. With 40 care homes in the network and another 100 slated to be on board by

the end of the year, Adopt a Care Home is already being lauded for its contribution to digital inclusion. "Schools and colleges are coming forward in droves to volunteer their students for the project," says Harris. "As the students get academic credits for their participation, they are more than willing to step forward. This ensures that the project will remain sustainable."



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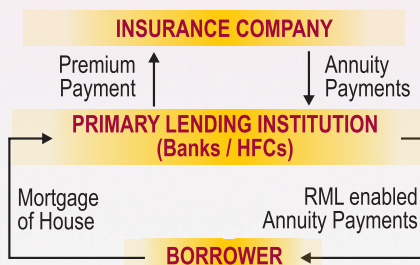
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Other'wise'

Fables aside, slow can actually win the race. A study at the University of Montreal in Canada insists that **though the ageing brain is slower than its younger counterpart, it's actually wiser**, enabling it to achieve an equal level of performance. Two groups of people—aged 18 to 35, and 55 to 75—who were active professionally were asked to perform a language pairing task; the rules of the task were changed repeatedly through the exercise. While the younger participants were much quicker initially, their pace tended to slow every time the rules changed whereas their silver counterparts remained working at a steady pace, taking every shift in their stride. "The older brain has experience and knows that noth-



ing is gained by jumping the gun," writes study leader Oury Monchi in the August issue of journal *Cerebral Cortex*. "We now have neurobiological evidence showing that age brings wisdom. As the brain gets older, it learns to better allocate its resources."

Talk of the town

In August Harmony for Silvers Foundation organised a **Diabetes Health Talk—Meethi Baatein** (Sweet Talk)—in Mumbai in association with diversified global healthcare provider sanofi-aventis. On 8 October, it was **New Delhi's** turn. Over 140 silvers gathered at the Vasant Kunj Senior Citizens' Welfare Association's community hall to deepen their understanding of diabetes. Apart from an analysis of symptoms, causes, myths and dietary modifications, the silvers had their share of fun, contributing to the discussions, participating in the quizzes and games, and exulting in the success stories of those who battled the disease—and won.

Subsequent events will be held at Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. To be a part of them, email us at contact.us@harmonyindia.org



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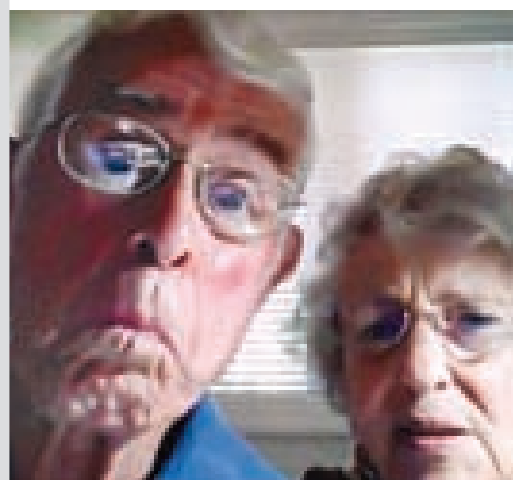


SILVER STREAK

We've said it time and again: **silver is the new black. And now, ever so slowly, the fashion industry appears to be catching up**, at least in the UK. To make this case, London newspaper *The Observer* points to some recent developments. For starters, new campaigns for retail giant Marks & Spencer and popular shoe company Clarks feature models in their 40s and 50s with grey hair. And at London Fashion Week this year, 82 year-old Daphne Self walked the ramp for design house Antipodium, while Carmen dell'Orefice, 80, and Valerie Pain, 67, graced the catwalk at Italian designer Alberta di Ferretti's show. Much of the credit for this goes to 52 year-old TV presenter turned body image campaigner Caryn Franklin (see *photograph*), who co-founded award-winning initiative All Walks on the Catwalk (allwalks.org), a campaign to promote diversity of age, size and race in fashion. "Our culture is fearful of ageing and especially ageing women," says Franklin, who has grown out the front of her own hair so it is completely grey. "I think we should stop apologising for getting older and embrace it. I want young women to see that beauty ages beautifully and there is no need to feel that getting older is something that has to be medicated, managed with surgery or be obsessed about."

Video STARS

This is what you call making a splash. Bruce Huffman, 86, and his wife, Esther, 79, of the Hillside Retirement Community in McMinnville, Oregon, recently became **Internet stars—quite by accident—when a home video starring them went viral**. It happened when they were trying to figure out the webcam of their new (and first) laptop computer.



"I was trying to figure out how to do the video and didn't know the thing was actually running," Esther told *The Huffington Post*. "All the while, Bruce was kind of amusing himself because he was bored. He was being quite an actor." Her husband's act included making funny faces, singing, burping and even exhorting his wife to show off her assets for the camera! Their granddaughter loved every second; titling the video 'Web Cam 101 for Seniors', she uploaded the video on YouTube, where it became an instant hit. You'll love it too—go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=FcN08Tg3PWw&feature=youtu.be

TOP OF THE APPS

It is the era of the smart phone: iPhone, Android or BlackBerry, each one available with a range of 'apps' (applications) to add value and fun to life. The UK edition of *Wired* magazine recently revealed the most popular apps for silvers; here they are:



Pill Reminder Pro, 69 pence (about ₹ 50) a month, iPhone: Enter the name of your meds, dosage and frequency and the app sends you an alert at the right time to remind you to take them.



VizWiz, free, iPhone: Developed by a team by the University of Rochester, it allows partially sighted users to take a picture with their phone, speak a question and receive multiple spoken answers.



Read2Go, £13.99 (about ₹ 1,100), iPhone: Recommended by the Royal National Institute for the Blind, this talking E-reader allows users to browse for books on Bookshare (www.bookshare.org), download and read an unlimited number of books. Users can control visual choices for font size, colour and background.



Which? Your rights, free, iPhone: This mobile guide to consumer rights arms users with all the information they could possibly need in a fight against retailers, including the Consumer Credit Act and the Sale of Goods Act as well as sample letters to send errant retailers. It also doubles as a quick reference tool while shopping.



Vouchercloud, free, Windows Phone, Android, BlackBerry: This boon for discount seekers offers 'money-off' vouchers from www.vouchercloud.com for shops, restaurants, cinemas and leisure outlets across the UK.



Dragon Dictation, free, iPhone: This voice-recognition application, ideal for people who suffer poor hand mobility, allows users to dictate text or email messages and see them instantly. Users can also dictate status updates for social network sites like Facebook and Twitter, or send themselves notes and reminders.



DriveGain, £3.99 (about ₹ 300), iPhone: This fuel-saving guide tells users what gear to drive in—just key in your car model and the app uses the phone's GPS to compute your speed, pace of acceleration and braking, and average speed.



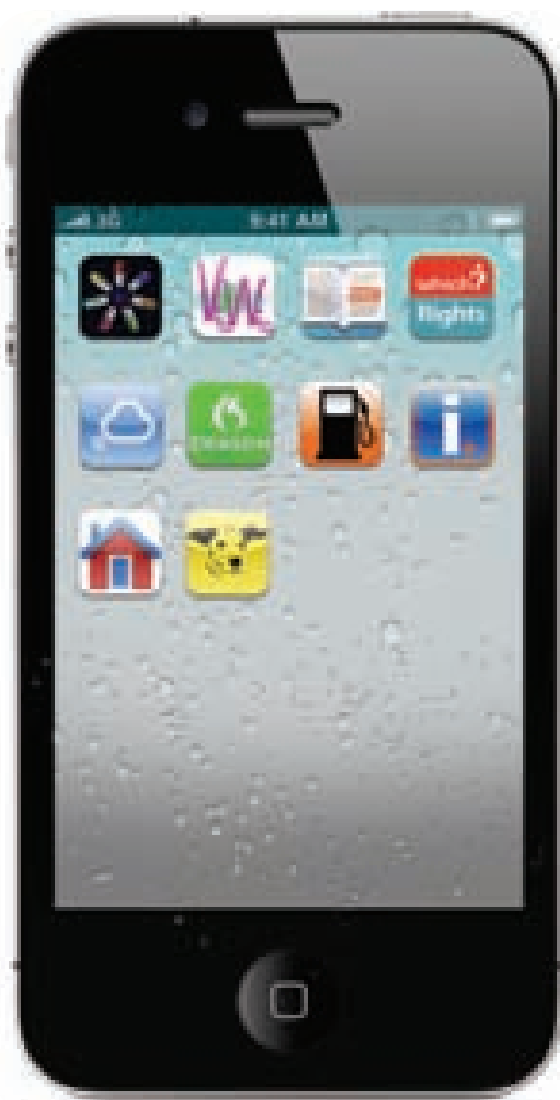
idealo, free, iPhone, Android: This app allows bargain hunters to scan the barcode on any product of their choice and search for the cheapest place to buy it online in the UK.



FixMyStreet, free, iPhone, Android, Nokia: Ideal for neighbourhood activists, it helps people report problems in their local area—from potholes and non-functioning traffic lights to more serious problems—directly to the municipal authorities from their phone.



iMutt, free, iOS: This game allows silvers in search of companionship to feed, play, walk and interact with a virtual pooch without the hassles and expense of a real pet. An Android version is expected soon.





SUPER ANTIBODY

An antibody called F16 could be the key to fight all types of influenza A viruses that cause disease in both humans and animals. Scientists believe this discovery might be a turning point in the development of treatment. Researchers from UK and Switzerland used a new method to identify **a super antibody (in humans) to neutralise main groups of influenza A viruses.** "Much research has been conducted to come up with a solution to all viruses," comments Dr Vijay Kumar from Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and Medical Research Institute, Mumbai. "Though such an antibody hasn't been tried and tested in India, such a discovery is possible. With the right

amount of molecular mixture, Influenza A viruses can be curbed." John Skehel from Britain's National Institute for Medical Research, who worked on the study, says, "As we saw with the 2009 pandemic, a comparatively mild strain of influenza can place a significant burden on emergency services. Having a universal treatment that could be given in an emergency would be an invaluable asset." Currently, vaccine makers change formulations every year to ensure they protect human bodies from the various circulating strains of the virus. This cumbersome process exhausts time and money. The goal of the study is to protect people from all strains by coming up with a universal flu vaccine.

Are you a SURVIVOR?

Now you can **predict the chances of surviving a heart attack.** Researchers at Wake Forest Baptist in the US have claimed that hypertension, BMI (body mass index), heart rate and a few other markers identified by an ECG (electrocardiogram) can be used to differentiate between your chances of dying suddenly as against living through a heart attack. The foundation of this study was laid by identifying specific predictors that usually separate the risk of sudden cardiac death to the ones that are non-fatal or not immediately fatal heart attacks. Elsayed Z Soliman, director of the Epidemiological Cardiology

Research Centre (EPICARE) at Wake Forest who leads the study, says, "For some people, their first heart attack is more likely to be their last and, for these people especially, it is important that we find ways to prevent that first heart attack from ever happening because their chances of living

through it are not good." The analysed data was collected from two of the largest US cardiovascular studies—ARIC (Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities) and CHS (Cardiovascular Health Studies)—as they contain records of over 18,000 participants. "Mostly, basic indicators like age and stress predict if one could survive an attack," says Dr T K Praharaj, cardiologist at B M Birla Heart Research Centre in New Delhi. "ECG, heart rate would also help, but there are many other things that need consideration. Some people might show clinical symptoms, while others might be asymptomatic, making it difficult to predict."



The sound of music

To chase away the blues, dump your antidepressants and tune in to music. According to researchers at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, **depressed patients on music therapy showed greater improvement than patients on standard therapy.** "Music distracts people from depressing thoughts," says Dr Biswaroop Dey, specialist in psychiatry at Dey's Care Clinic in Pune. For the study, which was later published in *British Journal of Psychiatry*,



researchers selected 79 people suffering from depression and on standard counselling and medication. Of these, 33 also underwent 20 sessions with a music therapist. After three months, the patients on (additional) music therapy showed better improvement compared to others; although there was no statistical improvement after six months. "Our trial has shown that music therapy, when added to standard care, helps overcome depression and anxiety," says Christian Gold, lead research professor. "Music therapy allows people to express themselves and interact in a non-verbal way; even in situations where they cannot find words to describe their emotions." Dr Dey concludes, "Depression is dependent on neuro-chemicals, which cannot be changed by music, though it quickens the standard therapy."

KOKILABEN DHIRUBHAI AMBANI HOSPITAL IN SUBURBAN MUMBAI NOW HOLDS THE DISTINCTION OF PERFORMING THE WORLD'S LARGEST NUMBER OF DEEP BRAIN STIMULATION PROCEDURES TO COMBAT PARKINSON'S DISEASE. THIS INVOLVES THE IMPLANTATION OF A 'BRAIN PACEMAKER', WHICH SENDS ELECTRICAL IMPULSES TO SPECIFIC PARTS OF THE BRAIN, AND IS PROVEN TO MITIGATE THE SYMPTOMS.

Naturally young

Love grapes? You could well have said goodbye to skin cancer and premature ageing. A new study, conducted by scientists from University of Barcelona and the Spanish National Research Council, shows that the **compounds found in the grape protect skin cells from UV (ultraviolet) radiation** emitted by the sun. These rays are a leading environmental cause of skin cancer as they increase the levels of reactive oxygen species in the skin, damaging its cells. Compounds found in grapes called 'flavonoids' prevent the formation of these harmful molecules. "One of the harmful effects of UV rays is a rise

in the risk of skin cancer," explains Dr Pretesh Kiran, consultant at Senior Citizen Health Service at St. John Medical Hospital in Koramangala, Bengaluru. "Flavonoids have an established antioxidant property that is seen to have a preventive action against cancers of any type. However, their action against skin cancer and their presence in grape extracts that may be used in skin products needs to be studied further in clinical trials." The director of the research project, Marta Cascante, agrees. "These encouraging results should be taken into consideration to develop new photo protection skin products," she says.



SONG OF LITERACY

While walking past a slum in Pune, **Vishvas Deshmukh** saw a 10 year-old girl singing the popular song *Ek do teen*. He asked her if she could sing the full song; she did. In that moment, the 75 year-old retired chartered accountant realised music transcended all barriers of poverty, age and language. "I felt music could be used to spread literacy, something I feel passionately about," he says. Deshmukh collaborated with Chaitanya Software, a Pune-based firm, and two months ago, launched *Geetaxari*, a unique CD that attempts to spread literacy in rural Maharashtra through a combination of symbols like circles, semi-circles and lines. "We have combined these symbols to make all the numbers and letters," says Deshmukh. "Learning and remembering these simple symbols is much easier for illiterate people than learning the whole alphabet." A Marathi song in the background helps learners grasp



Hemant Patil

the alphabets and numbers more easily. The method allows for instant electronic distribution and the entire software can be downloaded onto a mobile phone. "As most villagers have mobile phones now, they can become literate without going to a classroom," says Deshmukh. *Geetaxari* is six minutes long and covers 10 numbers and 36 letters. "Within one or two months of practicing this method, a person should be able to recognise,

read and write all the numbers and letters," says Deshmukh who plans to distribute the CD, priced at ₹ 50, through Bookganga and other such mail order enterprises. At present, the CD is available in Marathi; Deshmukh plans to come out with a Hindi and Kannada version shortly. "If the state governments take over the distribution, it can be made freely available to all villages," he says.

—Khursheed Dinshaw



Flying colours

He was 57 when he picked up the brush and decided to give free rein to his imagination. Now 43 years later, at the age of 100, **James Mills**, a resident of Neath in the UK, has had his watercolours and oils exhibited for the first time at the Neath Afan Gymnastics Club. The former marine engineer started painting only after retirement. However, everything was not picture perfect when he started, so he joined the Baruc Art Society and, later, the South Wales Art Society to improve his skill over the years. "It was a long held ambition to have a solo exhibition of my work so I am delighted that I have finally been able to achieve it," Mills tells Reuters. The centenarian still paints for two hours every day and continues to deliver 'made-to-order' commissioned works.



OVERHEARD

"If you're 50, you're never going to be 50 ever again, so enjoy being 50. If you sit through the year wishing you were younger, before you know it, it's going to be over and you're going to be 51.... There are things about my face that I'm not crazy about, but you are who you are. It seems like everybody has done work; I see a lot of it, but I don't think it looks any better—you're not going to suddenly look 25."

—American actor Julianne Moore to Sunday Life magazine

BIRTHDAYS

● American actor **Whoopi Goldberg** (right) turns 56 on 13 November

● **Prince Charles** turns 63 on 14 November

● American fashion designer **Calvin Klein** (left) turns 69 on 19 November



● American television and radio host **Larry King** turns 78 on 19 November

● American actor **Goldie Hawn** turns 66 on 21 November

● Former American tennis player **Billie Jean King** turns 68 on 22 November

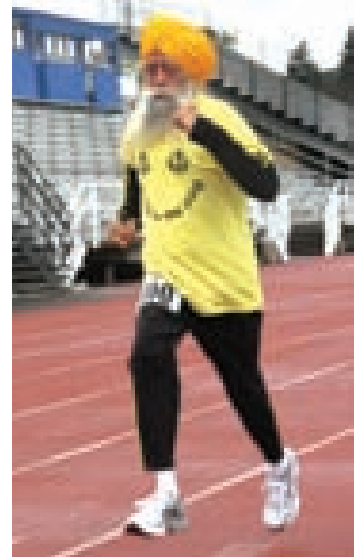
● American singer and actor **Tina Turner** turns 72 on 26 November

MILESTONES

● Swedish poet and writer **Tomas Tranströmer**, 80, won the Nobel Prize for Literature on 6 October. His achievement is even more inspiring considering that he continued to write and play the piano despite having suffered a heart attack two decades ago, which left him partially paralysed.

● **P K B Nayar**, chairman of the Centre for Gerontological Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, received HelpAge India's Golden Award on 1 October.

● Britain-based, India-born **Fauja Singh** (right), 100, who made *Harmony-Celebrate Age's* 'Hit List' in January 2005, completed the 42-km Toronto Marathon on 16 October—setting a new benchmark for the world.



IN PASSING

● Goan jazz singer **Mickey Correa** died on 22 September. He was 97.

● Kenyan Nobel laureate **Wangari Maathai** died of cancer on 26 September. She was 71.

● Sanskrit scholar and Padmashri **Mathoor Krishnamurthy** died of lung infection on 6 October in Bengaluru. He was 82.



● Founder of Apple Computers **Steve Jobs** (left) died of pancreatic cancer on 5 October. He was 56.

● Ghazal legend **Jagjit Singh** (above) died of a brain haemorrhage on 10 October. He was 70.

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WEAR YOUR ATTITUDE

I grew up in a large joint family, the second among six sisters. Thanks to the enormous sense of freedom we all had, we were pretty much allowed to do our own thing. While my elder sister was a bookworm, I was very fussy about what I wore. I was all of 10 when I used to tell my mother when she shopped for our clothes, “Don’t get me any of the usual prints. I want something striking and bold!” My mother turned around and told me, “No one makes special things just for you.”

So I chose to make my own designs and colour combinations. In college, I would do a temporary dye on a *dupatta* in one colour for a particular outfit, then wash out the colour and dye it another colour for another suit. Plus my sisters and I would pool our clothes—cardigans, *dupatta* and scarves. It gave us an edge over the other girls on the fashion scene!

When I became a college lecturer, I was quite tickled when some of the students told me I was held up as an example of perfect dressing! I have always loved wearing saris and matching accessories. After my husband’s retirement from the Air Force, I began to indulge my passion to design once again. With an artistic daughter-in-law who is also a designer, and a talented daughter to support my ideas, I gathered swatches of fabric from both of them and began working.

Luckily, there was a printer in the neighbourhood who was willing to indulge my fancies. So whenever I had a brainwave, the gears would turn and out came something really beautiful at minimal cost. Like this really old Benaras tissue sari that belonged to my daughter-in-law’s mother. I found a rich rust *kota* tissue, made a border and attached the *pallu* from the original. Now I have a brand new sari! The one I really love, though, is a dull gold Benaras tissue sari I had picked up in Delhi. I found a lovely *kairi* border in gold and black from Charminar and got it attached in Delhi by my favourite tailor. I wore it recently for a friend’s golden wedding anniversary and it was much appreciated.

Friends have sought my help and my designs usually appeal to them—except once. A friend brought the sari back and gave it to me, saying, “I cannot carry it off, only you can, Nirmal!” I guess it’s all about attitude. I used to wear halters and backless *choli* and I know people were shocked.



Shyamola Khanna

Nirmal Puri is on an exotic journey

But I had the confidence to carry it off. I have stopped wearing them now as my back is not as pretty as it used to be!

I dress Western style only when travelling. Otherwise, I prefer to wear saris. And, no, I never get tired of them; after all, I have so many! I believe draping yourself in something you love is very important. Unfortunately, many older women are so cowed down by the constraints of family and their environment that they forget to just be themselves. For instance, when you dress well, your mood instantly perks up because you know you’re looking good. Also, colours reflect your mood, and I love all of them except the odd green and pinks.

As far as other aspects of grooming go, I do a basic clean-up at night and use some cream. Otherwise, it takes me just 15 minutes from my bath to being ready to go out—only eye-shadow and some lipstick. Grooming, in all aspects, is important and one should look as natural as possible. Basically, be comfortable in your own skin.

—Nirmal Puri, Hyderabad

MASTER STRIKER

I grew up in one of the old neighbourhoods of Mumbai, near Grant Road. As a child, and later as a teenager, my friends and I used to catch up at the end of the day around a carrom board placed on a stool in our building compound. Back then, when there were no computer games and cartoon channels to keep children rooted to couches, carrom was one of the most popular games in most families in India. People argued, laughed, gloated and sulked over the carrom board—the atmosphere was always full of anticipation.

I remember being bullied a lot by the older boys and club champions in our locality; whenever we younger kids used to play carrom, these boys used to come and shoo us away so they could have the board to themselves. Thanks to them, I was driven to pursue something that became the focus of my life. To prove a point, I started playing at the Bombay Amateurs Carrom Club. I gradually excelled at the game, and became popular for my skill with the striker.

However, life dealt me a severe blow when I had an accident in 1971. I lost the middle finger of my right hand—an irreconcilable loss for a carrom champ. I was working at the Naval Dockyard then, and used to represent my organisation at tournaments. The accident happened while I was attending to a defect on a safety wall onboard the ship *INS Delhi*. I noticed some dust on the edge of the movable wall and used my finger to clean it without realising that the wall was being lifted mechanically from the other side. Before I could grasp the situation, my finger was jammed between two walls and got severed.

Everyone around me naturally thought that I would be forced to give up carrom after such a painful loss. However, I simply changed my technique and was back in form in a few months. I started playing the defensive game instead of my signature attacking moves and eventually came to be recognised in carrom circles as the 'king of defence'.

My passion for the game spurred me to continue with my lifelong passion. Over the years, I have participated in several tournaments and defeated many top players. To my credit, I have won 10 gold medals, several silver medals, trophies and shields. In 1986, I was selected as the captain of the Maharashtra team at the Sholapur Nationals. And in



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

Ramesh Chitty takes aim

1991, the All India Carrom Federation selected me to be the Indian coach at the First World Carrom Championship held in New Delhi. Ever since, I have continued to work as the coach for the national carrom team. In 2006, I was invited by the Sri Lanka Carrom Federation for 20 days, during which I taught 22 players in the island nation.

Though I have won many awards and cherish each one of them, I look back at those sunny weekend afternoons and late evenings of my childhood as the best carrom years of my life. Those little triumphs and the cheerful banter paved the way for all the major milestones of my life.

—Ramesh Chitty, Mumbai

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"I distill the knowledge of a long career and train budding brewers"



Devanshu Sharma

A fresh chemistry graduate, I spent my summer holidays in 1963 at Mohan Meakin Breweries in Solan. All of 20, I didn't even know what beer was. My short stint, though, got me my first job offer as assistant chemist at the Breweries.

I soon became an expert at brewing all kinds of beers. In my working life of over 40 years, brewing became a passion, so much so that I wanted to pursue it after retirement as well. I retired in 2003 and dreamt of a dream second career. In 2008, I discussed the subject with the owner of Galaxy Hotel in New Delhi and convinced him about the merits of setting up a micro-brewery. A few months later, in October that year, Howzatt, a cricket theme-based micro-brewery (a first) was set up.

Howzatt became a trendsetter, with many more micro-breweries being

established in other metro cities. As a head brewer, I feel proud when people praise our beer. We use the best barley malt and I make sure it is finished within 72 hours while it is still fresh. We also get a lot of enquiries for franchising Howzatt; you may soon see the pub in many more cities.

Unlike most other master chefs, who always withhold a crucial bit of their ingredient for fear of being copied, here I distill the knowledge of a long career and train two brewers, who look into daily brewing under my guidance. In doing so, I am also passing on my passion for brewing good quality beer to beginners.

I look forward to setting up many more micro-breweries and hope that soon everybody will prefer freshly brewed beer to the bottled varieties.

—as told to Anju Mohan

I have had extensive experience working in the operations division of an international courier company and want to start an intra-city courier service of my own? How should I go about it?

When you start a courier service, remember that dependability is the key word. People should be able to rely on you with their belongings. If you want to work from home, an intra-city courier service is an excellent option. One thing that will make a difference is the mode of transport—the Indian transport system is not very reliable so extra care needs to be taken about ship-ping and delivery dates. You will need to draw up a formal business plan that includes your financial statement and detailed research about the competition in your geographical area; research will help you improvise on your existing plans. You will also need to decide on the brand name and how you want it structured: sole proprietorship, partnership or corporation. Once you have your ground plan ready, the paperwork will start. The primary papers are a business license from the state and local government and an agreement bond. Also remember to get a commercial license for the vehicle that you will use to deliver the shipment. Intra-city courier businesses offer services like delivering small packages, messages and flowers; they are often in demand among attorneys for court filings. As a courier, you can charge by the mile or a flat rate for delivery. You will need very little to get started, other than reliable transportation and insurance.

—S Santosh manages
Transworld Couriers and
Despatch Ltd in Mumbai

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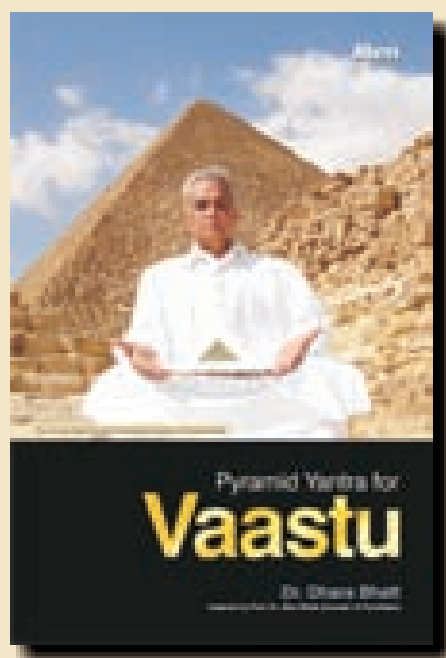
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EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Regain taste: Exercise to feel hungry and enjoy food

I am a 62 year-old man living alone. I seem to have lost taste for most foods I once liked. Considering I am not a very active person and I rarely cook, mostly relying on liquids like juices and soups, what kind of diet do you think I should follow?

Eating well is indispensable at all ages. Regardless of age, daily food choices can make an important difference to health. As we get older, our body begins to work differently. You may not be able to eat the same foods you could a decade ago. Your energy requirements are less but nutrients required remain the same. Eating healthy induces mental alertness, strengthens the immune system, elevates energy levels, fastens recovery and ensures better handling of chronic health problems.

Reduced physical activity leads to reduced appetite, which can cause malnourishment. Loneliness may further reduce the desire to eat. You can overcome this by opting for innovative, nutrient-rich foods at every meal, along with frequent healthy snacks and multivitamins.

Plan your meals and snacks to include the following:

Plenty of fruit and vegetable juices: Fruit and vegetable juices are a source of important vitamins and minerals. Most of these foods have little fat. They also give your body phytochemicals (natural compounds such as beta-carotene, lutein and lycopene). Like vitamins, minerals, and fibre, phytochemicals promote good health and reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Most fruits—strawberries, black grapes, oranges, sweet lime and kiwi—are high in Vitamin C. Vegetables high in Vitamin A and Vitamin C include carrots, sweet



READERS ASK

potatoes, tomatoes, spinach, broccoli, cabbage and onions. Juice them out in different combinations and enjoy their health benefits.

Low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products: These products provide calcium and Vitamin D to help maintain strong bones. They also provide protein, potassium, Vitamin A, and magnesium. Yoghurt is a good option as well; you can have it with rice.

Animal foods: Try replacing meat and chicken with fish. Add nuts and seeds like walnuts, almonds, raisins, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and flax seeds to your meals and snacks, but include them in small amounts as they contain high amounts of fat. To meet your protein requirements, add egg whites, fish, milk, low-fat cheese, curd, tofu, beans, *dal* and *paneer* to your diet.

Reduced physical activity leads to reduced appetite. Loneliness may further reduce the desire to eat. You can overcome this by opting for innovative, nutrient-rich foods

Limited amount of fats: Consume monounsaturated fats like canola, olive and safflower whenever possible. Reduce intake of saturated and trans-fats. Read food labels carefully. Also control salt and sugar intake.

In various combinations, these foods combine the daily requirement of nutrients, fibre and calories your body needs. Physical activity ensures better consumption and absorption of food. Try to walk 5-6 km every day. It will help you to build a good appetite. Also start taking a zinc supplement to improve your sense of taste and appetite. It is important for you to plan your meal rather than skip it. Consider your needs and begin cooking for yourself. The meal plan suggested below is simple and does not require much preparation.

SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

Early morning: A glass of wheatgrass juice.

Breakfast: A bowl of skimmed milk with muesli and one banana.

Mid-morning: Orange juice.

Lunch: *Dal pulav*, *dudhi raita*, grated carrot and beetroot salad.

Evening: Tomato-carrot-beetroot juice, handful of nuts (almonds and walnuts).

Dinner: 2-3 chapatti, a cup of vegetables and *paneer* (80-100 gm).

Bedtime: A small glass of skimmed milk.

I am a 64 year-old woman planning to go on a two-month detox diet. If I stay vegetarian, what should I eat to get everything my body needs?

To begin with, you need not go on a two-month detox diet at your age. A week of detoxification once a month is adequate. You can do this for about four months. Food plays a major role in helping you detoxify. Potent detoxifiers include pomegranate (eat it whole or juice it out), beetroot, carrots, tomatoes (you can juice these together), cruciferous vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower (make a salad), horseradish (helps clean the lungs and breaks up chest congestion), wheatgrass juice (potent cleansing agent and immunity booster), green tea (anti-inflammatory; good for arthritic patients and those experiencing excessive hunger), a teaspoon each of ginger and garlic juice with ½ teaspoon honey (ginger contains zingibain and garlic contains allicin; both are powerful cleansing agents); pineapple (eat two slices as one mini-meal—it contains bromelain, a powerful enzyme with cleansing properties); papaya (a good colon cleanser—it contains papain, a powerful enzyme for good digestion). Drink only filtered and boiled water. Include fibre in your food in the form of whole wheat, *jowar*, *bajra*, oats, nuts, seeds and fruits. Eliminate processed, packaged, refined foods to stay healthy.

I am a 70 year-old active woman. How do I get enough protein as a vegetarian?

Virtually all plant foods have the essential amino acids in quantities that meet the needs of normal adults, if you are on a calorically adequate diet. An average, healthy adult body needs about 40-50 gm of protein every day for upkeep of hair, skin and muscles. If you are 70 and active, you would need an additional 10 gm daily. The recommended daily allowance (RDA), however, is slightly higher—0.8 gm per kg of body weight. So, if your weight is 70 kg, your RDA for protein is 56 gm every day. The RDA is higher as it takes into account extra protein needs for injury, illness and low immunity. Vegetarians have to try a little harder to get enough protein. A glass of milk along with a paneer sandwich should give you 30 gm of protein at breakfast. Munching soya nuts through the day (50 gm) should give you 20 gm protein. This is not taking into account your meals like *dal* (5 gm), curd (6 gm), chapatti (10 gm), and sprouts (6 gm). Eating a wide variety of high-protein vegetarian food makes it easy to meet your requirements.

Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health related disorders. Visit www.health-total.com. If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Train your body: Build muscle and beat diabetes

Gaining muscle and getting into shape are not as difficult as they sound. After getting rid of the initial soreness (as illustrated in this column in the October issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*), it's time to overcome other hurdles.

Step 1

Cut back and simplify your resistance training programme. Instead of training five or six days a week like you did 20 years ago, try doing three full body workouts per week. This programme will also work well for beginners. If you can, start each workout with either barbell dead-lifts or squats, which cause a rush of testosterone and growth hormone (see www.bodybuilding.com). If injuries prevent you from doing these exercises, simply substitute another leg exercise such as leg presses, which will have a similar effect.

Step 2

Work out for no longer than 60 minutes at a time while doing resistance training. Going over this time limit causes the body to produce a lot of the stress hormone cortisol, which, according to *Optimum Anabolics* by Jeff Anderson, breaks down muscle tissue. With less circulating testosterone and growth hormone, you will be susceptible to muscle wasting. Get to the gym and get out quickly.

Step 3

Decrease your total volume to compensate for stunted recovery ability. Volume means the number of sets that you perform of a given exercise. Instead of cranking out set after set, use targeted training techniques to extend your sets. Drop-sets are one example, done by performing one set of an exercise and then decreasing the weight and immediately doing another set. Rest-pause training is another example. You set the weight, do 10 reps (repetitions), rest 20 seconds, do as many reps as you can, rest another 30 seconds and do a final set to exhaustion.

Step 4

Take natural supplements to improve recovery time and increase lean mass; for example, whey protein. Also take a multivitamin and an omega-3 supplement for overall health.

Step 5

Consume 1 gm of protein per pound of your body weight. You may need to reduce carbohydrate intake slightly because of slowing metabolic rate. Be sure to get at least 25-30 per cent of your calories from healthy fats, which support hormonal function and aid heart health.

Tips and warnings

- Always get seven to eight hours of restful sleep every night to support proper recovery and hormonal function.
- Never train with heavy weights unless you have properly warmed up.

Exercising to reduce diabetes

Exercise can play the most effective role in your treatment.

Step 1

Undergo a checkup at your family physician's clinic before you begin any type of exercise programme. This will serve as your baseline information and tell you how much work you have ahead and how much progress you have made along the way. Most checkups include a comprehensive physical examination, a complete blood test (including fasting blood glucose), your height, weight and a resting electrocardiogram. The results of these tests will help your physician outline a sound exercise programme and let you know what you need to look out for as you exercise.

Make a goal with your registered dietician and doctor to expend at least 500 calories per day

Step 2

Calculate your exercising heart rate range. You will want to stay within this heart rate range to lose weight, lower blood glucose level and increase cardiovascular fitness without overdoing it. A good place to exercise is within 50-70 per cent of your maximum heart rate. Here is how to calculate your target heart rate range:

- Subtract your age from 220.
- Subtract your resting heart rate (in beats per minute) from the result of Step 1.
- Multiply the result of Step 2 by .50 (representing 50 per cent).
- Add your resting heart rate back onto the value computed in Step 3.
- Follow Step 1 through 3 using .70 (representing 70 per cent) and add your resting heart rate to the result.

For example: A 55 year-old man with a resting heart rate of 70 bpm should exercise between 117 and 136 beats per minute:



$220 - 55 = 165 - 70 = 95 \times .50 = 47.5 + 70 = 117.5 \text{ bpm}$
 $220 - 55 = 165 - 70 = 95 \times .70 = 66.5 + 70 = 136.5 \text{ bpm}$

Step 3

Check your resting heart rate before beginning the exercise routine and for one minute after finishing. Both should drop as you become fitter. Record the results in a notebook.

Step 4

Check your blood sugar level before you begin exercising. Be sure that it is within safe range before you start exercising. Your doctor will advise you on the correct range for your specific condition. It is also a good idea to carry something sweet like hard candy in case your blood glucose drops while exercising.

Step 5

Exercise within your heart rate range. Start slowly; plan to exercise for 10-15 minutes in the beginning and increase your duration (approximately 10 per cent per week) until you can comfortably exercise for 45 to 60 continuous minutes.

Step 6

Make a goal with your registered dietician and doctor to expend at least 500 calories per day. This will result in you losing 1 pound of fat per week until you reach your target goal. Reducing weight may help you reduce the amount of medication you are taking and lower your glucose.

Step 7

Pay close attention to the condition of your feet. Keep them clean and dry at all times. Many diabetics have neu-

ropathy, which prevents them from sensing pain from blisters or infections. Make sure that your shoes fit properly; your socks are free from wrinkles; and you don't develop hot spots that can turn into blisters (these can turn into serious infections).

Tips and warnings

- Begin easy—10-15 minutes a day for the first week. Record your results in a notebook and share them with your doctor. Stay well hydrated during exercise.

- Never increase the intensity and duration of exercise at the same time.

Aerobic exercise

- Brisk walking, running, swimming and cycling are types of aerobic exercises that can be done by most people, even if you already have a chronic condition. Thirty minutes or more of aerobic exercise on most days of the week is good. If you have any conditions that concern you, consult your doctor before an exercise programme.

Strength training

- In addition to regular aerobic exercise, strength training is also recommended. If you are new to strength training or have been inactive for a while, consult a trained exercise professional to help you get started.

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YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Stoke your creativity: Yoga believes a sense of imagination can be invited through physical activity

Physical activity can stoke mental creativity. The technique lies in re-infusing blood circulation back to the gut and urogenital system through yogic poses. Interestingly, the gut has over 100 million nerve cells, even more than the spinal cord. It also manufactures over 95 per cent of neuro-chemicals—messengers in our blood—that get transmitted back to the brain for distribution. Yoga believes these chemical flows can be used to revamp ourselves. This may be achieved by focusing on poses that tone the abdomen and exert pressure at the tailbone, which is where the second *chakra* of sensuality (*swadhistana chakra*) is said to lie.

Similarly, yoga's technique of balancing the brain uses intricate awareness of how the right and left hemispheres work. The right brain is said to be involved with our creative, intuitive side as opposed to the logical, linguistic left side. While boosting creativity, it employs practices from the secretive branch of *swar* yoga (yoga of breath flow) to stoke the right brain hemisphere.

As mentioned earlier, the uro-genital system is the seat of major hormones that make us feel good about ourselves

and create a sense of adventure. Dopamine, released during gratification, is involved in learning new things and creates a reward loop in our mind-body complex. It is also involved with moods, attention, and goal-oriented drive. It is said to affect decision-making and social confidence. If we understand that our mind is mostly made up of the harmonised flow of neuro-chemicals, it is easy to accept that creativity may be harnessed through its practices.

The poses that tweak our creative impulse include all those that exert pressure at the tailbone region. This includes standing forward bends like the full stretch (*uttanasana*), seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), inverted V (*parvatasana*, or the mountain pose), and lunges from the warrior (*virabhadra*) series. Poses that harmonise both brain hemispheres must be included in this list because, as biology says, the left part of our body deals with the right brain, and vice versa. Harmonising brain hemispheres ensures that the creative high attained by exercising the right brain hemisphere is not sabotaged if dopamine release goes into an overdrive. The latter is known to cause compulsive behaviour. Yoga ensures against such mishaps.

YOGIC MOVES

Half-lotus, full-stretch pose (*ardha padma uttanasana*)

Stand up straight, folding your right leg at the knee as shown. Place your right foot high on the left thigh, folding it well. Inhale, raising both hands overhead. Exhaling, bend your left leg slightly at the knee and gently bend forward to reach both hands to the ground. Hold for a few seconds, to ensure balance. If comfortable, try to reach your hands closer to the left leg. Breathe normally, holding for 10 to 15 seconds. Release the pose, to return to starting position. Repeat for opposite leg. **Caution:** This pose is to be attempted only after the single-leg, half lotus (*ardhapadma ekpada pranamasana*) has been mastered, and by those with some yoga practice. This is an intermediate level practice that may be learnt under guidance in a phased manner by beginners to yoga.



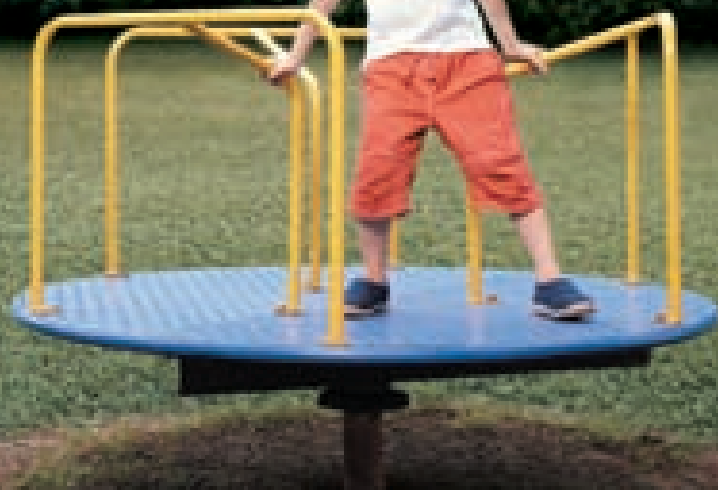
Benefits: This pose works the second *chakra* called *swadhistana chakra*, involved with creativity and sensuality. It gives a complete stretch to the body and spine and tones the abdomen. It also improves balance, harmonises the personality and boosts confidence.

Model: Sunanda Vadke
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

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



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SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET AMMINI AND RAMA RAMACHANDRAN, TEXAS, USA

An exclusive series about life, love and food that unites hearts

Like the peeling of an onion, the conversation with 67 year-old Ammini and 76 year-old Rama Ramachandran slowly unfolds to reveal fascinating aspects of their life together. Originally from Kerala, they have lived in the US since 1970 and have two sons. She is a writer and he a professor of economics, whose scientific mind played a great role in Ammini's career. Her book *Grains, Greens and Grated Coconuts* is one of our favourite cookbooks—well-planned content, perfect recipes and breathtaking insight into the history of Kerala cuisine. On 1 October, we had the pleasure of hosting them. During this meeting, we understood what makes Ammini's work exemplary; behind this successful woman stands a strong man!

Jigyasa Giri and Pratibha Jain: Before we jump into cookbook conversation from where there is no return, tell us when, where and how the two of you met?

Rama Ramachandran: Our families were best friends. As the two of us were growing up, they decided we would marry one day.

Ammini: They were two boys and we were three girls and both of us were the oldest. His parents always considered me their daughter and my parents looked upon him as their son.

He: From our teens, we knew we were going to be married.

She: And it seemed neither of us had any reason to decide otherwise!

Ah, lovely. But do you think such a thing is possible now? Would you decide for your children?

She: Things are a lot different now. My father passed away when I was eight, so my mother had just one goal—to get her three daughters mar-

ried. And all of us accepted that. I had my boys early; by the time I was in my mid-30s, the boys were claiming their independence.



He: In the US, and now in India too, you don't want your parents chaperoning you. Marriage is obviously a personal decision. Our elder son married a lovely American girl and the younger one is 40 years old and not even thinking of marriage.

So you were not very busy parents?

She: Yes and no. In fact, as our boys were always independent, I constantly complained of boredom. And to that, Rama's reply was: 'Do something.' In fact, if he hadn't pushed me, I might not have really started working.

Did you move to the US as soon as you were married?

He: We got married in our hometown in Kerala in 1964 and left in 1970 for the US, where I wanted to pursue my PhD. I had already been abroad for my higher studies and this move was a natural outcome. I was professor of economics at Southern Methodist University in Dallas for 14 years and then at the Business School of New York University for 18 years.

Ammini, did you always want to write cookbooks?

She: It was boredom that propelled me to think of work. I decided to do an MBA and enrolled in an evening school. Looking back, I wonder how we managed it all! But we did and I worked for 22 years as a financial analyst and later in New York as a senior credit officer in an Italian bank.

How did the book happen?

She: I have always been interested in food history and wanted to write about Kerala cuisine. My mother was an excellent cook and hostess. Most of my cousins were abroad and they all remembered her dishes and would talk about them whenever we met.

He: She would often write articles about food on her website. It was like her first hobby.

She: New York University had a department of food studies that offered a course on how to write cookbooks. I joined the course and, as they say, the rest is history.

Not everyone who writes cookbooks has actually done such a course. This penchant for methodology, is this a US influence?

He: Probably so. Doing things in a structured manner is the right way.

She: When I started writing about food, I wrote like a financial analyst. It took a lot of rewriting and finding a good editor. I also became a member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals, where I met some wonderful people who really helped me.

"I was always interested in food history and wanted to write about Kerala cuisine. But when I started writing about food, I wrote like a financial analyst"

Were you always a good cook? What are your favourites?

He: [laughs] When we were in India, we had a cook. But in Rhode Island [where I was doing my PhD], we were the only married couple on our campus. On weekends, many students and friends would come hoping for a home-cooked meal. But she really had no clue; nor did I.

She: And unlike now, in those days, telecommunication was not easy. Trunk calls were expensive. But my mother sent me a letter every week with two recipes. They were written with hand measurements, just like she cooked—with pinches and fistfuls instead of teaspoons.

He: And that is what I now enjoy the most in her cooking—her mother's touch! The Ellukari, chutney with fried banana chips, *vada*, *appam*, and of course, her *dosa* are much sought after by all our friends.

She: I also learnt to cook from magazines. I remember looking at a recipe contest in one of them. On an impulse, I borrowed a friend's typewriter and typed my mother's coconut rice recipe, tweaking it with American measurements. It won the first prize; that was in 1973. It excited me no end. I also enjoy cooking Italian, Mexican and French food.

In a nutshell, tell us what you really admire about each other.

He: She had to go through many transformations to reach where she is today, and I admire the way she did that.

She: It was his motivation that made me do most of what I did.

And what is it that you would like to change about each other?

He: Our time schedules! They never match.

She: If we have to do something early in the morning, it is tough. He wakes up late and starts the day only after his three cups of coffee and two newspapers.

He: We have two office rooms; she sits in hers facing east and I sit in mine facing west. I am a night person and can work late. She switches off after dinner.

She: After a while, you simply adjust.

Is that your advice for the present generation?

She: This generation is very different. In many Indian families, parents pressure their children to agree to an arranged marriage. But often, in such



a situation, they marry without understanding what commitment is.

He: We always tell our children to be honest and to trust each other.

She: The Indian family structure is changing, becoming more nuclear and independent. Yet the good thing is that youngsters seem to have more honest relationships.

He: In life, one must learn to change and adjust to changes in each other.

A unique recipe from Ammini's cookbook *Grains, Greens and Grated Coconuts*

Kurukku Kaalan

(vegetables in slow-cooked, sour buttermilk sauce)

In the tropical heat of southern India, milk and milk products are highly perishable. Before the days of refrigeration, the only way to use leftover milk was to ferment it to make yoghurt. Yoghurt was churned in the morning to separate the butter from buttermilk. Even buttermilk soured quickly so it was cooked over slow heat. In the old days, *kurukku kaalan* was prepared with reduced sour but-

termilk and stored in ceramic jars for several days. Ground coconut and seasoning spices were added only just before serving.

Ingredients

- Green plantain: 1; peeled and cut into cubes
- Telinga potatoes (*suran*): 1½ cup; peeled and cubed
- Crushed black pepper: 2 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
- Ghee: 3 tbsp
- Sour buttermilk: 10 cups
- Curry leaves: 10
- Freshly grated coconut: 2 cups
- Serrano or Thai green chillies (fresh): 6 to 8 (less for milder taste)
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp

For seasoning and garnish

- Fenugreek seeds: 1 tsp; toasted in

a ¼ tsp of ghee before powdering

- Coconut oil: 2 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
- Fresh curry leaves: 10 to 12

Method

Place the plantain and Telinga potato cubes in a pot and pour just enough water to cover them. Sprinkle black pepper, salt and turmeric and cook over medium heat until the vegetables are tender. Most of the water would have evaporated by the time the vegetables are cooked. Add ghee and keep stirring until water evaporates. Pour sour buttermilk, sprinkle half the curry leaves and cook over low heat for several minutes until the buttermilk has reduced to half its original quantity.

While it is cooking, grind the coconut, green chillies and cumin seeds

into a thick, smooth puree. Add to vegetables and cook over medium heat until it begins to boil. Remove it from the stove and set it aside. Stir in the powdered fenugreek seeds.

Heat oil in a small skillet and add mustard seeds. When they start sputtering, add curry leaves and remove from the stove. Pour over the cooked curry. Keep the dish covered until it is time to serve. Serve with steamed rice. Enough for 4 to 6 servings, if served with another curry.

*Jigyasa and Pratibha are authors and publishers of two award winning books **Cooking at Home** with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. They specialise in documenting culinary traditions. Visit them at www.pritya.com*

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Just for KICKS

Leading your country to an Asian Games gold in football is something few sporting heroes can boast of. 'Chuni' Goswami, who also dazzled on the cricket pitch, relives those golden moments in Jakarta with **Partha** and **Priyanka Mukherjee**

He's pushing 74 but age has only sharpened his wits. He doesn't dye his hair; his silvery mop reflects the wisdom of experience. And if you want to speak to Chuni Subimal Goswami, there's still one place you can find him on the weekends: the tennis courts of Kolkata's South Club.

'Chuni', as he is fondly called, is a man of many talents. And if he's serving aces now, he has had the rare distinction of serving his country in no less than two sports: international football and first-class cricket. The former senior State Bank of India officer, former director of the Tata Football Academy and current sports advisor to the West Bengal government, poignantly sums up a dazzling career, "Life has given me a lot."

After lobbing back a few serves, we head to Goswami's office at Netaji Indoor Stadium where the trophy case silently chronicles the high points in this hero's career: Best Striker of Asia Award (1962), Arjuna Award (1963), Padmashri (1983) and Mohun Bagan Ratna (2005). "If I list all the awards I have received, it will take all day," he says with a laugh. "Most important, the people of Kolkata still love me and recognise me," says Goswami, who also served as sheriff in 2005.

Further, he is a member of an array of clubs in Kolkata. "At South Club, I play tennis; at Calcutta Club, I enjoy the company of people; and Mohun Bagan is my second home," beams Goswami, obviously revelling in his social networking skills.

It's a long way from cub footballer—he joined Junior Mohun Bagan at the age of eight—to captaining the Indian football team. Not surprisingly, picking a golden moment is a tough choice. "I captained most tournaments I played and we won most of them, including the Durand Cup. We made it to the finals seven times, won six times, and I led the team on five of those occasions. We also won the Calcutta League 10 times during my career," reminisces Goswami, who



"The 1962 Asiad was the first time India won her gold in football in a foreign country"

stuck with Mohun Bagan despite numerous attempts from arch rival East Bengal to poach him.

He made his international debut for India in 1956 during the team's 1-0 victory over the Chinese Olympic team. He went on to play for India

in 50 international matches including the Olympics, Asian Games, Asia Cup and Merdeka Cup. "But if you want me to single out one memorable event, it would have to be the final against South Korea in the 1962 Jakarta Asian Games," he shares. "Our finesse was appreciated by the likes of [sportswriter] Willy Meisel and [renowned soccer administrator] Sir Stanley Rous. In fact, the 1962 Jakarta Games ranks among the finest moments in Indian football history."

Wearing the captain's jersey at the Games, Goswami says the team got off to an inauspicious start. "We lost to South Korea 2-0 and we met them again in the final," recalls the former striker. "In the next match, we gave Thailand a drubbing. We played like we were possessed, and together PK [Banerjee], [Tulsidas] Balam and I earned the sobriquet 'The Fearsome Trident of Indian Football.'"

The Indian team trounced Japan and then South Vietnam before confronting South Korea in the finale. "The match was on 4 September 1962," recalls Goswami. "None of us could sleep the night before. We were so charged that we strolled around the Games Village at midnight. When we returned, I was still edgy and I was furiously dribbling the ball in my room. Coach Rahim ticked me off before he ordered me to get some rest. I tried but only with the football next to my pillow!" A pregnant pause follows. Goswami's eyes moisten while gazing at a photograph of the late Syed Abdul Rahim gracing his office.

Regaining his composure, he carries on, "As if we weren't tense enough, a remark made by an Indian Olympic Association official had sparked diplomatic tension between India and Indonesia. The stadium was jam-packed with spectators rooting against us. Fortunately, around 20 Indian military personnel were present in the stadium, which boosted our morale a little."

"Ironically, we found support from the Pakistani hockey team! Although our own hockey team had lost to Pakistan, they were still on our side," continues Goswami. "But the tension was unbearable. And in the midst of all this, the reputation of Indian football rested on my shoulders."

His heart was pounding but he nevertheless strode onto the field without betraying his feelings. "We were determined not only to lift the trophy but extract revenge on the South Koreans. Such was our spirit and focus that we managed to overpower the Koreans, who collapsed like a house of cards before our forward line. PK and Jarnail scored and scripted a 2-0 victory. We not only brought home the 1962 Asian Games football trophy, this was also the first time India won her gold in football in a foreign country!"

Then, with endearing, childlike enthusiasm, Goswami asks, "May I tell you about another fine moment in my career?" And before you know it, he's back in 1977, when he posed for a photograph with one of his own heroes, Pele, at Mohun Bagan. "He was visiting as part of the Cosmos team and I presented him a diamond ring on behalf of Mohun Bagan."

Goswami's brilliance on the football field was matched only by his zeal on the cricket pitch, where he donned white flannels as an all-rounder for 46 First Class matches representing Bengal in the Ranji Trophy from 1962 to 1972. His prowess as a right-hand batsman and right-arm, medium-pace bowler caught the eye of the cricket establishment and he soon rose to



Shilbhadra Datta

The trophy case in Goswami's office resonates of a lifetime of sporting excellence

the pinnacle of his cricketing career. "I led Bengal to the Ranji Trophy final twice," he says.

Goswami takes down an album from a shelf and opens it almost by reflex to a photograph he wants to show you. You suspect he's looked at this picture a million times in the past 30-odd years. "The West Indies were touring India in 1966-67 and they played a match against the Combined Central & East Zone team. I took eight wickets in this match: 5/47 in the first innings and 3/50 in the second innings. This was perhaps the most famous victory

in a first-class match in India till then," he says with triumph.

There's more! "I also took a spectacular catch. I still cannot fathom what drove me to hold the catch at deep-square leg after running more than 40 yards from mid-on. It was a massive hook by none other than Wessley Hall off Subrata Guha."

Today, the adrenaline rush has been replaced with a morning bout of tennis, old chums and family. But Goswami knows his life has been special. He puts it succinctly: "I am blessed." ❀

TOGETHER WE STAND

Punalur Somarajan gave up a creative and lucrative life to salvage the lives of battered souls. **Nisary Mahesh** visits the United Nations-recognised model village he has created near Kollam in Kerala

📷 Sivaram V

In the soft evening light, a serene silence envelopes the green compound. Almost every building here is prefixed with '*shanthi*' or '*sneha*', havens of peace and love. When you step into an unpretentious, three-storied main building, the neat corridors resonate to *bhajan* wafting out of the hall overlooking the sea. Soon, prayer time concludes and Punalur Somarajan, a sturdy 58 year-old, emerges with a cheerful smile. Hanging onto his hands are children with bright eyes eagerly looking up at you.

We are at Gandhibhavan Snehagramam, a model 2-acre village at Pathanapuram near Kollam in Kerala. Home to 700-odd destitutes of all ages, Gandhibhavan is recognised by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme. It houses several buildings including Snehalekam, a home for children and women; Sneha Bhavanam, an old-age home and a shelter for young boys and men; and the Gandhibhavan National Open School for vocational training. The other facilities are Snehageetham, an auditorium that also doubles as a free facility for the poor to conduct their weddings; Annapoornalayam, a canteen where the residents eat and which also caters to anyone who knocks at the door; a library stocked with over 3,000 books, most of them from Somarajan's personal collection; a prayer hall; and a candle and *agarbatti*-making unit.









(Opposite page) Silver residents attend a prayer meeting at Gandhibhavan; nurses and supporting staff cheer ailing silvers at Sneha Bhavanam; (above) a normal day at the vocational training centre; and silver destitutes at home in Sneha Bhavanam

Set up in 2004, this is Somarajan's dream project. It was initially meant to give orphans a second chance at life. But soon, the door opened to all manner of destitute individuals, from babies of unwed mothers, deserted or abused women and widows and widowers to the physically and mentally challenged, and the lonely and depressed. They all live here with Somarajan and his family whose home is on the property. Somarajan's wife Prasanna and son Amalraj help administer the vast complex while his daughter Amitha, a postgraduate student of computer science, assists the children with their studies.

Gandhibhavan's day-to-day affairs are managed by a seven-member committee comprising residents who take care of health, hygiene and cleanliness, discipline, food control, security, the garden and prayers. The members, who are also part of projects like kitchen gardening, ornamental fish breeding, dairy farming, growing medicinal plants, and farming on leased lands, meet once a week. "Our committed team and volunteers work as a think-tank to rekindle the life of the downtrodden," explains Somarajan.

Seated in his cramped office, where the sound of young animated voices acts as a background score, Somarajan opens a window into the lives of the residents. It is only when he recounts their gut-wrenching stories that you realise how torturous their journey has been to get here. Ten year-old Bipin saw his father set his mother on fire, while seven year-old Shalini and her sister watched helplessly as their mother poisoned their father. Then there's 19 year-old Sajeena, a victim of sexual abuse, and 15 year-old Mini who delivered three children after being sexually abused by her father. Omana and her chil-

dren were rescued by relatives from her sadistic husband while 21 year-old Raichel, who gave birth to her brother's daughter, has filed a petition against her brother with the help of Gandhibhavan's volunteers.

There are some happy stories too. Geetha, whose dark past brought her here a couple of years ago, is all set to be a blushing bride, thanks to Gandhibhavan. "What he [Somarajan] has done for people like me, who had no future, is nothing short of a miracle," says a grateful Geetha, an unwed mother who was abandoned by her family. The young woman had left her child at an orphanage but reclaimed him and took refuge at Gandhibhavan. Mother and child will soon have a new home, and the boy will have a father. While Geetha's good fortune was the result of wide media coverage and a subsequent reality show that was staged at Gandhibhavan, other eligible young men and women find partners as the management approaches marriage bureaus and scans the matrimonial columns for suitable matches.

"There are 80-odd abandoned children at Snehalokam. The youngest is just three months old," reveals Sabu S, caretaker of Gandhibhavan. "Everyone blends in perfectly. Boys and girls live in

separate apartments and are sent to school, while the older children who are not academically inclined can sign up for vocational courses. The women act as loving mothers for the children and daughters for the senior citizens. We focus on building stable relationships and family bonds."

Many would have baulked at setting up such a massive project for the socially challenged, but not Somarajan. He set up this model village while in his late 40s. By then,

Gandhibhavan is run entirely on financial and material assistance from noted personalities, celebrities, NRI associations and businessmen, among others

he had already worn many hats, among them college lecturership, businessman, writer and singer. "I had a philosophical bent of mind and I couldn't concentrate on these things," he says, adding that his vision had a lot to do with a friend of his father whom he regarded as a *guru*. The gentleman had often told the young Somarajan that he should serve society, advice that encouraged him to steer a different course.

Somarajan has worked with several organisations and has a vast network of friends and associates. When he shared his vision with them, many came forward to help, including some dear friends like Vijayan Ambady, a retired sales tax officer, and N Somarajan, an advocate. "We registered a trust in 2002 and focused on campaigns like women's empowerment. One day, I met 85 year-old Parukuttyamma, who was abandoned by her children. She was very ill," says a sombre Somarajan, who explains that Parukuttyamma's plight was brought to his attention by social activists.

That's when the idea of Sneha Bhavanam, his first project that operated out of rented premises, dawned in 2004. Soon, social workers, police officers and politicians started bringing abandoned silvers to Sneha Bhavanam. It wasn't long before the model village grew into a 700-member family. "With the help of donations, we bought a plot in 2006," reveals Ambady. "But since the money was enough only for a small plot, Somarajan sold his own house and all the property he owned to buy the rest."

So where does Somarajan get his unusual spirit? "Even when we didn't have enough to eat, my father shared it with those who came home seeking food," says the emotional silver. Adds Prasanna, "When he first voiced the idea, I was sceptical. But when he came home with Parukuttyamma, I knew there was no stopping him."

Gandhibhavan is run on donations in the form of financial and material assistance that comes from noted personalities, celebrities, NRI associations and businessmen, among others. Somarajan also travels round the year to raise funds while adding to his brood. "Punalur Somarajan must be commended for the personal sacrifices he has made to set up this institution," remarks K B Ganeshkumar, Kerala Minister of Sports and Environment. Adds Sabu, "Somarajan takes care of the most minute details. For instance, he has opened an account for each resident and secretly puts modest sums into their accounts for the work they do."



For Somarajan and his wife Prasanna, Gandhibhavan is like their extended family

His meticulous attention to detail doesn't distract from the big picture. For instance, Somarajan's vision enabled the establishment of Gandhibhavan Phoenix Hospitals and Health Centre at Ezhamkulam, 10 km away from the model village. This complex includes centres for mental health, de-addiction, pain and palliative care and Snehasanthwanam to rehabilitate mentally challenged children.

Several retired professionals offer their services free, and both free and sponsored treatments are available. What's more, the Jana Suraksha Project acts as a service provider for the Domestic Violence Regulation Act under Kerala's Social Welfare Department, while KELSA is a legal clinic under the Kerala High Court. In association with social agencies and the local *panchayat*, the project runs empowerment and counselling programmes, provides therapeutic assistance and organises cultural programmes.

Snehasanthwanam is recognised by the Central Government's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to offer protection to mentally challenged children. Orphanages under this project are recognised by the Orphanage Control Board of the State Social Welfare Department, while the mental health centre is approved by the State Mental Health Authority. The special education programme for mentally challenged children is recognised and controlled by the State Education Department. Not only do these programmes and projects provide the young and old with tools for a better future, they also encourage them to weave dreams that can come true.

In other words, the children clinging to Somarajan's hands can dream of a day when they save lives as doctors; design high-rise buildings; fly high as pilots; or, as teachers, lead future generations. ✨

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"Insurance is subject matter of the Solicitation"

On the right track

Jugal Rathi speaks to Khursheed Dinshaw about RTI—and cycling—as a way of life

It was 12 October 2006. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005, Anna Hazare addressed a meeting in Pune, where he held forth on the inherent power of the Act and how to make optimum use of its provisions. Watching in the audience, Jugal S Rathi was so taken in by this new tool of empowerment that he, along with friends Vivek Velankar (an IT professional) and the late Prakash Kardale (senior journalist with *The Indian Express*), formed the Sajag Nagrik Manch in Pune. A practicing chartered accountant, Rathi is the founder convener and managing trustee of the NGO. Since November 2006, on every first Sunday of the month, the Manch convenes a public meeting to promote the cause of RTI and educate and counsel citizens about its potential.

Beginning in August 2010, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has allotted a two-hour timeslot (from 3 pm to 5 pm) every Monday for citizens to visit any of its offices and inspect records. If required, the civic body also provides documents at a cost of ₹ 2 per page; the copies can be collected the next day. On these Mondays, Rathi is at the PMC office at the designated time, helping people inspect records and getting the information they require.

His efforts have paid off. Thousands of citizens benefitted from his efforts when they, along with Rathi, inspected records of several government offices under Section 4 of the RTI Act. “We inspected sensitive files of TDS [tax deducted at source] in the PMC. This was the first ever experiment; now Section 4 inspection is followed all over India,” says the 64 year-old who has filed 100 applications and 32 appeals under RTI.

One such RTI inspection forced the RTO, ration office and *talathi* (a person who keeps government land records) to disclose the citizens’ charter (services offered, officer responsible, service delivery time limit, fee payable and name and contact number of officer to complain to if the services are unsatisfactory).

In May 2007, he filed an application against the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Limited (PMPML) for information on the total number of bus stops, the number and names of those where signboards were miss-

“We inspected Pune civic body's TDS files. Now Section 4 inspection is followed all over India”

ing, the plan of the company, and the time required to install missing signboards and sheds wherever necessary. PMPML sought two months to compile the information. “The information commissioner passed strictures; in the process, 1,000 bus stop signboards and 100 bus sheds were installed,” recounts Rathi.

Another RTI application in connection with a bus fare hike revealed that projected income was scaled down and expenses were unrealistically inflated in the proposal. “This fuelled public protest and agitations; for the first time in the history of 60 years of Pune’s public transport, the fare hike was rolled back for the first four stages, giving relief to more than 600,000 daily commuters.”

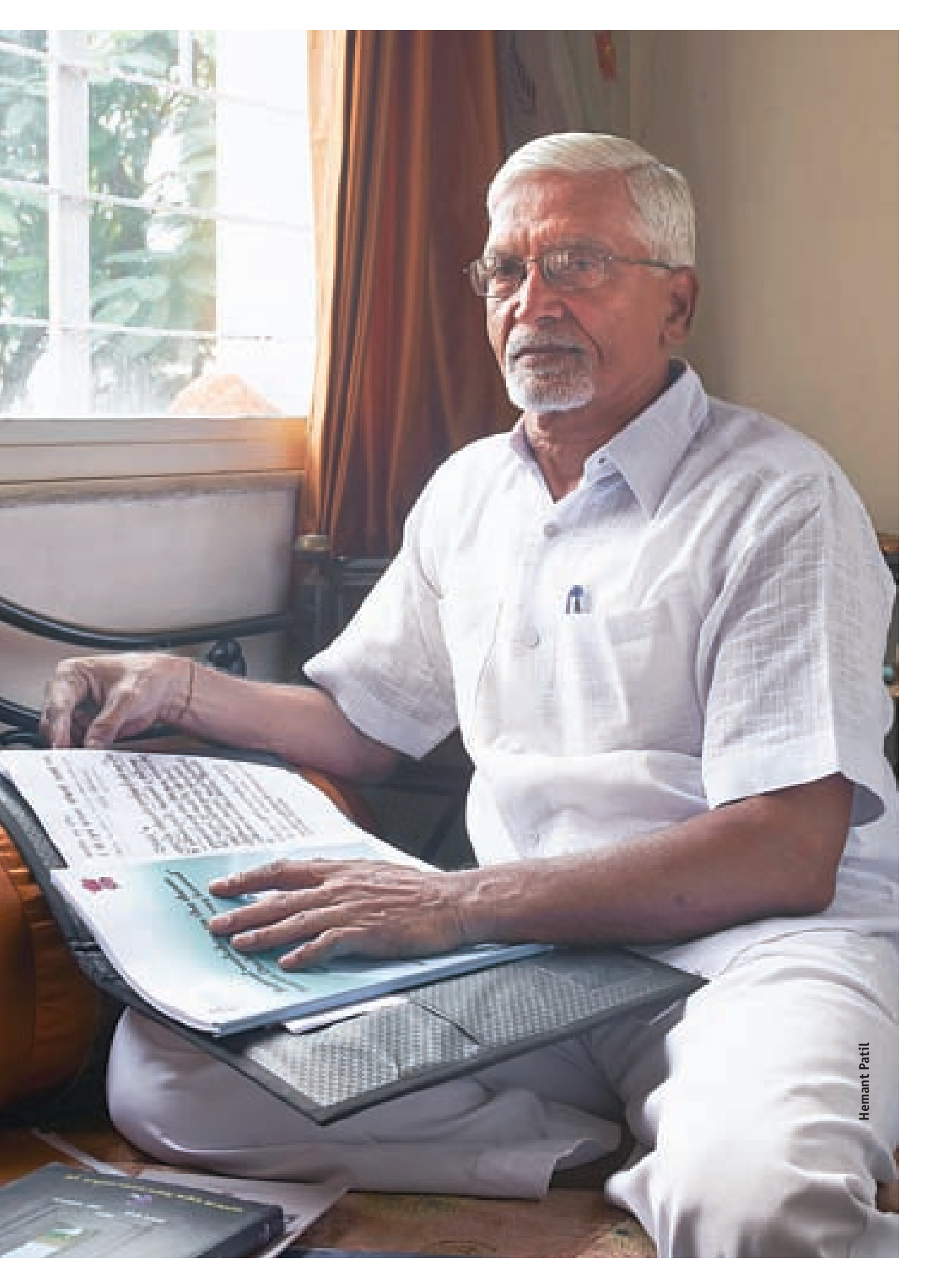
Rathi’s toughest RTI application so far has been against the commissioner of

police where he asked for cases pending with the state government for permission to file criminal cases against guilty government officers, the reasons and follow up action, along with all correspondence.

Though Rathi’s wife Sushila, son Chaitanya and daughter Pallavi are supportive of his activities, they are also scared. “I do worry that in the crossfire the family may face problems,” rues Sushila. Meanwhile, Rathi remains unfazed. Proof of this is the fact that he has performed close to 100 stand-up comedy acts in Marathi, English and Hindi across Pune! An avid cyclist, he has also participated in marathon and adventure sports. He promotes non-motorised transport in the form of walking and cycling, which he resumed after three decades in 2002, at the age of 55. He has pedalled more than 55,000 km in the past nine years.

Besides spreading awareness on the benefits of cycling, Rathi delivers lectures on safe cycling to students and has arranged and participated in over 100 cycle promotion rallies. On 5 June 2010, he was awarded the Green Leader Award 2010 by the Association for Leadership Education, Research and Training (ALERT) for his outstanding contribution to environmental conservation through cycling as a way of life; ALERT is an Indian associate of former American vice-president Al Gore’s Climate Change Project.

Rathi believes the second innings is a beautiful phase of life; he advises readers of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* to make the best of it. “To give is to live, do what you enjoy most, put your heart into it, and be a role model for an ageless body and timeless mind,” he says. We couldn’t agree more. ✨



Hemant Patil

Trash craft

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION, IT IS SAID. THIS NEED NOT BE A ONE-TIME PROCESS, THOUGH. THE WASTE THAT CRAMPS YOUR BIN OR GETS YOU A FEW RUPEES MORE FROM THE *KABARI* CAN BE 'RE-FORMED' AND PUT TO GOOD USE, SOMETIMES EVEN TRANSFORMING ITSELF INTO A WORK OF ART. WE PRESENT FOUR GREEN WARRIORS WHO CONSIDER WASTE SACRILEGE—AND ARE ACTING ON THEIR CONVICTION. TAKE A LEAF FROM THEIR LIVES AND GET INSPIRED

Venkat Ram Iyer

Utter trash!

A day will come when we will be walking on garbage," says Mumbai-based Venkat Ram Iyer, who believes recycling is the only way to save the planet. This effervescent engineer quit his job in Nairobi, returned to India in 1987 and turned professional tennis coach. A few years later, alarmed by the mineral-bottle wave he saw around him, he decided to use his creative touch to spread awareness on recycling.

"It was a wake-up call," recalls the septuagenarian, who never leaves home without cello tape and a pair of scissors, which he uses to transform paper, plastic and even cloth into something useful! "It takes me only five minutes to make something out of nothing," proclaims Iyer, instantly transforming a sheet of paper into a bugle that can be heard two blocks away. After he's done 'blowing his trumpet', he converts it into an air-craft, as if to prove his point.

Iyer is considered a 'mobile workshop' because he educates people about recycling, anytime, anywhere. "I was once travelling by train from Bengaluru to Mumbai and people were staring at me because I was snipping plastic coffee and tea cups. I ended up conducting two workshops right then and there," he recalls. To advertise the cause, Iyer rides a 'recycled bicycle', whose wheels are encased in wheel-chair tyres because "they are made of thick rubber and will never puncture". That's not all. His bicycle is adorned with an effigy of Lord Ganesha made from a 5-litre cooking oil container.

Iyer also conducts workshops in schools and for silvers at Nani Nani parks. Further, he supplies 'recycled trophies' for sports tournaments conducted by schools and the gymkhana where he is a tennis coach. In fact, he has even presented recycled trophies to icons like Sachin Tendulkar and Aamir Khan.

—Radhika Raje

TRASH TALES

Recycling 1 tonne of paper saves 17 mature trees, 7,000 gallons of water, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, two barrels of oil, and 4,000 kilowatt hours of electricity. What's more, manufacturing recycled paper uses only 60 per cent of the energy needed to make paper from new materials



RECYCLE





TRASH TALES

Plastic bags and other plastic garbage thrown into the ocean kill as many as 1 million sea creatures every year. Recycle it: about 88 per cent of energy is saved when plastic is made from plastic, and not from raw materials gas and oil.

The Khan Brothers Paving with plastic

In 1996, when the green warriors and the government were talking about banning the use of plastic, it almost dealt Ahmed and Rasool Khan a body blow. The Bengaluru-based brothers owned a plastic packaging company and worried for their future. But they found a way out. "We decided to restructure plastic for road construction," says 60 year-old Rasool Khan, co-founder of K K Polyflex. "We filled up some potholes in the beginning and then my son Amjad, an engineering student, further researched our technology."

The Khans thus came up with K K Polyblend, a mix of recycled plastic and additives. This was developed and patented to mark the beginning of K K Waste Management Pvt Ltd in 1981. But the Khans' moment of triumph came in 2002, when the Bruhat Mahanagara Palike laid out 40 km of roads using their product. "Since then, we have used 5,000 tonne of plastic for roads, including 1,500 km

in a single stretch in Bengaluru," reveals a proud Rasool, who along with his 62 year-old brother Ahmed are up for a Greenpeace award.

Indeed, Rasool's take on plastic is truly sustainable. "Ahmed and I want people to understand that plastic can be our friend," he says. "If it is completely banned, people will be compelled to switch to paper and cloth and that would destroy all our trees in less than two years. By using plastic to fill potholes, this artificial material can cause no more damage. Alternatively, when you recycle plastic, you're prolonging its life."

He ends with a thought-provoking titbit. "Bengaluru generates 45 tonne of garbage a day, of which 40 per cent is plastic. The rest can be used to make organic manure. Did you know that the Indian government's second-highest budget allocation is to subsidise chemical fertilisers? But that is another story."

—Priya N



Photographs by Prasad Durga

TRASH TALES

Cotton, which is such an intrinsic part of the wardrobe in a country like India, is the most pesticide-dependent crop in the world. It takes one-third of a pound of pesticides to make one t-shirt.

Sudha Gorthi

Bag to basics

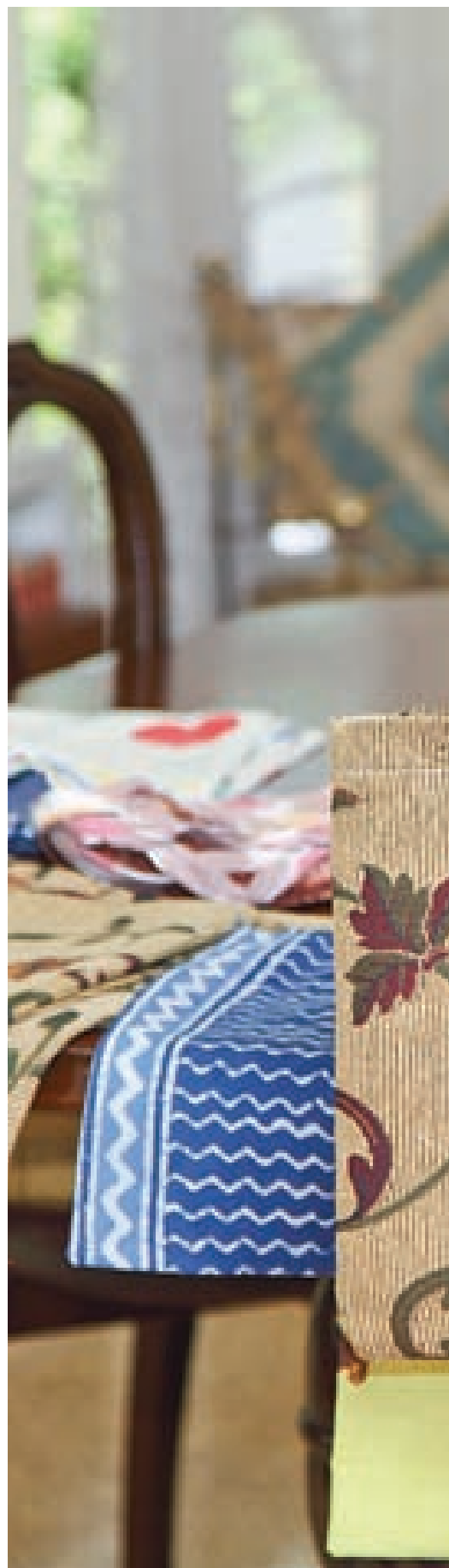
A casual conversation can sometimes throw up a seriously good idea. This one happened when 70-year-old Sudha Gorthi was travelling to Devnar Junior College for the Blind with her fellow volunteers to teach spoken English. During a discussion on Andhra Pradesh's recent ban on the use of plastic bags, Gorthi suggested they turn old cloth into bags. The group of silver women with her, from Secunderabad's Sainikpuri and Vayupuri, loved the idea.

The next day, Gorthi asked her friends to contribute old bed sheets, faded tablecloths, old *salwar kameez* and the like. She had already lined up a tailor willing to stitch the bags at ₹ 5 apiece. Gorthi decided they would make a set of five bags of three sizes and sell them for ₹ 100 a set. After paying the tailor ₹ 25, the rest would go to her favourite charities: a home for children with AIDS and Project 511, an education-related endeavour that helps children in government schools.

Her friends Sudha Raghuram and Vijaylaxmi contributed fabric from different sources, while Mondira asked her maid to help with stitching. Soon, almost everyone in the neighbourhood was carrying 'Sudha's bags'. Those who had extra gave them out as gifts. "A friend came in and picked up 10 sets because she was going to a kitty party and was willing to sell them for us," says our creative campaigner. Thankfully, Gorthi has a steady supply of material as Vijaylaxmi collects fabric from her family. In fact, Vijaylaxmi also made paper ties for the five-bag set. The message on the strip is simple: 'Say no to plastic.'

The group keeps coming up with innovative uses for the bags. For instance, Mondira convinced friends to use them in their refrigerators. "Instead of wrapping greens in napkins, these handy and inexpensive bags can hold your vegetables," Mondira points out. Thus, thanks to an idea born of random chatter in August, these enterprising silvers have sold 60 sets, or 300 bags, in less than two months.

—Priya N





Anand K Soma



N S Ramakanth

Garbage into gold

He has a one-point agenda to turn Bengaluru back into the Garden City it once was. And to achieve this, N S Ramakanth and his green warriors are working simultaneously with residents and municipal authorities. The solution: segregating garbage at its source to make recycling of dry waste possible.

"It makes me very angry when young couples tell me they don't have the time to segregate their garbage. If they have the time to neatly separate and put away their clothes after they come out of the washing machine, why can't they take 15 minutes to separate wet and dry garbage?" asks the 74 year-old founder of an NGO called Solid Waste Management Round Table (SWMRT) and Bengaluru City president of the Lok Satta Party.

A former mining engineer, Ramakanth first worked informally with the resident's welfare association at Sadashivnagar where he lives, till he and a few like-minded residents formed SWMRT in July 2011. "Bengaluru has a population of 9 million and we generate 5,000 tonne of garbage every day," he points out. "Typically, a household of four generates about 2 kg of waste daily, of which half is wet waste. Dry waste, which usually comprises plastic, paper, metal, aluminium cans, milk sachets, etc,

can be recycled if segregated. And although we have rag pickers doing this at the dumping grounds, there is only so much they can do at this stage."

Going straight to the source, Ramakanth and other SWMRT volunteers counsel people in various localities. They have also been training municipal officials on the merits of garbage segregation. "This month, the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike issued a tender to set up dry waste collection centres across the city. We also made a presentation to the Lok Adalat and they agreed. These collection centres have been proposed to pick up dry waste from homes every week," says the triumphant silver.

There is a law in place for garbage segregation, he informs us. In 2000, the Supreme Court passed the Municipal Solid Waste Rules that required people to separate their waste. "But not one single city follows this directive as the law is not enforced," he rues. "We only know how to compromise."

But Ramakanth is not about to give up. SWMRT is conducting an intriguing experiment by placing large bins at the Shivajinagar bus stop to see if people are willing to change their habits. "People have actually begun throwing their used tickets in the bins," he says. "If this works well, we will take it to the next level."

—Priya N

TRASH TALES

The unreleased energy contained in the average dustbin each year could power a television for 5,000 hours. Believe it or not, 60 per cent of all that garbage can be recycled.

CHAMPIONS AGAINST DIABETES



Diabetes, a progressive disease affecting over 50 million Indians, is gaining epidemic proportions. The commonly held belief regarding Diabetes is that, it is a life-altering disease which takes complete control over a patient. But our Patient Champions have proved the contrary.

These spirited individuals have not only demonstrated that Diabetes can be controlled and life can continue to be fulfilling, but are 'exceptional Champs' because they have inspired and motivated others to manage their Diabetes well.



Mrs. Meena Iqbal

Mrs. Meena Iqbal, Ms. Malka Verma and Mr. M.R. Swaminathan hail from Delhi and have taken pro-active steps to control their Diabetes. Their dedication has earned them the title of a 'Champ' in the 'I Am A Champ' Awards – India's first National Diabetes Awards instituted by Sanofi, to celebrate Diabetes control.

Our first 'Champ', Mrs. Meena Iqbal was diagnosed with Diabetes over 20 years ago. Meena, at the time, was unaware of the severity of her condition. Her impression of Diabetes was that it could be controlled with the help of medication and diet control.

"My life did undergo a change when my doctor mentioned that my eye-sight was getting affected due to Diabetes and that it was probably affecting the rest of my body as well", she says.

"My major challenge was maintaining my sugar levels, which fluctuated to a great extent due to my lack of awareness of Diabetes during the initial stages of my diagnosis. Giving up the food that I loved was heart breaking for me."

"But thanks to the support of my family, friends, representatives and my doctor, I was able to adapt

a lifestyle and eating routine in order to get my sugar under control. It's not an easy task and temptations will be everywhere, but it's up to you to understand that life is more precious than indulging in something that could make you suffer later", Meena says.

Today Meena leads a healthy and fit life. Her mantra to be a diabetic 'Champ' is,

“Correct balance of lifestyle, physical activity, quantity and quality of food and drink, together with regular medication and monitoring of blood sugar level.”

83 year old Ms. Malka Verma tells a different, albeit equally inspiring story. "I was upset when I was diagnosed with Diabetes in the year 2000. I had gone in for a doctor's appointment because I had symptoms of Typhoid. Here, I was given the shocking news of being diabetic as well."

"At first I thought my eating habits were the cause of this diagnosis, but an endocrinologist confirmed that my family had a history of Diabetes. It was then I decided that there was no escape and acceptance was my only option", says Ms. Verma, who lives alone, having lost her daughter in 2000.

A teacher by profession, Ms. Verma is a strong-willed and youthful person. "I did not take Diabetes as a problem, but as part of my life. I changed my living style. I cooked myself and ate very simple food. I did not eat fried food and sweets (Yes, I had a sweet tooth but was able to control my urges). I don't deny myself anything, but instead consume everything in moderation. If I go to social gatherings, I restrict myself to the things which are not harmful for me."

When asked about how she inspired herself to take control of her Diabetes, she astonished us by saying, "I gathered information from my doctor, articles in magazines and newspapers and people who have Diabetes. No one in particular helped me or inspired me. In fact I became an



Ms. Malka Verma

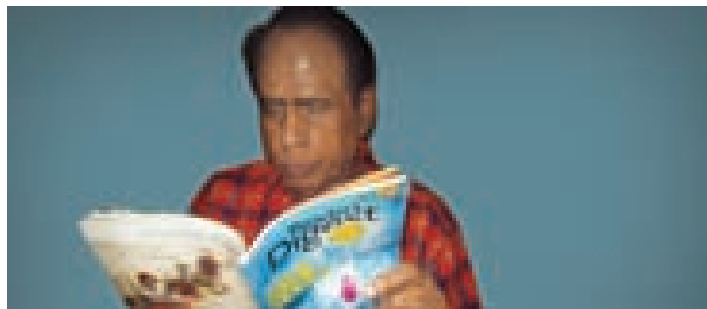
example of inspiration for people in my family and friend circle. Support from family and friends motivates a diabetic to further control his/her Diabetes. However, it is up to the patient to realise what is good for them. Inspiration comes from within. If one thinks that they can do it, then they will surely be successful."

She feels that all the diabetics should take care of their condition and try to maintain a happy, upbeat lifestyle. She believes that it is not Diabetes but its complications that one should take care of. And the only way to achieve that is by following a strict regime of regular medicines, regular walks and exercises, backed by a calm and confident state of mind. And what is her message to Diabetics today?

"When I visit my doctor's clinic, I see diabetics sitting with long faces filled with worry and tension. These are the two major enemies of any illness. Live in the present and try not to worry about the future. I hope readers who are diabetics, will live by my motto - LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL, MAKE THE BEST OF IT."

Our third 'Champ', Mr. M.R. Swaminathan, initially took his diagnosis very lightly. He did not make any major lifestyle changes, treating the disease like any common ailment. It was only when the disease started impacting his day-to-day life, he decided to proactively take steps for his illness. He says, "I felt fatigued during the early hours of the morning, even though I slept well at night. This was when I knew, I had to do something about it."

Battling the disease for over 40 years now, Mr. Swaminathan has trumped over the negative, and managed his condition in an admirable way. He says that the support of his Diabetologist and his wife have helped him get through some tough times. "I kept control over my diet, made sure I exercised regularly and took my medication properly. My wife is also diabetic (Type-I). She is insulin dependent. She lost her teeth and also became inactive. On seeing her, I became cautious. She has been my inspiration, and this has made me responsible to take care of the two of us."



Mr. M.R. Swaminathan

A true 'Champ' at heart, he shares his experience of 'I am a Champ' by saying, "When I first came to know about the 'I Am A Champ' initiative from a Sanofi representative, I knew that I just had to share my story with the rest of the world. I want everyone to know that taking control of Diabetes isn't difficult at all. Today as a 'Champ', I am proud to be someone else's inspiration.

"All I want to say to diabetics world over, is that this life is YOURS. It's in your hands. What you do with it and the time you are given to do it, is all up to you. Diabetics must realise that stress is their worst enemy. Stress won't get you anywhere. Diabetic patients should not keep worrying about the problem because it is not a killer disease. With proper medication, diet control and exercise, one can lead a normal, and happy life."

We at Sanofi celebrate the spirit of our 'Champs' today for not just being an inspiration to others, but showing that every small step, be it work-outs, food, or having a 'Champ' attitude matters. EVERY STEP COUNTS !

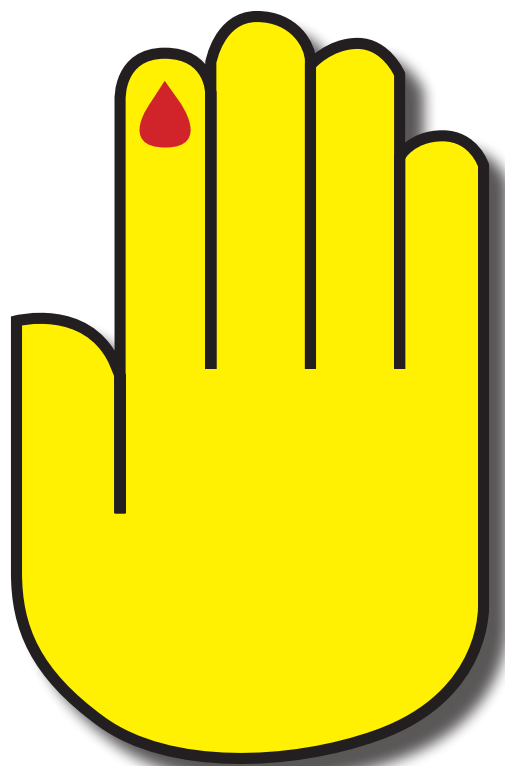
**Make every
step count**

Sanofi, a worldwide leader in Diabetes management, hopes to encourage diabetics across the globe through its movement 'Make every step count', with the core message being that every step (be it exercise, diet or medication) counts towards preventing, controlling and managing Diabetes.

For more information about this campaign, please log onto

www.makeeverystepcount.in

bitter truths



India is firmly in the throes
of a diabetes epidemic.

Radhika Raje speaks to
experts and sifts through the
latest data to determine the
rising burden of the disease

Chhaya Joshi was shocked when she was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 35 in 1987. Strangely, it was like being told she had viral fever. "I had never heard the word; my parents were not diabetics," says the homemaker who, despite being diagnosed, did not make any significant alterations in her lifestyle. Today, at 61, after a bypass surgery and hysterectomy, she has reversed her mindset and plans her diet to the last detail. "I know as much about diabetes as an expert would. I even know that too many fruits can harm you," says Joshi, almost free of the breathing problems that had tied her down at one point of time.

THE NUMBER CRUNCH

The worst may be over for Joshi but there are millions of Indians who continue to suffer. Gone are the days when diabetes was considered a lifestyle disorder detected in people by the age of 50 or 60. Today, this lifelong, incurable problem is recognised as a serious disease. Almost 40 million Indians were grievously afflicted by diabetes, according to the last available statistics from 2007. Currently, more than 70 per cent of the world population with diabetes lives in low and middle-income countries. With an estimated 50.8 million diabetics, India has the world's largest diabetes population, followed by China with 43.2 million. In fact, the World Health Organisation (WHO) predicted that developing countries would bear the brunt of this epidemic in the 21st century, and so we are—WHO predicted net losses amounting to \$ 336.6 billion in India from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases between 2005 and 2015.

Apart from weakening the health of a country, diabetes also damages the economy. While the data on the total spend of developing countries on the disease is sparse, the economic burden on urban families is fast increasing; the total direct cost of managing diabetes has doubled from 1998 to 2005. Besides excessive healthcare expenditure,

diabetes also imposes a huge economic burden in the form of lost productivity as a result of disability and loss of life from the disease and its related complications. "The Indian health economy is facing too many problems because of diabetes," says Dr Mangesh Tiwaskar, diabetologist and honorary consultant at Asian Heart Institute in Mumbai. "Along with the work hours lost, a lot of money is spent by an individual on treatment."

A National Family Health Survey conducted in eight Indian cities by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2005-06 (the only recent survey conducted by the government) concluded that the disease is detected mostly in the southern cities of India such as Chennai and Hyderabad compared to northern cities. It also revealed that urban dwellers are more prone to the disease and women more than men—during that survey, 1,124 women for every 100,000 were detected with the disease in Meerut, while 3,847 were diagnosed in Chennai. The study also showed that with very few exceptions, diabetes was more common in urban cities than rural regions, as the rural population was less likely to have a sedentary lifestyle or the predisposition to be overweight or obese.

"Population surveys for the past 35 years have been quite overwhelming," says Prof A Ramachandran, president of the Indian Diabetes Research Foundation. "Earlier, where diabetes was concerned, there was a huge gap between the urban and rural population; in the past decade, the gap has been closing." According to him, although diabetes is predominantly an urban disease, rural regions are fast catching up. Dr R K Lalwani, diabetes specialist at Batra Hospital and Medical Research Centre in Delhi, agrees that the urban-rural divide in diabetes is narrowing with the rush to ape the urban way of life. "The elderly—in cities, smaller towns and villages—suffer the most; with their familial position compromised, it's a lot harder for them to continue with a proper diet," adds Prof Ramachandran. "And staying alone comes with its own set of problems."



FACT VS. FICTION

Dr Dheeraj Kapoor, consulting endocrinologist at **Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital and Medical Research Institute**, helps bust myths about diabetes

Myth: If you are overweight or obese, you will eventually develop Type 2 diabetes.

Fact: Most overweight people never develop Type 2 diabetes, and many people with Type 2 diabetes are of normal weight or only moderately overweight. Being overweight is definitely a risk factor for developing diabetes, but family history, ethnicity and age also play a role. Unfortunately, too many people disregard the other risk factors.

Myth: Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.

Fact: No, it does not. Genetics and other unknown factors trigger the onset of Type 1 diabetes; Type 2 diabetes is caused by genetics and lifestyle habits. Being overweight does increase your risk of developing Type 2, but a diet high in calories (whether from sugar or fat) could contribute to weight gain. If you have a history of diabetes, a healthy meal plan and regular exercise are recommended to manage weight.

Myth: If you have Type 2 diabetes and your doctor says you need to start using insulin, it means you're failing to take care of your diabetes properly.

Fact: For most people, Type 2 diabetes is a progressive disease. When first diagnosed, many people can keep their blood glucose at a healthy level with oral medication. Over time, the body

50.8 million

India has the world's largest diabetic population

\$ 336.6 billion

Net losses in India from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases

More statistics are expected soon. Next year, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will carry out a diabetes-related study in eight urban Indian cities as part of a national survey to analyse the burden of diabetes. The cities include Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune and Ahmedabad. ICMR will also conduct a minor survey in smaller cities to calculate the urban to rural diabetes ratio. The results of the study are expected to be declared by September 2012. "Studies keep getting updated," says Atul Ingle, nephrologist at Fortis Hospital in Mumbai. "Earlier, diabetes was thought almost non-existent in the rural population owing to the non-sedentary life. But today, with changing lifestyles there has been an upsurge in diabetes in rural areas as well."

Evidently, diabetes is a disease we ignore at our own peril—wherever we live. The need of the hour is to understand it, and learn to manage it while maintaining our quality of life.

DEFINING DIABETES

First, the basics. A disorder in our metabolism—the way our body di-

gests and assimilates food—is called diabetes. Most of what we consume is broken down into glucose, the basic form of sugar, in the blood and served as the body's main source of fuel driving us through the day. Following digestion, glucose enters our bloodstream, which further makes it accessible to body cells where it is used as energy. However, insulin must be present as a hormone in the body to allow glucose entry into cells.

Diabetes develops when pancreas (the gland-organ that manufactures insulin) does not make enough insulin; or when the cells in the muscles, liver and fats refuse to use insulin properly; or both; thus depriving us of energy. Over a certain period of time, this deprivation and increasing undigested blood glucose levels damage nerves and blood vessels causing further complications such as heart disease and stroke. There are two types of diabetes: Type 1, which occurs before the age of 40 and is a result of lack of insulin production; and Type 2, which is either because of insufficient insulin production or lack of ability to use insulin properly, or both. Each has its own set of causes and symptoms (*see page 58*).

Apart from these two broad types of diabetes, there are several mutations and variations. One of them is gestational diabetes. This kind of diabetes is diagnosed when higher than normal blood glucose levels first appear during pregnancy. Pregnant women need two to three times more insulin than normal people. However, if the female body at that stage is unable to produce the required amount, gestational diabetes develops. While this piece of information might not be relevant for silvers, the knowledge of it might help you help others.

THE H-WORD

Hypoglycaemia—low blood glucose or insulin reaction—is an extreme condition when our blood sugar drops lower than what the body can

gradually produces less and less of its own insulin and eventually oral medication may not be enough. Using insulin to get blood glucose levels to a healthy level is a good thing, not a bad one.

Myth: Children can outgrow diabetes and diabetes only affects the elderly.

Fact: Type 1 diabetes, also known as insulin-dependent diabetes, is usually diagnosed in childhood and is caused by the destruction of insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. As these cells cannot grow back once destroyed, this form of diabetes is lifelong. Type 2 diabetes is uncommon in children, but the number is increasing. This type of diabetes is also lifelong; usually it develops in people over 35 years of age, with the incidence of Type 2 diabetes increasing throughout middle age.

Myth: People with diabetes can estimate their blood glucose level without testing.

Fact: Testing is the only reliable way to monitor blood glucose levels. However, it is possible to recognise the early signs of low blood glucose. These signs include increased heart rate, trembling, sweating, slow thinking or lack of concentration, and irritability. Any change in lifestyle or health that might disturb blood glucose control (up or down) should be followed by more careful blood glucose monitoring in order to prevent a possible low blood glucose episode (hypoglycaemia) or failure to detect high levels. Training courses in how to recognise low blood glucose are available for people who have difficulty in recognising hypoglycaemic symptoms—those who attend these classes often realise how difficult it is to predict blood glucose levels without testing.



adjust to. This situation can be caused by one or more events such as delaying a meal; not consuming enough carbohydrates; unplanned physical activity; or a more strenuous exercise than usual. There have been cases where people have suffered from hypoglycaemia owing to too much alcohol, insulin or oral medication for diabetes. While these are the most common causes, a specific cause is yet to be discovered. Mostly experienced by people who are on regular medication for diabetes, including those who self-inject insulin, hypoglycaemia can easily be avoided by Type 2 diabetics by healthy eating and physical activ-

For silvers, diabetes brings with it a host of allied medical, social and psychological complications. With most symptoms generally ignored or suppressed as 'age related', it's important to understand and recognise them

ity. If it occurs, however, it is vital to treat hypoglycaemia immediately to stop the blood glucose level from dropping any lower.

JUST BEEN DIAGNOSED?

Unfortunately, being diagnosed with diabetes is still largely perceived as a lifestyle hurdle rather than a major health concern. Being diagnosed with diabetes can be intimidating but it is important to see it as the beginning of a healthy lifestyle and an end to bad

eating habits and lack of exercise. For a diabetologist to plan an all new life for you, it is also important to be honest about your eating patterns, weight history, blood pressure and medications you are on.

One truth is incontestable: unless a permanent cure is found, diabetes is a lifelong disease and it is essential to take charge of your life as soon as you are diagnosed. Charting out meals and exercise with the help of a dietician or doctor is the first step towards a healthy life. Consulting an endocrinologist will also help manage diabetes. An endocrinologist is a medical specialist who can provide expert advice on diabetes management and can treat conditions that are often complex and involve many other hormones in your body, which are all related one way or the other.

LIVING WITH DIABETES

In 2004 when he was 50, P J Thomas's medical check revealed Type 2 diabetes beyond manageable limits. Further medical investigation revealed that his mother was diagnosed as a Type 2 diabetic in her later years and her problems were attributed to 'old age'. "It was partly the reason why I never understood the enormity of it even after being diagnosed," he recalls. "And therefore I didn't understand why I was being put on insulin right away." At first resentful of his new routine, he soon accepted that the only way to live normally was to accept the problem and bring a certain level of discipline to his life. The responsibility to encourage and help him maintain a changed lifestyle was wife Susan's. "I could no longer cook anything and everything, and had to think carefully before buying things," she says. "Thankfully, I was never fond of sweets and cold drinks, so being told to cut them out of my diet made no difference to me," adds Thomas.

Beginning with a regulated diet and soon followed by exercise in the form of daily walks, he began to see the re-

sults. Within a year, his glucose levels were under control and he made the much-awaited switch from injections to oral medication. Having lived with diabetes for seven years, Thomas believes he has now managed to reach a balance between his original lifestyle and the enforced one.

Thomas is a case in point—despite being diagnosed with diabetes, living a healthy and happy life requires an individual to adhere to lifestyle modifications. Initially, some adjustments may seem inconvenient but in the long run they will help manage the condition and instil a positive sense of well-being. Keeping your body weight in check through a strict diabetic plan plays a pivotal role in controlling the disease. The longer the duration before diagnosing the disease and poorer the control, greater the chance of complications. It is, therefore, essential to regularly monitor glucose levels and manage the problem with medication and lifestyle changes.

Take the case of Mumbai-based Patricia John, 59, who was diagnosed with diabetes 19 years ago. Warned about the problem after the birth of her second daughter, she realised the gravity of the disease only in 2000. Today, amid her working schedule (she is director at John Mech-El Technologies Pvt Ltd) and caring for the family, John takes two insulin injections every day. Earlier a borderline case, she thought the disease would heal itself until, one day, a wound in her toe refused to heal. Soon after the diagnosis, she was put on medication, but had to go on insulin injections by 2005. Today, managed diet and regular medicines are her mantra. "It helps to have a supporting family, though," she adds.

Indeed, family support can help a diabetic negotiate the day-to-day challenges that are the most difficult to overcome. Some common challenges identified by experts include eating (only) healthy; regular blood sugar monitoring; exercising despite

RISK FACTORS

Diabetes is an anti-immune disease, which further causes severe damage to nerves, blood vessels and arteries. Uncontrolled diabetes eventually leads to other health problems such as Alzheimer's, dementia, cardiac stroke, vision loss (even complete blindness), and foot problems (even amputation in extreme cases).

TYPE 1 DIABETES

Causes: The exact cause of Type 1 diabetes is still unknown. There are proven theories, though, showing a strong link between Type 1 diabetes and family history. Lifestyle is not essentially a cause of Type 1 diabetes. However, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important to manage the disease.

Symptoms: Being excessively thirsty; passing urine frequently; feeling tired and lethargic; always feeling hungry; having cuts that heal slowly; itching and skin infections; blurred vision; unexplained weight loss; mood swings; headaches; feeling dizzy; leg cramps.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

Causes: There is no single cause for Type 2 diabetes, though there are several risk factors. You are at a higher risk if you have a family history of diabetes, or suffer from hypertension or obesity. The risk increases with age once you turn 45.

Symptoms: Most of the signs of Type 2 diabetes are often dismissed as a part of 'getting old'. Sometimes Type 2 diabetes is diagnosed only after the complications of diabetes have already manifested themselves. The symptoms are the same as those outlined above for Type 1 diabetes.

Diabetes – More than just high blood sugar levels

Diabetes is a condition characterized by high blood sugar levels either due to lack of or insufficient insulin. Once a person is detected with diabetes, it cannot be reversed to a non-diabetic state, but a person can still maintain his/her blood sugar levels in normal range with conscious efforts towards diet, regular exercise and taking appropriate medicine. What medication a person requires can only be decided by the treating physician after evaluating the person with diabetes at regular intervals. Diabetes is a disorder which can be life threatening, if it is not controlled properly.

Is diabetes a sugar problem or an insulin problem?

As already discussed diabetes is characterized by high blood sugar levels, but this is not because one eats sugar. In fact, we all need sugars which come from various sources of carbohydrates like grains, fruits and vegetables, milk and other food items. As these food items are digested in the body, they are broken down into simple sugars (Glucose) before being released into the blood. From the blood, sugar enters into the cells to provide energy. In case of lack or less insulin, sugar levels in blood become high and cells do not get fuel to provide energy. Even people with diabetes require carbohydrates as they require energy but the intake has to match with available insulin levels (either given from outside or aided increased secretion with oral tablets), so that sugar levels can be maintained at near normal levels in body.

How can people with diabetes live a normal life when it is a serious condition?

Many people live a long, active and normal life with diabetes that includes marriage, family, careers, sports and vacations as they aim to control diabetes rather than let diabetes control them. Diet, Exercise and Medicine are three important tools for diabetes management and diabetes education gives the person with diabetes an insight to how to use these tools effectively.

Diet and Diabetes

We all need sugars but people with diabetes need to avoid simple sugars and excess fat. It is also important to recognize that eating healthy food in large quantity can also make sugars high. E.g. fruit is healthy but since it contains sugar you may need to limit the quantity according to their sugar levels like 1 apple = 1 orange = ½ bananas = 1 big slice of mango = 10-12 grapes. These are all approximate values but the quantity matters. It is advisable to eat small and frequent meals to help you lose weight and maintain sugar levels in acceptable range. Vegetables are healthy and all non starch vegetables like greens, gourds; cabbage, carrots, beans, tomatoes, cucumbers etc should make a large part of your diet. A person with diabetes can have starchy vegetables like potato but they need to be exchanged with

grains. Whole grains and pulses with fiber are better for all, including people with diabetes. Milk and milk products contain both sugars as well as fat, so it is better to have low fat options.

Exercise and Diabetes

Any kind of activity helps. Walking, swimming, dancing, yoga or any other activity which you enjoy can help. A leisurely stroll has its benefits but if you're going for weight loss, pick up the pace. Walk briskly. This means walking fast enough to cover at least 5.5 Kilometers in an hour. To figure it all out, walk a Kilometer and time it. If you make it in approximately 10 minutes or less, you're on the right track. If you feel breathless, or any pain or discomfort than slow down, take rest and consult your doctor.

Medication and diabetes

When diet and exercise are not enough to keep blood sugars at normal levels then a person with diabetes needs oral tablets and insulin. Mostly tablets work till some of the insulin producing cells are alive. If even after taking 2-3 tablets, HbA1c (test which gives average blood sugar levels of last 2-3 months) is more than 7.5 than a person needs to ask about insulin from his/her doctor. Whether a person requires insulin or tablets, in diabetes what matters is good sugar control. Recently Glp-1 analogue (a natural hormone produced in small intestine) has been introduced as medication for people with type 2 diabetes. GLP-1, along with its effects on blood sugar control is beneficial because of its weight lowering and blood pressure controlling properties. It is utmost essential to consult doctor before taking or skipping any medicine.

Is this enough to control Diabetes?

Along with monitoring sugar levels (at least once in a week), a person with diabetes must undergo HbA1c test and blood pressure checkup once in 3 months and lipid profile, serum creatinine, microalbuminuria, eye fundus examination and foot examination once in a year. These are necessary as these tests would help a person act before it's too late.

Taking control of diabetes becomes easy when one adopts healthy lifestyle as a family as these steps would help not only to manage diabetes but also to prevent diseases like diabetes, blood pressure, obesity and heart diseases in all.



Dr Arpandev Bhattacharyya
MD in Internal Medicine and DM
in Endocrinology

changing the future of diabetes



a busy schedule; and timely medication. Some even complain about it affecting their social life. Nevertheless, with a little effort, diabetes can be controlled and managed.

DIABETES AMONG SILVERS

For silvers, diabetes is a whole new ball game. The travails of management aside, the disease brings with it a host of allied medical, social and psychological complications. With most symptoms generally ignored or suppressed on the pretext of being 'age related', it's all the more important to understand the patterns and symptoms of the disease to be able to manage it well.

"Ageing already brings with it vision problems; with the disease, it further affects the person," says Dr Mangesh Tiwaskar from Mumbai's Asian Heart Institute, who has just been awarded a fellowship at the Indian Geriatric Society. Diabetes can complicate existing disorders or add to complications, he elaborates, adding that dementia and loss of memory set in earlier if coupled with diabetes. Brittle bones,

osteoporosis and prostate problems are also a cause for concern.

"Younger people in the family have to understand that diabetes in the elderly is a multi-fold disease," says Dr R K Lalwani from Batra Hospital and Medical Research Centre in Delhi. "Elders who suffer from hypoglycaemia need special support. Someone needs to constantly monitor their blood sugar. Moreover, elders need support from the government in terms of raising awareness about the problem, which is sorely lacking."

On the medical front, researchers and scientists from across the world are trying their best to find a permanent cure. Of all the options being explored, stem cell treatment seems to be the only hope. Transplanting stem cells that will improve the ability to produce adequate insulin will be the ultimate cure. The therapy is already proving effective in a variety of medical problems but its role in curing diabetes is yet to be confirmed. Until then, mind your lifestyle.

—with inputs from Preeti P
in New Delhi

YES AND NO

SAY 'YES' TO

- REGULAR CHOLESTEROL AND BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK-UPS
- EXERCISE, ACCORDING TO YOUR FOOD INTAKE
- PLENTY OF WATER
- MEDICATION TO KEEP CHOLESTEROL AND BLOOD PRESSURE IN CHECK
- CONTROLLED SUGAR INTAKE
- EXTRA FOOT AND EYE CARE

SAY 'NO' TO...

- UNHEALTHY EATING HABITS
- SMOKING
- UNCHECKED SUGAR INTAKE
- SOFT DRINKS, FLAVOURED MINERAL WATER AND FRUIT JUICES

One truth is incontestable: unless a permanent cure is found, diabetes is a lifelong disease and it is essential to take charge of your life as soon as you are diagnosed

Diabetes & you

“Every diabetes drug has therapeutic effects and side effects,” says Jianping Ye, MD, a professor at Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge, La. “So it is a hot area right now to combine CAM [complementary and alternative medicine] therapies with synthetic drugs to enhance the therapeutic effect and reduce side effects.”

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Opinion

Why are Indians more prone to diabetes?

Dr Anoop Misra and Swati Bhardwaj present their case

For years we have heard that Indians are at a greater risk for diabetes. Clearly, Indians [we] have a higher predisposition to syndrome X (clustering of risk factors, a first step towards diabetes), Type 2 diabetes and cardiac disease, compared to other ethnic groups. These cannot be ascribed to a single factor, but appear multifactorial in origin.

Overall, we have more accumulated fat—from the time of birth, nearly 1.5 times more than the white race. When it gathers in the abdominal region, it interferes with metabolism. As a rule, we tend to have greater waist circumference and waist-to-hip ratio. It is not clear why we have higher body fat. But it has been suggested that during centuries of famine, the Indian body developed a mechanism that enabled energy to be stored as fat. Now that food is in excess, this accumulated fat has increased rapidly.

Excessive fat gets deposited in peculiar places in the body—the nape (akin to a ‘buffalo hump’) and chin (‘double chin’). In fact, these markers could easily be recognised and lend increased risk for diabetes. We also have an inherent tendency for insulin to act slowly and ineffectively. This could be dictated by genes. Our livers (the prime site of glucose metabolism) are also full of fat and metabolism is markedly sluggish. These risk factors are aggravated with junk eating habits, and sedentary and highly stressful lives.

A ‘thrifty phenotype’ hypothesis that lays stress on foetal under-nutrition leading to altered metabolic programming in adulthood is attractive but lacks firm evidence. According to this, Indian babies born with low birth weight had higher systolic blood pressure and adiposity (‘fatness’) at eight years of age. This data prompted the concept of syndrome X originating in the womb and that at this time key metabolic activities may be undergoing modulation.

There has been research that indicates that migration increases adiposity and Type 2 diabetes in Indians. Inter-country or intra-country migration appears to be a risk factor for diabetes and other cardiovascular risk factors. Adiposity and insulin resistance in migrant Indians tends to be higher than either urban or rural-based dwellers in India. For example, migrant Indians living in the UK have been shown to be more obese, with higher levels of blood pressure, total cholesterol and blood glucose; they have been proved more insulin-resistant than their siblings living in Punjab. Further, a recent multi-site study shows stepwise increase of prevalence of Type 2 diabetes from rural India (8.4 per cent), urban India (13.6 per cent) and in the Indians settled in the US (17.4 per cent).

Indians could be classified as ‘metabolically obese’ or more appropriately dysfunctional—they have multiple metabolic derangements but are ‘non-obese’ by conventional body mass index standards. These ‘non-obese’ people usually have high abdominal adiposity and thick truncal subcutaneous fat.

These characteristics contribute to insulin resistance and hyperglycemia. It seems that the ‘switch’ for metabolic control has been slowed down several centuries ago. This ‘switch’ continues to work in the same mode, even when more control is needed. In our recent study, we found that a particular type of gene (LMNA1908T/T) increases the tendency of obesity; people with this particular gene are at a 5.6 times higher risk for obesity.

The high burden of diabetes and other cardiovascular risk factors in urban and rural Indians provide the basis for tailored and cost-effective prevention and intervention programmes. The successful management of the diabetes epidemic, however, requires collective charting of a future course of action to bring interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaboration to research on diabetes.

Indians have nearly 1.5 times more accumulated fat than the white race. When it gathers in the abdomen, it interferes with metabolism

Dr Anoop Misra is chairman of the National Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol Foundation; director of Diabetes and Metabolic Diseases at Diabetes Foundation; and chairman of Centre of Nutrition and Metabolic Research; Swati Bhardwaj is a nutritionist and head of Nutrition and Fatty Acid Research, National Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol Foundation; senior research officer at Diabetes Foundation; vice-head at Centre of Nutrition and Metabolic Research



DANCE

Golden duet

VP Dhananjayan, 71, and his wife Shanta, 68, are among the most accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer couples in India. The two have performed together in almost every part of the world for more than 50 years. Trained at Kalakshetra in Chennai, the duo met each other while still in their teens and went on to deliver hundreds of performances choreographed with a sensitive blend of male and female dance principles. Found-

ers of the Chennai-based dance academy Bharata Kalanjali, the Dhananjayans were conferred with the Padma Bhushan in 2009 for development, preservation and propagation of the Kalakshetra tradition of Bharatanatyam. We caught the spirited duo as they gear up for their next performance *Sri Thyagagaraaja Vaibhavam* and *Poorna Thrayee*, which will be held on 13 and 14 November at Shanmughananda Sangeeta Sabha in Mumbai.

Chennai Pix

Memories in MINIATURE

Artist Falguni Gokhale's works have been exhibited in Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Singapore and Delhi. Her latest art installations, the *Aaji's Kitchen and Bathroom* series, travel back to her childhood to bring alive memories of her grandmother's kitchen. Khursheed Dinshaw comes away enchanted from a burnished past



Satish Gokhale

Could you share the dimensions of *Aaji's Kitchen and Bathroom*?

Each installation of *Aaji's Kitchen and Bathroom* is 20 cm × 20 cm × 10 cm. The background is a painted picture, while miniature toys are glued to the walls. Some items like teacups, soaps and towels are made of clay. You can mount these installations on a wall or keep them atop a microwave or bathroom shelf.

What inspired you to do this series?

I spent most of my school holidays at my maternal grandmother's home at Karamsad in Gujarat. I have many happy childhood memories associated with this quaint and charming place. The *tamba* [copper] toys commonly found all over Pune are entwined with these memories. Through my art, I wanted to recreate a nostalgic world and document a way of life that we don't get to see anymore. It's an earnest attempt to pay tribute to the wealth of wisdom that all silvers possess. Though I have titled it *Aaji's Kitchen and Bathroom* [*Aaji* means grandmother in Marathi], this old-world kitchen and bathroom could belong to any house in India.

What was your grandmother like?

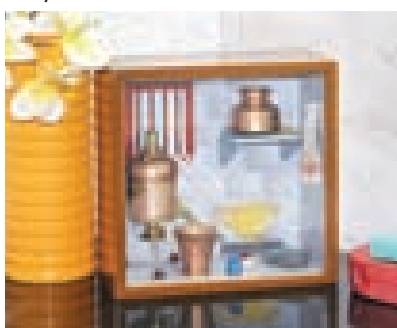
My grandmother Heera Ba was beautiful, strong, loving, bold, capable,

hardworking and resourceful. She glued our family together. She passed away 16 years ago. If she were alive today, I am sure she would have chuckled with delight at the kitchen and bathroom I've made.

ART Any special memories about your grandmother that added depth to the installations?

Her kitchen was big and clean and had delicious aromas emanating from it at all times. Her bathroom was large and spacious, with cauldrons of hot water kept ready for the children's bath at the crack of dawn. My young cousins and I would stand in line while we were oiled, scrubbed and bathed by an assortment of aunts under the ever-vigilant gaze of my grandmother.

Does your world have any room for *tamba* or do you prefer stainless steel and glass?



I use *tamba* jugs, plates and serving bowls in my house. I also have some small *tamba* bowls on my office desk which I use for keeping stationery. I have some copper boxes as well. Every time I look at my favourite objects, I am enveloped by warm, soothing memories.

Each installation of *Aaji's Kitchen and Bathroom* costs ₹ 3,500 (per box); available at Either Or, Pune

Post perfect

EVERY STAMP HAS A STORY TO TELL. KOLKATA-BASED PHILATELIST AND STAMP DESIGNER DIPOK DE TELLS PARTHA AND PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE HOW A TINY PATCH OF PAPER BECAME HIS LIFE'S GREATEST PASSION

Dipok De has more than a million postage stamps, cards and other postal art. The septuagenarian has exhibited his collection in Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Mizoram. Quite rightfully, he is borderline obsessive when it comes to caring for his treasures—he keeps them wrapped in silicon paper and stores them in special holders made in Germany.

De is more than a philatelist though; he is also a stamp designer. Over the past 50 years, he has been commissioned by India Post to design stamps on a variety of subjects: Rabindranath Tagore, Satyajit Ray, the Kolkata Tercentenary, female celebrities, and representations of Indian costumes and technological strides.

It was an unexpected twist of fate that impelled De to switching tracks from being a commercial artist. In the 1960s, after graduating from the Government Art College in Kolkata, De started his own advertising agency. One of his accounts involved overseas advertisements for Indian products. “Bundles of envelopes stuck with stamps from different countries would arrive and I was slowly drawn into the world of philately,” he recalls.



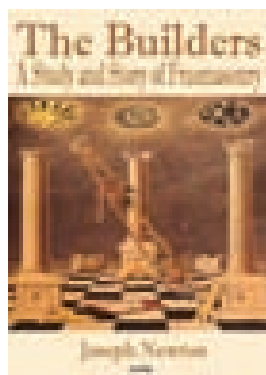
Shilbhadra Datta

Soon, De, already entranced by postal art, wanted to create it too. In 1983, in a competition convened by the UN, his work on the theme ‘Child Survival’ earned rave reviews. (So far, De is the only Indian artist to have designed stamps for the UN.) Soon, he was commissioned by India Post. In 1990, he organised the National Philatelic Exhibition on cinema and performing arts, the first national exhibition on such a subject organised by anyone other than the country’s postal department.

These days, De is working on booklets and postcards for the Patna GPO. He takes about four weeks to design each stamp. Typically, each stamp is designed in a large format (enlarged

to four times its actual size), and subjects, forms, colours and shadows are carefully chosen for maximum clarity.

Though he still prefers working with conventional brushes and colours, unlike younger artists who rely on the computer, De admits he has been compelled to use the ubiquitous machine these days. “It makes things faster,” he concedes, adding, “but I will never be entirely dependent on it.” Ruining the fact that stamps may soon lose their relevance with the increasing use of email, he says, “Letters are slowly fading into oblivion and stamps might just end up becoming an object of fascination for hobbyists. But then the old order must change, yielding place to the new.”



Secret service

*Freemasonry is a fraternal organisation that started out as an underground group of workers from the building trade in late 17th century England. Today, there are over 6 million freemasons worldwide who acknowledge each other with cryptic gestures and codes. **The Builders**, written by rationalist Joseph Newton in 1914, was once considered essential reading for every mason. An excerpt...*

Always the symbolic must follow the actual, if it is to have reference and meaning, and the real is ever the basis of the ideal. By nature an Idealist, and living in a world of radiant mystery, it was inevitable that man should attach moral and spiritual meanings to the tools, laws, and materials of building. Even so, in almost every land and in the remotest ages we find great and beautiful truth hovering about the builder and clinging to his tools. Whether there were organised orders of builders in the early times no one can tell, though there may have been. No matter; man mixed thought and worship with his work, and as he cut his altar stones and fitted them together he thought out a faith by which to live.

Not unnaturally, in times when the earth was thought to be a Square the Cube had emblematical meanings it could hardly have for us. From earliest ages it was a venerated symbol, and the oblong cube signified immensity of space from the base of earth to the zenith of the heavens. It was a sacred emblem of the Lydian Kubele, known to the Romans in after ages as Ceres or Cybele—hence, as some aver, the derivation of the word ‘cube’. At first, rough stones were most sacred, and an altar of hewn stones was forbidden. With the advent of the cut cube, the temple became known as the House of the Hammer—its altar, always in the centre, being in the form of a cube and regarded as ‘an index or emblem of Truth, ever true to itself’. At any rate, Mercury, Apollo, Neptune and Hercules were worshiped under the form of a square stone, while a large black stone was the emblem of Buddha among the Hindoos, of Manah Theus-Ceres in Arabia, and of Odin in Scandinavia. Everyone knows of the Stone of Memnon in Egypt, which was said to speak at sunrise—as, in truth, all stones spoke to man in the sunrise of time.

More eloquent, if possible, was the Pillar uplifted, like the pillars of the gods upholding the heavens. Whatever may have been the origin of pillars, and there is more than one

theory, Evans has shown that they were everywhere worshipped as gods. Indeed, the gods themselves were pillars of Light and Power, as in Egypt Horus and Sut were the twin-builders and supporters of heaven; and Bacchus among the Thebans. At the entrance of the temple of Amenta, at the door of the house of Ptah—as, later, in the porch of the temple of Solomon—stood two pillars. Still further back, in the old solar myths, at the gateway of eternity stood two pillars—Strength and Wisdom. In India, and among the Mayas and Incas, there were three pillars at the portals of the earthly and sky temple—Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. When man set up a pillar, he became a fellow-worker with Him whom the old sages of China used to call ‘the first Builder’. Also, pillars were set up to mark the holy places of vision and Divine deliverance, as when Jacob erected a pillar at Bethel, Joshua at Gilgal, and Samuel at Mizpeh and Shen. Always they were symbols of stability, of what the

Egyptians described as ‘the place of establishing forever’—emblems of the faith ‘that the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and He hath set the world upon them’...

Long before our era we find the working tools of the Mason used as emblems of the very truths which they teach today. There are even evidences, in the earliest historic records

of China, of the existence of a system of faith expressed in allegoric form, and illustrated by the symbols of building. The secrets of this faith seem to have been orally transmitted, the leaders alone pretending to have full knowledge of them. Oddly enough, it seems to have gathered about a symbolical temple put up in the desert, that the various officers of the faith were distinguished by symbolic jewels, and that at its rites they wore leather aprons. From such records as we have it is not possible to say whether the builders themselves used their tools as emblems, or whether it was the thinkers who first used them to teach moral truths. In any case, they were understood; and the point here is that, thus early, the tools of the builder were teachers of wise and good and beautiful truth.

The secrets of this faith seem to have been orally transmitted, the leaders alone pretending to have full knowledge of them

Grandmother's tales

ASHA SHANKARDASS WANTS KIDS IN INDIA TO DISCOVER THEIR ROOTS. RAJASHREE BALARAM MEETS THE SILVER AUTHOR AND DISCOVERS WHY HER DEBUT BOOKS ARE RECOMMENDED READING FOR KIDS TODAY

Everything about Asha Shankardass exudes urbane refinement and sophistication—the string of pearls around her neck, chiffon sari, salt-and-pepper hair leashed into a flawless French roll, and even the high-ceiling office of her legal firm that sits two stories above the snooty Hermès boutique near Horniman Circle in Mumbai. Her debut literary offerings for children, *Champa - The Punjabi Kudi Discovers the Himalayas* and *Champa, The Dreamer - Journeys to the Land of the Buddha* (Leadstart Publishing; ₹ 195; 169 pages), however, seem endearingly rustic and earthy.

At the centre of her stories is a *salwar kameez*-clad nine year-old girl, Champa, who lives in a small village on the banks of a river in Punjab. Through Champa, Shankardass wants to introduce children in the cities to the rituals, lifestyles and places they may not get to see in a world circumscribed by McDonald's and Disney TV. As Champa travels to different places and meets different people, one learns about the many traditional customs, food habits, lifestyles, festivals and legends that ultimately make India a magical place.

Shankardass introduces kids to the spectacular colour and rhythm of rural India through vivid descriptions of Baisakhi *ka mela*, *madari ka naach*, *sapere ki been*, *sarson ke khet*, and the invasion of

Punjab. One can easily deduce that the septuagenarian is still deeply rooted to Rawalpindi, now in Pakistan, where she and her family lived before Partition.

Her stories are critiqued by her granddaughters: 11 year-old twins Simran and Saira. "I used to make up stories for my grandchildren when they were little and came up with characters who stayed with me long after the scheduled story time was over," Shankardass tells us. When she started writing her first book in 2007,

she shared Champa's adventures with her grandchildren and admits to receiving some 'constructive feedback'.

The creative silver even illustrated the book entirely on her own, using software Microsoft Paint. "I learnt to use the computer some years ago, when I had a fracture and was killing time at home," she reveals. "When I asked my grandson to let me play one of his computer games, he told me rather wearily that it was not my cup of tea." Spurred by the challenge, Shankardass managed to learn the computer by the time she resumed work. "There is nothing we cannot do if we put our mind to it," she insists.

Despite pressing work commitments and social engagements, Shankardass still finds time to work on her next book in the same series, where Champa travels to Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and uncovers wonderful facets of Rajput and Mughal history.

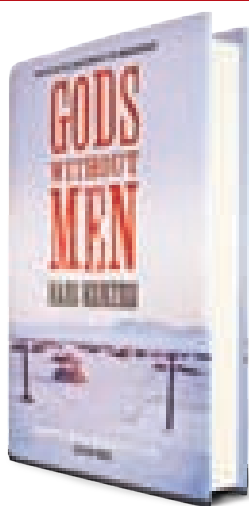
Today, Shankardass's favourite companion is her laptop; she admits to cherishing the time she spends in front of the screen weaving tales, discovering places, and fabricating adventures. When asked if she plans to foray into adult fiction, she smiles back enigmatically: "As of now, I am fully occupied with Champa and rediscovering my childhood through hers. But I never believe in saying never."



Utkarsh Sanjanwala

On the shelves

NEW READS THAT MAY GRAB YOUR FANCY

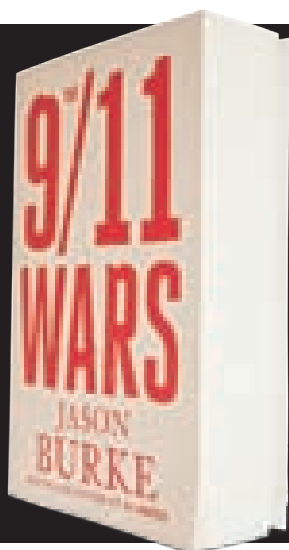


Gods without Men by **Hari Kunzru** (Penguin; ₹ 1,300; 384 pages): You can always count on Kunzru, who engaged us so wonderfully with *The Impressionist*, to serve up a book that pushes the creative envelope. This one is true to type. Raj Matharu, the four year-old autistic son of some seriously wealthy folk, disappears in the California desert and all hell breaks loose. Kunzru introduces us to some mesmerising characters whose lives converge with the protagonist's family but the most overpowering of them is the desert itself—harsh, unyielding, a metaphor for survival amid chaos and churn.



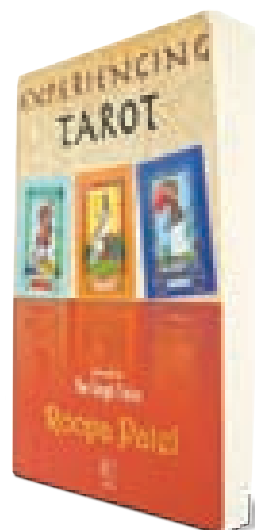
The Best of Quest, edited by **Laeq Futehally, Achal Prabhala, Arshia Sattar** (Tranquebar; ₹ 695; 661 pages): Since its inception in 1954, periodical *Quest* ('a quarterly of inquiry, criticism and ideas') flourished for two decades as an emblem of literary and cultural freedom in the hands of the incomparable Nissim Ezekiel until it was impelled to shut shop during the Emergency. This book brings the pioneering magazine back to life with a selection of essays, poems and stories culled with love and care from its pages. Some names that will pop up at you: Khushwant Singh, Nirad C Chaudhuri, Ashis Nandy, Anita Desai, Dom Moraes, Sudhir Kakkar, Kamala Das, Kiran Nagarkar. And that's just for starters.

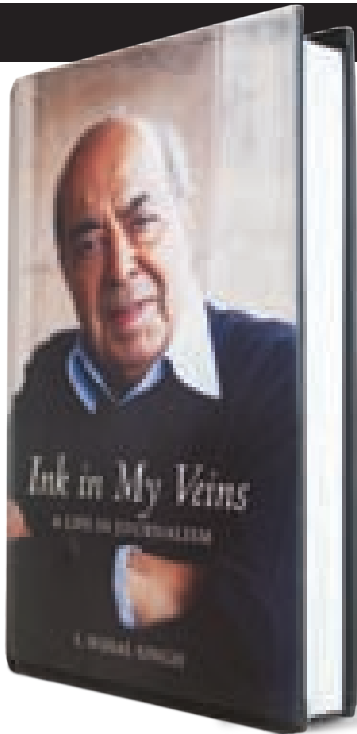
The 9/11 Wars by **Jason Burke** (Penguin; ₹ 599; 707 pages): This is one from the trenches. Calling the new age of extremist terror (invasions, bombings, battles, riots) following 11 September 2001 the '9/11 wars', investigative reporter and author Burke melds reportage, history and analysis to write a compelling narrative. Hundreds of interviews with key players—from bureaucrats and intelligence officials to militants and their victims—fill in the blanks between perception and reality, holding a mirror up to the world, and those who administer it.



Controversially Yours by **Shoaib Akhtar** (HarperCollins; ₹ 499; 280 pages): This outing by the Rawalpindi Express is, quite frankly, a bit of a literary train wreck and not only because he dared to take on two Indian icons (Sachin Tendulkar and Shah Rukh Khan; gasp!) in one book. But cricket fans will still enjoy an insider's take on batsmen, bowlers and bureaucrats of the game, and the highs and lows of a life lived in the harsh lights of an unforgiving arena.

Experiencing Tarot by **Roopa Patel** (HarperCollins; ₹ 799; 249 pages): Want to learn how to play your (Tarot) cards right? This is the perfect introduction. Learn about their significance and power as well as their connection to thought-systems like Kabbalah, I Ching and numerology. The highlight for us: incredibly vivid illustrations by London-based sisters, The Singh Twins.





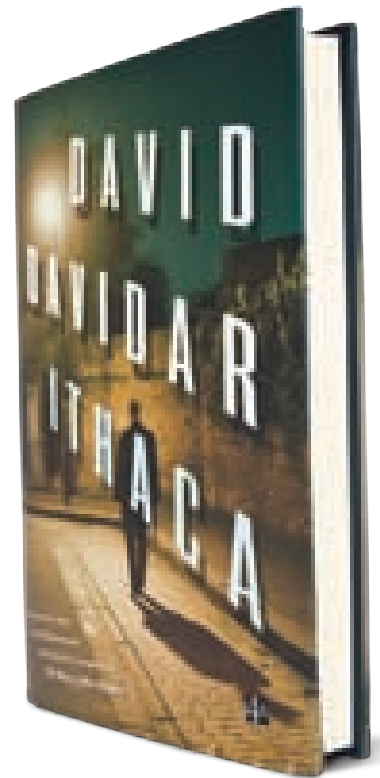
The wordsmith

The pictures of **Surendra Nihal Singh's** press cards ranging from 1971 to 2004 are proof of his long—and lustrous—career. From Jawaharlal Nehru to Manmohan Singh, the veteran scribe, who has edited *The Statesman* and the *Indian Express* along with Dubai's *Khaleej Times*, tells us about the people and events he has covered from cub reporter to editor in **INK IN MY VEINS: A LIFE IN JOURNALISM** (Hay House Publishers; ₹ 499; 308 pages), a book replete with anecdotes. The episode on the tension and uncertainties he faced during Emergency is particularly insightful. There's a fair share of personal information too; including his wife's death to lung cancer and even the homosexual advances he apparently faced owing to his being, what his teacher called, "a handsome boy". Too much information, perhaps, but par for the course for a man of many, many words. Fellow journalists can learn much from this one; and we dare say laypeople may enjoy seeing some very famous names edited to size.

—Radhika Raje

Between the lines

David Davidar is a shrewd man. Once the unquestioned czar at Penguin Books (India and then Canada), his reputation took a tumble—or so it would seem—with allegations of sexual misconduct that forced him to resign. But he has turned adversity into advantage with the release of **ITHACA** (HarperCollins; ₹ 499; 276 pages), where he mines his own life very evidently—and effectively—to deliver a book that revolves around the world of publishing. Go figure! Davidar's proven skills at weaving together an engrossing and credible story prevent this book from degenerating into a self-serving exercise. The rise and fall of Indian-born Zachariah Thomas, editor-in-chief of London-based Litmus publishing, an independent publishing house hanging on by a tenuous thread, is told with an underlying irony that is unmistakable; in the process Davidar lets us in on the incestuous world of books and authors, book fairs and administrators, talent and plagiarism, sex, ego and money. In Homer's *Odyssey*, his hero makes it back to his haven, Ithaca; Thomas's search for his own Ithaca ends at Yercaud in the Shevaroy Hills of Tamil Nadu where his father managed a coffee estate (Davidar's own father was a tea planter in Kerala). Along the



way, you will navigate a moment or two of self-aggrandisement, like the description of *A Suitable Boy*, published by Davidar, as a "great milestone" of Indian publishing! Yes, Mr Davidar is a *very* shrewd man. And he's got a happy ending—his imprint Aleph (with Rupa Books) will be in business by spring 2012.

—Arati Rajan Menon

FROM THE BOOK

"...every action in the publishing sequence has a whiff of desperation about it. Editors frantically sell their colleagues further down the chain on the mythical selling points of the book they are pushing, and these fabrications get even more elaborate and fantastical as the process unfolds. By the time the salesman is selling the book to the buyer at the retail chain, neither quite knows or believes what is being talked about—partly because the odds are they haven't read the book but more so because they haven't the faintest idea whether it will work or not. Given this scenario, everyone in a position of authority is cynical about the claims made by those who need them to buy into their arguments."

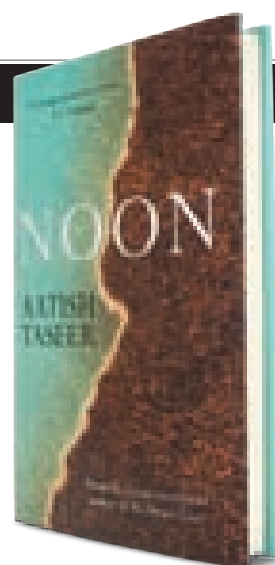
Unchained melody

In what is evidently a very rich life, **Mitra Phuken** effortlessly flits from one world to another. The native of Assam is a vocalist of the Hindustani classical musical tradition, a music critic, columnist and author—she has numerous children's books to her credit and her debut novel *The Collector's Wife* received rave reviews. With her second novel, **A MONSOON OF MUSIC** (Penguin; ₹ 450; 419 pages), she uses her knowledge of music, her insight into the lives of musicians and her considerable way with words to fuse her worlds together. Tamulbari, a small mofussil town on the banks of the Brahmaputra, is her stage where her protagonists play out a slice of their lives. Talented small-town singer Nomita, whose fascination for her

betroted Kaushik, an international sitar star, never quite matches her depth of feeling for childhood buddy Rahul. Nomita's mentor Sandhya, whose marriage to fellow singer Tridib, an enigma himself, is not as tranquil as it appears to be. Industrialist and patron of the arts Deepak, one half of a power couple

(with globetrotting wife Rani), who finds his release in music—and his muse. These lives, etched with empathy by Phuken, intersect one stormy monsoon, leaving each one irrevocably changed. At heart this is a simple book. What makes it complex are the layers each character brings to it, the gentle meanders of the plot adding their own cadence. A gentle music, this.

—Arati Rajan Menon



Parched

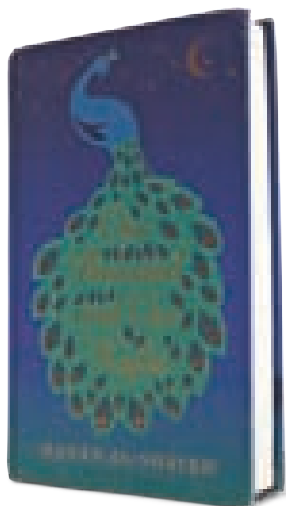
From India—a land of new riches and veiled contempt that the have-nots harbour against the haves—to Pakistan, a nation of blatant despotism and carnage... Rehan Tabassum is an unanchored and dejected young man who has lived more than 30 years of his life without 'male approval'. He travels the distance to meet his father (Sahil Tabassum), in whose other son, Isffy, he finds the love of a brother looking for his own moral compass. Fictionalised as Port bin Qasim, Pakistan is a jungle of social and religious divisions and subdivisions like India. In his physical and emotional transitions, Rehan finds other similarities, including "the special pain of losing the things into which we breathe hidden value; and India, ever prepared to cut down to size anyone clinging to alien refinements". At the core of **Aatish Taseer's NOON** (Fourth Estate; ₹ 499; 239 pages) are social disintegration and the resultant disillusionment and angst. There are signs of the author's own life here—Taseer's ever-absent father Salmaan Taseer was killed for opposing blasphemy early this year and his brother kidnapped from Lahore in August. The ease of violence across the border to India's "corroding moral interior", there's an apathy and indifference common in both reality and the book. Societies, politics and religions of half-truths burn bright in *Noon*.

—Meeta Bhatti

Voices in the dark

Who hasn't heard of these legendary Arab folk tales? In fact, their erotic content has kept many of us—those lucky enough to get their hands on them—awake almost as many nights as their narrator, young Sharazad/Scherazade, who told them to her husband King Shahrayar in a bid to prolong her life. Now, acclaimed Lebanese writer **Hanan Al-Shaykh** re-imagines **ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS** (Bloomsbury; ₹ 699; 288 pages) in a delightful volume that is sure to beguile an entire new generation of readers. The stories are the same, tales of love and loss, valour and vanity; a colourful cast of characters from kings to tradesmen beset by the human condition. What makes them different is Shaykh's telling; the words underlined by a contemporary understanding of a very traditional setting—she makes you laugh, frown, harrumph and, yes, sigh. This is a heady treat.

—Arati Rajan Menon





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The divine realm

The Supreme One will be revealed to you when you are shorn of all material consciousness, says **Steven Rosen**

If the soul, who could perceive material existence, has its life and interests elsewhere, and the body, who cannot perceive anything, is basically inert, who or what perceives the material world? Ultimately, of course, material existence is experienced by the soul and yet it also can be said that the soul does not experience the world at the same time. This philosophical conundrum is not meant to evoke the confusion of a Zen koan but rather to express the soul's actual position in the spiritual world contrasted with its temporary stay in the world of matter. While here, it functions according to the dictates of the conditioned intelligence, mind, and senses, while subsisting in a sort of dormant state in the spiritual realm. How can this be understood? Consider what your body is doing while you dream at night: When you dream, are you experiencing the events taking place in your mind or not? In a sense, yes, you are; but in another way, no, you are not. You are not really walking, talking, eating, or interacting with others as your dream would indicate, even if the dream has a subtle reality of its own.

In this way, the soul is accepted as the 'experiencer' (*bhoktri*) in the material world. 'Experience' is another way of referring to 'awareness' or 'consciousness' (*chiti-shakti*, *chetana*). This is the symptom of the soul, which is never truly in a dormant state and is constitutionally and metaphysically incapable of dormancy (although for all appearances while in the material world its original life with Krishna is halted). The soul's pristine place is with Krishna in the spiritual realm



When consciousness is completely purified of the material contamination, one comes to the platform of mystic trance

and, when pure, its consciousness is absorbed in its identity in that higher realm. Therefore, a type of apparent dormancy exists when the soul is here, in the material world, experiencing its conditioned life divorced from ultimate reality. Nonetheless, the soul is always completely aware, even if that awareness is covered by goodness, passion or ignorance. A 100-watt bulb emits the same light irrespective of its covering—whether covered by a dense cement box (ignorance) or a glass box (goodness).

The problem is that we often confuse the bulb with the box that covers it. In other words, the box is responsible for what we see, even if the bulb remains

the same. The *Bhagavad-Gita* hints at this when it says, "Nature is said to be the springboard of all material causes and effects, whereas the living entity is the cause of the various sufferings and enjoyments in this world (13.21)." One might understand this in terms of playing a computer game: The doer or the 'experiencer' is the person playing the game. But all the action is done by the hardware, software, and electricity. The player only communicates his or her desires via computer interfaces....

Accordingly, it may be ascertained that the soul experiences all acts in the material world... According to Vaishnava terminology, while one is awake, his 'knowledge or reality' (*dharma-bhuta-jnana*) may be functional, based on his specific frame of reference, as is his 'self-awareness' (*dharmi-jnana*). At the same time, however, he may be unaware of his real nature, at least until self-realisation takes place. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* attempts to clarify this complex subject: When one's consciousness is completely purified of the contamination of material existence, gross and subtle, without being agitated by working and dreaming state—or when the mind is laying dormant, as in deep sleep—one comes to the platform of mystic trance. At that point, one's material vision, along with the memories of the mind, which functions according to the names and forms of this world, are transcended. Only in such a trance-like state is the Supreme Lord revealed. Thus, let us offer our respects unto God Himself, who is seen in that uncontaminated, spiritual state.

Excerpted from **Krishna's Other Song** (Jaico Publishing; ₹ 295; 293 pages) by Steven J Rosen. An American author, Rosen has written several books on Vaishnavism

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The first day at school

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen

The first drama you got a part in

The first day at college

The first date you went on

The first kiss

The first time you proposed

The first job interview

The first board meeting you addressed

The first day after retirement

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Today, watches are regarded more as fashion accessories than timekeepers. There was a time, however, when watch manufacturing was a closely guarded secret of Swiss horologists. Therefore, when India launched its first indigenous watch in July 1961, it was a moment that made history. The hand-wound wristwatch manufactured by Hindustan Machinery Ltd in its Bengaluru factory was gifted to then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. HMT, which till then produced tractors and other heavy-duty machinery and tools, set up its watch factory in technical collaboration with Tokyo-based Citizen Watch Co. In the initial years, about 500 employees from HMT were trained in Japan.

Today, with its wide range of affordably priced watches, HMT continues to be a stoic symbol of middleclass values and solidity amid other brands that promise instant sophistication and sex appeal. Despite its no frills image, the brand occupies a generic status in India, thanks to its immense popularity in villages. Since June this year, HMT watches are also being sold at select post offices in Tamil Nadu. And in July 2011, the company became the first in India to launch Braille watches for the visually impaired. Times may have changed but HMT continues to remind us how we have moved ahead of the times.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: **NOVEMBER 1961**

- On 1 November, an avant-garde literary movement, called the Hungryalist movement, was launched in Kolkata by writers Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury, Samir Roychoudhury and Debi Roy. The writers sought to overturn the established colonial vocabulary in painting and literature.
- On 11 November, Stalingrad was named Volgograd.
- On 18 November, US President John F Kennedy sent 18,000 military advisors to South Vietnam.
- On 24 November, UN set up its World Food Programme.

Experience

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LIP DUB

n. A video that features one or more people lip-synching to a song, which is later dubbed over the edited footage.

Example: This city can't get enough of Rob Bliss, the urban artist and visionary who attained worldwide fame for the west Michigan city with a *YouTube* video that has drawn a staggering 2.8 million views in less than two weeks. Bliss' **lip dub** video—in which a parade of Grand Rapids celebrities and residents lip-synch a song in a single, sweeping take—"was awesome", Nancy Jesko, a breathless bank worker, ran up to tell Bliss last week.

—Mark W Smith, "City lip-syncs its way into fame on You Tube", Detroit Free Press, 8 June 2011

underdecided

adj. Being unenthusiastic or unsure about a decision, particularly when choosing a candidate in an election.

Example: I'll be honest, though, I'm pretty underwhelmed with this whole election. I know who I'm going to vote for, and I've known for a while, but I wish I could have been more excited about it. I don't fall into the 'undecided' category, but I guess I'm looking for a reason to get enthused—for a reason to change my vote. I've coined a word for this feeling: **underdecided**.

—Grant Hamilton, "I would vote in advance, if...," Brandon Sun, 26 September 2011

“As you walk down the fairway of life you must smell the roses, for you only get to play one round.

—Ben Hogan

dejab

v. To stop wearing a *hijab*.

Example: Some of those same women are now **dejabbing**—removing it.... **Dejabbers** have become tired of the separation that the *hijab* can lead to, of being spokespersons for, and defenders of, all Muslim women. They are choosing their own identity. As writer Rahat Kurd, a **dejabby**, observes: "If we could just quit this protracted and demoralising fight about women's dress and mobility in public space, we could get so much done with our lives."

—Leslie Scrivener, "Shaila Kibria made a painful but liberating decision to give up the Muslim hijab", Toronto Star, 1 October 2011

NARB

n. An item of personal information posted online, particularly as it contributes, often unwittingly; to a personal narrative that an individual is creating online. Also: NARB.

Example: Social media is an online place where people tell their stories. "We call them **NARBS**, short for narrative bits," said Kraft. Insurers can take advantage of this information by setting up what Kraft described as listening posts.

—Ron Panko, "Life in the fast lane: life insurers use new tech tools to find customers and leverage their existing client base," Best's Review, 1 May 2011

pity friend

n. On a social networking site, a person whose friend request you accept out of pity. Pity-friend *v.*

Example: Consider paring down your Facebook friends to ensure that personalised search results are as relevant as possible. (No more **pity friend** accepts!)

—Laurel Miltner, "Picks of the week: May 16-22", PR 20/20, 24 May 2011

boswell

n. A biographer, especially one who records in detail the life of another and obtains information through close observation of the subject.

Example: Thierry Guetta is both their **Boswell** and their stalker; filming, filming, filming; always.

—Michael Phillips, "Movie review: Exit through the Gift Shop", Chicago Tribune, 29 April 2010

gazundering

n. As a house buyer, reducing a previously agreed-on price for a house just prior to signing the contract.

Example: Remember, if you complete your transaction on bad terms, or twist the vendors' arms with a bit of last-minute **gazundering**, you may find yourself moving into a house in which everything has been stripped out.

—Christopher Middleton, "Confessions of an estate agent,"
The Telegraph, 2 July 2011

augean

a. Extremely difficult, unpleasant, or filthy.

Example: Rajiv Gandhi gave an impression that he would clean the **Augean** stables that the Congress had come to represent.

—"Game-changer that wasn't", The Pioneer, 19 September 2011



BUZZ

Once upon a time...

Do your grandkids love the way you tell stories? Use your special skill to make a difference to the lives of children fighting to overcome intimidating odds. The Uday Foundation, a Delhi-based NGO, runs a series of programmes to enhance the well-being of children suffering from critical disorders. One such programme involves weekend storytelling sessions in paediatric wards of different hospitals in the city. Your stories needn't necessarily revolve around ghosts, kings and animals (though kids can never get enough of those); you can even fabricate a tale around unique experiences from your own childhood. So make an innocent little face light up—log on to www.udayfoundation.india.org to learn how to volunteer.

“Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we often might win by fearing to attempt.”

—William Shakespeare

roman-fleuve

n. A long novel, often in several volumes, that tells the story of an individual, family, or society across several generations.

Example: And it'd be a shame to miss out on the delights of the **roman-fleuve** as summer reading: there's a thrill in buying 12 volumes to read end-to-end.

—Tim Martin, "I'll be joining the dance online," The Daily Telegraph, 17 May 2008

FOLLOWEE

n. A person one chooses to follow on an online social network such as Twitter.

Example: Twitter, however, is a different beast. The asymmetry of follower and **followee** creates a different rhythm, allowing the possibility of falling into conversation with an unknown someone without invading his or her space.

—G E, "Being there," The Economist (Babbage), 8 February 2011

“Working for other people without an iota of expectation offers a unique sense of joy”

Prabhakar Jawadekar, 70, Pune, for collecting and supplying medicines to charitable dispensaries



Hemant Patil

While working as an accounts officer in Telco in Pune, **Prabhakar Jawadekar** felt a sense of social debt after he received unstinted support and help from his friends and colleagues during some major health problems. After retirement in October 2004, this prompted him to start a medical support group and medicine bank, for which he collects unused medicines from families and medical practitioners and distributes them for free among those who need them. “Though retired, I do not get tired. I have discovered a new meaning to life and new friends. This also makes me forget my health problems and has a therapeutic effect on my mind and body. Everyone should discover this social engagement for themselves,” says Jawadekar who is aided in his endeavour by 25 silvers. The group goes on a collection drive two to three times a week and later separates the usable from the unusable. They further arrange the unused medicines in alphabetical order and make an inventory detailing the names, manufacturers, batch numbers, expiry and quantity. The listed stock is then supplied to various charitable dispensaries for free for further distribution. So far, medicines worth ₹ 450,000 have been delivered to charitable dispensaries and 75,000 poor people have benefited from the activity.

—Khursheed Dinshaw

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

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

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We support the nation's cricket and hockey team.

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

We have also adopted more than 95 Indian sports persons from the 7 Olympics disciplines of archery, shooting, boxing, wrestling, track & field, tennis and volleyball along with the adoption of the sport of squash who together represent India's brightest medal prospects in international gaming arena.

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Because we are Sahara India Pariwar.

