

harmony celebrate age

NOVEMBER 2013 ₹ 30

The magazine for silver citizens

PROACTIVE

ALMITRA PATEL'S
CLEAN-UP DRIVE
AGAINST URBAN WASTE

DESTINATION

CLEAN, GREEN, SERENE
MAWLYNNONG

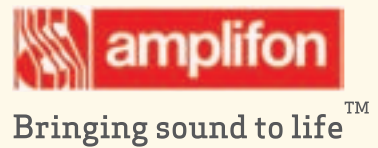
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PANKAJ UDHAS

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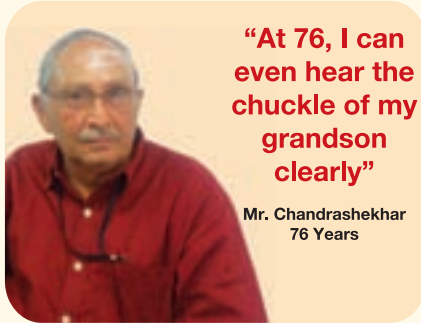


- BANK ON VIJAY GOKHALE TO REDRESS FINANCIAL GRIEVANCES
- BUNNY SURAIYA ON THE DELIGHTS OF THE CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

DO YOU NEED A SIXTH SENSE TO REVIVE YOUR HEARING?



Life takes us by surprise every day. Like 76 year old Mr. CHANDRASHEKHAR, who was facing hearing difficulties at a time when usually he would love to hear the chirping of birds & the gentle flutter of a passing butterfly. Reluctant to give up, he finally found a solution which brought back the complete joy of hearing. Here are the excerpts from his interview:



"At 76, I can even hear the chuckle of my grandson clearly"

Mr. Chandrashekhhar
76 Years

Q1. When did you realize that you had hearing difficulties?

Ans. Initially, I would refuse to acknowledge that there was any problem. But gradually, I started realizing that there was something wrong, when every time I had to direct my head towards someone speaking to me.

Q2. What hearing difficulties did you face?

Ans. I could not follow people talking to me, so I would ask them to speak a little louder & clearer. I realized that my one ear was hearing better so I always preferred using that to answer the phone. I also noticed that I was watching TV at a higher volume than before.

Q3. How did your family and friends react to your hearing loss?

Ans. My family was trying to persuade me to

get my hearing checked. It made me feel irritated & I used to retort by saying that I was ok. In fact, I felt exhausted and frustrated trying to focus on understanding what others were saying.

Q4. Which specialist did you visit to get your hearing checked & what was your first reaction when you were diagnosed with a hearing loss?

Ans. I came to know about my hearing loss from an ENT Specialist, who after initial assessment referred me to an Audiologist for further diagnosis. I was reluctant to go for a hearing instrument because of my old age and also because of my perception that I could somehow manage my day to day activities without a hearing aid.

Q5. Who advised you to go for a hearing instrument?

Ans. The Audiologist at Amplifon, duly supported by my family. Further during my interaction with Audiologists, I came to know that Amplifon provides best in class hearing care, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment and works with highly qualified Audiologists - Truly World Class Standard.

Q6. What was your idea of hearing devices? Were you afraid?

Ans. I did not want to have them thinking that

they would be big, cumbersome & visible to everyone. To my surprise, I got a small and a comfortable hearing solution, hardly noticeable. I had no idea there were so many varieties of hearing instruments for inside the ear and outside the ear. The hearing aids have built-in intelligence to adapt to the surrounding environment.

Q7. How does your hearing instrument help you in your daily life? Are you happy with your decision of going for it?

Ans. I am thrilled. I can now hear sound as well as understand speech very clearly. Initially it took me some time to adjust to the hearing instrument but now I can't imagine a life without them. Everything is much easier now and I am back to my normal routine.

Q8. Would you recommend other hearing impaired people to wear hearing instruments?

Ans. Definitely. Because at this age, you really wouldn't want to miss the beautiful moments that life bestows upon you. Like at 76, I can even hear the chuckle of my grandson or listen to my favourite devotional songs clearly. Thanks to this small device which has actually brought back smile on my and my family's face. I must also appreciate the personal touch, care and customized solution provided by Amplifon which completely fulfills my lifestyle requirements.

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WRITING on the wall

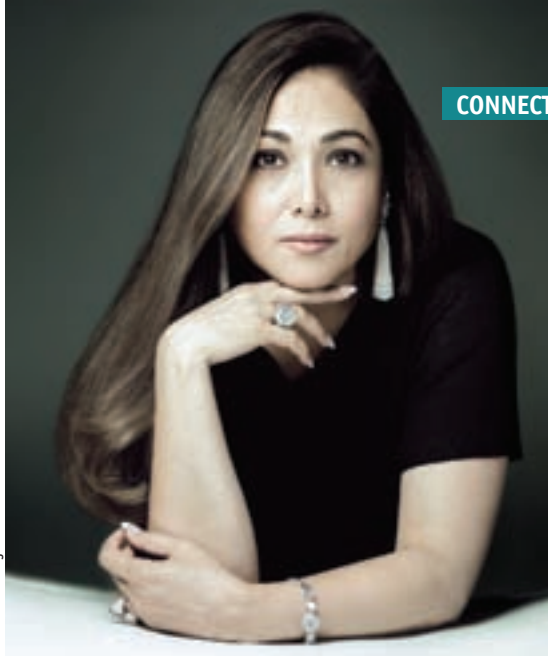
It's not history or economy, size or social tradition—it is policy that defines how our country takes care of its own.

For me, that is the biggest takeaway from the United Nation's Global AgeWatch Index, which rates the countries of the world on the wellbeing of their silvers (*see 'Orbit'*). It's bad enough to see India stand at 73 in a list of 91; what's worse is that countries we are quick to dismiss as insignificant—economically, politically, historically—rank much higher. Consider the fact that Sri Lanka (36), Bolivia (46), Tajikistan (52), Nicaragua (55) and Kyrgyzstan (63) are all well above us and you know we have a serious problem.

The standard excuses of a large population—China, by the way, stands at 35—and limited resources just don't work anymore. The fact is we have consistently continued to neglect social policy, both in the short and long term, and the results are now apparent.

A quick look at the case of Sweden, the country who topped the rankings, brings home the consequences of our short-sightedness. Today, the Scandinavian countries are seen as developed countries but when Sweden institutionalised its universal pension system—a prime reason for its success on the Global AgeWatch Index—it

Suresh Natarajan



was still an 'emerging economy', which is how India is defined today. That was a century ago. Another country that is considered an 'emerging economy' today is Brazil; with social policy increasingly becoming a priority for the government, it already ranks 31 on the index. Similarly, other Latin American countries like Chile (19) and Uruguay (23), who have sharpened their welfare focus, fare exceedingly well on the index.

The writing is on the wall. But we seem strangely reluctant to read it. While we love to wax eloquent on our traditional reverence for our elders and our intergenerational bonds that have weathered the test of time, we have little patience for hard facts, real numbers and quantifiable data that establish that we are on a slippery slope when it comes to silver care.

To claw our way back, we need sustainable policies with teeth. Nothing less will do.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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*Ghazal maestro Pankaj Udhas
on his musical journey*

Cover photograph: **Vilas Kalgutker**

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I CAN, WE CAN

Cancer survivor Harmala Gupta provides palliative care to cancer patients

SECURED FUTURE

Triloki Das Khandelwal on setting up the Social Security Foundation in Jaipur for silvers

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column one

"Music needs to come from within," he asserts. And for Pankaj Udhas, on our cover, there was no alternative but to follow the call of his inner voice. Having endured years of struggle before emerging at the top of his game, the *ghazal* maestro remains incredibly grounded even as he continues to break new ground (and sell out concerts overseas) with his latest album *Sentimental*.

Like Udhas, our featured silvers this month have marched in cadence with their inner voice. While Vijay Gokhale, a former banker, has chosen to use his wealth of experience and the RTI Act to protect small investors and businessmen, Almitra Patel has dedicated her life to waste management practices in a bid towards a more sustainable tomorrow.

Sustainability and eco-responsibility are also the hallmarks of Mawlynong, a village nestled in the Meghalaya hills that has been rated the cleanest in Asia and boasts 100 per cent literacy. The perfect foil to its scenic beauty is the zeal of its residents to live green—read on to discover how they harvest rainwater, fine those who litter and cut trees, and have mastered the art of waste management. Green and serene, Mawlynong is truly the perfect whistle-stop getaway for those with wanderlust.

Indeed, there are many paths to personal bliss. For writer-editor Bunny Suraiya, it's the cryptic crossword, which she calls among the most exciting and stimulating brain games ever. In a delightful column, she recounts how she fell in love with the grid. "What could be a better reason for waking up every morning?" she asks. Find your reason—and savour it.

—Arati Rajan Menon

The findings of HelpAge India's survey released on the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day are appalling. More than one-fifth of the elderly across India (23 per cent) admit facing disrespect, verbal abuse, neglect and physical abuse in their own homes. The elderly form one of the most vulnerable groups of society. Police files report crimes skyrocketing against them; rarely a day goes without a horror story about their abandonment or abuse. Some elders report that their children turn against them once the family property has been transferred to them. Working members of the family lock up Alzheimer's patients and leave for the day, lest they get lost. Neighbours sometimes call in to inform the authorities about the elderly being suddenly thrown out of their homes. According to police records, the number of elderly seeking protection in Delhi has jumped three times in the past three months. Their fear of goons, builders and even their children are not unfounded. The Mumbai police helpline for silvers gets over 80 calls a day—ranging from requests for medical information to friendly chats to ease loneliness.

Some silvers are fighting back as well; self-sufficient silvers are moving into 'pay-and-stay' homes that offer an honourable life rather than facing the perpetual neglect and insult heaped upon them by their own children. In places like Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, day care centres for the elderly are turning out to be of great help for working couples and those with their kith and kin living abroad. But remember one thing: whether it is the children who desert their parents or parents who decide to live separately, it is the heart of the elderly that bleeds the most.

Apart from food and shelter, the elderly need care and medicines. They also crave love, affection and tender care. They want to interact, to be heard and seen; they also want some space of their own apart from having a constructive and creative role to play in society. They don't want to be pushed to the fringes or ignored because of their diminishing physical prowess.

Jasvinder Sharma
Haryana

The Doctor Is In" ('Diary 100', October 2013) was very informative. Visiting a general practitioner involves a lot of expenditure. Earlier, like Dr Keshab Chandra Bordolay rightly pointed out, doctors used to prescribe medicines after physical examination and, in most cases, patients were cured. It is a fact that for most ailments—even minor in nature—doctors these days ask patients to go in for various tests. However, many a time, the

results themselves prove that there was no need for the tests!

Medical help must be available to all citizens free of cost, especially to senior citizens—a fixed percentage of tax collection could be apportioned towards a health fund created by the Centre and state governments. The initiative of the Gujarat government in starting a round-the-clock ambulance service free of cost is laudable. In fact, such services are required in





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all the states, towns and villages of the country. Also, the younger generation must be encouraged to opt for the medical profession as we need several more doctors in our overpopulated country.

Mahesh Kapasi
New Delhi

The article "Plastic Money" ("The Way We Were", October 2013) was a very interesting read. The usage of credit cards should be encouraged so the pressure on paper currency can be reduced and the Government gets full tax on transactions.

Kiran Oza
Bhavnagar, Gujarat

A mother's heart is filled with inordinate affection for her children. Being a parent, she thinks it's her duty to protect her child from the vagaries of life. But when a mother spends her whole life for her children, and does not get what she deserves in return, she feels left out. Silvers suffer negligence at the hands of their own children, who were once the centre of their lives. Children easily forget what their parents have done for them, and don't realise the same will happen with them, as ageing is a universal

truth. I would, therefore, like to suggest that we should live like people with a heart and soul; as the famous saying goes: "What you see in yourself is what you see in the world."

Megha Chawla
Indore

I loved reading Ranjit Lal's puppy love ("Canine Capers", October 2013). I was reminded of our Dalmatian who was with us for almost a decade. He was a bundle of joy, yapping around in the backseat of our car when we adopted him as a month-old puppy. He was a perfect companion to talk, to play with, and to help us relieve our work-related tensions. In fact, there cannot be another substitute to the amount of love a dog gives us. They don't throw temper tantrums and are always there for us. All they ask us in return is a little attention.

A K Ahuja
New Delhi

I enjoyed reading some very interesting articles in the September 2013 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. The main attraction was the Grandparents Special ("Relative Value"), featuring grandparents and their grandchildren sharing diverse hobbies and interests.

Second, Sudha Murty's fine portrayal of her grandmother and all the valuable lessons she learnt from her about how nature gives without any expectations. I also like your regular columns such as 'The Great Granny Diaries' by Pratibha Jain, with inspiring stories about seniors spending their lives fruitfully while ageing gracefully; and 'Your Space', featuring lifetime experiences of silvers that motivate us to follow in their footsteps for healthy, happy living. Thanks a lot and keep up the good work.

Kusum Gokarn
Pune



AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

- You had an experience related to money
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
...and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'

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CONTRIBUTOR



After an award-winning career in advertising, **Bunny Suraiya** took up writing and editing as her profession. She writes on travel as well as social mores and literary subjects. She has contributed to *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *India Today Travel Plus*, *Jet Wings*, *Go Now* and the *Economic Times*. She was a columnist with the *Khaleej Times* and *Time Out London*

and reviews books regularly for *India Today*. She is currently copy editor for *Sommelier India*, India's only wine magazine. Her first short story was published by Khushwant Singh in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*.

Bunny Suraiya lives in Gurgaon with her husband Jug and dog Mili. She loves music, reading, travel, black chocolate and red wine, and is a crossword addict. *Calcutta Exile*, her first novel, garnered critical and popular acclaim and is soon to be published in France by a leading publisher.

► CUTTING EDGE

Brainwave

Researchers at the University of California in San Francisco have developed **NeuroRacer, a video game designed to keep the memory of silvers on track.** When they got participants between the ages of 60 years and 85 years to play the game, which involves racing a car around a winding road while identifying road signs, they found it boosted memory and multitasking. What's more, the improvements lasted for as long as six months,

even without further gaming. "While it appears rather basic at first glance, this 3D game has hidden complexities, pushing participants to go further once they master a skill," team member Adam Gazzaley writes in journal *Nature*. "It is a fantastic way of discovering how plastic the older brain is and getting the brain to perform optimally." The team is now planning to go commercial with the game—they expect to release it on the market in time for Christmas.



List of shame

Shame time, folks. **India clocks in at an appalling 73rd in a list of 91 countries on the Global AgeWatch Index 2013, a study on the wellbeing of silvers supported by the UN.** The rankings are based on data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other agencies on the incomes, health, education, employment and environments of elders and were compiled by the HelpAge International advocacy group and the UN Fund for Population and Development. While Sweden, Norway and Germany came in as the top three places to grow old, the lowest rungs of the ladder were reserved for Tanzania, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Interestingly, while richer, developed countries inevitably scored high, there were some poorer, developing countries that fared well because of progressive, silver-friendly policies, such as Bolivia (46), which offers free healthcare to its silvers, and Sri Lanka (ranked 36), which has invested heavily in health and edu-



cation. “The number of people over the age of 60 is set to soar from about 809 million today to over 2 billion by 2050, when they will account for more than one in five people on the planet,” emphasises the study, which aims to focus the world’s attention on where things are going right—and where they’re not. You can read the entire report at www.helppage.org/global-agemwatch/

1 Sweden	20 Slovenia	39 Albania	58 Greece	77 Nepal
2 Norway	21 Israel	40 Hungary	59 El Salvador	78 Russia
3 Germany	22 Spain	41 Croatia	60 Belarus	79 Lao PDR
4 Netherlands	23 Uruguay	42 Thailand	61 Venezuela	80 Cambodia
5 Canada	24 Belgium	43 Peru	62 Poland	81 Morocco
6 Switzerland	25 Czech Republic	44 Philippines	63 Kyrgyzstan	82 Honduras
7 New Zealand	26 Argentina	45 Latvia	64 Serbia	83 Montenegro
8 USA	27 Italy	46 Bolivia	65 South Africa	84 West Bank and Gaza
9 Iceland	28 Costa Rica	47 Bulgaria	66 Ukraine	85 Nigeria
10 Japan	29 Estonia	48 Romania	67 South Korea	86 Malawi
11 Austria	30 Panama	49 Slovakia	68 Dominican Republic	87 Rwanda
12 Ireland	31 Brazil	50 Lithuania	69 Ghana	88 Jordan
13 United Kingdom	32 Ecuador	51 Armenia	70 Turkey	89 Pakistan
14 Australia	33 Mauritius	52 Tajikistan	71 Indonesia	90 Tanzania
15 Finland	34 Portugal	53 Vietnam	72 Paraguay	91 Afghanistan
16 Luxembourg	35 China	54 Colombia	73 India	
17 Denmark	36 Sri Lanka	55 Nicaragua	74 Mongolia	
18 France	37 Georgia	56 Mexico	75 Guatemala	
19 Chile	38 Malta	57 Cyprus	76 Moldova	



WANTED! ENGLAND NEEDS AN ‘OLDER PEOPLE’S COMMISSIONER’—AS IS THE CASE FOR WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND—TO ACT AS A POWERFUL VOICE FOR PENSIONERS AND ADVOCATE THEIR CONCERNS, ACCORDING TO THE COUNTRY’S FORMER CARE MINISTER PAUL BURSTOW. INDIA NEEDS ONE TOO.

Kudos to Karnataka



On the occasion of World Elders' Day, which was celebrated on 1 October, some good news came our way from Karnataka. **In Bengaluru, the Elders Enrichment Centre in Malleswaram opened its doors** to offer silvers a place to interact with their peers in a friendly and elder-friendly setting. The day centre also has facilities for people with dementia who cannot be left alone. Further, Urban Development Minister Vinay Kumar Sorake announced the establishment of a **toll-free helpline for silvers in Udupi district**. Also, identity cards are being distributed to people over the age of 60 in every taluk in the district—close to 9,500 have already been disbursed. What's more, Sorake announced that **the state government has invited proposals from NGOs to run a 25-bed old age home in each of the 30 districts in Karnataka**. Two thumbs up.

DRIVEN TO CRIME: THE NUMBER OF ELDERLY PEOPLE CAUGHT SHOPLIFTING IN TOKYO HAS OUTSTRIPPED THAT OF TEENAGERS FOR THE FIRST TIME—A QUARTER OF THE 3,221 PEOPLE ARRESTED FOR THE CRIME WERE AT LEAST 65 YEARS OLD. AUTHORITIES ASCRIBE THIS TO INCREASING ISOLATION AND ALIENATION AMONG SILVERS.

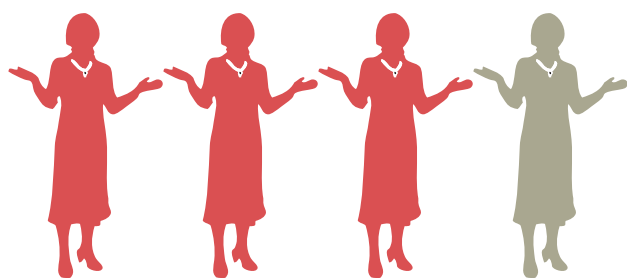


New, from Google

The hype can't fail to grab you. **Calico—or California Life Company—has been described as 'Google's bid to solve death'**. The Internet giant's new venture has been described as a 'moonshot' project involving healthcare and biotechnology that will focus on the challenge of ageing and associated diseases. Even more intriguing, it will be run by Art Levinson, the current chairman of both biotech company Genentech and Apple. "Illness and ageing affect all our families," said Google co-founder Larry Page in a media release. "With some longer-term moonshot thinking around healthcare and biotechnology, I believe we can improve millions of lives." We know very little right now but we have to admit that we're excited.



SAFER IN CHANDIGARH: THE CHANDIGARH ADMINISTRATION HAS ANNOUNCED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL CELL TO LOOK INTO THE GRIEVANCES OF SILVERS REGARDING THREAT TO LIFE AND PROPERTY. IT WILL BE FUNCTIONAL ROUND THE CLOCK.



75%
WOMEN OVER THE
AGE OF 30 IN THE UK
USE SOME SORT OF
ANTI-AGEING PRODUCT

INTERESTINGLY, THOUGH, **48** PER CENT
CONFESS THAT THEY CONTINUE USING THE
PRODUCT EVEN THOUGH THEY BELIEVE THAT
IT DOESN'T REALLY WORK.

Mum's the word

IF YOU HAVE WRINKLES, blame your mother! We already knew that damage to our mitochondria speeds up age-related conditions. Now, a team comprising researchers from Sweden and Germany have established that while the DNA that influences how we develop comes from both parents and is held within a cell nucleus, the genes in mitochondria are entirely separate and come only from our mother. And when inherited DNA is defective, the result is premature ageing in the form of wrinkles, as well as a possibly shorter lifespan. "Our mother's mitochondrial DNA [mtDNA] seems to influence our own ageing," lead researcher Professor Nils-Goran Larsson from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden writes in journal *Nature*. "If we inherit mtDNA with mutations from our mother, we age more quickly."

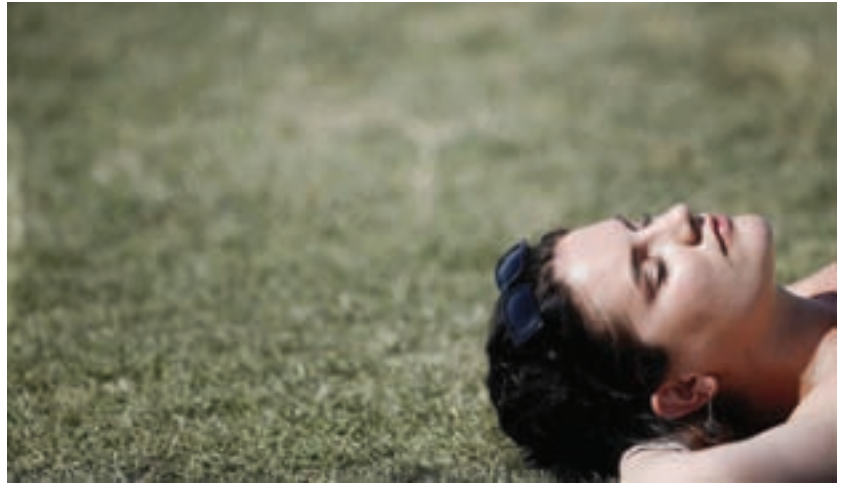


Slime on

It sounds like an icky torture scene from a B-grade movie. But apparently live snails crawling over your face can be a good thing. Tokyo's Clinical Salon has launched **the Celebrity Escargot Course**, an anti-ageing treatment that involves precisely that, in a bid to channel the benefits of snail mucus, which is packed with hyaluronic acid, protein and antioxidants. The desired results: therapy for sun damage, greater moisture retention, and less inflammation and dead skin. The entire drill takes an hour—first they cleanse your face and let the snails loose on your cheeks and forehead. If you can make it past that point, you get a massage with a cream infused with snail slime. As London newspaper *The Telegraph* reports, this slime is provided by the salon's five resident snails, fattened up on a variety of nutrient-rich organic veggies. "Snail slime can help the recovery of skin cells on the face, so we expect the snail facial to help heal damaged skin," says Yoko Miniemi, sales manager at Clinical Salon. If you're game, it will cost you £ 161 (about ₹ 16,000). And, yes, the cost of a return ticket to Tokyo.

Sleeping beauty

Sleep isn't just good for your body—it's also essential for your skin. A clinical trial conducted at University Hospitals (UH) Case Medical Centre in Ohio, in the US, has established that **poor sleepers have increased signs of skin ageing and slower recovery from environmental stressors.** The research team studied 60 premenopausal women between the ages of 30 and 49 and found that those with poor sleep quality showed increased signs of intrinsic skin ageing including fine lines, uneven pigmentation, slackening of skin and reduced elasticity. The ability of their skin to



recover from pollution, dehydration, sunburn and UV radiation was also significantly lower. What's more, poor quality sleepers were more likely to have a higher body mass index (BMI). "Our study is the first to conclusively demonstrate that inadequate sleep is correlated with reduced skin health

and accelerates skin ageing," writes primary investigator Elma Baron in an extract titled *Effects of Sleep Quality on Skin Aging and Function*. "Sleep-deprived women show signs of premature skin ageing and a decrease in their skin's ability to recover after sun exposure."



Magic wand?

Want your very own fairy godmother to turn back time with a swish of her wand? British company Crystal Clear has launched a **hand-held vibrating wand, Lift Away the Years, which claims to firm and lift the entire face**—from eyes to cheeks and jaw line—and banish fine lines and wrinkles. It also releases a burst of intensive anti-ageing serum into the skin, which includes peptides such as Syn-Ake, derived from the venom of the Temple Viper snake. As London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, the wand provides facial muscles with a workout, stimulating blood flow and increasing oxygenation; trials showed a 45 per cent increase in skin firmness and 27 per cent reduction in fine lines and wrinkles. And owing to the surprisingly moderate price—it costs £ 59.99 (about ₹ 6,000)—it's selling like hotcakes. If you're interested, you can buy one online at crystalclear.co.uk/lift-away-the-years/

BRIGHT LIGHT: FRENCH COSMETIC AND FASHION COMPANY YVES SAINT LAURENT HAS LAUNCHED FOREVER LIGHT CREATOR, AN ANTI-AGEING PRODUCT THAT USES THE REFLECTION OF LIGHT TO IMPROVE THE COMPLEXION. AVAILABLE IN LOTION OR A MORE CONCENTRATED SERUM FORM, IT CLAIMS TO EVEN OUT THE COMPLEXION, REMOVE DARK SPOTS AND SHADOWS AND MAKE THE SKIN MORE RADIANT WITH THE HELP OF THREE TYPES OF SUGARS CALLED GLYCANS THAT REFLECT LIGHT. PRICES RANGE FROM £ 35 (ABOUT ₹ 3,500) TO £ 82 (₹ 8,200).

It's never too late

Turning back the clock can go beyond wishful thinking to actual reality. According to scientists at the University of California – Los Angeles, **healthy lifestyle changes**



such as eating whole foods and practising yoga can actually reverse the ageing of the body's cells. Over a period of five years, the team studied 35 men with a non-aggressive form of prostate cancer; 10 of them adopted a 'lifestyle change intervention' programme comprising a healthier diet, moderate exercise, stress management and attendance at a social support group, while the other 25 made no changes to their lifestyle. They discovered that the 10 men who chose the intervention developed chromosomes that appeared similar to those of a younger person, owing to a lengthening of their telomeres, the caps at the end of the chromosomes that stop DNA damage. In fact, their telomeres lengthened by an average of 10 per cent over five years, with those that embraced the lifestyle intervention more wholeheartedly displaying the longest telomere length. "The implications of this relatively small pilot study may go beyond men with prostate cancer," writes study leader Dean Ornish in *The Lancet Oncology Journal*. "If validated by large-scale, randomised controlled trials, these lifestyle changes may significantly reduce the risk of a wide variety of diseases and premature mortality."

TASTE OF TIME: A STUDY AT OSAKA UNIVERSITY IN JAPAN REVEALS THAT OUR TASTE PREFERENCES MAY CHANGE OVER TIME. THEIR STUDY OF RATS DEMONSTRATES THAT AGEING DECREASES DIETARY AND ENERGY REQUIREMENTS AND THIS REDUCED CONSUMPTION IS RELATED TO ALTERATIONS IN TASTE PREFERENCE.

Couple conundrum

Although we're the first to cheer at silver wedded bliss, we do acknowledge that it may not work for everyone. Take, for instance, a new study from Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia, which argues that **having a husband in old age doesn't necessarily make a woman happy**. When the researchers interviewed men and women from Adelaide over the age of 85, they found that the female respondents who had a spouse reported feeling more unhappy when they were interacting with their spouse than when they were alone. "We believe women are burdened by the double roles of being a wife and full-time caregiver," writes team leader Helena Chui in online journal *Developmental Psychology*. "Although women are more likely to experience bereavement from widowhood because men die younger on average, our research shows women are actually not happy when their partners are with them on a day-to-day basis."





Alone, with AIDS

AIDS is no longer the four-letter word it was for so many years. Its tide has been stemmed and advances in treatment have ensured that people who are HIV positive can have near-normal life expectancy. However, according to HIV and Later Life Study, conducted at Keele University in the UK, **many silvers with HIV are still stigmatised, leaving them isolated and afraid.** "HIV is still widely seen as a disease of young people, especially young, gay men," Dr David Asboe, chairman of the British HIV Association, tells London newspaper

Daily Mail. "Thus, older people who suffer from AIDS, especially women, are often typecast as 'undignified' or 'sexually irresponsible'. This also leads other people in their peer group to keep a distance from them socially." Affirming this, project leader Dr Dana Rosenfeld says, "There is an immense knowledge gap in this field and a very real sense that later-life HIV status will be read in very stigmatised ways." In 2002, only one in nine people accessing HIV care in the UK were over 50 years of age; in 2011, it was one in five.

TAKING ON THE WORLD: DESPITE BEING SUBJECTED TO AGE-RELATED DISCRIMINATION, 60 PER CENT OF CANADIAN WOMEN FEEL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT AGEING AND GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES—AS OPPOSED TO JUST 50 PER CENT OF MEN—ACCORDING TO A JOINT REPORT BY RETIREMENT HOME AND CARE SERVICES PROVIDER REVERA INC AND THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF AGEING.



Forever fashionable

Style and sass have no expiry date. Proof of this is a new show from the UK's **Channel 4: *Fabulous Fashionistas*** features six women with an average age of 80 who show that getting older can be fun, fabulous and uber fashionable. The stars of the show are Daphne Selfe—who, at 85, is acclaimed as the world's oldest supermodel—Gillian Lynne, Sue Kreitzman, Baroness Trumpington, Jean Woods, and Bridget Sojourner, and they all credit their positive state of mind to their youthful style, as London newspaper, *The Independent*, reports. On the show, they throw open their astonishing wardrobes, share their lives and loves, and offer some seriously sound advice on keep-



ing your look current and relevant through the passage of time. "You only live once," says Selfe. "You don't get a second chance." Lynne, who is 87 and married to a man 27 years younger, adds, "I like wearing short skirts and

I don't give a toss what people think or say about it. My legs are my best asset and I know it." *Fabulous Fashionistas* went on air on 17 September 2013; you can catch a peek on www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKISrYFK-G4

COOL BRITANNIA: WITH WESTERN TV SHOWS BECOMING VIRAL IN INDIA, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT THIS ONE MIGHT SOON COME TO A SCREEN NEAR YOU. A NEW BBC SITCOM, *GREY MATTERS*, FOLLOWS A FEISTY GROUP OF OLD AGE PENSIONERS LIVING IN NORFOLK IN THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE, CHRONICLING THEIR LIVES, LOVES AND MANY (MIS)ADVENTURES. THE CAST INCLUDES VETERANS STEPHANIE BEACHAM, RUSS ABBOT AND ALISON STEADMAN. FILMING FOR THE SHOW BEGAN IN SEPTEMBER 2013.



Poster boys

Considering the sheer decadence and hedonism of the lives they've led, **silver rock stars are the perfect go-to when it comes to advertising opulence.** Thus, when French luxury house Louis Vuitton recently announced that iconic British singer-songwriter David Bowie would headline its latest ad campaign for signature luggage, it didn't come as much of a surprise. As the US edition of *Vogue* magazine reports, he follows on the heels of Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards (69) and eternal diva Madonna (55), who have all posed for Vuitton in the past. The idea, it appears, is contagious. While fashion house Yves Saint Laurent has used images of rock 'n' roll legends Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis and B B King for its campaign, Greek designer Varvatos has country music legend Willie Nelson strutting his stuff for its latest campaign. In case you wondered, Nelson is 80.

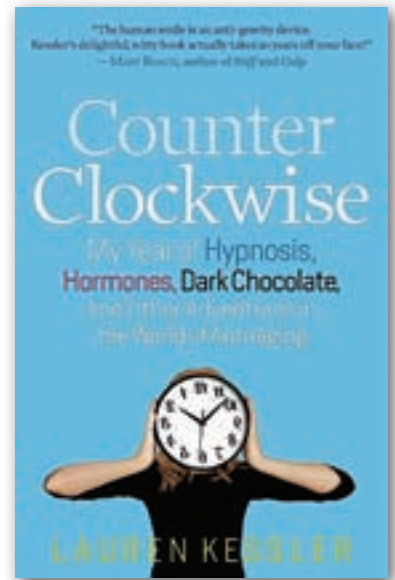


Hollywood secrets

His client list is guarded more carefully than Fort Knox. But now, Beverly Hills anti-ageing specialist **Dr Andre Berger reveals the secrets of the stars in his new eBook, *The Beverly Hills Anti-Ageing Prescription*.** Going beyond the slew of quick-fix potions available on the market Berger offers a more holistic approach to feeling your best; his books spans parameters like nutrition, exercise, sleep, stress management, hormone replacement therapy, environmental detox, and even eastern wisdom, mapping out a life plan that is straightforward and easy to follow. "The book equips readers with specific tools needed to properly nourish and cultivate the best internal and external surroundings for ageing, while managing and decreasing stressors on the body," he writes in a media release. He also discusses the benefits of minimally invasive cosmetic procedures to enhance the anti-ageing experience. If you're interested, the eBook is available on a variety of sites, including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kindle, iTunes and Overdrive. The price: \$ 9.95 (about ₹ 615). Go to www.rejuvalife.md

The whole nine yards

When Lauren Kessler set out to research her latest book, *Counter Clockwise: My Year of Hypnosis, Hormones, Dark Chocolate, and Other Adventures in the World of Anti-Ageing*, (Rodale Books; 256 pages), she left no stone unturned. Thus, as *The New York Times* reports, she hypnotised herself, ate superfoods for a week and even zapped her face to get with the programme. The result: a wry, witty eye-opener into the lengths people go to in search of the anti-ageing fix. "I believe that the underlying idea of the anti-ageing industry is false because it's based on physical stuff," says Kessler, who teaches multimedia narrative journalism at the University of Oregon. "There are reasons to stay vital and engaged that have nothing to do with vanity. It's about staying physically healthy and intellectually and creatively



vibrant. I believe that how we think about our own ageing has tremendous biological consequences."

TREASURE TROVE: FOR HISTORY BUFFS KEEN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EVERYDAY LIFE AND CULTURE IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS IN EUROPE, WWW.ILLUSTRIERTE-PRESSE.DE/EN/ OFFERS A COMPLETE INVENTORY OF 10 POPULAR GERMAN ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINES OF THE TIME.

Hot stuff

As travel promotions go, it's a little far out. But a **group of pensioners from the Italian village of Castrovalva have achieved instant Internet fame for themselves—and their village—by performing their own version of Donna Summer's classic *Hot stuff*.** The tiny village, an hour and a half from Rome, is home to only 19 permanent residents; all of them are silver, with most of them octogenarians. Owners of holiday homes in the village, they are completely dependent on tourists for their survival. "We love this classic disco song and we filmed it as a bit of a lark to try and promote the village," Pietro Marchesani, 82, told London newspaper *The Telegraph*. "We didn't believe it would receive this much attention! The best part is that we're all booked through for the rest of the year." Mission accomplished. And, yes, if you want to watch them boogie, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK1SrYFK-G4



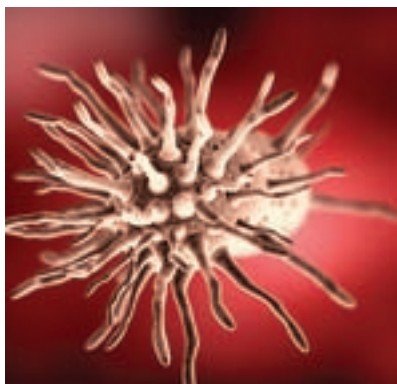
A lobster's life

While its delectable flesh sends seafood lovers into rhapsody, **scientists are singing the praises of the lobster as a species that is biologically immortal.** While they can be injured or killed by predators (including man!), their cells don't deteriorate with age—in fact, they become stronger and more fertile each time they shed their shells, British biologist and TV presenter Simon Watt said, speaking at the British Science Festival held in Newcastle in September. “While the telomeres—the caps that protect our chromosomes—get shorter every time a human cell di-

vides, lobsters produce sufficient quantities of a substance called telomerase to renew these protective DNA caps and prevent cells from dying,” he tells London newspaper *The Times*. “Of course, such species also die; they can become diseased, injured or hunted. But unlike humans, they don't die as a result of their own metabolisms; there doesn't seem to be a built-in life expectancy in their cells.” By studying such biologically immortal species, scientists expect to shed more light on the process of human ageing and develop new treatments for diseases like cancer.

Maximum microbe

They look nothing alike but our biologically immortal friend the lobster has a compatriot: **a yeast microbe called *S. Pombe* that is also immune to ageing.** According to a team from the University of Bristol in the UK and the Max-Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics in Germany, this common species of yeast microbe has evolved to stay young. “The yeast reproduces by splitting into two halves that both inherit their ‘fair share’ of old cell



material,” writes lead investigator Iva Tolic in journal *Current Biology*. “However, as both cells only get half the damaged material, they are both younger than before. Thus, *S. Pombe* is rejuvenated each time it reproduces and can escape ageing as long as it keeps dividing fast enough.” However, this happens only when the yeast is in favourable conditions—exposure to heat, UV radiation and damaging chemicals can throw a spanner in the works.

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Play to win. It's time to dust off that old board and renew your acquaintance with the magnificent game of chess. Have a round with your spouse, your friends, or teach your grandkids. A recent report by the Mayo Clinic in the US highlights seven benefits of playing chess: it stimulates the growth of dendrites in your brain, which increases the brain's processing speed and boosts performance; exercises both hemispheres of your brain; prevents Alzheimer's; helps treat schizophrenia; improves thinking and problem-solving skills; builds self-confidence; and can be used to rehabilitate patients recovering from a stroke by honing motor skills and improving cognitive function. Checkmate.



FACTS

- Leather takes up to 50 years to decompose. Unlike glass and plastic, it isn't possible to melt leather down and make a new leather coat or bag. The only way to recycle leather is to reuse it.
- In India, 700 million leather shoes are produced annually—and that's not counting bags, belts and car seats among its other uses. This presents a dark picture, considering that cow hides are used to produce leather.

Then: Old leather belts Now: Door mat

Make a vintage door mat with a bunch of old and unused leather belts to welcome your guests. You'll need a leather hole puncher; a ball of hemp twine; a large sewing needle; and eight to 10 old belts. If the belt's too worn out on its front side, flip it over. To make the door mat, first cut off the buckles. Then, line them up adjacent to each other. Run a low-heat iron over just to straighten them out and make your work easier. It

doesn't matter if the belts vary in width, but if they vary in length, now's the time to cut them to an equal length. Next, with the hole-puncher, make holes along the length of each belt, at a distance of about two inches, such that each hole is next to its adjacent belt's hole. Then, sew the belts up together through the holes, vertically, along the length of the belt for sturdiness. You're done with your innovative and eco-friendly door mat!

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. CUT LEATHER BELTS AND SEW THEM ON TO CLOTH BAGS FOR A NEW AND STURDY BAG HANDLE. IN FACT, THEY CAN MAKE GREAT HANDLES ANYWHERE—FROM PLANTERS TO DRAWERS.
2. IF YOU HAVE A FUNKY LEATHER BELT YOU THINK YOU'LL NEVER WEAR AGAIN, CUT IT IN HALF WITH A CURVING END AND GIVE YOUR PET A NEW COLLAR.



Power in awareness

With the increasing number of dengue-related deaths in Mumbai, a timely session on the prevention of dengue was organised by the Harmony Interactive Centre in the city on 21 October. The session was conducted by Dr Sunita Khushi, administrative medical officer at Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, and Dr Thakkar, resident medical officer at Suryakant Hospital.

Dr Khushi spoke about the symptoms of dengue, its causes and possible timely treatment. She then listed out the potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes – from leaking pipes and refrigerators to planters, rubber tyres and ignored water tanks. She emphasised upon the need to keep these places clean and clear. An interesting concept that she introduced is a community initiative of organising ‘dry days’—a day in the week when tanks and other containers are kept dry and emptied thoroughly.

For his part, Dr Thakkar busted several common misconceptions in a



question-and-answer session. It's a myth, he said, that dengue (once cured by medication and vaccination) does not occur again. Setting the record straight, he explained that dengue's symptoms can be treated and reduced. “But if another dengue-carrying mosquito bites you, you are prone to it again. There is no vaccination that prevents it completely.” He also added that no matter how many kinds of medicines or insecticides we invent, mosquitoes soon become resistant; in other words, they are invincible. Spreading awareness about dengue is very important as it helps in early diagnosis.

Indeed, the Harmony Interactive Centre is a place where knowledge is disseminated selflessly. Earlier this September, *rangoli* artist and social worker Jitendra Vaishnav conducted a *rangoli* workshop at the Centre. He demonstrated *rangoli* drawing and filling the layout with colours using his fingers. He also shared tips on combining colours and using various objects for layering and texture.

After this quick course, silvers made an attempt to make their own splash of colours, and ended the evening admiring each other's work!

—Neeti Vijaykumar



Vitamin shield

Popping multivitamin pills enriched with minerals can reduce chances of death from invasive breast cancer (a form of cancer that has spread outside the membrane of the milk glands or ducts and into the breast tissue) by 30 per cent in post-menopausal women. As part of a women's health initiative, researchers at Albert College of Medicine, Yeshive University, New York, studied about 7,700 women aged between 50 and 79 for seven years. While most of them had been taking multivitamin supplements before their diagnosis, 38 per

cent had started using the supplements once the cancer had developed. Researchers adjusted for lifestyle factors from smoking to weight and depression to diabetes issues, and found that mortality among regular users of mineral-enhanced multivitamin supplements was 30 per cent lower than non-users. While previous studies mostly pitch against the use of multivitamin supplements by patients who have breast cancer, this extensive study and its follow-ups might change major opinions among experts.

There is increasing evidence against the use of statins, the cholesterol-controlling wonder drugs that could prevent heart diseases. A new study has found that **statins could increase the risk of cataract**. After 10 years of analysing 7,000 statin users and an equal number of non-users, researchers at San Antonio Military Medical Centre, Texas, have concluded that statin users run a 27 per cent higher risk of cataract than non-users. However, it is being advised that patients discuss the pros and cons of drugs with doctors rather than stopping the use of statins over a supposed risk of cataract.

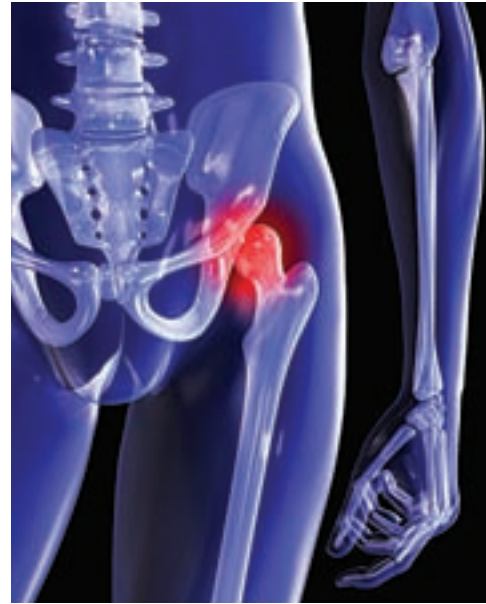


Vital step

When someone suffers a cardiac arrest, survival hinges on the first few crucial minutes during and after the attack in which a bystander plays a more important role than professional medical help. A large-scale, 10-year study in Denmark serves as solid evidence that **increasing awareness about cardiac pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) among common people increases the survival rates of cardiac patients substantially.** Researchers at the Copenhagen University Hospital in Gentofte analysed survival in out-of-hospital cardiac arrests by studying 19,468 patients aged around the age of 70. Resuscitation attempts on these patients included the use of CPR and automatic defibrillators before the arrival of paramedical aid. The study found that in comparison to a similar analysis 10 years ago, the rates of bystanders performing CPR increased from 21 per cent to 45 per cent. The number of patients brought to hospital alive increased from 8 per cent to 22 per cent, and 30-day survival went up from 3 to 11 per cent. However, the increase in bystanders using automatic defibrillators on the patients rose only by 1 per cent. But the fact that the number of survivors has doubled is reason enough for us to encourage citizens to learn to administer CPR.

Hip hip hurray

Though the mortality rate in the first 90 days after hip replacement surgeries is as low as 1 per cent across the world, the collective figure is substantial. Considering that almost 36 million people in India suffer from osteoporosis and would eventually need hip replacement surgeries, it is good to know that **four key treatment options—spinal anaesthetic; a posterior surgical approach; chemical thromboprophylaxis with heparin; or mechanical thromboprophylaxis—have been proven effective in lowering death rates.** Researchers at the University of Bristol studied 409,000 patients between 2003 and 2011 and found that the number of deaths in the first 90 days have halved from 0.6 per cent to 0.3 per cent with the use of these options. Another surprising finding: overweight patients are less likely to die within the crucial period compared to patients with normal weight. It has also been



ascertained that people with severe liver disease had a tenfold increase in risk of death, while those with a history of one or more heart attacks had a threefold increase in risk; both diabetes and renal disease led to a twofold increase.

NEW RESEARCH HAS ESTABLISHED A LINK BETWEEN ABDOMINAL FAT AND DEMENTIA: THOSE WHO BUILD UP ABDOMEN FAT IN THEIR MIDDLE AGES ARE 3.6 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP DEMENTIA LATER IN THEIR LIFE, ACCORDING TO NEUROLOGISTS AT RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTRE, CHICAGO. THE PROTEIN THAT CONTROLS FAT METABOLISM IN THE LIVER IS THE SAME THAT IS FOUND IN THE MEMORY AREA OF THE BRAIN. WHEN THIS PROTEIN DEPLETES, THERE IS ACCUMULATION OF FAT IN THE MID-TORSO AND, EVENTUALLY, LOSS OF CONTROL IN THE HIPPOCAMPUS (MEMORY AND LEARNING CENTRES) OF THE BRAIN. BUILDING UP OF FAT IS A MORE VISIBLE SIGN OF LOSS OF THIS PROTEIN, SO PREVENTIVE MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN MUCH EARLIER, RECOMMENDS THE STUDY.



Sunandini Banerjee

World class

In 2005, when the big players of global publishing had started making their presence felt in India, a relatively small and fiercely independent publisher in a nondescript South Kolkata by-lane came up with an audacious thought. “What if we were in New York and London? Let us assume our money is as good as everybody else’s; our design, craft and production capabilities are better; and we have reasonably decent distribution, where we take an author’s book to the global audience. We don’t make huge sums of money for the author, but he knows that we are doing this well and he is getting paid on time. Then why shouldn’t everyone from Jean-Paul Sartre to Toni Morrison be possible to publish?” This “partly tongue-in-cheek and partly political” experiment of **Naveen Kishore**, founder of Seagull Books, obviously worked. Today, impressed by *The New York Review of Books*, if you wanted to read the 2012 Literature Nobel Prize winner Mo Yan’s *Pow!*, you would be pleasantly surprised to find that Seagull is the publisher.

Kishore and his small team prefer to do things with a certain élan and take the idea of ‘global’ to a new high in the world of publishing. Enter the Seagull bookstore and you find, among others, a book on the shelf rich with Wall Street flavour, written by a French economist and printed in Kolkata

with a Somenath Hore painting on the cover. In the world of publishing, one can’t get any more global!

Awards and recognition have started coming in from international quarters. The German government recently honoured Kishore with the Goethe Medal for promoting German culture. “Perhaps publishing, which started in 1982, was a trigger for the award but the Germans and my Seagull team have been working together since 1972,” shares Kishore. The cultural links between Kishore and the Germans started from his original interest in theatre where he was a stage-lighting designer. “In Calcutta, we all grew up on Bertolt Brecht,” he says with a smile.

Kishore’s publishing list is heavy with a more-than-generous dose of intellectual content; his books are certainly not for the casual reader. Apart from Germany, he has published authors from countries such as France, Italy and Switzerland. He even has authors from Africa and a few Arabic titles on his enviable list. While he takes European authors to the world, he is also taking some Kolkata names to the global arena. The Seagull list includes Bengali author Mahasweta Devi and theatre personalities like actor Utpal Dutt and Badal Sircar. Additionally, there is a whole list of books on films and film studies.

Fine art is another subject close to Kishore’s heart. Apart from a gallery that curates and exhibits what he calls “non-saleable” aspects of an artist’s work, he has a long list of books on both Indian and European artists. Such titles are clearly not meant for the mass market and most don’t make money on a standalone basis. So how does his business—Seagull has been in the business for over 30 years—survive?

In the words of one of his German translators, Katy Derbyshire, Kishore publishes books “not because they will make money, but because someone out there will want to read them.” In his own words, Kishore says, “Small, independent publishing will always be passion-driven, it cannot be commodity-driven. No one believes it but we survive on a combination of debt from friends, grants from different agencies and, on the third level, sales proceeds of books—it’s a very slow process.”

Sometimes, though, one gets lucky. Last year, long-time Seagull lister Mo Yan, whom critics call the Franz Kafka of China, won the Nobel Prize for Literature—an award that can literally change the fortunes of a publisher. “I didn’t do anything special,” says Kishore. “I just happened to like his work and so we worked together.”

—Sudipto Roy

BIRTHDAYS

● Legendary actor-director of Tamil cinema **Kamal Hassan** (left) turned 59 on 7 November.

● Hindi film producer **Boney Kapoor** turns 59 on 11 November.

● Greek pianist, music composer and producer **Yanni** (right) turns 59 on 14 November.

● American political scientist and diplomat **Condoleezza Rice**, who served as the 66th US Secretary of State, turns 59 on 14 November.

● American fashion designer **Calvin Richard Klein**, founder of renowned international fashion brand Calvin Klein Inc, turns 71 on 19 November.

● Hindi film diva **Zeenat Aman** (left) turns 62 on 19 November.

● Dancer extraordinaire **Helen Jairag Richardson**, best known in Bollywood as Helen, turns 75 on 21 November.

MILESTONES

● Prominent television journalist **Karan Thapar**, 57, was selected for the International Press Institute (IPI) India's award for excellence in journalism on 8 October. He has been lauded for his sharply critical interviews on *Devil's Advocate* on CNN IBN.

● Indian agricultural scientist **M S Swaminathan** (left), 88, was selected for the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration 2012 on 10 October.

● Canadian writer **Alice Munro**, 82, was awarded the 2013 Nobel Prize in literature for being a "master of the contemporary story" on 11 October.

● Former US secretary of state **Hillary Clinton**, 65, was conferred the First Founders' Award from the

Elton John AIDS Foundation, in New York, on 15 October. The award is for her work to help people with HIV/AIDS.

IN PASSING

● **Hiroshi Yamauchi** (left), known for making Nintendo a household name, died on 19 September at the age of 85. He succumbed to pneumonia.

● **Jaywant Yeshwant Lele** (right), former secretary of the Indian Cricket Board, died of a heart attack on 19 September. He was 75.

● Indian freedom fighter **Ranjit Singh** passed away after a brief illness on 20 September. He was 97.

● Renowned American thriller novelist **Tom Clancy** (left) passed away on 1 October, aged 66.

● **Scott Carpenter**, one of NASA's first group of astronauts, died of a stroke on 10 October. He was 88.

● Former president of the Table Tennis Federation of India **T D Rangaramanujan** (right) passed away on 14 October. He was 96.

● Political thinker and Marathi playwright **Govind Deshpande** passed away on 16 October. He was 75.

OVERHEARD

"I think retirement's for old people. I'm still in the business, thank you. I have a young child and I want to live as long as I can to see him grow up. I also have three young grandchildren, I'm enjoying my life and I want to stick around for as long as I can. I'm thrilled that I'm still employed, still have my health and still have opportunities and interesting things to do."

—American actor **Harrison Ford**, 71, to British newspaper *Daily Mirror*

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LIFE'S HIDDEN MEANING

The best part about life is that it surprises you when you least expect it. Not every surprise is pleasant, mind you. But even the toughest challenge can be a blessing in disguise and it is up to you to unravel the message and meaning it contains.

Growing up was wonderful. I had a loving family and was blessed with a passion and talent for Bharatanatyam and Carnatic music. I even won a gold medal and many trophies for this at the tender age of eight.

I was also lucky to choose my life partner in medical college. We were very, very happy but not for long as I was widowed at the age of 42. My husband's death at this early age revealed life in all its darkness and changed my attitude towards life.

Being a single woman, even a doctor, is not easy in a male-dominated society such as ours. I also had two children and wanted to give them the best I could. I wanted to instill in them courage, faith, love and joy, and encourage them to become better individuals in this competitive world. A good parent also knows when to let her children go so they can develop their own interests and live independent lives. By God's grace, both my children are well-settled and will always be my greatest assets.

My professional life was equally challenging. I graduated as a doctor at the age of 23 from Gandhi Medical College, Hyderabad. I had a very promising career but at the age of 39, I developed arthritis of the right hip joint and underwent total hip-replacement and revision surgery.

This orthopaedic handicap forced me to compromise with fate and I settled for the post of medical officer at Nuclear Fuel Complex (NFC), Department of Atomic Energy, where I was required to be more a family physician than an obstetrician and gynaecologist, which I had believed to be my calling.

Once I got over my despondency, I wholeheartedly embraced my work at NFC. The doctor-patient relationship is a mystical bond I shared for more than two decades with employees and their families. Here, I not only dealt with my patients' physical disease but their emotional problems



For Jayaram, life is a reward in itself

and fragmental families too. I encouraged them to think positive and face the odds as best as they could. Although my work was reward in itself, I was pleased to receive many awards, including being declared Woman of the Year in 2001 by the American Biological Institute.

After retirement, I ran a menopause clinic for six years and counselled women grappling with this life-changing event. I was also involved in many free medical camps and other services. I experienced another turning point in my life when I met my guru, who gave me an excellent opportunity to serve the poor at Dindigal Ashram Vydy Seva of Sri Ganapathi Satchitananda Swamiji.

I believe there is a hidden agenda in everybody's destiny, which surfaces when the sun is setting on their lives. I also believe the 'empty nest syndrome' brought out the real me and I am grateful that, during this brief passage on earth,

I learnt to compromise, be gentle and accepting of life. Isn't it wonderful just to be alive?

—Dr N Gowri Jayaram,
Secunderabad

A FRIEND INDEED!

I read your feature on Friendship Day in the August issue of your magazine and thought I would recount my own experience.

Having a true friend—someone you are totally comfortable with—is a gift not everyone is blessed with. I am fortunate to have a friend like this, to stand by me through thick and thin and, of course, the other way around.

My 'best friend' Sudesh Airi and I love travelling and we also love the good life. At least once a month, we check out the latest restaurant in town and, oh yes, we love our shopping sprees, especially when one of us has an occasion to attend. Why, the younger generation in our families teases us, calling us the best-dressed in the family wearing only the latest fashions!

I met Sudesh after I married my husband Raj in 1966. Sudesh was Raj's best friend Tilak Airi's wife. We got to know each other pretty well when we went on vacation with them to places like Mussoorie, Manali and other hill stations around Delhi. But Sudesh and I grew really close when my husband passed away in 1984; she was my pillar of strength.

At the time, I wanted to go on a pilgrimage to southern India to visit various temples, Jyotirlingams and the Char Dham. Sudesh and I set off and it was real fun. One day, both of us were on a beach in Kanyakumari and Sudesh wanted to take a picture of me sitting on a rock in the middle of the water. Halfway to the rock, I was swept away by the tide but fortunately ended up clinging to another rock. I had to wait for the tide to ebb before clambering to it safely. Alas, Sudesh didn't get the picture she wanted as she dropped her camera in the water in sheer panic!

I have so many hilarious memories of our travels and tra-
vails together. We used to arrange our trips around the summer vacation as I was a teacher and that's when I would get time off. Thankfully, we are both financially sound and can splurge whenever we want to. Not to mention living it up! We never once felt the years pile up because we are



Anju Mohan

Around the world with her best friend: Sharma (right) with Airi

happy-go-lucky, carefree and adventurous. Sure, we have differences of opinion but we are very easygoing and these don't matter.

I was initially not particularly fond of travelling but was bitten by the bug because my husband used to travel a lot for work and I used to accompany him often. I am also a member of the Senior Citizens and Pensioners Club and travel overseas with groups. Sudesh joins our group, and we've visited places like the US, Europe, Singapore and Malaysia.

I owe these adventures partly to Sudesh's husband, who has been very supportive of me as I live alone. He has no problem with Sudesh leaving their children with their joint family so she can take off on trips with me.

As I have no children, I consider Sudesh's family my own. So, in 1990, when Sudesh's 35 year-old married daughter, Mini, was in hospital, I spent many days looking after her. After Mini passed away, Sudesh was heartbroken. This time, it was my turn to help her accept her loss and start living once again, just as she had once done for me.

Age has started catching up with us and, now, we get tired easily. But we still take the occasional break from the extreme climate of Delhi. Sudesh has a flat in Goa and she is planning to take a two-month vacation there. Our vacations may no longer be high-octane adventures but they are just as wonderful.

—Kamal Sharma, Delhi



Train the **TRAINER**

PROF M S RAO, 50, HYDERABAD

Shyamola Khanna

I was barely 18 years old when I joined the Indian Air Force (IAF) as an engine fitter in 1982. I was in the midst of my graduation but as a result of exigencies at home I had to abandon my studies for a while and earn some money. I went back as soon as I could as I had the hunger to learn.

During my training years with the Air Force in Tambaram, Chennai, I studied late in the night under the streetlights so I could get my degree. I did not want to get it through correspondence as it was not valued, so I wrote backlog exams, one after the other.

For the next 25 years, I was posted to various places across the country; Chandigarh, Jodhpur, Chhabua being just a few of them. In the next few years, I added various other degrees—a postgraduate degree from Ajmer University, PG diploma course in Labor Laws (PGDCLL), MBA in

WHEEL OF FORTUNE

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

1995 from IGNOU—to my CV. I later earned my PhD in soft skills from Swami Ramananda Teertha Marathwada University.

By now, I had realised my actual passion was teaching and training. To that end, I was armed with all the qualifications when I finally said goodbye to the IAF in 2006. In 1990, I married Padmavathy, the love of my life. We have two very smart and intelligent boys, who are both studying engineering and writing books. My elder son, M Ganesh Sai is now 22 and is already the author of four books on behaviour and motivation, while the younger M Ramakrishna Sayee is 20 and the author of three books on personality development. Together the three of us have worked on a book, *Success Can Be Yours*.

To hone my writing skills, I joined the ICFAI Business School (IBS) Centre in Hyderabad in 2007. It was important that I document all my learning and present it to the youth in simple prose. In my one year as consulting editor, I made the base for my next step: I built up my network and very soon I was working in various colleges as visiting faculty for soft skills, which was my ultimate aim. Over the next two to three years I did training stints at the State Bank Staff College, the Andhra Bank Staff College, Symbiosis Institutes, IBM and Wipro.

Simultaneously, I started writing blogs on tools for management and soon my writing began to be noticed by top management gurus. My first book, *Secrets of Success*, was published in 2010 but was not promoted very well. Since then, I have published 21 books on soft skills and management techniques and my friends, students and readers have helped spread the word.

I have worked hard all my life and I am still doing so. My habit of waking up at 3 am continues. Now, I spend early morning hours writing, rewrit-

ing and, of course, planning my day. I also spend an hour at a nearby gym every day. My years in the IAF have helped me inculcate discipline and punctuality.

I am an ardent believer of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi and I quote from their texts in my training sessions. So far, I have trained 15,000 students and I shall not stop till I have touched 1 million. Swami Vivekananda was a youth icon who instilled confidence in them. Our youth are brilliant but they don't recognise their own potential. Parents do not encourage them to follow their own passions and insist on following the most 'favoured' professions of engineering or medicine, regardless of whether they have the aptitude or not. I believe our youngsters are tech-savvy, intelligent and energetic, besides being rebellious and sometimes quite fickle in their pursuits. Having said that, I also believe that the day they realise their true potential, they will hit the bull's eye!

I have introduced a new concept; I call it soft leadership. It stems from my belief that soft skills are what make a great leader. I introduced the concept in 2012 to the corporate world and the student body through a webinar organised by a national newspaper. I am told that it broke all the earlier records. Through such webinars, my copious articles and books, I have a student fan base across the world, although I have never travelled out of the country.

I was not born with a silver spoon and I have struggled all along to become what I am today. The years in the IAF were very different from my life now—that was a different world as I did not have to worry about where my next meal was going to come from. Out of the uniform, I am still proving myself and the big money is still eluding me. But I have no illusions—I have chosen my path and I am happy where I am.

—As told to Shyamola Khanna

I'm a retired art teacher keen on starting a pottery business along with my husband, an ex-bank employee. We are looking at setting up our own studio. How can we make it perfect and profitable?

A pottery studio can be set up anywhere—in your own home, a kitchen, garage or a rented place, depending on how much production you're expecting to do in the initial phase. You don't necessarily need a large studio space; cost-effective pottery can also be done in small studios, provided you have the bare minimum equipment and a functional working space, where one area of production flows smoothly and logically to the next.

Remember to look out for three important things when scouting for a place: enough storage space for drying your pots and building stock; ample access to electricity for the kiln and water for the clay; and good ventilation to release the toxic gases from clay bodies. Choose a place that will also suit your pottery wheel. An electric wheel is recommended instead of a manual kick wheel, unless you have immense control over speed. Go for tiled or wooden flooring as opposed to carpeted floors, as pottery is a messy activity.

A little research into where you can sell your work, depending on where you stay and competition could take you a long way in business. To begin with, look for online stores and handicraft exhibitions that take in artist contributions.

—Dhruba Ray is an independent pottery artist working from his home studio in Kolkata



Rice: Sweet facts, bitter myths

I am 55 years old and was diagnosed with diabetes five years ago. Though I have been avoiding sugar and other sweets, my friend recently told me I should also give up rice completely to control blood sugar levels and reduce weight. However, I love to eat rice at least once a day. Do I really need to avoid rice?

To begin with, I would like to say that there is no need to completely avoid rice and sugar in your daily diet. Balancing calories is important while planning a diet plan for diabetics. Rice is one of the most controversial foods when it comes to the diet of diabetics and obese or overweight individuals. Sometimes even healthcare providers are not convinced about including rice in the diet of diabetics and weight watchers.

However, I believe rice can be a nutritious and healthy choice if included in the right amount and in the right

combination with other food groups. Let's have a look at some of the myths and facts about rice, specifically for diabetics and those looking at losing weight.

Myth: Diabetics and obese people should not consume rice as it is full of starch and raises blood sugar levels.

Fact: Rice, like any other cereal, can be included in the daily diet of diabetics. What is important is the distribution of carbohydrates in one's diet plan. Diabetics can take boiled rice to reduce the amount of calories. Moreover, adding vegetables to rice as in carrot rice, tomato rice, spinach rice, vegetable rice, not only improves the nutritional value of the meal but adds fibre, further helping to control blood sugar levels. Brown rice is also a healthy option for diabetics and weight watchers.

Myth: Rice makes you fat.

Fact: Rice is low in fat and cholesterol-free. It is a good source of energy because of the carbohydrates in it. Carbohydrates help the body carry out its functions and ev-



READERS ASK

Rice is low in fat and cholesterol-free. It is a good source of energy because of the carbohydrates in it. One should understand what kind of carbohydrates one is eating and how they fuel the body. When eaten purposely, rice can help sustain us through an intense workout and build up our muscles

eryday growth and repair. One should understand what kind of carbs (as carbohydrates are popularly called) one is eating and how they fuel the body. When eaten purposely, rice can help sustain us through an intense workout and build up our muscles. That brings an individual one step closer to one's appropriate weight and fitness goals.

Myth: Rice does not contain protein.

Fact: Protein is the second most abundant nutrient found in rice, after carbohydrates. Rice protein is considered to be of the highest quality compared to other grains. One cup serving of white rice carries more than 4 gm of protein. With a ¼ cup serving of brown rice, you get 3 gm of protein.

Myth: Rice contains high levels of salt, which are not good for diabetics and weight watchers.

Fact: Actually, plain rice carries 0 mg of sodium. It is considered safe to consume by people who watch their salt intake in diets.

Meal plan for diabetics

Ideally, the day should start with a cup of green tea, as it is beneficial in regulating blood sugar levels and helps in weight loss.

Breakfast should be rich in complex carbohydrates like oats, porridge, *poha*, etc.

Mid-morning and mid-evening meals should be healthy with some citrus fruits and nuts like almonds and walnuts.

Lunch should be wholesome with chapattis, *dal*, vegetable, yoghurt and salad. Reduce the number of chapattis if you wish to include rice.

Dinner can be planned with a cup of soybean vegetable, two to three chapattis, salad and yoghurt. Eating soybean and food made from it, like tofu and soymilk, has been found beneficial in lowering sugar levels.

I am a homemaker and have a family of four. I love cooking and I keep in mind that I make the right amount of food for the family to avoid wastage. But sometimes, some food is left after a meal. I am not sure whether I should reuse it for eating or make any other dish out of it. Does leftover food contain the same nutrients as fresh food?

When it comes to leftovers, we need to see the perishability factor before deciding upon reuse. Still, we recommend minimising the reuse of leftovers. The first reason for not eating leftovers is because they lack nutrition. Food loses many of its nutrients from the time it is cut to the time it is cooked because of a process called oxidation. When the food is in contact with air for a long time, as leftovers are, it loses many of its nutrients; also there is more loss during the process of reheating.

Second, leftovers are generally not stored properly, thus increasing the chances of getting infected with bacteria. For the safety of cooked food, it should be refrigerated within two to four hours of cooking. Bacteria start acting and multiplying when food is left out for long.

Cut fruits should be completely discarded if left over, as they provide a medium for bacterial growth. You can utilise leftover salad vegetables in making dishes rather than eating them raw in the next meal. Cold salads or sandwiches should also be eaten or refrigerated promptly. The goal should be to minimise the time food is in the 'danger zone'—between 40° and 140° F (4° and 60° C)—when bacteria can multiply quickly.

When you're ready to eat your leftovers, reheat them on a stove, in the oven or microwave until the internal temperature reaches 165° F (74° C). Because they may not get hot enough, slow cookers and chafing dishes aren't recommended for reheating leftovers. Heating ensures that the bacteria in the food are killed.

Having said that, the best solution to the problem of leftovers is making sure you don't have them in the first place. Cook considering the portions you are going to eat. Even when you are in a restaurant ask for the portion size and make sure that leftovers are minimised.

Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist at Diet Mantra and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit www.dietmantra.in. If you have any questions for Namita Jain, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

Joint action: Follow a healthy diet and exercise programme for sustained relief

Arthritis is a common problem among the elderly. There are several kinds of arthritis but osteoarthritis is the most common and is a leading cause of disability in people 65 years of age and above. It is an age-related degenerative disease, predominantly affecting weight-bearing joints such as the legs, back, neck and even hands. Diagnosing arthritis at an early stage and treating it appropriately makes a great difference in improving functions and preventing complications.

Simply said, a 'joint' is a place where two bones meet, with a membrane called cartilage in between. As we age, this cartilage degenerates and, therefore, causes pain. This is called osteoarthritis. It usually affects the knee joint, shoulder joint and smaller joints of the hand and feet, thereby causing painful restriction of movements.

Risk factors

- Ageing
- Family history and genetics
- Obesity
- Hypertension
- Early menopause
- Mechanical trauma causing wear and tear to the joints

Ageing: Osteoarthritis is usually a disease of middle and old age. It is theorised that ageing cartilage has a decreased ability to resist mechanical stress, which causes cartilage damage and destruction.

Genetics: Women are genetically predisposed to the development of osteoarthritis. Early menopause could also be a cause.

Obesity: Obesity increases the load on weight-bearing joints, thereby causing increased prevalence of osteoarthritis in individuals.

Mechanical aspects: Altered biomechanics play an important role in the pathogenesis of osteo-

arthritis. For instance, even active people such as football players (knees), baseball players (shoulders, elbows) and miners (elbow and knees) witness rapid destruction of articular cartilage with sometimes complete immobilisation of joints. Repetitive impulse loading also appears to be a common denominator in cartilage destruction.

Symptoms

Clinically, pain is the most important feature. Pain may arise from several sites in and around the arthritic joint. The severity of pain and functional impairment is greatly influenced by personality, anxiety, depression and daily activity. Following structural changes, crepitus (crackling or popping sounds experienced in joints), bone enlargement, deformity, instability and restriction of movement may occur. Associated muscular weakness and wasting may occur as well. Morning stiffness is a common complaint but brief in duration, usually five to 15 minutes and no longer than 30 minutes. A doctor diagnoses osteoarthritis on the basis of these critical symptoms, a physical examination and exercise of the joints.

Management through analgesics

Treatment through analgesics is supportive and symptomatic in nature. Fortunately, however, non-specific treatment is usually quite successful. The major goals of treatment are patient education, pain relief, maintenance and improvement in joint function, and an attempt to delay or await further cartilage damage by altering physical stresses on already abnormal joints.

It is important to realise that although there is no cure for osteoarthritis, a majority of patients do well and, even in the severest form of this condition, much can be done to relieve symptoms and maintain normal function. Pain is the chief symptom of osteoarthritis. Consult your doctor for the dosage of analgesic required, for instance aspirin. Paracetamol 500 mg, twice daily, after meals can also reduce the pain. Other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like indomethazine have been reported to be effective in osteoarthritis of the hip.





It is important to realise that although there is no cure for osteoarthritis, a majority of patients do well and, even in the severest form of this condition, much can be done to relieve symptoms and maintain normal function. Pain is the chief symptom of osteoarthritis

Side-effects of analgesics

Pain relievers should only be taken on the advice of the doctor, because their side-effects may sometimes endanger life. Common side-effects are loss of appetite, abdominal distension, belching, burning sensation in the stomach, vomiting, heaviness of the head and swelling of the legs. Sometimes pain relievers can precipitate life-threatening complications like vomiting of blood and perforation of pre-existing peptic ulcer.

Muscle spasm often accompanies osteoarthritis of the spine and the use of muscle relaxants such as diazepam and methocarbamol may be beneficial. In addition, local heat, massage, cervical collar and traction, especially in the presence of nerve compression, may be useful. Certain medicines containing chondroitin sulphate and glucosamines can also work as pain relievers. These medicines are more expensive but have no major side-effects.

Physical therapy

Physical therapy helps control and relieve pain; prevents further strain or damage to the affected joints; improves joint movements; improves muscle power; and maintains (or even improves) functional independence. A proper balance of rest and a supervised exercise programme helps maintain and improve joint function and strengthen the supportive elements of the joints, muscle and ligaments.

Injection therapy

Greater relief is experienced by injecting steroids into the knee. But this should not be done more than twice or thrice continuously. Such steroids are prescribed only for those who have unbearable pain and those who are not fit or willing to undergo surgery.

Surgery

Surgery benefits people who are severely disabled by knee pain and find no relief by other measures. There are several types of surgeries. Osteotomy corrects the deformities of the knee, thereby decreasing the pressure inside the knee.

Partial joint replacement involves removal of a part of the deformed knee, only to replace it with a prosthesis. In total joint replacement, the damaged knee joint is removed completely; it is replaced by an artificial prosthesis. This surgery is highly effective for the hip and knee joints. Almost 95 per cent of the elderly can live an almost pain-free life with this surgery. A very minor percentage do not get the expected benefits with surgery.

Dos

- People who are overweight must lose weight.
- Appliances like walkers and walking sticks decrease the load on the knee joint and hence the pain. It's better to use hand rails when a person has hip or knee pain.
- The use of proper footwear is advisable. It should suit the soles, be soft and be flat without heels.

Don'ts

- Elders with knee pain can avoid frequent climbing of stairs and sitting with legs crossed on the floor.
- People with knee pain should avoid driving two-wheelers.
- It is preferable to use pillows with less height.
- Elders with backache should avoid long hours of continuous travelling and sitting in the same place for prolonged hours.

Silvers suffering from osteoarthritis should minimise further damage to joints using the above mentioned tips. Involvement and cooperation of patients are essential to treat this disease.

Padmashri Dr V S Natarajan, a specialist in the field of geriatric medicine, runs Memory Clinic, a service for silvers in Chennai. If you have a question for him, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

See and shine: Retain a youthful sparkle in your eyes

Eyes are not just the windows of the soul. They are also highly indicative of your health. In fact, in traditional systems of medicine, your overall health may be gauged by seeing how your eyes sparkle, with life, clarity, and without being outlined by tiredness. This may explain why in cosmetology and physical attributes of attraction, a high premium is placed on how your eyes represent you.

The clarity of your eyes comes from how well blood flows to them, relating to a well-organised circulatory system. The skin surrounding the eyes is thinner than the rest of the body because it has less collagen support. That is why as we age, and our collagen reserves fail, they begin to show up as sagging or get more leathery and lined. This is also an indication of poor nutrition. If the body's nutrient supply is low, or affected by medication or stress, the body will save the transmission of nutrition to 'less important' parts. This is where stress or mal-absorption also begins to affect how we look.

As yoga takes care of us at the various levels mentioned above, the eyes too maintain a youthful sparkle. Some practices that will add to your eye's aesthetic appeal include the eye wash (*jal neti*) on a daily basis; poses that involve working the muscles of the face,

such as the cobra (*bhujangasana*), bow (*dhanurasana*) and wheel (*chakrasana*); and poses that bring in more blood to the face such as inversions like the shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*), headstand (*sirsasana*) or forward bends like the downward dog pose (*adomukhasvanasana*) or seated west-facing pose (*paschimottanasana*), to name a few. Arm balancers that replicate the impact of inversions, like the crow pose (*kakasana*), are also very powerful in terms of gushing blood to the face, especially the eye region.

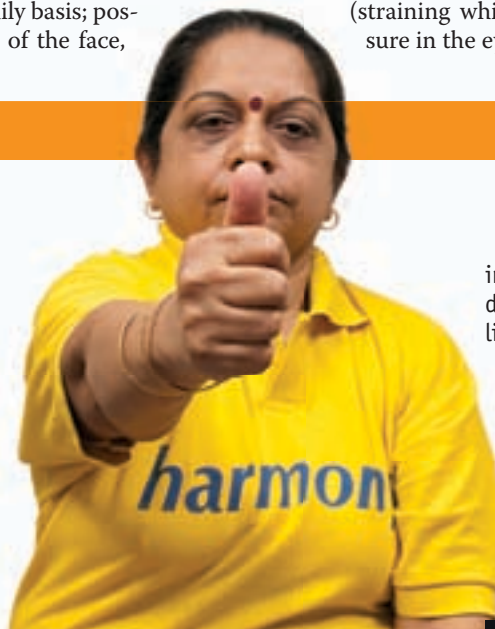
In fact, most poses and practices that work the eyes are simple, classical poses and may already be part of your daily practice. To involve your eye muscles, become more aware of your *drishti* (point of focus) in each pose. This will double the impact of your practice in other areas too, including the mind, creating meditative power and mind control.

Other ways to add sparkle to your eyes including resting the eyes regularly, using the yogic system of palming; playing ball games or engaging in activity like dancing that encourages peripheral vision and works out the muscles supporting the eyeballs; eating a well-balanced diet; and avoiding constipation by including fibre in your food (straining while passing stools can increase pressure in the eyes, making them redder).

YOGIC MOVES

Yogic eye exercise (*trataka*)

Sit down. Keep the body loose and relaxed. Hold the right arm out at shoulder level, in front of the eyes. Jut out the thumb, keeping it at eye level. Slowly now begin to move the right thumb towards the right shoulder. Do not turn the head, but just follow the movement of the thumb with your eyes, without too much strain. When your arm reaches the right side completely, drop the arm. Rub the palms, creating some heat and press the palms gently on the back of the closed eyes. Do for the left side. Repeat a few times. Rest the eyes with palming.



Benefits: This is a premeditative practice but impacts the eye muscles too, encouraging the tone of skin around the eyes; strengthening the muscles that hold the eyeballs; and

improving peripheral vision that diminishes when you lead a sedentary life or stare at gadgets for long. It also improves the quality of sleep by removing stress. Avoid if you suffer from extreme problems of the eyes like glaucoma or infection.

Model: Kanchan Nazare,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Dattaguru Redekar

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

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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT DEACHY APPAJI, COORG, KARNATAKA

An engaging series about the wisdom of love, nurturing and culinary bonding across generations

Cleanliness and beauty are visible in every corner of Smt Deachy Appaji's house, situated amid the lush greenery of the Kodugu district of Coorg. At 86, she is a mother of three, grandmother to six, and great-grandmother to four. She believes it is important for youngsters to be all-rounders, a value instilled in her by her father. A gracious hostess and excellent homemaker, she is also known to be a keeper of traditions. Her relatives depend on her to remember the traditions pertaining to marriages and festivals. My friend Divya Bidapa, who introduced Smt Appaji to me, said, "I like Deachy Aunty because she is so warm, and always willing to help. She is a very good hostess. My childhood memories are full of her table filled with goodies."

Namaste. Could you tell us about your childhood?

I was born in Coorg, and moved to Bangalore and Mysore for some years after marriage, but eventually returned back to my hometown.

Your family tells me you are a person of routine.

Yes, I like to be routine-oriented and disciplined. Every morning I wake up at 6:30 am. I take a bath and say my morning prayers to Cauvery Iguthappa, the main deity of the Kodavas. After this, I prepare breakfast along with my cook, and eat immediately afterwards. Until lunchtime, I clean the house, read prayer books, read the paper, finish ironing, and do some cross-stitching for two hours. After lunch, I rest for an hour. Once I get up, I watch TV for an hour and do some more cross-stitching. I have



Aditi Jain

tea at 4 pm and walk for half an hour. In the evening, I have a wash, pray for half an hour, watch TV for some time, eat dinner and go to sleep at 9 pm.

That almost sounds like military discipline!

My husband, Mr P T Appaji, was in the Army, so that explains my need for discipline and order.

How did you shift back to the hills of Coorg again?

He started his career in the army but later moved to Coorg to manage his plantation. He was a friendly and jovial person and made friends easily.

Your grandchildren inform me that you have cultivated a variety of craft hobbies.



Yamini Vasudevan

Yes, I enjoy making things with my hands. I find embroidering a relaxing activity. Whenever I gift something I have made, I always receive appreciation. I also feel one must try one's hands at a variety of things to truly decide what they enjoy doing.

Sapna (granddaughter): She has been a caring mother-in-law, a loving wife, adorable mother and a wonderful grandmother. She has fulfilled her duties well, from caring for the elderly or sick and entertaining family and relatives to cooking for family and functions. Her spirit and enthusiasm for life are a lesson for us all.

Uttam (grandson): She has many interests apart from cooking. I still remember how excited we felt when she scaled the highest peak in Coorg, even though she was quite old by then. When she arrives anywhere, it is not without her goodies of jams, preserves, cakes and other delicacies. She is a loving person and her demeanour spreads love to all those around her.

What is the main ingredient of taste in food?

I think one must be interested in whatever one does. Food, when cooked with patience and love, is bound to be tasty. I also enjoy cooking with fresh and seasonable vegetables.

And what is in season just now?

Today, we have prepared a curry with small, wild mangoes. It is a famous dish from Coorg and is prepared during feasts. It is sad that man's greed for valuable timber has resulted in the loss of a great many of these centuries-old patriarchs among mango trees. I am sure you will enjoy the taste of this curry.

I am looking forward to that. Could you tell me a little more about your mountain climbing?

At the age of 65, I went on an overnight trek with a group to Thadiyandamol, which translates to 'on top of a big mountain' in Malayalam.

Thadiyandamol is the highest peak in Kodagu, reaching a height of 5,730 ft. The trek was organised by Coorg Adventure Club, a club for local students. It takes three hours to climb, the last stretch of which is a very steep climb. After the trek, our group spent the night under the trees and the stars. This allowed us to enjoy the sunset and sunrise from the hill-top, which was a fantastic experience.

That is so inspiring. I can almost visualise the place through your description.

I have also gone on a trip to Sabarimalai, the famous pilgrimage town set in the middle of the mountains in the Western Ghats. This pilgrimage usually happens in the month of January. It is a 41-day pilgrimage that includes severe austerities and trekking up a forested path of almost 14 km.

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FROM SMT DEACHY APPAJI'S KITCHEN

Maange Curry (a side-dish with small wild mangoes)

In the hills of Coorg, a delicious curry is made with wild mangoes. Unlike the hybrid commercial cultivars, these are generally smaller in size, have fibrous pulp and pack a punch in terms of flavour. Some of the smallest varieties are just a trifle bigger than a lime, have thinner skin, and are lemon yellow inside. Even little children can be seen joyously tucking away five or six mangoes in a sitting.

Ingredients

- Cooking oil: 2 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

- Jungle mangoes: ½ kg; small and slightly ripened

- Curry leaves: 4-5

- Garlic cloves: 4-5; chopped

- Chilli powder: 1 tsp

- Salt: 1½ tsp

- Jaggery syrup: 4 tbsp

Roast the following ingredients to a dark colour and grind fine:

- Cumin (*jeera*) powder: 1 tbsp

- Mustard seeds: ½ tsp

- Fenugreek seeds: ¼ tsp

Method

Skin the mango. Keep the skin in another bowl and add 200 ml water. Squeeze the skin of all the juices, keep

the liquid and throw out the skin. Add the whole mangoes with seed, salt and chilli powder to a vessel and cook on low flame. Take a small shallow frying pan and heat the oil. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves and garlic. Add sliced onions and the ground masala, stir-fry for a few minutes. Add this to the mangoes in the vessel. Now increase the flame to medium heat and cook for 1-2 minutes, adding jaggery syrup.

Mix well and serve with *akki rotti* or steamed rice.

Pratibha Jain, an author and translator from Chennai, is the co-author of two award-winning books Cooking at Home with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. Her area of specialisation is documenting Indian traditions through research, translation and writing

one on one

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RELIANCE



Waste not

Jayanthi Somasundaram meets Almitra Patel, whose road to finding practical solutions for effective solid waste management is one worth following

The road to Kothanur village is dotted on either side with cemented concrete high-rises; the taxi driver proudly claims that Bengaluru's tallest apartment block will soon crop up right here. Stopping now and then to ask for directions, we reach a quaint stone farmhouse, almost completely hidden by the only patch of towering trees on the stretch. The security guard sounds clueless about the address we seek, but brightens up on hearing the name of the resident and shows us the way.

Almitra Patel welcomes us warmly into her cool and cosy home. Best known for her landmark PIL filed in 1996 against the open dumping of municipal waste on highways, her years of research and PIL resulted in the drafting of the country's first Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules 2000. "When I was advised to take my cause to the Supreme Court, I actually thought that I would write out a nice, long, technical reasoning and the court would grant my wish in a day and I could go home," she laughs. It was only after a road tour of 30 cities in 1994 that Patel discovered the reason behind the garbage dumping on the shoulders of national highways. "It's no man's land! There is no accountability or ownership for these stretches. The highways authority will only lay the road and keep moving on," she explains.

Since Vedic times, villages in India have understood that food waste has a nutrient and micro-nutrient value that needs to go back to the soil. "This is why people would dump food waste in shallow pits on the outskirts, to decompose and use later as manure," she reasons. "I think that is where these new towns and cities got the idea of dumping garbage outside their territory."

Probably the "first Indian girl to pass out of Massachusetts Institute of Technology," Patel, along with her husband Hoshang and two daughters, Aviva and Simonil, moved into Kothanur on the outskirts of Bengaluru in 1972. "I remember beyond the railway tracks where the city ended, there were only a bar, a bakery and a bangle shop and then only fields for the 12 km to my village," she chuckles and continues to narrate how her family would stop on

their drive back home to listen to the frogs in the marshes. But in the 1990s, the area became silent and the winding roads began to get filled with large garbage dumps on either side. This heap brought with it whole packs of stray dogs that would go on hunting sprees at night and kill the village livestock. This prompted Patel to write letters to authorities, only to receive vague and irresponsible answers. "The city's top health official actually asked me why I was complaining when another part of Bengaluru was dirtier!" she recalls. "This got my blood boiling and, thanks to that comment, my journey began."

After over two decades of learning, research, practice and self-motivation, Patel is today considered one of the wisest heads in waste management practices. Busy with three projects, she is engaged in creating fully compostable sanitary napkins; ways to convert unrecyclable plastics into fuel; and promoting safe portable solar LED lighting for nomads and unelectrified homes. "I'm a cheerleader and well-wisher for these projects," she says.

"People need to bring about change in waste management. Do not put your food waste in a plastic bag and throw it. When the cows try to eat the wet waste, they get a stomach full of plastic!"

Patel's friends say that the PIL that she filed in 1996 was just a small contribution she made towards the larger cause. Delhi resident Anjana Mehta, a friend who helped Patel create her website www.almitrapatel.com, says, "Every municipal corporation has a humongous budget for waste management. But the whole system is riddled with corruption. In reality, it is easy to clean big cities but the funds are siphoned off into individual pockets, the reason why even simple solutions are not implemented. Patel is very passionate

about waste management, has a vast database and offers practical solutions to NGOs and municipal corporations. I don't know anyone better informed than her."

Almitra adds that until the 1960s, urban waste was a resource and then the 'plastic yug' began. "We began to throw away everything mixed, making it unusable," she points out. "When I had gone to the Supreme Court and asked for space to compost the food waste of cities, the court appointed me part of an eight-member committee to draft an Urban Solid Waste Policy. Based on this, the Central Pol-



Patel at a dry wastage collection centre in Bengaluru

lution Control Board drafted the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules and sent it to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.” As a member, though she had given close to 300 suggestions and grammatical corrections to the draft, not even one was accepted. “Even simple suggestions like adding the definition of aerobic composting were not considered. Fortunately, the rules that came into effect in 2000 clearly stated that door-to-door garbage collection by municipalities was the sole answer to a clean city.”

Patel has always been keen to learn how to effectively manage waste and has met like-minded individuals trying to implement new and effective ways to manage waste in their cities. One of the people she met was Kantisen “Kaka” Shroff, a businessman whom she calls her ‘eco guru’. Every day after lunch, Shroff would put his food and canteen waste in a little trench behind his office and try out different bio-cultures to convert it into compost. Today, his team has a 300 tonne per day compost plant in Ahmedabad and has franchised nine other plants. “People like the late Captain J S Velu of Exnora, Chennai, S R Rao, then municipal commissioner of Surat, and Khader Saheb, then municipal commissioner of Suryapet in Andhra Pradesh have all proved that you do not require any government funding or NGO support to manage waste and that you could even earn a lot from waste segregation,” says Patel. She reminisces about Captain Velu’s ‘travelling circus’, which made heads turn at all levels. “It was at the ‘Clean India Campaign’ in 1994 after plague broke out in Surat that we thought we had to do something to educate city man-

agers. We went on a 30-day road trip from Bengaluru to Delhi and back via Surat and visited 30 cities carrying banners like ‘Pile up and perish or clean up and flourish’. We got a good response from all the city administrators we met.”

As much as she has been inspired, Patel has also served as inspiration for many working towards the cause. One such person is Ragini Jain, a Mumbai-based dry waste recycler, who has been part of many projects spearheaded by Patel. “If there are bin-less cities in the country, it can very clearly be attributed to Patel,” she asserts. “She has worked selflessly for this cause but has never been recognised by the government for her efforts. She has personally visited over 100 Indian cities, met the commissioners, advised and implemented innovative waste management practices. At many places, though, they are yet to implement them.”

Patel has faced several challenges on the way, but none as great as the entrenched corruption in the system. “I still do not have an answer to that,” she rues. “People need to bring about change. Please do not put your food waste in a plastic bag and throw it. When the cows try to eat the wet waste, they get a stomach full of plastic!” A bulwark of support through the struggle has been her family. “For my birthday, my mother gave me an open ticket from Bengaluru to Delhi and back so I could attend the Supreme Court hearing,” she reveals with a smile. “My husband would keep updating my gadgets so I could work efficiently and my daughters have been my cheerleaders.” ✨

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Due credit

Earlier an insider, Vijay Gokhale now fights injustices in the banking and financial system from the outside.

Neeti Vijaykumar meets the crusader whom thousands of grateful customers consider an 'ombudsman'

When Vijay Gokhale looked at his updated passbook one morning last year, the 'Transactions' column read like gibberish. It was a string of 20 digits. What should have been an explanation (for the purpose of tax returns later about the transaction) was just a long number that made sense only to the bank and not the customer. He wrote to the chairman of the bank, and when that drew a blank, a determined Gokhale finally wrote to the ombudsman and the RBI governor's office, which finally stirred things up and rectified the general problem.

A stickler for protocol, this is what Gokhale does full time now. Known among small investors as 'Mr Fixit', this former banker takes up issues of small businessmen and secures redress for those wronged by the financial sector. "Essentially, I'm more into investor protection and welfare of small investors; I use the Right to Information Act [RTI] for the purpose," explains Gokhale, who lives in a modest home in Dombivali in suburban Mumbai with his wife and son. He usually gets phone calls from people in Maharashtra, with varied grievances. "If people find I am of some use to them, it's good," he adds with a smile. Gokhale is also quick to point out that his crusade against corrupt systems and unfair practices is not motivated by a grudge against any financial institution and that he works for the benefit of the people.

The 61 year-old, who holds a post-graduate degree in law, worked in

the banking sector for over 25 years and eventually quit when he was vice-president at ABN Amro Bank 13 years ago. He felt it was time to do something more with his life.

During his long career, he had noticed the issues that cropped up in everyday banking affairs, and watched how customers gave up because they lacked either the energy or the expertise to pursue them.

Resolving such issues, Gokhale decided, would be his mission. "I realised that people needed help to get past the stone wall with which most banks and institutions respond."

Our crusader is as stubborn and persistent as the authorities are reluctant and thick-skinned. "My natural and legitimate expectation is that, if someone has placed an issue before you, you should examine it with an open mind. However, I've come across people in numerous organisations who react with hostility," remarks Gokhale, who was responsible for SEBI lifting the entry and exit charges on the bonus on mutual fund units; for 6,000 UTI agents getting their commission that was stalled for three years; and for getting banks to comply with an RBI circular that stated that customers should be paid due interest if there is a delay in the clearing of their local cheques.

More than a decade into the crusade, Gokhale obviously has a well thought-out strategy. When presented with a grievance, the first thing he does is research the legalities and procedures

involved. "In 13 years, no institution has ever been able to point out that what I am arguing for is ridiculous or not in accordance with the law," says the soft-spoken silver. Thereafter, he writes to the authorities concerned,





Gautam Ruparel

gradually moving up the hierarchy if his letters go unacknowledged.

Most banks, whether private or government-owned, turn a deaf ear to his polite letters seeking informa-

tion about something that isn't being done right or is causing inconvenience to customers. That's when he files an application under the RTI Act. Usually there is no reply to this either, at least for the first 30 days. So

he inquires again, and is usually told that the institution is in the process of assembling the data sought. "But the information is not very old," he says, shaking his head in mock bewilderment. "If the issue was raised a month

ago, it's not likely that they've stashed it away inside a godown. This is how they stonewall information-seekers."

The RTI Act does not always yield results. "It still hasn't been implemented earnestly," he says. As information officers are generally picked from within the same organisation, they usually display a clear desire to operate with the best interests of the organisation in mind, rather than the information-seekers. And appealing to the appellate authority or the Central Information Commission (CIC) is often a waste of time, as they take up to a year to get to fresh cases, he adds.

"Often, the objective of information officers seems to be to wear out and punish the applicant," rues Gokhale. "The attitude is, if you have the time and money to question us, then go all the way, take your request to the appellate authorities or the CIC. The fact that they know they will most likely never be penalised for such stonewalling gives them courage." What keeps Gokhale going, cutting away at all the red tape, is the impact his work has on the people he helps.

Most recently, he spent over a month going over paperwork and rebuffs to help a 70 year-old retired senior engineer from Dombivli claim an income-tax refund of ₹ 15,000 that had been 12 months overdue.

"My tax consultant couldn't help me, but Gokhale did," says Srikrishna Rajopadhye, who decided to approach the former banker after reading about his voluntary work in a local newspaper. "He told me I could visit him at his house whenever I wanted to, and he helped me draft my letters and finally my RTI application." Following Gokhale's directions, Rajopadhye finally got his refund, with interest. In gratitude, he recently visited his house one last time, with a box of sweets.

Gokhale's own favourite story is from 2008, when a widow approached him

after her bank refused to acknowledge that her late husband had named her the nominee for a post office savings scheme. The bank argued that although the nomination was mentioned in the pass book, it wasn't registered. "The truth is, once it is in the pass book, it is their business to register the nomination," points out Gokhale. Instead, the bank officials were asking her to get a succession certificate, something that wasn't necessary. So Gokhale decided to file an RTI application asking to see the form filled out when the account was

"People may laugh when they see you writing to the finance minister but it is my experience that writing letters and not giving up ensure that your problem gets noticed. Someone needs to take the initiative and drive the change"

opened. "Eventually, we also visited the state postmaster general. She finally instructed the officials to pay her what was due, within two days, and the postal head was reprimanded," he says, with a triumphant smile.

After the case was reported in the tabloid *Mumbai Mirror*, the Rotary Club of South Mumbai felicitated Gokhale for his work. The newspaper also named him a contender for the *Mumbai Mirror* Mumbai Heroes Awards of 2013.

Among scores of people who are indebted to Gokhale is Charudatt Sadawarte, a small businessman from Nashik. Sadawarte was being given the run-around by HDFC Bank, which charged him a fee for every transaction he made from a branch that was not his home branch. "My home branch is 5 km from where

I live and being a businessman I need to make a fair number of transactions at the bank every month," explains Sadawarte. "For convenience, I started using a branch that was closer to home but they began levying a fee on every transaction I made." He says his emails were ignored, then he was rebuffed by bank officials and, finally, he was told the charges would be reversed as a 'service gesture', provided he proceeded to open an account in a branch closer to home. Sadawarte finally approached Gokhale. "He told me to write a stern letter and enclose a certain RBI circular along with it," he says. "They reverted, saying they would not charge me anymore. They even refunded the transaction fee they had debited from my account. The process took about six months, but it would have taken longer if it weren't for Gokhale's guidance."

When not poring over emails, partially drafted letters, RBI circulars and trawling the Web to ferret out information to back up his cases, Gokhale enjoys a good read and his morning session of singing. "I try to find a balance between what I do and spending time with my family," he says. "Fortunately, I don't have ailing seniors to take care of or any such commitments, so I am able to handle both easily."

Part of Gokhale's mission is to serve as an example of what can be achieved by just one individual, even without the backing of an organisation. "If we decide not to stand up to wrongdoing and institutional injustice, nothing will happen," says our crusader. "People may laugh when they see you writing to the finance minister but it is my experience that writing letters and not giving up ensure that your problem gets noticed." Gokhale also does it because it seems like the right thing to do. "Someone needs to take the initiative and drive the change. That's what keeps me going, the faith that even if you are just one person, it is still your duty to do something." ✨

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Thank you for the • music

True to form, Padma Shri Pankaj Udhas's latest album *Sentimental* is winning the hearts of *ghazal* lovers, world over. **Deepa Ramakrishnan** meets the maestro who has always marched to his own beat, through adversity and applause

The hustle and bustle of Mumbai hasn't found its way into the tranquil and tastefully appointed home of Padma Shri Pankaj Udhas in South Mumbai's Peddar Road. "My dad will join you shortly," says Nayaab, his elder daughter, as she ushers us into the living room and asks after our refreshments. The sober walls in his home match the light Victorian furniture, crystal curios shimmer, and well-tended potted palms lend a burst of colour. It's easy to take in the unhurried feel of the home where even time seems to have slowed down a beat.

Indeed, Udhas's oeuvre, spanning 30 years and close to 50 albums, seems to have transcended time. An entire generation grew up listening to his voice. His first *ghazal* album *Aahat* was released in 1980; more albums followed, some as successful, others even more. But it was not until 1986, with his soulful rendition of *Chitti aayi hai* in the Hindi film *Naam*, that people really took notice of his silken voice. Thereon, a constant, joyous drizzle of melodious renditions, *ghazal* and *ghazalnuma* film songs made him an integral part of the lives of music lovers. In the 1990s, he scaled musical peaks, taking the *ghazal* to new heights, breaking conventions, making foray into media territory yet uncharted. In 1999, Udhas went on to host a popular *ghazal* talent-hunt show *Adaab Arz Hain*, on Sony Entertainment Network and his expertise was also sought for judging another musical contest, *Meri Awaaz Suno*, then hosted by Bollywood playback singer Sonu Nigam. About 11 years ago, he began conducting Khazaana, an annual two-day *ghazal* festival to recognise stalwarts and raise funds in aid of cancer and thalassemia patients, a cause he is very passionate about.

My thoughts are interrupted as the maestro joins us. He is dressed simply, yet elegantly, in a jet black *chudidaar-kurta* and light turquoise, silk Nehru jacket with light paisley patterns. At 62, it's not surprising to see age showing on the graceful face but the years haven't taken away the warmth of his smile that still reaches his eyes. After the introductions are made, we settle down, even as the photographer readies his lights for the shoot.

A SENTIMENTAL TURN

Udhas has returned only a couple of days ago from a successful tour of the US to promote his latest *ghazal* album

Sentimental, which was launched by his music company Velvet Voices Pvt Ltd in late July this year at Khazaana, a week before his tour. "I've been travelling to the US since the 1980s and have a good following in the US and Canada," he says. "I usually tour the country in March-April but this time, we were there in August-September, a period when schools are about to open after their vacations. So there was a risk of low attendance owing to people holidaying or preparing for school reopening. However, throughout the tour, most of the halls were overbooked, and every concert went off to a packed house."

Sentimental had not really been tested in India because of time constraints, but the US tour appeared to have served as a litmus test. "In the beginning, we rehearsed two popular numbers from the album for the tour. But soon, we were rehearsing a third and then a fourth one. At some point during the tour, I was singing five songs out of the whole album," he says, laughing, the pride of having conceived yet another wonder showing clearly.

Incidentally, *Sentimental* was released close on the heels of *Hey Krishna*, his first *bhajan* album after he had rendered the *Hanuman Chalisa* in the wake of the 26/11 attacks in 2008. *Hey Krishna* had been arranged by his London-based nephew Kartik Udhas, who had introduced contemporary flavour in the interludes and percussion. So did he also promote this album during this trip? "No," he replies. "*Bhajan* is a very private aspect of me. And I have never mixed *bhajan* and *ghazal* during my tours."

ANOTHER MASTERPIECE

According to reports, *Maaee*, a number from *Sentimental*, seems to be steadily garnering the kind of fame that *Chitti aayi hai* had brought him. You read about the emotional responses the song evokes among audiences...grown men and women, sobbing openly to the touching lyrics by poet Tahir Faraz, some overwhelmed, choking on their tears, others discreetly trying to wipe away a stream building at the corner of their eyes. Udhas even tells us of a man who hadn't been able to meet his mother in India for about 14 years because of clearance issues in Canada; he had sobbed shamelessly at a concert. Was he expecting that kind of reaction when he composed the music for it? "I knew while composing *Maaee* that it would go down well with audiences," he acknowledges. "I actually anticipated that kind of reaction and decided to sing *Chitti*

“Making music thinking of what people might like can be your downfall. You must be true to your core and feel one with the music. I am very passionate about composing and I am confident about my abilities to do so”

aayi hai much after *Maaee*—just to give enough time for people to recover.”

It brings to mind what he told me in an earlier interview, about composing music using his own cues. “Making music thinking of what people might like can be your downfall,” he had said. “You must be true to your core and feel one with the music.” Interestingly, he had taken about three days to work out the music score for *Maaee*. And going by the standing ovations it has received, the effort has paid off. Also, a *nazm* in the album, *Tum joh hasti ho to phullon ki yaad*, has been widely appreciated by musicians for its chord progression. But then, the *ghazal* maestro has always been a composer, not a writer. “I am very passionate about composing and I am confident about my abilities to do so,” he says, explaining the inspiration for *Sentimental*. “And though I had rendered two very beautiful albums that did very well, *Shaayar* [2010] and *Dastakhat* [2012], they were not my compositions. I have been quite busy for the past few years and there was a huge time gap since I last composed. That alone drove *Sentimental*.”

Udhas is also a lover of poetry and is always on the lookout for good poems—sometimes getting them from completed works of old poets, called the *Khuliyat*, or choosing from works of well-known contemporary poets. But for someone who does such justice to the poetry he sings, why doesn't he write any? “Urdu poetry is very difficult to write, with rigid meters around which to create a verse,” he had told me. “It's a complete art, something I haven't ventured into.”

THE PRODIGAL SONGSTER

Born in 1951 in Jetpur, Gujarat, Udhas was about five years old when he was subtly initiated into music by his father's interest in learning and playing an instrument called the dilruba. Every evening, his dad would return from work and sit down to tune his dilruba, playing it for about an hour.

Soon enough, Udhas realised his passion was music. And because his father loved music, he never discouraged his three sons—Manhar, Nirmal and Pankaj—from their musical aspirations. At the age of 12, Udhas enrolled to learn the tabla at Sangeet Natya Akademi in Rajkot, close to his

birthplace. There, he was exposed to classical vocals and became fascinated. The family soon moved to Mumbai, where Udhas was mentored by Navrang Nadpurkar, a child prodigy and brilliant vocalist, fondly known as Master Navrang. And after he was introduced to Begum Akhtar's *ghazal*, he knew that's what he wanted to sing, with Master Navrang in full accord.

Manhar, his eldest brother, was already singing for films. And Udhas, who was studying science in St Xavier's College, realised that in order to do justice to the *ghazal*, it was important to get the diction and pronunciation right—by learning Urdu. So he tagged along with his big brother to an Urdu teacher, known simply as Maulavi Saab. “I was fascinated by the language and more so by the Mirza Ghalib poetry Maulavi Saab used to quote when teaching Manhar,” remembers Udhas. He soon gathered courage and approached the *maulavi* to teach him too. As hard as it may be today to visualise a hippy-happy Udhas, it was precisely how the *maulavi* first saw him—with long hair, dressed in a long *kurta* and bell-bottomed trousers paired with chunky jewellery. But after some convincing, the teacher consented and his training began.

A FLAILING START

Although Udhas's career officially started in 1980 with the release of his first *ghazal* album *Aahat*, he had been active in the music scene much earlier. “I had sung through school and college, and by the late 1960s, Manhar, Nirmal and I formed a band called the Fabulous Three Brothers, doing concerts with a complete orchestra,” he says.

After hearing him at one of these shows, music composer Usha Khanna recommended Udhas to firebrand filmmaker B R Ishaara, who had directed the controversial movie, *Chetana* (1970). Ishaara was taking on a new crew for his latest film *Kaamna*, and looking for new singers too. He hadn't wanted to try out singers like the Late Jagjit Singh either, as he had already sung a couple of film songs, and Ishaara had wanted to use a new voice. “I was asked to audition at the now-defunct Famous Studios,” remembers Udhas.

“I got through the auditions easily and was asked to come back the next day for the recording. The moment I stood



Courtesy: Pankaj Udhas

In harmony: Udhas with wife Farida and daughters Nayaab and Rewa

before the mike, the brashness I felt during my audition vaporised and nervousness engulfed me—this was where stalwarts like Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar and Manna Dey sang their songs...where Raj Kapoor recorded all his films' songs. But thankfully, I did well and the song, *Tum kabhi saamne aajaao to poochoon tumse*, was well-accepted." With rave reviews coming his way, Udhas imagined he had made it.

But fate had other plans. "I struggled for almost 10 years after that," he reveals. "Despite the song's success, the film industry didn't want newcomers. Today Bollywood is open to different voices; back then, the industry wanted just Rafi *saab*, Kishore *da*, Manna Dey and Mukesh, who were actually really very good and delivered exactly what was asked of them. My preoccupation with music left me with no time for anything else. I had no job or business to depend on."

And though Udhas did concerts across the country and in the US and the UK, he was struggling. In fact, there came a time when a frustrated Udhas decided to leave it all behind and move to Canada for good. But once there, he realised how much Indian music was appreciated and he knew it was time to get back to where he belonged. "Also, every time I sang, the responses I got were wonderfully positive," he remembers. "That positivism just kept me going."

THE REVENUE CAPITAL

Udhas did decide, however, that films were definitely not his platform—he loved *ghazal* more. In 1980, he launched his first album, *Aahat*. "I did nothing in films for a while, indulging only in *ghazal*," he recollects.

Then, in 1985, he released *Nayaab*, the first-ever album to be recorded on multi-track. Loaded with gems like *Zamaana kharaab hain* and *Ek taraf uska ghar*, it was a chartbuster, staying at the top of the music charts for over six months. In fact, *Nayaab* was pre-booked at music stores—even on the day the album hit stores across the country, none of them had a single copy left to sell. "That was when the film industry took notice of me," remembers Udhas. In 1986, he was signed up to sing *Chitti aayi hai*, which carried his silken voice to a wider audience, his poignant rendition melting hearts across the world. In poured a stream of offers—*Jeeyen to jeeyen kaise* (*Saajan*, 1991), *Na kajare ki dhar* (*Mohra*, 1994)—and Pankaj Udhas had arrived.

His loyalties, though, remained with the *ghazal*. Following the stupendous success of *Nayaab*, his music company insisted he do his next album, *Afreen*, as an extended version—a 90-minute, double-cassette format instead of the standard 45 minutes. Like everything he touched, *Afreen*



the album *Nasha*. It was a move that brought a flush of non-Bollywood videos to television.

But soon, tastes changed and people moved on. Or, perhaps, models of revenue-generation changed and TV channels moved on. "Today, musicians are deprived of that huge marketing arm, the television, and they're where they were before TV channels helped them reach their audiences," says Udhaz, the regret sharp in his voice. "Despite the latest technological trends, nothing compares to the wonders of a TV remote. Even musical reality TV shows have audiences chanting the names of the contestants. No matter how popular YouTube and such become, nothing will replace the TV." Then, snapping out of his thoughts, he adds, "The period since the 2000s has been the worst time for musicians playing non-Bollywood music in our country; it's a very scary situation. And Bollywood music today has turned into a confused genre—a mix of hip-hop and R&B."

And yet the disdain for the loss of a platform for his beloved *ghazal* hasn't turned him bitter about other musicians—or genres. One remembers the controversy that erupted when the late Jagjit Singh, his fellow *ghazal* maestro, dismissed A R Rahman's Oscar for the score of *Slumdog Millionaire*, saying, "Ask him to compose a *ghazal*, and then we shall see." Udhaz feels differently. "I don't think anyone can claim that their genre of music is any better than another's," he insists. "Composing music is challenging, no matter what the genre; it's not correct to belittle

another's efforts and compositions."

too turned gold, selling 1.2 million copies in 10 days, perhaps one of the highest selling *ghazal* albums to date.

SHIFTING WINDS

The 1990s were also the years when Indian television began to explore the possibility of playing all kinds of music. But in the early part of the decade, MTV didn't play anything but western or Bollywood numbers. Udhaz, who has never shied away from trying something new, approached the channel with his music company Music India (now Universal Music India) and the Indian Music Industry (IMI) to consider running his videos on air. It was only some years later, in 1999, that they agreed to air the video of one of his *ghazal*, *Phir haath mein sharaab hai*, from

He has less respect for the rash of music contests on TV today, despite his experience judging *Adaab Arz Hain* and *Meri Awaaz Suno*. "Those shows were about music alone," he underlines. "I stopped wanting to be a part of such reality shows after they became about TRPs and SMS voting and tears and drama on stage. In fact, though the judges on *Adaab Arz Hain* were not paid money, save for transportation and refreshments on set, we had people like Naushad and Khayyam *Saab* happily being a part of the show. These shows are a great platform for talent. But nowadays, even the TV channels want nothing to do with the winner as the season ends. And especially because I have lived through that struggle, it feels wrong that despite the stardom, those

“I don’t think anyone can claim that their genre of music is any better than another’s. Composing music is challenging, no matter what the genre; it’s not correct to belittle another’s efforts and compositions”

winners aren’t acknowledged thereon. Sure, the money is a huge draw and there is that added advantage of millions seeing you as a judge, but I am well on both counts on my own accord.” Would he then consider turning mentor? “I don’t think I have learnt enough music to be able to teach anyone,” he says modestly. “But I have considered building a music institute that teaches music with a proper syllabus. Maybe that someday.”

REWARDS AND REGRET

It’s a dream commensurate with his tremendous success. Udhas has won about 18 awards, including the Padma Shri in 2006, the year he completed 25 years in the field. “The honour is yet to sink in though, yes, all those early years of struggle feel vindicated,” he says with a smile. “But I owe it to the late Vilasrao Deshmukh, who was then chief minister of Maharashtra. He was a fan and went out of his way to nominate me.”

Although he insists that awards don’t really reflect one’s worth or talent, he does have one regret. “*Chitti aayi hain*, in 1986, turned out to be a landmark hit, and in all fairness I believed I should’ve got the Filmfare Award for it,” he confesses with a chuckle. “But sadly, for some reason the Filmfare Awards weren’t given that year [1987]. Despite every other award I’ve won or missed, that award was one I really felt deprived of!”

TRANSCENDING TIME

“Besides Jagjit Singh, Pankaj Udhas was the only one who led the pack of *ghazal* singers so well, and stayed around for so long,” says Mehmood Curmally, managing director of Rhythm House, a landmark music store in Mumbai’s Kala Ghoda area. “What set him apart was the effort he put into advertising too. We would have autograph sessions with him at the store where he would arrive immaculately dressed, hair in place, and sit for hours signing autographs. He was always such a gentleman, always humouring his fans. Although there isn’t much of a craze for *ghazal* these days, I hear he still has quite a hold on his fans—his concerts are still running full.”

Vijay Lazarus, president of the Indian Music Industry, a trust that represents recording industry distributors in In-

dia, is widely credited with introducing *ghazal* and *bhajan* into the popular music scene in India when he was head of Music India. “By the 1980s and 1990s, there was a dearth of good music,” he recalls. “Bollywood had started getting more action-oriented and there was a vacuum of lyrics as well as melody. So we began approaching young *ghazal* singers like Pankaj Udhas. His tunes and style helped the *ghazal* penetrate deeper into the mass market, making not only the voices of the singers but also their faces popular—they didn’t need an actor’s face to sing for, as in the movies. *Ghazal* began garnering a larger market than Bollywood music. Today, with different kinds of music as well as outlets to hear or download music, *ghazal* has gone back to becoming simply a genre, although with a niche of its own. But going by the acceptance for his latest albums, I think Udhas is still very relevant and, perhaps, one of the most popular *ghazal* singers today.”

Indeed, it’s been over 25 years since *Chitti aayi hai*, and his voice remains as youthful. Point that out and Udhas replies, “A singer’s life is perhaps the worst—all you have is your voice! Anyone who listens to you expects 130 per cent from you, always. I follow a lot of dos and don’ts to maintain my voice, including tips from noted otolaryngologist Robert Thayer Sataloff. I avoid cold water, eat carefully and take bland food, especially before a concert. Rich and spicy food causes acidity, which can affect the vocal chords. But my daily, hour-long *riyaaz* has helped me the most.” Ask him when he ate his last ice-cream (something he admits he loves) and he cannot remember. “I guess I love singing more than ice-cream,” he adds, chuckling.

But it’s not just about his voice—there’s been no perceptible dip in his energy through the years either. “I strongly believe age is in the mind,” he asserts. “In fact, the tour I just returned from was very strenuous. I’d sing on Friday night, travel all through the next morning to the next destination and then sing again that night only to repeat the whole routine again the next day. But I’d do it all over again. The moment you think of retiring, age catches up with you. Singing keeps me young.” Udhas also follows a two-hour fitness schedule every day, an hour of walking and yoga each. “It keeps me feeling active through the day,” he explains. “Moreover, unfit and fat bodies can create breathing trouble, something a singer cannot afford.”

“I strongly believe age is in the mind. The moment you think of retiring, age catches up with you. Singing keeps me young. So does my fitness schedule. It keeps me feeling active through the day”

ANCHORS AHOY!

Other than his passion for work, Udhas's close-knit family—Farida, his beautiful wife of 31 years and two daughters—sustains him emotionally. He met Farida at a neighbour's house in 1979, during his darkest period of struggle. “I don't think I have felt that kind of despair ever in my life; it was all-pervading, consuming me totally,” he remembers. “I found Farida to be focused, with a lot of faith in me and my abilities even when I had nothing going for me.” By and by, she turned into his “anchor”.

“It may not have been easy for her to start the relationship because she came from a very affluent family and had no dearth of suitable men. But if she hears me saying this, she will scream at me,” says Udhas, his light laughter not hiding the love and respect he feels for his better half, the woman he often refers to as his best friend. “In fact, initially her parents were against it but I hadn't wanted to marry her without their permission. So I met her father and he agreed, though reluctantly. Today, I am his favourite son-in-law,” he adds, smiling.

Although Farida is not trained in music, Udhas credits her with a keen ear. “She has always had this ‘sixth sense,’ knowing which melody will work and which won't,” he reveals. “And I have come to trust that.”

When Udhas is not touring, his evenings, before he begins his composing sessions, are reserved for his daughters Nayaab, 27, who runs an event management company, and Rewa, 19, a student of mass communication. Nayaab, who was named after his album, looks after Udhas's national and international concerts. “He is an amazing dad,” she says. “Despite his schedule and concerts, he always makes it a point to be there for us. In fact, when I was little and getting admitted to school, the school insisted both parents be there at the interview. My father was out of town for a concert; yet, he travelled through the night to ensure he was there for the interview, reaching the school directly from the railway station.”

To his daughters, Udhas is more friend than father. “He is always up-to-date with the times, whether it is current events, technology or the latest movies and music,” adds Nayaab. “Even my friends get along really well with him.



Professionally, I have learnt a lot from him—his temperament, his commitment to honour his word and the need to reach out to help someone in distress.” So are Nayaab and Rewa musically inclined? “Both of us love music but neither of us wanted to pursue it,” she responds. “People around us wonder why we weren't doing justice to his legacy, but never once did he force either of us into *riyaaz* or to take music more seriously.”

For his part, Udhas says, “It doesn't matter to me. Because I know that music needs to come from within.” No one knows it better. 🌸

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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Green, clean, serene

A day trip to Mawlynnong, Meghalaya, turns out to be a journey of unfailing surprises

✦ 📷 Shivani Dasmahapatra

While on a short holiday in Shillong, Meghalaya, a highly recommended day trip to Mawlynnong and Riwai turned out to be a journey of unfailing surprises. "Clean village and root bridge is

must to see, Madam," said the cheery cab driver who had been driving us around Shillong for the past two days.

So, on a bright sunny day after days of rain, we embarked on a day trip from Shillong to Mawlynnong. The

journey itself was simply mesmerising. As we drove out of Shillong, the traffic thinned down and the true beauty of the Meghalaya Hills unfurled. As we left the snow peaks behind, the beauty of the green-clad mountains that unfolded at every





Meghalaya is known for its centuries-old tradition of living root bridges. It is an unwritten rule that if any villager notices a new root, he has to weave it into the mesh

turn of the road took us by surprise; the dense forests gave way to hills verdant and lush, waterfalls tumbled down the green cliffs, and the plains of Sylhet, Bangladesh, lay below. The scenic drive lasted all of about three hours where blue skies, white clouds and green earth all blended into perfection.

Mawlynnong is nestled in these pristine Meghalaya hills, about 90 km from Shillong along the Indo-Bangladesh border. A few kilometres before Mawlynnong, we stopped to take a look at a natural balancing rock, a strange phenomenon of a large boulder balancing on a far smaller rock—think of an elephant balancing on a football! This sacred *Maw-Ryngkew Sharatia* or balancing rock is said to be an ancient Khasi shrine. A few minutes from there, we crossed the quaint Balang Presbyterian Church

dotted with colourful flowers at the entrance of Mawlynnong.

“Welcome to Mawlynnong...God’s Own Garden”, reads the signboard at the village entrance. A tiny village with about 90 households, Mawlynnong is indeed picture perfect. In fact, travel magazine *Discover India* declared the village the cleanest in Asia in 2003, and the cleanest in India in 2005. Walk around the flower-lined pathways twining around the enchanting thatched houses raised on stilts and you’d be hard-pressed to refute the claim. Bamboo baskets outside every home and roadside—a community based eco-tourism initiative—add to the charm. Indeed, the people here take pride in the continued collective effort to maintain their village. In a happy coincidence, broom grass (*Thysanolaena maxima*) grows abundantly in Mawlynnong where agri-

culture is the main occupation and betel nut the primary crop. Interestingly, the village boasts a 100-per-cent literacy rate and most villagers are conversant with the English language. It didn’t take us long to realise that these extremely well-mannered and polite people dislike being photographed.

All the 90 families living in the village ensure that their everyday life and long-term livelihood is sustainable and eco-friendly. You see strangely formed large rocks with holes in front of almost every house. We were told these holes were created by rainwater and called *Mawlynnong* in Khasi, thus giving the village its name. Rocks and stones are a significant part of Khasi culture in Mawlynnong. Placed outside every house, rainwater is harvested in these natural stone basins with large cavities and used later.

And if there's one thing the people of Mawlynnong have excelled in, it is the art of waste management. They take cleanliness seriously and have passed down this legacy over generations. A strict fine is imposed on those who litter or cut trees.

The centre of the village has a large parking lot to accommodate visiting cars and buses; a teashop does brisk business selling fish curry and rice, a must-try. Roadsides are lined with women selling fresh pineapple, bamboo curios and souvenirs brought in from Bangladesh. There are also

surprisingly clean pay-and-use public toilets managed by local women for the benefit of travellers, something other, larger cities could learn from and replicate.

About a 10-minute walk from the village square, tourists stand in line to clamber up Sky View, a tall, bamboo tower from where you can view the Bangladesh plains. Standing 80 ft in height, this magnificent structure was built by a local schoolteacher, Rishop Khongthongreh. A teashop below offered the much-needed rest for our tired limbs.

A few kilometres away from Mawlynnong is the village of Riwai, home to a unique bridge that wasn't built but 'grown': Living Root Bridge. Strategically placed signboards guided us there, the narrow concrete road snaking its way along well-kept huts. After a few bends and turns, a Khasi youngster sitting in a booth informed us we needed to buy tickets for ₹ 10 to see the bridge. The money, he said, helps keep the area clean. Along the roadside, an enterprising family was selling bottled water, tetra packs of juice, fresh pineapples and boiled eggs. A signboard to the bridge on the mud

(Facing page) A natural bridge made from knotted roots; (clockwise from below) stone path at King's Way; the pristine environs of Mawlynnong; stone basin used for rainwater harvesting





FACT FILE

GETTING THERE

By road: Mawlynnong is about 90 km from Shillong and 92 km from Cherrapunjee.

By air: The nearest airport is 30 km from Shillong, called Umroi Airport. You can take a taxi to Khasi Hills and then switch to a Sumo from Bara Bazaar market to Mawlynnong. Mawlynnong can also be visited as part of package tours along with other destinations of the Northeast. You can take a day-trip from Shillong or Cherrapunjee or opt to stay the night.

WHERE TO STAY

Home stays are available in Mawlynnong. To learn more, contact India Beacons Sojourn; Tel: (0) 9903295920, 02419-1976
Email: info@indiabeacons.com;
Web: www.indiabeacons.com
Mawlynnong Guest House:
Contact Deepak Laloo or Carol Nongrum (0364-2502420, (0) 9863115302).

A view of the plains of Bangladesh

and stone road points downwards. As we took the small rocky stairway, the soft gushing sound of the water below filled our ears. The stone path to the river is called the King's Way. We learnt that this path linked Khasi villages with each other and helped them trade in betel nut.

As the short steep path ended, we stood mesmerised at the first sight of the bridge. Spanning a gurgling stream stands a natural bridge made up of knotted roots. In fact, Meghalaya is known for its centuries-old tradition of living root bridges used to cross streams in remote mountainous areas. The pliant roots of the *Ficus elastica*, the Indian rubber tree, are braided and entwined in a way that they grow into an elaborate lattice. Over time, the bridge becomes so strong that it can be paved with stone.

It is an unwritten rule that if any villager notices a new root, he has to weave it into the mesh.

The bridge across the river can endure the weight of about 50 people and is an example of eco-engineering at its best. No one knows how old it is—perhaps 50, or even 100 years.

Below the bridge, some children swam with abandon and upstream a few village men fished in silence. Women carrying baskets of clothes to wash walked down the rocks singing a Khasi song. The sounds of gushing water and children's laughter filled our ears.

Sitting on a rock in the middle of the stream, we soaked in the sun and breathed in the beauty of this magical land. It was a day well spent. 🌸

INSIDE

p64: Across and down

p77: Man in armour

Etcetera

CULTURE ● LEISURE ● LIFESTYLE ● BOOKS ● MISCELLANY

Japanese DREAMS

He is probably the only Indian across the globe to belt out Enka, a popular Japanese music genre. But at 60, Sarabjit Singh Chadha's dream is to translate the soul-stirring lyrics into Hindi. "Enka songs touch the core of every human being and I am looking for someone who can bring out the depth of the lyrics without changing the original essence," says Chadha, whose love affair with the

MUSIC genre started in his teens when he had gone to Japan to learn orange cultivation. "Enka is like Indian *ghazal*, full of deep-rooted emotions; it is similar to the black-and-white Hindi songs with great lyrics and emotional upheaval. The genre is more popular in the smaller cities of Japan," says the New Delhi resident who is just back from Japan after a scintillating performance at the Namaste India festival. "I have a spiritual bond with Japan and Enka," he smiles.

—Ambica Gulati



Be Indian

Sudipto Roy meets Father Gaston Roberge, a pioneer of film studies, who has been advocating the Indian way of watching movies



Shilbhadra Datta

This Father is on a rather unusual mission—to get people to watch Indian cinema through Indian eyes. “Leave the baggage of Western education of cinema outside the hall,” advocates Father Gaston Roberge. “Many people would know Aristotle’s *Poetics*

with a rare depth of knowledge but, unfortunately, very few care to find out what their own ancient sages said centuries ago about performing arts.”

CINEMA

Which is why he wants you to know about ancient Hindu theatrologist and musicologist Bharat Muni and his theories of drama and

communication, all encapsulated in the massive *Natya Shastra*.

French-Canadian by birth, Roberge came to Kolkata half a century ago to be a Jesuit missionary priest but fell in love with Indian films; he can discuss Bollywood and Indian cin-

ema for hours. Attached to the city's St Xavier's College, he is a part of the senior faculty in the department of mass communication and film studies. In his spartan room in the college premises, paintings of Satyajit Ray and Bimal Roy share the wall with a frame of Jesus Christ. At 78, he is as enthusiastic discussing *Battleship Potemkin* as *Sholay* or *Three Idiots*.

Passionate as he is about "the Indian theory of cinema", Father Roberge has just finished his latest book *To View Movies The Indian Way*. He has written about 25 books on various film-related subjects, including a biography of his friend Satyajit Ray. For writing this yet-to-be-published work, Roberge drew upon his years of experience as a teacher of film studies at an institute called Chitrabani when he started out in Kolkata.

So what is the Indian way of watching cinema? "I had first seen *Pather Panchali* in New York in 1961, just before catching the boat to India," he recalls. "When I described my most favourite scene—Durga licking her finger after eating pickle—to a film expert here, he said, with his legendary knowledge of film appreciation, 'Oh, that's one of those scenes Ray did because he was a novice then and didn't know much about filmmaking.' I realised he was talking like a West-

ern film critic, while I, despite being a Westerner, reacted to the scene with my heart."

Father Roberge also gives the example of a 2003 film, *Raghu Romeo*, which he watched as a jury member at an international film festival. Though he was

"When I ask my students to name a few films they have seen, they don't talk about popular Bollywood movies but mention only the classics, as you don't talk about popular films in a serious classroom"

of the opinion that a song-and-dance sequence between the hero (a tea boy) and the heroine (a TV star) was the best scene in the film, some serious filmmaker friends on the jury thought that it was the weakest. "My friend, for whom I have the highest respect as a filmmaker, didn't want to see it as an Indian," he laments. "He imposed his Western standards of appreciation and thought that the scene marred an otherwise brilliant film." Mind you, Roberge is not stuck to the idea of

films with heavy intellectual content. One of his favourite films is *Sholay*. "When I ask my students to name a few films they have seen, they don't talk about popular Bollywood movies. They mention only the classics, as you don't talk about popular films in a serious classroom. And then I ask, 'Have you not seen and liked *Sholay*?' But when they analyse the film and tell me what they liked about it, they all talk about what would appeal to a Western audience. They ignore the essential Indian qualities hidden in the film that make it so popular in India."

Roberge's theories are mostly drawn from *Natyashastra*. His passion to connect with the audience finds echoes in the writings of another stalwart of film appreciation in India, Chidananda Dasgupta (filmmaker Aparna Sen's father), who also felt a similar need for an Indian film theory. When told that he is one of the pioneers of films as a subject of study in India, Roberge says modestly, "I take just one class a week these days. And the things I discuss are mostly out of syllabus." But then, for a person who is philosophically inspired by Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society*, educating students on viewing movies the Indian way has never been an easy task—and it is likely to stay difficult for a long time to come.

ON SONG

A blend of poetry, melody and rhythm, Bhavgeet has ruled the heart of Marathi music lovers for decades now. Celebrations are around the corner as this popular music genre enters its 81st year since legendary composer G N Joshi laid its foundation. In anticipation, singers and connoisseurs came together to celebrate an evening of mellifluous light music at National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai last month. Stalwarts Arun Date, Anuradha Marathe, Suresh Wadkar, Dhanajay Mhaskar and Saeed Tembhekar recreated the magic of Bhavgeet. "Most of the songs in Bhavgeet are dedicated to the beautiful moon; so what better way to celebrate a genre that has witnessed 1,000 moons," says Date, who rendered all-time hits like *Shukratara* and *Bhatkalichya khelamadhali* at the event. Incidentally, this year also marks the golden jubilee of his evergreen song *Shukratara*. Are today's compositions as good as the old ones? "There is a huge gap," rues Date. "Today, we have a shortage of good poetry. Also, we need music directors who can do justice to poetry." Look out for many more Bhavgeet concerts this year.



Gautam Ruparel

Southern BEATS

For veteran mridangam player M S Parameswaran, teaching youngsters to play the instrument brings fulfilment, discovers **Gautam Ruparel**

The rhythmic beats of the mridangam reverberate through the serene Navi Mumbai Tamil Sangam Hall in Vashi. It's a sight to behold: nimble-fingered youngsters practising on the ancient percussion instrument, striking powerfully and delicately, alternating with an intermittent pause. Directing them is M S Parameswaran, a retired engineer turned mridangam

teacher. "After retirement, I had several offers for senior positions but I had decided to devote myself to music. After 36 years of service, music was all I looked forward to," says the 64 year-old.

Since childhood, mridangam has been an integral part of Parameswaran's life; in his ancestral home in Palghat, Kerala, his father M K Sreenivasa

Bhagavathar and brothers M S Krishnan, N H Jayaram and Kalyanakrishnan were musicians besides being his teachers. "I learnt Carnatic vocals but when there was a local vacancy for a mridangam player, I was groomed to take up the role," he recalls.

Such was his prowess that Parameswaran delivered his first stage performance at the age of 11. Whether it

“Playing mridangam is nothing but mathematics and science, it is full of calculations. The art helps improve concentration, which has a positive effect on learning”

was his father or mridangam maestro Guruvayur Dorai, whom he had a chance to learn from quite by chance after moving to Mumbai, he spent hours imbibing the art. “Every performance of every artist is unique; when in doubt, I was never shy asking a question,” he says. “After all, we need to keep learning.”

He went on to pursue a career in mechanical engineering in Mumbai. With work and the responsibilities that come with living a solitary life in a big city, his mridangam practice took a beating. But when wife Vasini entered his life, the mellifluous notes of the instrument resonated again in his home. “Vasini encouraged me not to give up this great art and pursue it under all circumstances,” he recounts. “I took out time from my daily routine and

pursued the mridangam again.” Today, Parameswaran has around 150 students from across the country training under him—like a 62 year-old retired judge, and a 12 year-old boy who recently gave his *arangetram* (first performance on stage).

His school and college-going students have found a perfect balance between music and education, and Parameswaran believes there is a direct connect between the two. “Playing mridangam is nothing but mathematics and science, it is full of calculations,” he affirms. “The art helps improve concentration, which has a positive effect on learning. In fact, one of my young students has overcome high blood pressure after learning this instrument.”

Today, for Parameswaran, there is nothing more rewarding than watching his students enjoy and excel at playing the mridangam—just like he did while learning the art. His efforts to popularise the instrument and train youngsters were recognised by the Navi Mumbai Tamil Sangam, which awarded him the ‘Musical Excellence for Expertise in Mridangam’ award recently. “I have had my share of performances; now I’m more interested in giving back through teaching,” he declares. “I ensure that each of my students understands the mridangam as beautifully as I did. Many of them have given their *arangetram*. I cannot ask for anything more as their guru. Their dedication is a motivation for me; it is my major achievement.”



ART FOR ALL

THE ART MARKET HAS SHRUNK EVER SINCE THE ECONOMY SLOWED. AND ARTISTS HAVE FELT THE HEAT WITH MANY OF THEIR WORKS REMAINING UNSOLD. IN AN EFFORT TO REV UP THE MARKET, AN ART BAZAAR IN VADODARA DISPLAYED ABOUT 500 WORKS BY 135 ARTISTS, BOTH SEASONED AND NEW. WORKS OF PROMISING ARTISTS LIKE ARUNANSHU CHAUDHARY, HIRAL TRIVEDI AND AMARNATH SHARMA WERE CLUBBED TOGETHER IN PORTFOLIOS WITH MASTERS LIKE K G SUBRAMANYAN, BHUPEN KHAKKAR, ATUL DODIYA AND G M SHEIKH, ALL SURPRISINGLY PRICED BETWEEN ₹ 15,000 AND ₹ 20,000. SERIGRAPHS OF ANJOLIE ELA MENON AND SUDHIR PATWARDHAN WERE SOLD AT—HOLD YOUR BREATH—ONLY ₹ 10,000! HITESH RANA OF SARJAN ART GALLERY, WHO ORGANISED THE EXHIBITION *MANDI*, SAYS, “MORE THAN HALF THE WORKS AT EXHIBITIONS AND AUCTIONS ARE NOT SOLD AS PEOPLE FIND THEM UNAFFORDABLE. I DESCRIBED MY PLAN TO PROMINENT ARTISTS AND THEY READILY AGREED TO JOIN HANDS WITH YOUNGER ONES TO MAKE ART AFFORDABLE. THIS EXHIBITION HAS OXYGENATED THE MARKET; EVEN THE COMMON MAN HAS BOUGHT ART!” LOOKING AT THE EXCELLENT RESPONSE, RANA PLANS TO HOLD SIMILAR EXHIBITIONS IN OTHER CITIES AS WELL.



Clued in

An avid fan of the cryptic crossword, **Bunny Suraiya** shares her delightful experiments and experiences with the grid

16 ACROSS. *Emperor greets English girl going round Ethiopia's capital* (5,8).

Hmm. I take a strand of my hair in my fingers and twist it round into an almost-ringlet and park it on the top of my upper lip, which curls to hold it there in place. Weird, but that's what I do when I think. Everyone has their own equivalent of 'putting on a thinking cap' and this is mine. I have to figure out the two words that will solve this clue and what makes it harder is that I have solved none of the other clues nearby which could give me a few letters in the blank squares in which this answer is to be filled.

I was a kid of 16 when I met the man who was to introduce me to what was to become one of my lifelong pleasures. My parents and I were at the Saturday Club in Calcutta and my dad said, "This is Brian Uncle." I looked up at the tall, craggy-faced Englishman, dressed in a tweed jacket, his dark blond hair brushed severely back from his forehead, who looked impossibly ancient to my teenaged eyes, but who couldn't have been much more than 40 or so. I fell in love with him right away when he held out his hand to me as to an equal and said, contradicting my father firmly, "Not Brian Uncle. Perish the thought. Brian Sinjin Conway—that's my name and you may address me as Brian." It was only much later, when I saw his name written down—on a club bill, as it happened, which he insouciantly crumpled and threw away—that I realised that 'Sinjin' was the upper-class English pronunciation of St John.

Brian was the epitome of the aristocratic Brit. Unfailingly courteous,

extremely well read, and with a delightful sense of humour. He taught me practically everything worth learning: how to bet on the Quinella at the Calcutta races; an appreciation of western classical music (he started my education with Mozart, Bach and Beethoven); a taste for sloe gin (if it was in short supply, which it often was, Benadryl cough syrup made a satisfactory alternative); and how to

And then one day, I hit the jackpot. I actually finished the crossword. All by myself. I kept gazing at the completed grid with an idiotic smile on my face, anticipating my meeting with Brian that evening

do the cryptic crossword from the London-based *The Times*, which used to be published daily in *The Statesman* in Calcutta. "You have to think logically," he would advise. "But also tangentially—because the crossword setters have fiendishly convoluted minds. That's what makes it fun."

Every day, after my father had finished with the paper, I would pounce on it and—lock of hair firmly planted on upper lip—struggle to make sense of the clues. It would take me all day, in between whatever else I was doing, and in the evening at the club I would show the result of my efforts to Brian. Sometimes I had managed to solve one clue, sometimes a couple more—

and Brian would fish out his own nearly always completed crossword and take me through the rest of the clues, one by one, patiently explaining the logic behind each one, and I would say, "Of course! I should have worked that out. How stupid I am!"

And then one day, I hit the jackpot. I actually finished the crossword. All by myself. I couldn't believe I had really done it. I kept gazing at the completed grid with an idiotic smile on my face, anticipating my meeting with Brian that evening. It went even better than I had expected, because that day happened to be one of the few when Brian was stumped by a clue. It was a DOWN clue and the solution was two words of five and seven letters and when Brian saw it on my completed grid, he said, "Small clothes? What on earth are small clothes?"

"It's how English gentlemen in Regency times used to refer to their underwear," I said airily. "It comes from reading Georgette Heyer."

Brian was impressed. "You're a brilliant child," he said, "and we shall have a mug of beer each to celebrate." And we did.

My passion for the *The Times* crossword grew stronger after that day and soon I became almost as good as Brian at solving it. On days when there was no newspaper, such as the day after Holi or some other holiday that *The Statesman* observed, I mooched around, bored and missing my daily fix. And when, at the age of 25, I went to live in London for a while, more exciting to me than the thought of the Big Ben and Oxford Street and all the other delights of what remains



my favourite city in the world, was the electrifying thought that I would be able to do *The Times* crossword on the same day as it was published!

Travelling to my place of work on the Tube every morning from Turnpike Lane to Piccadilly Circus was an exercise in craftiness. For someone at the very bottom of the economic ladder as I was, the idea of buying *The Times* every day was inconceivable. So I would carefully seek out fellow passengers who were likely readers of *The Times* (mostly pinstripe-suited city gents with hats and furled umbrellas) and position myself such that I would be able to make a grab for their discarded newspapers if they left them behind on the train before my stop.

This ploy worked four days out of five, and on the odd day when I was unlucky, as well as during the weekends, I learned to live without the crossword, but it was a pleasure lost, and I doubt if there was ever a more delighted office-goer than me when the week began again. No Monday morning blues for me—not when the

stimulation and excitement of getting my hands on the crossword was a possibility!

14 DOWN. Highly curious after crime? Sounds like it in place of worship (9)

As hard as it is to solve a crossword, it's infinitely harder to set one, because the setter has to work backwards! When we returned to India, my husband was working on *The Statesman Literary Supplement* and the idea was mooted that it might be interesting for its readers to have a literary crossword to solve once a week.

But buying crosswords from foreign papers was expensive—it still is, which is why no daily paper in India has a cryptic crossword worth doing—and so my husband offered to compile a weekly crossword and he asked me to help. I was thrilled. And that's when I realised what an enormous labour of love it is for those who compile crosswords every day of the week. I hope they get paid very well, because it's certainly not an easy thing to do.

The first and the most important thing to consider is the grid. This has to be—like a chessboard—perfectly square. And, something a lot of people don't realise, it has also to be perfectly symmetrical. This means that the left and right halves of the grid, as well as the top and bottom halves, have to be mirror images of each other. All too often in magazines one sees crosswords where the grid is asymmetrical, with a collection of black and white squares randomly placed and of unequal lengths—those are not at all correct and show that the compiler has no basic understanding of how crosswords are formed. For amateur compilers like my husband and I, the easiest way to get a perfect grid was simply to photocopy one each week from the main paper that still carried the cryptic crossword from *The Times*.

Next came a task that was even more demanding, if such a thing could be possible: filling in the light squares with words. The first time we sat down to it, we thought it would be a breeze, and started filling in the squares with

a ballpoint pen, convinced it would be the work of 10 or 15 minutes at the most. After we had ruined the grid by overwriting the words dozens of times to make them fit and interlock with each other, we realised we had quite a job on our hands. We made a fresh photocopy of the grid, and this time with pencil in hand and an eraser nearby, we started again—filling in the words lightly and tentatively, only to have to continuously erase them and start over. It took hours because the symmetry of the grid is sacrosanct and has to be maintained no matter what. So the words have to be chopped and changed because the grid cannot be.

Once all the words are finally in place, that's when the fun part begins: compiling the clues to the words. Here's

where you can let your fancy roam, and make the clues as cryptic and devilish as you like, provided you observe one cardinal rule: the clue has to be devised in such a manner that the final answer fits it *exactly*, with no ambiguity whatsoever. The solution has to have the elegance of a geometry theorem. There can be no two answers, and once the solver has the answer, it must be demonstrably correct. QED.

This is proof that crosswords—for setters and solvers alike—are among the most exciting and stimulating brain games ever. The more you travel, the more widely you read, the more experiences you allow yourself to be open to, the larger your vocabulary, the better at crosswords you will be and the more fun you will have.

And now that it's possible to freely download the day's cryptic crossword from *The Guardian* and *The Observer* in London (as well as the one from *The Times* at a small fee), it costs nothing—or next to nothing—to get your daily dose of mental callisthenics. What could be a better reason for waking up every morning?

P.S. If you haven't yet solved the clues above, here are the answers:

16 ACROSS: *Haile Selassie (That's the Emperor; hails is another word for 'greet' and it incorporates 'e' which is the capital of Ethiopia; followed by English girl, i.e. E lassie).*

14 DOWN: *Synagogue (a place of worship that 'sounds like' highly curious, i.e. agog, after crime, i.e. sin).*


Bunny Suraiya is a writer, reviewer and crossword addict. Her acclaimed novel, *Calcutta Exile*, is soon to be published in France

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A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair, both smiling and playing in a pond. The man is in the water, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, splashing water towards him. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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The homecoming

We ring in Deepavali, the festival of lights, with a canto from **Ralph T H Griffith's** 1870 translation of *Válmíki's Rámáyan*, celebrating Rama's return to Ayodhya

Then Ráma, speeding through the
skies,
Bent on the earth his eager eyes:
"Look, Sítá, see, divinely planned
And built by Viśvakarmá's hand,
Lanká the lovely city rest
Enthroned on Mount Trikúma's crest
Behold those fields, ensanguined yet,
Where Vánar hosts and giants met.
There, vainly screened by charm and
spell,
The robber Rávan fought and fell.
There knelt Mandodarí and shed
Her tears in floods for Rávan dead.
And every dame who loved him sent
From her sad heart her wild lament.
There gleams the margin of the deep,
Where, worn with toil, we sank to
sleep.
Look, love, the unconquered sea
behold,
King Varun's home ordained of old,
Whose boundless waters roar and
swell
Rich with their store of pearl and
shell.
O see, the morning sun is bright
On fair HiraGyanábha's height,
Who rose from Ocean's sheltering
breast
That Hanumán might stay and rest.
There stretches, famed for evermore,
The wondrous bridge from shore to
shore.
The worlds, to life's remotest day,
Due reverence to the work shall pay,
Which holier for the lapse of time
Shall give release from sin and crime.
Now thither bend, dear love, thine
eyes
Where green with groves Kishkindhá
lies,
The seat of King Sugrívá's reign,
Where Báli by this hand was slain.

There Ríshyamúka's hill behold
Bright gleaming with embedded gold.
There too my wandering foot I set,
There King Sugrívá first I met.
And, where yon trees their branches
wave,
My promise of assistance gave.
There, flushed with lilies, Pampá
shines



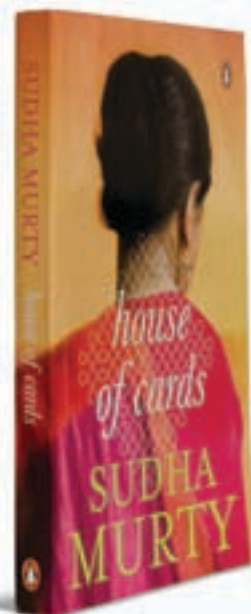
With banks which greenest foliage
lines,
Where melancholy steps I bent
And mourned thee with a mad
lament.
There fierce Kabandha, spreading
wide
His giant arms, in battle died.
Turn, Sítá, turn thine eyes and see
In Janasthán that glorious tree:
There Rávan, lord of giants slew

Our friend Jatáyus brave and true,
Thy champion in the hopeless strife,
Who gave for thee his noble life.
Now mark that glade amid the trees
Where once we lived as devotees.
See, see our leafy cot between
Those waving boughs of densest
green
Where Rávan seized his prize and
stole
My love the darling of my soul.
O, look again: beneath thee gleams
Godávarí the best of streams,
Whose lucid waters sweetly glide
By lilies that adorn her side.
There dwelt Agastya, holy sage,
In plantain-sheltered hermitage.
See Śarabhangá's humble shed
Which sovereign Indra visited.
See where the gentle hermits dwell
Neath Atri's rule who loved us well;
Where once thine eyes were blest to
see
His sainted dame who talked with
thee.
Now rest thine eyes with new delight
On Chitrakúma's woody height,
See Jumna flashing in the sun
Through groves of brilliant foliage
run.
Screened by the shade of spreading
boughs.
There Bharadvája keeps his vows,
There Gangá, river of the skies,
Rolls the sweet wave that purifies,
There Śringavera's towers ascend
Where Guha reigns, mine ancient
friend.
I see, I see thy glittering spires,
Ayodhyá, city of my sires.
Bow down, bow down thy head, my
sweet,
Our home, our long-lost home to
greet."

BETWEEN THE LINES

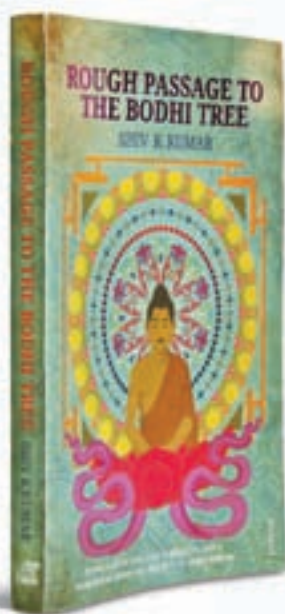
David Harris-Gershon's debut novel, which is part memoir and part investigative journalism, is a book for today's times where terrorism is part of our daily news capsule. It is easy to treat the number of dead and injured as mere statistics—until someone we're close to gets affected. How do we

cope with life then? **WHAT DO YOU BUY THE CHILDREN OF THE TERRORIST WHO TRIED TO KILL YOUR WIFE?** (Penguin; ₹ 499; 288 pages) attempts to answer that, interspersed with facts and historical back stories. Harris-Gershon and his wife, Jamie, students at Hebrew University, have their lives shaken upside down when a bomb explodes at the university cafeteria. While Jamie, who suffers burns, tries to cope with it in her own invisible way, Harris-Gershon finds it tough to move on. Paranoia, guilt and obsessive-compulsive fear take over his life, even though he is miles away from violence and bloodshed after moving to the US. As a first step towards internal healing, he decides to write about the experience. He also decides to meet the terrorist's family. What ensues is a touching emotional exchange that completes the healing process. While some parts of the book seem a bit too dramatic and slow, the build-up to the encounter and the way Harris-Gershon captures his own psychological recovery more than make up for it.



Adorned with simple, relatable characters, **HOUSE OF CARDS** (Penguin; ₹ 250; 288 pages) is a book about what happens when human relationships are prized less than materialistic commitments. Told in an even, simple voice by **Sudha Murty**, the book delves into the tumultuous relationship between a husband and wife, a son's realisation of family values, a father-daughter relationship and the story of a woman who takes the reins of her life in her own hands. This is the story of Mridula, a bright young woman from a Karnataka village, who marries Sanjay, a government doctor, and moves to Bengaluru. When greed gets the better of him, Sanjay starts keeping secrets from his wife, straining the relationship. It's nothing new—growing mistrust in a marriage, the divide between nouveau riche urban self-centeredness and simple village life, the eternal clash between ethics and the lure of easy comfort—but the way the story has been narrated sets it apart.

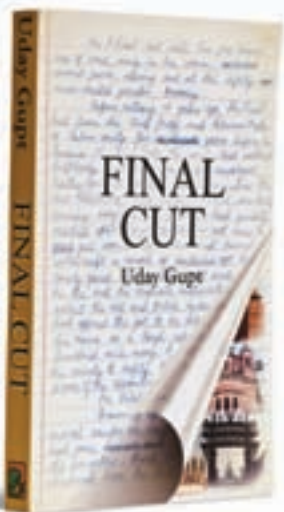
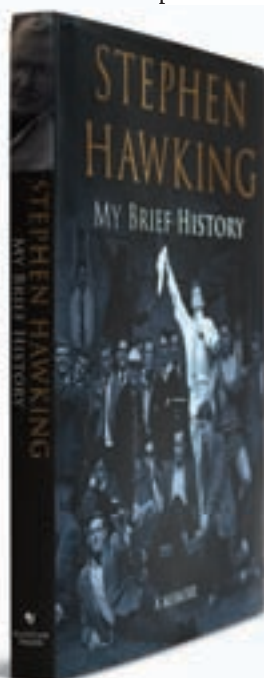
Is it so easy to renounce the riches and comforts of a palace, a beautiful wife and new-born child and walk the rough path for the sake of humanity and ultimate wisdom? An evocative fable on the life of the Buddha, **ROUGH PASSAGE TO THE BODHI TREE** (Random House; ₹ 299; 227) seeks to find an answer to this dilemma. Narrated in an earthy idiom by **Shiv K Kumar**, it traces the transformation of Prince Siddhartha into the noble, enlightened Buddha. The 92 year-old author injects a lifetime of wisdom into understanding the Buddha's psyche and adapts the tale to modern times, making it relatable and relevant at the same time. An imaginative recreation of the Buddha as a messiah of compassion, peace and harmony, it makes the teachings of the master accessible and attainable. Readers of Kumar's *Nude Before God* may miss the writer's trademark wit and humour. But this book is still worth a read because it doesn't take a moral high ground and preach to you, speaking to you instead in your own language.



Uday Gupta's debut, a collection of six gripping short stories and a novella, reminds you of Jeffrey Archer's style of storytelling. The twists in the end come unpredicted and unwarned, sometimes as an anti-climax, sometimes an 'aha!' moment. The book takes its name, **FINAL CUT** (Leadstart; ₹ 195; 302 pages), from the last story set in quintessential Kolkata, amongst all its puja and festive fervour. Most of the book, in fact, is a sort of magical journey through Kolkata's many worlds, spread over different eras, whether it is the Naxal revolution of the 1970s, red-light districts, old haveli of landlords or the city's art circuit. Gupta, who now lives in the Middle East and has written for

One of the most brilliant theoretical physicists since Albert Einstein, **Stephen Hawking** recounts the trajectory of his improbable journey from post-war London to international fame in **MY BRIEF HISTORY: A MEMOIR** (Random House; ₹ 399; 126 pages). For someone who has spent an entire career explaining the wonders of the cosmos to non-scientists, this is perhaps his most personal book to date. Turning his gaze inward, into his personal cosmos, Hawking offers us a peek into the making

of a global science superstar. Nicknamed 'Einstein' for his inquisitiveness, a young Hawking's scientific temperament is on display right from the beginning, from his fascination for machines and model trains to a passion for inventing complicated games in a bid to understand how complex systems function. Hawking also delves into the genesis of his physical disability that shook him out of the sloth of his Oxford days and contributed in part to the breakdown of his two marriages. The reader is also taken behind the scenes to witness the making of his bestseller *A Brief History of Time*, which sold over 10 million copies and spent 237 weeks on *The Sunday Times* list. As for rumours of infidelity by Hawking and his wives and physical abuse of the disabled scientist, there is very little that you learn. Clearly, the renowned cosmologist is not comfortable revealing the dark side of his life. Still, the two things that make this book priceless are rare photographs from his personal album and the classy wit on display.



newspapers before, has a sardonic and witty take on India and its people, especially Bengalis. While the characters are relatable, simple and well-etched, the stories deftly weave political and historical facts into fiction. For instance, the story "Friends", which is about two boys—one a struggling artist who plays by the rules and the other a Naxalite who paints secretly but brilliantly for money—gives us a sideways glance into the time when thousands of young minds were drawn to the revolution in the 1970s. The stories are also fun to read, heavy on sarcasm, deadpan humour and imagination and replete with sharp observations on the zeitgeist.

The master of the political thriller **Frederick Forsyth** is back with a bang with **THE KILL LIST** (Random House; ₹ 399; 352 pages), a book that both reflects and critiques today's geopolitical realities. The fact that every US president actually has a 'kill list'—a roll call of baddies that can be legitimately eliminated for the good of the nation—brings this tale closer to home. Simply put, 'The Tracker' ex-Marine Kit Carson is on a mission to hunt down and kill 'The Preacher', an Islamic extremist who preaches jihad and impels radicalised Muslims in the West to carry out assassinations while remaining hidden behind a curtain of computer wizardry that befuddles investigators. Things get even more personal when Carson's own father, a retired Marine general, is assassinated. The plot is fantastic, the action frenetic and the dilemmas encountered by the protagonists all too realistic; this is a book of our times, for our times. Watch out for the movie—it's in the works already—at a theatre near you.



Tracing Gandhi's FOOTSTEPS

We present an extract from Ramachandra Guha's *Gandhi Before India*, a definitive work on the formative years of the man who would go on to become the Father of the Nation

This book has reconstructed Mohandas K Gandhi's less known and sometimes forgotten years in Porbandar, Rajkot, Bombay, London, Durban and Johannesburg, on the basis of contemporary records rather than retrospective accounts. Now, however, with my subject having finally sailed from South Africa, it may be time to bring in questions I have kept at a distance all this while. In what ways did the first forty-five years of Gandhi's life shape him as a social reformer, religious thinker and political actor? What is the significance of his South African years in particular for those who know Gandhi as the leader of the Indian freedom struggle, as an icon and inspiration for non-violent movements the world over, as a prophet of inter-faith harmony, and more?

Let's start at the beginning, with how a Bania from Kathiawar outgrew the conventions of his caste. As a schoolboy, Gandhi befriended a Muslim classmate in Rajkot. As a law student, he shared a home with a Christian vegetarian in London. However, it was in South Africa that he more fully elaborated his unique spirit of ecumenism. This was religious—originally employed by Muslim merchants, Gandhi came to count Jews, Christians and Parsis among his closest friends. It was social—a middle-class man himself, Gandhi was to identify closely with hawkers and labourers. As the poorer Indians in South Africa were largely Tamil-speaking, he came to understand the diversity of language as well.

Gandhi was born and raised a Hindu, and he avowed that denominational label all his life. Yet no Hindu before or since has had such a close, intense engagement with the great Abrahamic religions. He understood Judaism through a highly personal lens—through his friendships with Polak, Kallenbach and Sonja Schlesin especially. His interest in Christianity was both personal and theological—he liked Doke and loved Andrews, but whereas he was not really influenced by Jewish thought he was profoundly shaped by heterodox Christian texts—above all Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. His relations with Islam were partly personal, but largely pragmatic and political. He had read the *Koran* (probably more than once), but was never really moved by it in the same way as he was moved by the *Gita* or the Sermon on the Mount. He had some



Muslim friends, but what concerned him more—much more—was the forging of a compact between Hindus and Muslims: the major communities in the Indian Diaspora in South Africa, as they were in India itself.

Perhaps even more striking than his religious inclusiveness was Gandhi's complete lack of bitterness towards the ruling race. The roots of this lay in those years in London, and his friendly interactions with vegetarians and others. In May 1891, just before he left England for India, he expressed the hope that 'in the future we shall tend towards unity of custom, and also unity of hearts'. Some years later, when set upon by a white mob in Durban, Gandhi chose to remember not his persecutors but the whites who stood by him. Still later, when faced with the rigorous racial exclusivism of the Transvaal, Gandhi sought 'points of agreement' with the oppressors, with whom he hoped to live in 'perfect peace'. Years of harassment and vilification at the hands of Boers and Britons did not deter him from seeking 'the unity of human nature, whether residing in a brown-skinned or a white-skinned body'.

To be sure, it was harder, and perhaps more admirable, for Europeans to befriend Gandhi. In 1904, when Boer and

Briton alike were being driven to a frenzy by the prospect of Asian immigration, a meeting in Volksrust resolved that 'any white person who aids, abets, assists or in any way connives, directly or indirectly, to the establishing of the Indian trader within our gates is an enemy to the advancement of the white races of the country'. Ritch, the Polaks, the Dokes, Kallenbach and Sonja Schlesin were all happy enough to be counted as enemies by the herd—and the mob.

Gandhi's ability to disregard differences of race and faith was exceptional in any time and place, not least the South Africa of the 1890s and 1900s. His first encounter with Winston Churchill, which took place in London in 1906, at a time when they were both relatively obscure, is instructive here. Gandhi, as secretary of the British Indian Association of the Transvaal, had gone to call on Churchill, who was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. They were discussing the fate and future of the Johannesburg locality of Vrededorp, where Dutch burghers and Indian immigrants traded side by side—an arrangement that Churchill considered violated tradition, custom, and human nature itself.

Churchill's perceptions—and prejudices—in this regard had been consolidated by his experiences in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War. Thus, to the plea that Indians be allowed to live and trade in Vrededorp, Churchill answered that 'the practice of allowing European, Asiatic and native families to live side by side in [a] mixed community is fraught with many evils.' It was an argument which could not resonate with Gandhi, who, in the same city of Johannesburg, already had as housemates a European couple—one Christian, the other Jewish.

Gandhi's broadmindedness was most forcefully stressed in an unpublished memoir by one of these housemates. Henry Polak wrote of his friend and leader that while he was

a Vaishnava Bania by birth, he is by nature a Brahmin, the . . . teacher of his fellow-men, not by the preaching of virtue,

but by its practice; by impulse a Kshatriya, in his chivalrous defence of those who had placed their trust in him and look to him for protection; by choice a Sudra, servant of the humblest and most despised of his fellow-men. It is said of [the seer] Ramkrishna that he once swept out the foul hut of a pariah with his own hair, to prove his freedom from ar-

rogance towards and contempt for the untouchable outcast. The twice-born [i.e. upper-caste] Prime Minister's son has been seen . . . with his own hands to purify the sanitary convenience of his own house and of the gaols in which he has been interned.

Having spoken of Gandhi's ability to be of all castes and of no caste at all, Polak then stressed his ecumenism of faith:

Religion implies, for him, a mighty and all-embracing tolerance, and a large charity is the first of the virtues. Hindu by birth, he regards all men—Mahomedans, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, Buddhists, Confucians—as spiritual brothers. He makes no differences amongst them, recognising that all faiths lead to salvation, that all are ways of viewing God, and that, in their relation to each other, men are fellow-human beings first, and followers of creeds afterwards. Hence it is that men of all faiths and even of none, are his devoted friends, admirers, and helpers.

Many years later, reflecting on his South African experience, Gandhi remembered that the residents of Phoenix and Tolstoy farms were, in religious terms, Hindus of different castes, Sunnis and Shias, Protestants and Catholics, Parsis and Jews. The

careers they had previously practiced included architecture, journalism, the law and trade. They now submerged their faiths and their qualifications in the common work of printing, gardening, carpentry and house-building. And so, as Gandhi recalled, the 'practice of truth and non-violence melted religious differences, and we learnt to see beauty in each religion. I do not remember a single religious quarrel in the two colonies I founded in South Africa.... Labour was no drudgery, it was a joy.'



Gandhi was born and raised a Hindu, and he avowed that denominational label all his life. Yet no Hindu before or since has had such a close, intense engagement with the great Abrahamic religions

Excerpted with permission from Ramachandra Guha and Penguin Books India; Gandhi Before India (Allen Lane; ₹ 899; 688 pages)

All for one

The ultimate goal of life should be to live in harmony with all, says Eknath Easwaran

Twenty-five hundred years ago, ordinary people like you and me used to gather around the Compassionate Buddha, dazzled by the radiance of his personality, and ask, "Are you a god?" The Buddha would answer quietly, "No, I am awake." This is the literal meaning of the word *buddha*, 'he who has awakened'—awakened from the nightmare of separate living into the light of unity.

This awakening is the highest goal of life, and though different religions call it by different names, the goal is one and the same. It is nirvana to the Buddhist, *moksha* to the Hindu; Christian mystics call it beautifully "entering the kingdom of heaven within". To the Sufis it is union with the Beloved; to Jewish mystics it is the return of the soul to its divine source. Sometimes it is called Christ-consciousness or Krishna-consciousness, enlightenment, illumination, or self-realisation. But there is no difference between any of these, as we can see when we keep our eyes on the goal itself rather than on the innumerable differences in rites and rituals and dogmas. No matter what they call it, all the great religions point to the same supreme goal.

The need for an overriding goal

Every one of us has an aching need for a goal worthy of our complete dedication, for an ideal so lofty that we can keep our eyes on it no matter what circumstances come our way. Much of our boredom and restlessness comes from not having a direction in life; we are like someone all dressed up on a Saturday night with nowhere to go. If I may say so, most of what we call goals are not real goals at all, because they give us no all-encompassing sense of purpose in life. But when we have an overriding goal, we find that many of our problems fall away of their own accord. Everything falls into perspective: we know what to do with

our time; what to do with our energy, and it is easier to see all the little choices that confront us every day. Shall I eat what appeals to the taste buds, or what conduces to sound health? Shall I spend time doing my own thing, or doing work which benefits all those around me? Shall I move away from people just because their ways are not my ways, or shall I try to live in harmony with everyone around me? When we have our eyes on the goal of life we see these choices everywhere, all the time, and we begin to cultivate the will and wisdom to make the choices which will help us to grow to our full stature. Thus we gradually wake up to our true nature, which is ever pure, ever perfect.



At present, however, most of us are far from having this supreme goal always in sight. The vast majority of us are obsessively identified with our body, our emotions, our intellect, and our ego. We have come to believe that we are separate individuals whose fulfilment lies in seeking our own satisfaction, even at the expense of those around us.

In traditional circles we hear a good deal about heaven and hell, and many people say they do not believe in them. But heaven and hell are not places; they are states of consciousness. Hell is not a bit of overheated subterranean real estate where devils dance about with pitchforks; it is what we experience whenever we are plagued by worry or anger or jealousy or greed. Hell is the increasing loneliness and frustration we feel when we try to live for ourselves as separate individuals. And heaven, too, is a state of consciousness, which we can all enjoy right in this very life when we no longer see ourselves as separate. When we overcome our identification with the body, the mind, and the ego, we are living in freedom. When we come to see that our fulfilment lies in making the greatest possible contribution to our family, our society, and our world, we are living in harmony with the unity of life. This is living in joy; this is heaven here and now.

Excerpted from The Mantram Handbook by Eknath Easwaran (Jaico; ₹ 250; 200 pages). Easwaran (1910-1999) was a spiritual teacher, author and interpreter of Indian literature

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IRON AGE

He is an all-American hero, the ultimate fictional saviour to turn to in the event of a crisis. Billionaire playboy Tony Stark, better known in his superhero avatar as Iron Man, made his debut in Marvel Comics' *Tales of Suspense* in 1963. Consistently ranked by *Forbes* among the wealthiest fictional characters in its annual lists and *Business Week* as one of the 10 most intelligent characters in American comics, Iron Man relies on his red and golden combat armour, besides his ingenuity and instincts, to protect the world from evil forces.

Conceived and written by Stan Lee, Stark is an engineering genius who has remarkable inventions to his credit, including his armour, which lines up weapons including the uni-beam projector, pulse bolts and a 360° defensive energy shield. His wardrobe also boasts specialised suits for space travel, deep-sea diving stealth, and a 'Hulkbuster', heavy armour for engaging the Hulk. Stark's character is assumed to be modelled on Howard Hughes (1905-1976), a defence contractor who developed new weapons technologies and was an icon of American individualism. But amid all the superhero brouhaha, at the core, Iron Man is just another man, facing inner demons like any of us. So while he battles alcoholism in one episode, in another he suffers from guilt pangs over the death of his best friend, Steve Rogers aka Captain America. Such is the relatability of his character that according to the admissions of his creator Lee, the fan mail for Iron Man surpasses those for other heroes of Marvel Comics.

Over the years, his re-imaginings have taken Iron Man from Cold War themes to contemporary concerns and situations. So, if it was the Vietnam War in 1963, in the 1990s the scene shifted to the Gulf War, while in recent times the



warfront has moved to Afghanistan. Iron Man is also an active member of the superhero team, the Avengers. Portrayed by Robert Downey Jr on screen, Iron Man has always enjoyed a smashing run at the box office in his different outings.

As for legions of his fans, there is an extensive line of Iron Man merchandise, several television shows and video games. Plans are also afoot to ready Disneyland in Hong Kong for 'The Iron Man Experience' by 2016.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: NOVEMBER 1963

- On 15 November, a volcanic eruption under the sea near Iceland created the new island of Surtsey.
- On 20 November, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
- On 22 November, US president John F Kennedy was shot dead in Dallas. The assassination overshadowed the death of two other stalwarts, British authors C S Lewis and Aldous Huxley, inspiring Peter Kreeft's book *Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialog Somewhere Beyond Death with John F Kennedy, C S Lewis and Aldous Huxley*.

Haloodie

n. A person who has an ardent interest in halal food. [halal + foodie]

Example. He dubbed the festival 'the arrival of the **haloodie**' or the halal-eating foodie, craving high-end products. From organic meat to the knives to chop it with, even non-alcoholic champagne, the festival is designed to be a haloodie heaven.

—Haroon Siddique, "*Haloodie heaven: the Halal Food Festival opens in London*", The Guardian, 27 September 2013

“Gray hair is God’s graffiti.”

—American actor and comedian Bill Cosby

Human safari

n. A journey or expedition designed to seek out and observe people, particularly indigenous tribes.

Example. The road is the main access highway for the island but campaigners say it opens up the reserve to unscrupulous tour guides who have in the past exploited the tribal community. Ms Grig said the reopening of the road, expected to take place on Friday, was a blow to Survival’s three-year campaign. “It is hard to believe that the Supreme Court has allowed these **human safari** tours to start up again.”

—Natalie Paris, "*Human safari fears as Andaman Islands road reopens*", The Telegraph, 6 March 2013

Empathy game

n. A video game genre that uses intense, personal stories to create an emotional connection with the player.

Example. More than four decades after Pong, players are tackling a range of heady subjects including cancer, depression and alcoholism. Instead of pumping adrenaline, these **empathy games** use the videogame form to tell stories that are far more personal than the Hollywood tropes most big budget games still rely on.

—Conor Dougherty, "*Videogames about alcoholism, depression and cancer*", The Wall Street Journal, 15 August 2013

SCREEN SIGHTED

n. Myopia caused by too much time spent indoors staring at small screens.

Example. British researchers coined the problem **screen sighted**, referring to a 35 per cent increase in nearsightedness since the launch of smartphones in 1997.

—“British researchers believe smartphones are to blame for poor eyesight”, CBS Los Angeles, 17 August 2013

Backfire effect

n. The strengthening of a person’s belief in a false idea by presenting evidence against that idea.

Example. In 2006, political scientists Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler identified a phenomenon called the **backfire effect**. They showed that efforts to debunk inaccurate political information can leave people more convinced that false information is true than they would have been otherwise.

—Maggie Koerth-Baker, "*Why rational people buy into conspiracy theories*", The New York Times, 21 May 2013

Phoneur

n. A person, especially a pedestrian, who interacts with or engages the world mostly through a mobile phone.

Example. Then again, even the most basic mobile phone camera can do something similar with the right light and shade. Indeed, Joel Sternfeld’s latest book echoes the Polaroid books of old in so far as it comprises his mobile phone shots of the shopping malls and consumers of Dubai. It is called *iDubai* and announces the coming of the **phoneur**—the photographer as flaneur, forever walking and shooting and, if he has time, daydreaming.

—Sean O’Hagan, "*The Polaroid revival*", The Guardian, 5 April 2010

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BUZZ

Imagine a warm, cosy room, shelves stacked high with well-worn books, a comfy chair by the fireside, a sleeping dog by your side, a thick book in your hand, your favourite author spinning his yarn. This need not be just a reverie—you can make it happen in your own home. With the help of Ahalya Naidu and Meethil Momaya, the 30-somethings at Delhi-based The Eternal Library, you can start a mini library in your own home.

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FLASH DROUGHT

n. A drought that develops abnormally quickly.

Example. Droughts typically develop slowly, so a **flash drought** happens within weeks rather than months, said Jim Angel, the Illinois state climatologist.

—Karen Chen, "Cool, rainy summer days just a memory as **flash drought** hits Illinois", Chicago Tribune, 13 September 2013

Throuple

n. Three people in a romantic relationship.

Example. In that case, every argument for recognising two men's bond as marital—equality, destigmatisation, extending economic benefits—would also apply to recognising romantic triads, or **throuples**, as they are now known.

—Robert P George, "Gay marriage, then group marriage?", CNN.com, 21 March 2013

Poopetrator

n. A person who defecates in a public place.

Example. In the past several weeks, an unknown individual or group, who students have dubbed the **poopetrator**, has repeatedly defecated in students' laundry, leaving many fearful about the safety of their clothes.

—Adrian Rodrigues, "Police probe Saybrook laundry incident", Yale Daily News, 2 October 2013

“When people see my altered appearance, they hesitate from chewing *gutka* and using tobacco”

Navin Khanna, 68, New Delhi, creates awareness about the ill-effects of tobacco use



Saurabh Khanna

His long-standing friendship with crows made it to the *Limca Book of Records* in 1995, earning him the sobriquet ‘Crow Man of India’. However, it’s his battle with oral cancer that has given 68 year-old **Navin Khanna** of New Delhi his raison d’etre; he’s the poster boy for the Voice of Tobacco Victims, an NGO that works towards creating awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco. During his hospitalisation at the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute and Research Centre in 2011, Khanna was introduced to Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, a doctor with Tata Memorial Hospital and the founder of the Voice of Tobacco Victims. For Khanna, it was a bold step coming out in the open and becoming the face of the campaign. Smiling through a partially covered face, Khanna says he has never faced ridicule from anyone over his altered appearance. “It is not cancer per se but the strong radiation that I had to undergo that changed my look,” he points out. “I am one of the lucky ones; my cancer was diagnosed and detected well in time and I could show the world how harmful eating *gutka* or *paan* can be.” Khanna, who attends all the events organised by the Voice of Tobacco Victims and speaks on

the detrimental effects of tobacco, also wrote to the Delhi and Karnataka chief ministers requesting a ban on tobacco. And when the Kerala government made an anti-tobacco film, Khanna’s before and after pictures were used to highlight the damage to the human body. The success of the campaign has led to the ban of tobacco and *gutka* across 25 states and two Union Territories, including Delhi, Karnataka, Punjab, Gujarat, Kerala, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Andaman and Nicobar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Odisha, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. “I’m happy to have been of some service to society,” says Khanna, who is a winner of the CNN-IBN’s Citizen Journalist Award 2012. A former mining engineer who retired from the Delhi State Industrial Development Corporation in 2004, Khanna has other things on his mind as well—like the Save Badkhal Lake mission to address the shortage of water in Delhi and setting caged lovebirds free.

—Ambica Gulati

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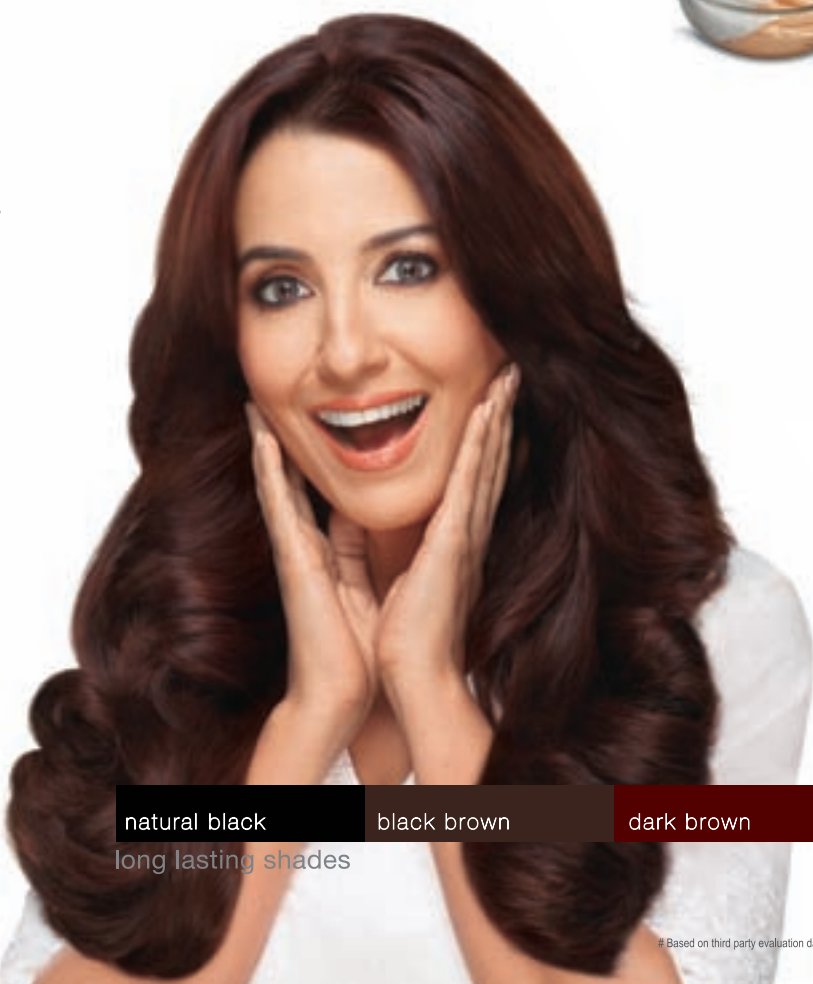
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