

harmony

NOVEMBER 2015 ₹ 40

# celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

## DIARY 100

'Saalumaraada'  
Thimmakka's  
tree of life

## SPECIAL REPORT

LEGENDARY  
FOOTBALLER  
PELE IN INDIA

A woman of words

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# Getting 'smart'

The stuff of science fiction is now reality.

As we report in our 'Orbit' section this month, the Singapore government has unveiled a 'RoboCoach'—a robotic exercise instructor to help silvers get in shape with personalised, age-appropriate exercises (*see page 10*). These 'coaches' will soon be rolled out at senior citizens' centres across the state. According to media reports, the initiative is part of Singapore's 'Smart Nation' programme, which aims to apply tech solutions to every aspect of the country's operations.

India too aspires to be a smart nation—the Government's ambitious smart cities' mission speaks to this intent. And we laud this plan to bring better infrastructure and connectivity to our cities. However, 'smart' doesn't imply technology alone. It is a holistic concept where human skills work hand in hand with gadgets to provide quality of life. Smart does not imply the youth alone. It is an intergenerational concept where people of all ages are able to work together, fulfilling their potential in their individual ways. And, most significant, smart doesn't imply the affluent alone. It is an inclusive concept to create integrated, sustainable communities where no one is left on the fringes.

Suresh Natarajan



These are imperatives that ideators, policymakers and influencers must consider as we move forward to remake our cities and build new ones. Any growth or progress that is non-inclusive, that does not take along silvers, the differently abled and the economically disadvantaged, is not future-forward—it is a mere mirage.

We may be a long way from spawning a series of robots to give our silvers their morning workout. But it is well within our power to evolve innovative policies and strategies to make our elders more financially secure, offer them comprehensive healthcare, guarantee them security in their neighbourhoods, and ensure they have the chance to live independently and productively. It may not be rocket (or robot) science, but it certainly would be smart.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

*Harmony Celebrate Age*—November 2015 Volume 12 Issue 6

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Cover photograph: Avinash Pasricha

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**Total number of pages in this issue of Harmony-Celebrate Age, including covers: 84**





## Uttar Pradesh Police Mahila Samman Prakhoshth 'Suraksha bhi, Samman bhi'



## Celebration of Women Empowerment Program

### Achievements

#### "Vikalp"

Through women centric online complaint registration web portal, more than 2000 complaints were immediately addressed by the district police.

#### "Adhikar"

Spreading awareness about laws related to women and children

#### "Rubaroo"

Interacting and providing sex education & awareness to (27,000) school children

#### "Nav- Chetana"

Workshop on gender related issues (Gender Sensitisation) for the Police force

#### "Akshaya"

Initiating and developing a self-defence program for school/college going girls

#### "Saarathi"

Sensitising auto drivers with clear focus on gender related issues (Gender Sensitisation)

#### "Citizen Cadet"

Gender based community policing

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[youtube.com/user/upgovtofficial](https://www.youtube.com/user/upgovtofficial)

[upnews360.in](http://upnews360.in)

# column one

When you watch journalist-author Mrinal Pande on television, there's a gravitas about her that comes from years of experience and unmistakable erudition. And then, unbidden, she flashes an endearing smile that offers you a glimpse into the woman inside, one of myriad interests and facets. It is an honour to have this "Woman of Words" on our cover and learn more about her work and life.

We are equally proud to feature centenarian 'Saalumara' Thimmakka from Karnataka who, along with her late husband Chikkaiah, raised over 300 trees as her 'children'—this canopy of trees provides a cool corridor from her village to the nearest town, and a haven for a multitude of species. Her story reminds us that each one of us, no matter our backgrounds, has the power to craft change.

Other highlights include a special report on the return of soccer icon Pelé to Kolkata after 38 years; an interview with British baronet Ferdinand Mount on his new book; and a breathtaking trip through misty mountains to the apple orchards of Thanedar in Himachal Pradesh. Also, veteran journalist Raj Kanwar kicks off a new column where he shares his encounters with Indian newsmakers—for the first edition of 'Kanwar's People', his subject is Indira Gandhi.

We also have some fabulous news to share. Your favourite magazine is now on international digital newsstand Magzter ([www.magzter.com](http://www.magzter.com)); you can now download and read *Harmony-Celebrate Age* on a variety of platforms, from Android phones and tablets to iPhones and iPads. Spread the word, tell friends and family overseas, and keep reading!

—Arati Rajan Menon

I found *Harmony-Celebrate Age* very unique and worth reading. I read the October 2015 issue titled "Silvers at Work". This month is special as World Elders' Day falls on 1 October and the magazine showcases traditional skills of silvers and their enduring spirit. The other articles about silvers also gained my attention. The magazine is very interesting not just for silvers but for youngsters as well. It reaches out to readers with inspiring stories and anecdotes that can be highly motivational.

**Vasanthi Ramesh**  
via email

It was very interesting to read through your "Silvers at Work" issue. As it often does, *Harmony-Celebrate Age* brought unsung heroes to the limelight. The short and brief stories on the dance dresser, mahout, goddess painter, goldsmith, potter and others presented a powerful message of humility and dignity of labour. It's admirable how they work with great passion with the purpose of giving back to society. It is heart-warming to read the message from editor Tina Ambani. Her mantra, "the longer you stay productive... the longer you live", is very powerful for elders to lead a happy and healthy life.

**B Suresh Iyengar**  
via email

I'm a psychologist working with the Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Society of India (PDMDS). Parkinson's disease is a neurological illness that most commonly occurs in people over the age of 60. The symptoms range from mild difficulties in daily activities to complete disability. The way to combat this is early diagnosis, medication and rehabilitation. We would like to inform you that through our patient welfare



programme, we provide medication and assistive devices to people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. All services are provided free of cost. PDMDS has set up Parkinson's support centres in cities such as Mumbai, Nasik and Pune in Maharashtra, as well as in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Hyderabad and Goa.

**Nishaat Mukadam**  
Mumbai

Senior citizens pay their taxes their entire working life, but what do they get in return? They don't have any medical help from the Government, nor do they have basic amenities that are up to the mark. In actuality, all their medical needs must be provided free of cost; after all, they have contributed towards building this nation with their best efforts and abilities. They are assets to the nation and not a liability for anyone.

**Mahesh Kapasi**  
Mumbai

Members of the Veteran Citizen Forum (VFC) had a day out on 9 October when we celebrated World Elders' Day in Thane. The theme of the celebrations was



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'Film Music from the Golden Era (1940-65)'. Eminent Hindi film music historian and writer Manek Premchand, who presided over the celebrations, said, "Music is the glue that binds every one of us." He went on to say that songs such as *Kisi ki muskurahaton pe ho nisar* or *Bahon mein chale aao* are enjoyed in the vast stretches of Patna in the east, in sunny Chennai in the south and even in remote Dogri homes of Kashmir the north. Members of VFC who had made outstanding contributions to society were felicitated followed by a variety entertainment programme, which included a folk song, Lavani dance, a multilingual song and skit, and a 90-minute musical performance. Though most of the singers were first-time stage performers, they could have given professional singers a run for their money. It was certainly a night to remember for us.

**Raghavendra Odeyar**  
Thane

In the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, "The Gourmet Getaway", a gastronomic journey across India, was engrossing. However, there is a serious price to pay for this delight! Taste may score high, but hygiene leaves much to be desired in street food. Overlooking this affects the health of consumers. One sincerely wishes that every food street in the country, mainly serving fare in carts or little shops, has exclusive food inspectors whose responsibility would be to maintain at least minimal health standards. The tendency is to go for cheap and tasty food, which plays havoc with one's health many a time.

**G Neelkantan**  
Bengaluru

My uncle is a septuagenarian; however we are not sure of his exact age. Of late, he has been having reading problems. My cousins and

I try to help him by reading things aloud for him, but lately it has started hurting his ego. So he finally gave in to our pleading and agreed to visit a doctor. At the session, the doctor made him go through an eye test and recommended that he check for diabetes. We took him straight to a diabetologist as we were little nervous that if we were to take him back home, he would refuse to go to the doctor again. My mother filled the form describing the personal details of the patient and asked me to go to check uncle's age with him, as that was a required formality. After a lot of pestering I went, accepting that being the youngest one of the family has its pros and cons. When I threw the question at him, he looked at me and asked what I thought; I was being nice when I said somewhere around 65! So he asked me to use my 'smartphone' to Google when Bhagat Singh was hanged. I gave him an instant reply: 1931. He then said something that went like this, "Now add 10 years and subtract 5, divide by 2 and by 1.5." I don't recall the exact math. Anyway, by the time I took out my phone again from my pocket to do the calculation, he snapped: "I was born when humans were smarter than phones." He snatched the form from me, went to the hospital administrator and persuaded her with his charm. We still don't know his age.

**Deepanshi Tandon**  
Bareilly

The moment we join the sexagenarian fraternity, we are honoured with the polite honorific 'senior citizen', owing to which we have the (humble) vanity to believe we are no less equal to the president of the country. On reaching the age of 60, we gain in all walks of life; we get more honour, preferences, concessions, special facilities, etc. People respect their elders knowing very well that old age is waiting for everyone. World Pensioners' Day is celebrated on 17 December. We have worked

hard all these years for the development of the nation and community, and possess vast experience that could be considered a treasure for society. So, let us draw a big line to conclude phase two—phase one being childhood and adolescence—and start the third phase of our life afresh, with no fear or favour to anybody or anything, as we are now free from all commitments after completing our duties and responsibilities to the best of our ability. Sixty is a great number in human life.

**N Subramanian**  
Chennai



### 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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Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate,  
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Or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)



inside

**P23:** Yo workout  
**P32:** Love your liver

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



✚ FIRST RESORT

## RAINBOW COUNTDOWN

**T**hree years. That's the time it will take for the **UK's first care home for LGBT silvers.** The product is the brainchild of British developer Tonic Housing. "If you don't have your own children, and if you have fractured family relationships, then you would not have the support networks that many older people count on," James Greenshields, a director at Tonic Housing, tells website [www.buzzfeed.com](http://www.buzzfeed.com). "I was really taken aback that although there are organisations for older LGBT people, in terms of care homes there is nothing at all." Intended to be an "iconic, statement piece of architecture", the home is likely to feature single and two-bedroom apartments (with space for additional nursing care) with the feel of a community hub featuring amenities like dining options, gardens, a fitness and business centre, and entertainment spaces. At present, Tonic Housing is working to secure a location for the project, preferably in London or Brighton.

Courtesy: Infocomm Development Authority

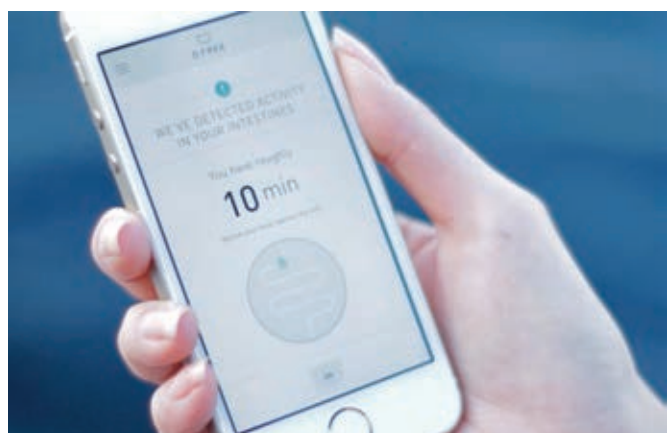


# RoboCoach

**T**his gym coach is quite a hunk—of metal, that is. The Singapore government has unveiled the **RoboCoach, a robot to help silvers exercise**. Part of the country's 'Smart Nation' programme, which aims to apply technology across operations in all sectors, RoboCoach was unveiled at the Silver IT Fest organised by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore. Speaking at the event, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, minister for communications and information, told media, "RoboCoach offers personalised exercise routines that are more enjoyable for seniors. At the same time, it is able to ensure that seniors perform exercise routines correctly to get maximum benefit from their workouts." The robot will soon be deployed in 25 venues across Singapore. Another 'smart' initiative that is already being implemented is remote patient monitoring, where silvers can check their blood pressure and sugar levels at home and transmit the results wirelessly to healthcare providers.

## Forewarned

This most unlikely of inventions could be a boon for both grandparents and grandchildren. As website [www.huffingtonpost.com](http://www.huffingtonpost.com) reports, Japanese company Triple W Japan has developed **Dfree, a device that tracks and predicts your bowel movements**. Recommended for people with faecal incontinence or those who need more lead time to reach the toilet, the device goes on the stomach and fits on the underwear. Using ultrasonic waves to monitor the internal organs, it sends the data to your smartphone. Owing to concerns that the device may chafe the skin, the manufacturer is now exploring different ways to safely secure it to the underwear before a market rollout. Check it out at [www.dfrees.biz](http://www.dfrees.biz)



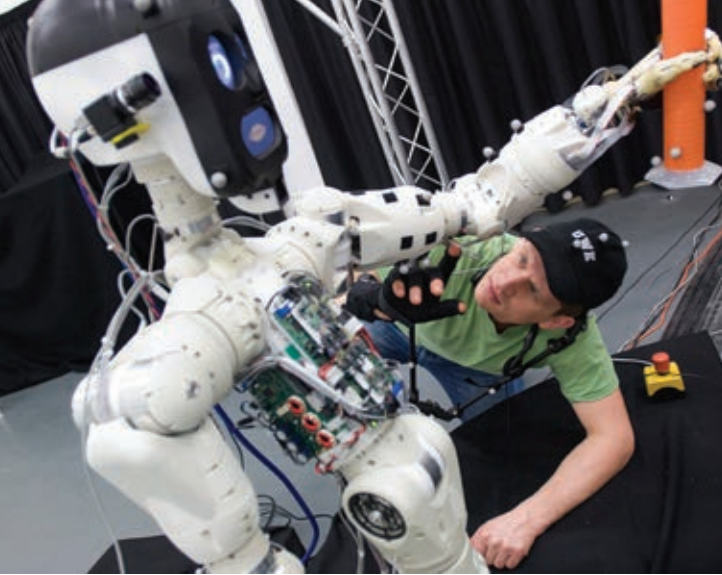
## Silver start-ups

**HERE'S A BOOST** for the silver market. **American non-profit AARP and global financial services firm JP Morgan Chase have launched a \$ 40-million fund for companies developing technology and solutions for silvers.** As website

[www.fortune.com](http://www.fortune.com) reports, "The AARP Innovation Fund" will especially focus on products that will enable independent living and proactive health behaviour. JP Morgan Asset Management will help AARP evaluate potential companies for investment. "The

goal is to try to change the market, so they are thinking differently about the way people are ageing," says AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins. "How do we design technology differently? The fund is the next evolution of our ability to fulfil our social mission by making sure that the needs and interests of those 50-plus are well represented by products and companies."





## Robots 4 U

**ONCE THE PRESERVE OF THE JAPANESE,** Britain is muscling into the arena of robotics for silver care. As physics website [www.phys.org](http://www.phys.org) reports, Bristol Robotics Laboratory (BRL) recently opened the Anchor Robotics Personalised Assisted Living (ARPAL) facility to develop and test robotics solutions for elders in a home

environment. Central to the facility is a 'Living Lab' environment—this space, which mimics a typical home with living, dining and kitchen areas and a bathroom and bedroom, will enable researchers to test-drive their innovations on silver volunteers. The ultimate goal is to develop 'personalised robotic systems' for silvers based on individual habits and lifestyle needs.

**TECH TOGETHER** *The US government has given a \$ 20 million federal grant to the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) to create a new computer ecosystem easily accessible to people with disabilities and special needs, and silvers. As the university's website [www.news.wisc.edu](http://www.news.wisc.edu) reports, the project will develop and deploy the first operational version of Global Public Inclusive Infrastructure (GPII) in a large-scale pilot test that can be accessed via the Internet, making it simple for people who are technologically challenged to configure the assistive features they need to survive in the digital age. Gregg Vanderheiden, engineering professor and the brain behind GPII, tells the site, "Whenever a person encounters something with a digital interface—computer, Web page, TV, thermostat—the interface will automatically change into a form the person can understand." Tech giants like IBM and Microsoft are collaborating on the project.*

## 'PATIENT ZERO'

**S**he's walked the talk—but is this worth a listen? Liz Parrish, CEO of biotech company BioViva, has become the **first human test subject of a gene therapy to reverse the process of ageing.** As website [www.ibtimes.co.uk](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk) tells us, she calls herself "patient zero" for the therapy, which aims to make permanent changes to her DNA to combat muscle loss and age-related diseases like Alzheimer's. Speaking at an 'ask-me-anything' (AMA) session on website [www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com), she said. "I will be 45 in Janu-

**NOT  
impressed!**

ary. I have ageing as a disease. The gene therapies on my body are to measure the effects on humans. There is plenty of animal research to support these gene therapies but no one was conducting human tests." Apparently, the treatment was conducted in Colombia to bypass US regulatory authorities, a move that has come under fire by many members of the research community and her own board members. For our part, we at *Harmony-Celebrate Age* are less than impressed at her categorisation of ageing as a disease.



iStock

# Death and donuts

While most of us shrink at the very idea of it, author J K Rowling famously said, "To the well-organised mind, death is but the next great adventure." Now, as British newspaper *The Independent* reports, London is set to open a 'Death Cafe,' where such an adventure can be discussed with candour—and coffee and snacks. The project is the brainchild of Briton Jon Underwood whose **Death Cafe Movement** has already spawned

over 2,000 'pop-up cafes' around the world; now, he's looking to set up a permanent one. According to the paper, Underwood, who got the idea from the Swiss model, Cafe Mortel, invented by sociologist Bernard Crettaz, says the aim of the movement is "to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives". To learn more, go to [www.deathcafe.com](http://www.deathcafe.com)



## WHAT'S YOUR DESTINATION?

Have wanderlust? Travelmark – DMC will help your dreams take wing. The Jodhpur-based travel agency plans to offer **special travel packages for silvers**. "It becomes difficult for senior citizens to match pace with younger travellers; and their concerns are different," Dinesh Kumar Genwa, proprietor of Travelmark – DMC, tells website [www.travelbizmonitor.com](http://www.travelbizmonitor.com). "Keeping this in mind, we are planning to start offering senior citizens' packages in 2016. We plan to start conducting package tours in India and international destinations such as Mauritius, Maldives, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Dubai. We will later start offering packages to China and European nations." Going forward, the company will open more branches across India as well as one in New Jersey in the US.

**CALLING WEST BENGAL!** Vodafone India has launched a dedicated helpline for silvers—9830198301—and doorstep assistance for the physically impaired in its Kolkata and West Bengal circle.

# Bravo Beijing!



IN A BID TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE CITY'S SILVERS, THE BEIJING MUNICIPAL BUREAU OF CIVIL AFFAIRS HAS RELEASED A DOCUMENT TITLED *ADVICE ON FURTHER STRENGTHENING WORK FOR THE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF THE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN BEIJING*. IT LISTS 44 PROVISIONS OVER SIX CATEGORIES—GOVERNMENT SERVICE, HEALTHCARE, TRANSPORTATION, BUSINESS SERVICE, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORTS, AND RIGHTS PROTECTION—including WAITING SEATS, GREEN CHANNELS AT HOSPITALS, AND SPECIAL TREATMENT AT SCENIC SPOTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT VENUES. THE PROVISIONS ARE TO BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY, FAILING WHICH THE CONCERNED DEPARTMENTS WILL BE BLACKLISTED.

## Godspeed in Orissa

The Orissa government has announced that it will facilitate pilgrimage for people over 60 years of age, irrespective of their religion, to places inside and outside the state. The government will bear all the expenses, including conveyance, food, lodging and any medical treatment if required. The scheme, which will not include income-tax payers and retired government employees, can be availed only once in a lifetime.





# Storm in a teacup

**N**ow, this is original. Using a teacup as a metaphor for an individual, British GP (general practitioner) trainee Dr Katy Shorttle has created artwork that explores ageing and frailty. As [www.gponline.com](http://www.gponline.com) tells us, Shorttle, who is also studying for a master's in illustration and book arts, exhibited her work recently at



Ruskin Gallery in Cambridge as part of a show called Perceptions. "I have chosen a well-known object, the teacup, as a metaphor for the individual, and created personal narratives representing the resilience, renewal and loss experienced by thousands each day," she tells the site. "I have sourced teacups from charity shops. Displaced from their tea set and often

sold without their saucer, each teacup becomes a souvenir of the 20th century lifestyle. It felt appropriate to use these objects that originate from the last century to illustrate individual stories relating to the ageing process. My art is rooted in my work as a medical doctor and my practice has benefitted from exploring the human side of medicine through art."

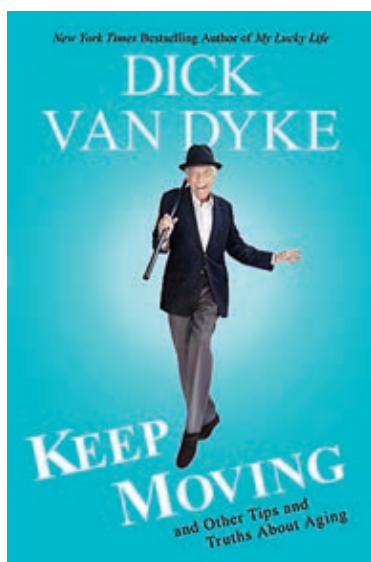


## SCIENCE, SOCIETY AND SENESCENCE

In *Growing Older Without Feeling Old: On Vitality And Ageing* (Scribe), Dutch doctor and researcher Rudi Westendorp delves into why and how we age, benchmarking human longevity with organisms like the hydra. Beyond the science, he also tackles society's response to ageing, from discriminatory employment policies to faddist diets and the anti-ageing 'solution'. You can purchase the Kindle edition for ₹ 1,344.62 on [www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in)

# THE SHOWMAN

FOR THIS SHOWMAN, THE SHOW STILL GOES ON. AND NOW **ACTOR-SINGER-DANCER DICK VAN DYKE**, WHO TURNS 90 IN DECEMBER, IS **SHARING THE SECRETS OF HIS LONGEVITY ON *KEEP MOVING*** (WEINSTEIN BOOKS). "THERE'S A FEAR OF GETTING OLD AMONG THE YOUNG THAT'S WORSE THAN THE FEAR OF DEATH; IT'S AMAZING," VAN DYKE SAYS IN AN INTERVIEW ON THE AMERICAN SHOW *TODAY*, WHICH AIRS ON THE NBC NETWORK. "AND I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT OLD AGE CAN BE WONDERFUL. IT'S THE BEST TIME OF MY LIFE, BY FAR." HE PUTS THAT TIME TO OPTIMAL USE WITH EXERCISE, DANCE, MUSIC, AND LOVE—HE MARRIED HIS SECOND WIFE, 45 YEAR-OLD ARLENE SILVER, IN 2012. YOU CAN BUY THE BOOK ON [www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in)



**MODEL MOVE** With silver models appearing in print ads and the ramp, a modelling agency to represent them is the logical next step. As [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk) reports, earlier this year, former photographic agent Rebecca Valentine set up Grey Model Agency ([www.greymodelagency.com](http://www.greymodelagency.com)), the only British modelling agency dedicated to mature models. The agency has achieved considerable success for its models. "The older demographic are wise to advertising techniques," Valentine tells the website. "They're getting bored and insulted that they're being pitched to using women the age of their daughters and granddaughters."



Steve Tarnier

## Rhythm of time

Combining theatre and dance to bring ageing to centre stage, Theatre Bristol's *Once Upon a Time* has received rave reviews in the UK following performances at Junction theatre in Cambridge and Scotland's creative ageing festival Luminare. As the media release tells us, this is "a considered and passionate story told through the bodies of professional ballet dancer Alexandra Pickford,

choreographer and dancer Caroline Lamb, and trapeze artist Mike Wright, all aged over 65. At once a celebration of and a provocation on our relationship with ageing, the dance theatre performance reveals how the passage of time affects our skin, muscles, and identity." The production, directed by Agnieszka Blonska, is inspired by Jean Amery's book, *On Ageing: Revolt and Resignation*.

**LA DOLCE VITA** Established to make communities more age-friendly, IRT Foundation has launched Australia's first YouTube channel exclusively for people over the age of 55. The Good Life YouTube channel will serve up news and views, profiles and features encompassing health, finance and lifestyle in 30-minute capsules. To watch, go to [www.youtube.com/channel/UC9Shm2wLLB80b08qDfWljpg](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9Shm2wLLB80b08qDfWljpg)





## Gentlemen, take a bow



We've told you in these pages about New Yorker Ari Seth Cohen and his trendsetting blog *Advanced Style* ([advancedstyle.blogspot.in](http://advancedstyle.blogspot.in)) documenting silver fashionistas that went on to become a successful book and documentary. Now, Cohen turns his eye to stylish silver men in a new documentary, *Advanced Style: Men*. Why men so late? "The reason

I chose to focus primarily on women is not only because my grandmother was my best friend, but I have always felt that women are judged way more harshly than men in terms of ageing," he tells website [www.nowness.com](http://www.nowness.com). Watch the documentary at [www.nowness.com/story/advanced-style-men-ari-seth-cohen-lina-plioplyte](http://www.nowness.com/story/advanced-style-men-ari-seth-cohen-lina-plioplyte)

**Read this?** *Vedaanta Senior Living*, which specialises in building retirement communities, has launched *Seniorz Today*, a lifestyle magazine. "We believe that senior citizens must live life on the front foot, rather than just surviving through it," said Ashwin Kumar Iyer, editor of the magazine and CEO, Vedaanta Senior Living, speaking at the event. We couldn't agree more.



GEROPROTECTORS

## Tomorrow never dies

Defined as 'drugs that are developed to fight specific diseases but deliver the unexpected side effect of prolonging life', geroprotectors are evoking a lot of interest today. And now researchers from Baltimore-based Insilico Medicine and a team of anti-ageing scientists have created [Geroprotectors.org](http://Geroprotectors.org), the first online database of life-extending drugs. As they explain in a media release, the site contains extensive information about life-extending compounds that can be reviewed and compared. This includes the status of the drug (in trials or approved), toxicity and side effects, apart from a detailed analysis of its chemical structure and how it works. Intrigued? Check out the site.



Illustration by Andrew Tarusov

## Silver toons

No more suspended animation for our favourite cartoon characters. Illustrator **Andrew Tarusov's** project, *Cartoon Characters That Grow Old*, re-imagines classic Looney Tunes and Disney characters in a silver avatar, with both their features and their surroundings reflecting their altered reality. These are initially a tad hard to take—Mickey in a wheelchair, Daisy Duck on crutches and Donald in a walker are hardly the stuff of childhood nostalgia. Yet, they make you look closer; these are poignant renderings, faithful to the spirit of the original characters yet meshing their stories with our own realities, merging fact and fantasy and bringing their tales to an inevitable closure. See for yourself at [www.tarusov.com/#!cartoon-characters-that-grow-old/c19wg](http://www.tarusov.com/#!cartoon-characters-that-grow-old/c19wg)

# Going for gold

Seniors from assisted living projects have a roaring time as they go 'back to college', reports **Aakanksha Bajpai**



Photographs by Aakanksha Bajpai and Sanchit Khanna

**Clockwise from top left: designing rangoli patterns; sweating it out for the badminton title; a participant dances her heart out; a performance by a musical ensemble**

For this bunch of silvers, it was back to college with a vengeance. Banners fluttered in the warm October air, there was a palpable buzz all around, and a roar from the audience as loud cheers went up. This was the best part of the evening as prizes were being handed out for various sporting events. Prizes!

S Awasthi, who won the badminton (singles - male) competition, said with a philosophical air, "As parents as well as grandparents, we have fulfilled all our duties with grace, love and care. Now it is time for us to enjoy ourselves, live

a carefree life and be happy. With this aim, I participated—and look, I have won!"

His words were met with a round of applause at Utsav, Ashiana Housing Ltd's assisted living project at Bhiwadi, in the National Capital Region. For two days, 3-4 October, silvers from Bhiwadi, Jaipur and Lavasa (Pune) had a gala time at 'Jashn 2015: Back to College', the company's second edition of its Senior Living Sports and Cultural Festival.

The grounds were filled with 500-odd silvers including participants all dressed in white tees. They had been





Clockwise from top left: winners of the dance duet, Manju Sachdeva and Sneha Agarwal; a participant grooves to actor Rekha's number *Kaisi paheli zindagani*; a lady in traditional Rajasthani attire burns the ramp; a Sikh couple sizzles at the head ramp







Clockwise from top: an evening to remember with Dev Anand lookalike; role-playing to a Rajasthani song; game on at the badminton tournament; the lively audience







Clockwise from top left: group dancers performing Bhangra; vying for the table tennis title; S K Sharma focuses his attention on the next big move; going for the strike at a game of carrom

chosen after preliminary rounds in events such as badminton, walking, chess, carrom and table tennis conducted earlier at their individual housing complexes. Sudhir Sharma, 68, from Jaipur, who won the walking competition in the 66-75 years category, happily reminisced, "During these two days, I relived my college days. If you realise what Ashiana offers, you will relish living at Utsav."

Adding further colour and vigour to the two-day festival were events such as *rangoli*, salad making and knitting, and cultural programmes like dance and singing competitions, and even a ramp walk. The entertainment evening on 3 October was a huge hit as silvers danced in tandem with Dev Anand lookalike, Kishore Bhanushali, and energy levels ran high as they matched steps to popular Bollywood tunes.

The dance competition was a big success, thanks to a couple who role-played to a Rajasthani song. In this number, the wife demands a gift before getting married. When her demand is not met, she warns her groom-to-be that she will go back to her mother's house. Her demand is finally met when they get married and have a baby. The duet dance competition was another delight, where 55 year-olds Manju Sachdeva and Sneha Agarwal danced

to Bollywood number, *O re piya*, and waltzed away with the prize. Victory was especially sweet for they were performing on stage for the very first time. Sachdeva runs her own shop at a mall in the Bhiwadi housing society and had to make time to practise, prompting Agarwal to say, "Time coordination was a problem but we managed it. We practised daily and it gave us peace and happiness."

Apart from individual participants, Bhiwadi was the group winner, followed by Jaipur and Lavasa, according to the number of points each of the three projects notched up. "Silvers here have proved that they can be competitive even at this age and broken the stereotypes attached with old age," said Dr Murlidhara C P, assistant general manager, Senior Living, from Ashiana. "They have shown that they are not feeble, incapacitated or content to sit in a chair all day. They have the will to prove their worth."

The event may have been defined by a competitive spirit but the atmosphere radiated a festive mood. S K Sharma, 76, who won the chess competition, remarked, "This event truly reminded me of my college days as I was a chess champion back then too. Undoubtedly, Jashn 2015 had it all... the desire to win, hooting and cheering from friends, and a party mood in the end. Just like a college fest."

**Checkmate!** Start a chess club with your friends and you'll all be winners. A study by the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York has established that playing chess measurably decreases the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. It also helps combat depression and anxiety; helps with rehabilitation and therapy following a stroke; and builds self-esteem and confidence. Get on (the) board!



#### RECYCLING FACT

- Any cassette is a collection of plastic and magnetic media. Plastic is easy to recycle compared to magnetic media. As the inside of a cassette has Mylar tape, cassettes are generally taken in as electronic waste (e-waste).
- Over 70 per cent of e-waste in Delhi's recycling units is actually dumped by developed countries. Despite a ban by the Central Government, these countries illegally ship around 23,000 tonne of e-waste every year to India and other countries.
- E-waste generated from obsolete computers and discarded electronic components contains over 1,000 different toxic substances (heavy metals, PVC plastics, brominated flame-retardants) harmful to human beings and the environment.

## Then: Cassettes Now: Coin purse

Here's a great way to repurpose those old cassettes that are of little use to anyone in this digital age. You need a cassette tape, a matching zipper, a piece of lining cloth, strong glue, scissors and a small screwdriver. Open the cassette tapes with the screwdriver—first unscrew an edge and then gently pry it open. Clean with an eraser and water to remove any dirt on the inside. Measure and cut out your zipper against the size of the cassette tape. Put a dab of glue at the cut end of the zipper and stick it to one side of the cassette. Continue gluing along the length of the

zipper, one side at a time. When you get to the other side, slowly unzip the zipper foot and glue it to the other side of the cassette. Wait for the glue to dry and try out the zipper to make sure it goes around the corners. Next, slather glue all over the inside of the tape and apply the fabric. Press it down and hold for a minute. Leave it to dry for at least 24 hours. For extra security, sew the ends of the zipper to the lining cloth to ensure the zipper foot doesn't come off and its corners are neatly tucked in. Your coin purse is now ready for use!

#### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. DID YOU KNOW THAT A 60-MINUTE CASSETTE CONTAINS ABOUT 285 FT OF TAPE? CASSETTE TAPE IS FAIRLY STRONG AND FLEXIBLE—YOU CAN USE IT AS TWINE TO BUNDLE NEWSPAPERS, ETC. JUST REMEMBER TO USE A GENEROUS AMOUNT WHEN BUNDLING HEAVIER THINGS.
2. TAPES ARE VERY RETRO-STYLISH AT THE MOMENT AND THE PLASTIC IS BEING USED TO MAKE BELT BUCKLES, BAGS AND OTHER DECORATIONS. THE TAPE CAN BE KNITTED OR CROCHETED TOO.



# Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

Harmony-Celebrate Age



[www.magzter.com](http://www.magzter.com)

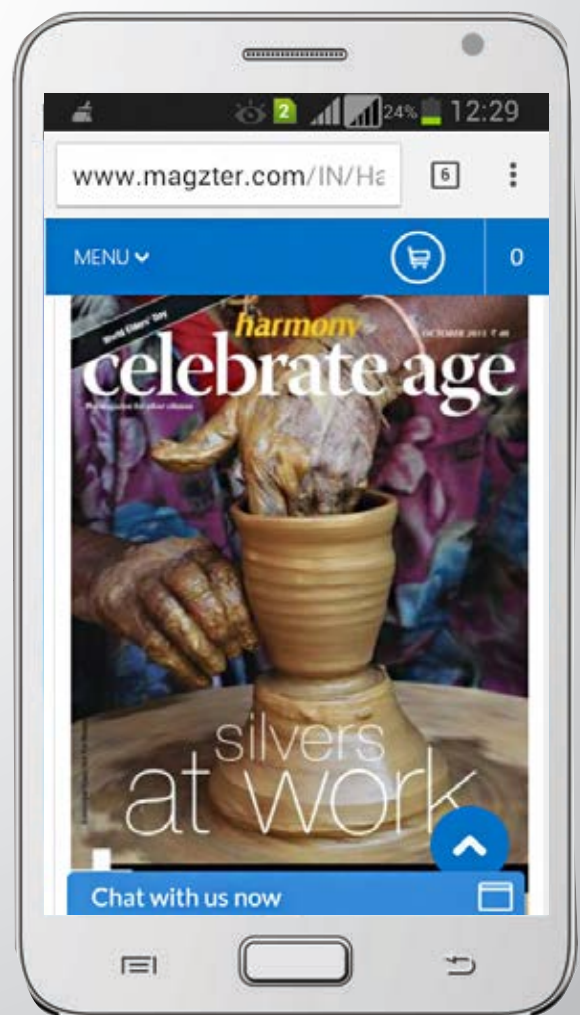
India's premier magazine for senior citizens, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, is now available on international digital newsstand Magzter



The magazine can now be downloaded and read on a variety of digital platforms such as iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows 8 and Tablets.

Download the free Magzter app or log onto [www.magzter.com](http://www.magzter.com) today to read the latest issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* free\*.

\* Limited period offer





## app alert



### FITICKET

**Available for:** Android 4.0 and above, iOS 8.0 and later, iPad

**What it does:** If you're bored with your daily routine in the gym or are looking for different exercise options, this app might come in handy. With Fiticket, you can choose from a list of locations and activities and schedule a class for it. The app provides a variety of activities like dance, aerial yoga, cross and functional training, body pump, and body combat. However, at present, the app is available only for residents of Mumbai and Bengaluru.

**After installation:** Once downloaded, the user needs to set up an account on the app that can be synced with an email account, Facebook account or Google+. After creating the account, it takes you directly to a list of activities that come under the tab, 'I feel like'—you have the option to select more than one activity and the option to explore more. Once the activities are selected, the app takes you to a list of places providing classes with time, date and venue. Once the activity and class have been chosen, the app provides more details, like the address and map to locate the class, and details about the activity, with a big yellow button to book it.

The State Bank of India has recently launched a mobile wallet app, SBI Buddy, in collaboration with Accenture and MasterCard. The app can be used to send money to registered customers, book movies, flights and hotels as well as for shopping. It also has reminders for dues, recharge and bill payment. You don't have to be an SBI customer to download the app. Right now, it is available only on the Android platform but will be soon available for iOS users.

### IRCTC CONNECT

**Available for:** Android 4.1 and up, iOS 7.0 and later, iPad

**What it does:** Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has recently launched its app to make ticket booking easier for train commuters. The app books paperless e-tickets for long and short rail journeys as well as platform tickets. It is very useful for people who travel regularly by train and don't want the hassle of booking it through the website. It provides one-step login to existing users of the IRCTC website and can also cancel train tickets with one click. Apart from this, the app provides users journey alerts and retains recently added passenger details, hence removing the extra effort to feed in the details every time. The only major setback: you can book tickets through the app only after 12 pm—the app cannot book tickets between 8 am and 12 pm.

**After installation:** Once installed, the app takes you straight to the login page. If you are an existing user of IRCTC, just key in your login id and password; if you're not, you can set up your account through the app. Once logged in, the app will open a new booking page every time. You need to fill in the name of the starting station and your destination. Once the stations are selected, the app provides a list of available trains with timings and seats. Just select the train, number of seats, and class (2AC, 3AC, General) and then book your ticket and pay for it. The app also stores your booking history, so you can check on previous booked tickets and cancel them if required. However, one major challenge is that the app is not synced with the website; thus, any ticket booked through the IRCTC website will not show on the booking history of the app.







Courtesy: Mickey Mehta's 360° Wellness Temple

# Yo! Heard this?

**W**ellness and fitness guru Mickey Mehta, who advocates holistic health and equipment-free exercise, has evolved the 'Yo workout,' a modified version of sun salutation (*surya namaskar*) that might prove helpful to silvers with arthritis and back problems. Since July, he's also been organising a monthly event, 'Yoga by the Bay,' on Mumbai's Marine Drive in association with NGO I Love Mumbai and supported by *The Times of India*. He tells us more:

## What is the Yo workout?

The Yo workouts are based on the principles, spirituality and science of yoga but I have reworked them and given them a 21st century spin so that they don't just appeal to the youth looking for quick-fix solutions to life issues but to silvers who are reaching and pushing new boundaries. Every workout connects body to mind, mind to spirit, spirit to body, leading to wholeness and evolution. They have been aesthetically designed to address all human needs on the ladder of evolution, including fitness, health and wellbeing. They work as a soul-searching synergy of exercises called Flow-Yo, Card-Yo, Stretch-Yo, Strength-Yo, Ab-Yo, Cross-Yo and Cool-Yo.

## Could you elaborate upon its benefits for seniors?

Yo workouts are four times more effective than conventional workouts. They offer the following health benefits for silvers:

- Increase flexibility without strain
- Help pump up the production of endorphins, the body's feel-good hormones, and thus help reduce stress, elevate mood and improve sleep
- Improve heart function and bone health and regulate hormone secretions

- Improve aerobic endurance, increase muscle strength and improve flexibility and balance
- Appear to boost the size of the hippocampus, the brain area involved in verbal memory and learning, thus possibly enhancing concentration, memory and cognition
- Recreational in nature to boost energy, improve stamina and consequently enable an active lifestyle

## Can anyone try these workouts or should people with certain health issues be careful?

Every exercise performed during the Yo workouts is completely safe and can be carried out by anyone. It is a combination of aerobic and muscular endurance, strength exercises, flexibility and balance that gives individuals the opportunity to gain all the benefits of fitness and complete wellness.

## What are the exercise domains being addressed?

Endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Mixing it up will help you reap the benefits of each type of exercise, as well as reduce the risk for injury. We recommend an overall strengthening programme, not just one for some parts of the body. With age, bones become less dense and muscle mass and muscle strength decrease making it essential to include resistance exercises in your exercise programme. Concentrate on the large muscle groups and compound exercises to reap maximum benefits.

## How can interested silvers learn more about the Yo workouts?

They can come to any of our centres to learn the routine.

For more details, go to [www.mickeymehtahbf.com](http://www.mickeymehtahbf.com)

**OSTEO UPDATE**  
 ACCORDING TO  
 THE REGENERATIVE  
 MEDICINE  
 INSTITUTE  
 (REMEDI) AT  
 THE NATIONAL  
 UNIVERSITY  
 OF IRELAND IN  
 GALWAY, CLINICAL  
 TRIALS HAVE BEEN  
 COMPLETED FOR  
 AN EFFECTIVE  
 TREATMENT FOR  
 OSTEOARTHRITIS.  
 THIS INVOLVES  
 REGENERATING  
 JOINT CARTILAGE  
 FROM STEM  
 CELLS DERIVED  
 FROM ADULT FAT.  
 EXPECTED TO BE  
 AVAILABLE IN  
 ABOUT FIVE YEARS,  
 THE TREATMENT  
 IS A NEW  
 ALTERNATIVE FOR  
 OSTEOARTHRITIS  
 PATIENTS—UNTIL  
 NOW, THEY HAD  
 TO CHOOSE FROM  
 MANAGEMENT OF  
 THEIR CONDITION  
 WITH PAINKILLERS  
 OR JOINT  
 REPLACEMENT  
 SURGERY.



Photographs by iStock

## Ersatz exercise?

**I**t was merely a quip when famous physician-author Robert H Butler said, “If exercise could be purchased in a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation.” Apparently, the prospect is nothing to laugh about anymore. Right now, there are at least **eight pills under development that aim to replicate the effects of exercise**. Reviewing their progress, scientists from Beijing

Sports University, China, and University of British Columbia, Canada, explain how some of these pills aim to increase muscle fibre, others help blood vessels grow in muscles and yet others stimulate the creation of good brown fat that can burn away the excess bad. However, as they observe in journal *Trends in Psychological Science*, none of these pills can replicate blood vessel strengthening during exercise, which keeps them elastic and healthy.



## Fruit force

**H**ere’s another reason to stock up on your fruits. Researchers from The University of Iowa in the US have discovered that a **protein called ATF4 causes muscle weakness and loss as we age**. The good news: **two natural compounds found in apples and green tomatoes reduce ATF4 activity**. Their study revealed that mice whose muscles lacked ATF4 were resistant to the effects of ageing. In a previous study, the team had found that ursolic acid from apple peel and tomatidine from tomatoes can prevent acute muscle wasting. Taking the study further, they established that these molecules could also reduce age-related muscle weakness and atrophy in mice.





## Crystal clear

**Seen this?** A collaborative British research effort could soon yield a new eye lens to counter presbyopia, or long-sightedness. A postgraduate student from the University of Leeds is working with consultancy Eurolens Research at the University of Manchester and contact lens manufacturer Ultra Vision CLPL of Bedfordshire to develop the lens, made from liquid crystal, which is used in smartphones and TV screens. Presbyopia occurs when the lens in the eye loses its flexibility and elasticity. As website [www.news-medical.net](http://www.news-medical.net) reports, a lens made of liquid crystal will help the eye adjust and focus automatically, depending on muscle movement. The lens, which could also help tackle cataract, is expected to be in the market after 2018.

## Act now!

**P**ain in the chest? Don't sleep on it. According to a study by LTMG Hospital in Sion, Mumbai, **many Indians tend to misinterpret heart attack as indigestion or acidity**, leading to a delay in proper treatment. The study covered 198 patients who were treated from March to September 2014, with over 50 per cent of them living within a 5-km radius of the hospital. A staggering 66 per cent misinterpreted the symptoms and reached the hospital after three to four hours. The delay in seeking treatment was worse among women and silvers. Their first instinct was to think it wasn't serious and wait for the symptoms to improve. Twenty per cent of the study participants also attributed the delay to travelling time and arranging for a vehicle. The study will be sent for publication in a medical journal.



## Replacement risk

Joint replacement surgery has the potential to dramatically restore quality of life for silvers with osteoarthritis. However, what are the potential risks? According to a study published in journal *Arthritis and Rheumatology*, researchers from Boston University School of Medicine, Massachusetts, US, found that **people who had total hip or knee replacement surgery had a greater short-term risk for heart attacks and a long-term risk for blood clots**. For osteoarthritis patients who underwent knee replacement surgery, there was an eight times higher risk of heart attack in the first 30 days after the surgery than those who didn't undergo the procedure. And for patients who underwent total hip replacement surgery, the risk of heart attack was four times greater. The researchers suggest the underlying cause of this could be the stress associated with the surgery.

# Waste to wisdom

**W**hen **Suman More** packed her bags to attend the 104<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, Switzerland, she made sure she included *bhakri* (flatbread made of millet). Having travelled to Nepal, South Africa and Switzerland before, she knew that she needed her comfort food within reach!

The story of More, a rag-picker from Pune, is one of pure grit. She has been picking trash off the city's streets for 37 years and, despite her meagre earnings, she has educated her children and converted the shanty where she lives with her husband into a *pucca* home. What's more, the 50 year-old has been speaking at international conferences since 2011, urging fellow women from weaker sections, like domestic workers, to push their boundaries. At the conference in Geneva in June 2015—part of the committee on the finalisation of a landmark International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommendation on 'Facilitating the transition from the informal economy to the formal economy'—More spoke about how the next generation needs education. "We have received some firm recommendations regarding health, education and insurance from the ILO, which I hope governments of all countries will implement for weaker sections in their societies," she says.

Such confidence comes from knowing just how far she's come. More's journey to the podium began when her family moved from a village in Osmanabad to Pune, to escape a famine. As a 13 year-old with no skills, she began gathering waste and trading it for a few rupees. Somewhere down the line, she realised that when segregated properly, the trash she collected fetched more. "However, for the longest time, we [rag-pickers] were not treated with any respect," she shares. "Whether it was the public or the police, we were treated with contempt and often looked at with suspicion."

After the formation of the Kagad Kaanchi Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP), a trade union started by a handful of waste-pickers, things started to get better. "Initially, we just got identity cards that enabled us to collect waste, but eventually we gathered strength and negotiated for some benefits," reveals More, who believes everyone must fight for their rights and stated this loud and clear at the Geneva conference, which she attended as a delegate of the KKPKP and NGO Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO). Today, KKPKP has over 8,000 members and has even birthed a cooperative of waste-pickers, SWaCH (Solid Waste Collection and Han-



Courtesy: WIEGO

## More at the International Labour Conference in Geneva

dling or SWaCH Seva Sahakari Sanstha Maryadit, Pune), India's first wholly owned cooperative of self-employed waste-pickers and other urban poor.

Women in the informal employment sector are productive citizens but are rarely treated as such, points out More. "When we pick up waste that would otherwise land up on the street or line landfills, we are saving municipalities a lot of money in collection and transportation costs," she said in her presentation at the Geneva conference. "The municipality must use some of that money to give the workers health benefits and life insurance and even scholarships to our children. Don't municipal workers get benefits for their service to the city? We too serve the city and now we are fighting for pension," adds the gutsy lady, who is a veteran of many a personal battle. After all, who would believe that a rag-picker would have a son who is a journalist—the other is preparing for the Civil Services exam—and a daughter-in-law who is a computer engineer.

"I do not even know Hindi," says More, who speaks only Marathi. Harshad Barde, KKPKP's general secretary, who accompanied her to Geneva doubled as her translator. With a laugh, she says it is her "ignorance" that has taken her places. The first time she was asked if she was willing to go to Nepal, she readily agreed because, "I did not realise it was so far. I volunteered based on the fact that I had travelled to Beed and Osmanabad on my own." More does not want for anything any more but continues to work despite her children urging her to give it up. The money she earns goes toward educating poor children.

—Suchismita Pai





Kamal Haasan



Zeenat Aman



Natesan Ramani



Manorama

## BIRTHDAYS

Environmental activist **Vandana Shiva** turned 63 on 5 November.

Actor **Kamal Haasan** turned 61 on 7 November.

Politician **Lal Krishna Advani** turned 88 on 8 November.

Actor **Zeenat Aman** turns 63 on 19 November.

Economist **Montek Singh Ahluwalia** turns 72 on 24 November.

Singer and actor **Tina Turner** turns 76 on 26 November.

## IN PASSING

Former England cricketer **Frank Tyson** passed away on 27 September following a prolonged illness. He was 85.

Renowned Carnatic flautist **Natesan Ramani** died on 9 October from cancer. He was 82.

Tamil actor **Gopishantha**, popularly known by her stage name **Manorama**, passed away on 10 October from multiple organ failure. She was 78.

Former Chief of the Naval Staff **Admiral Radhakrishna Hariram Tahiliani** (retd) passed away on 14 October. He was 85.

## MILESTONES

- 104 year-old **Uday Singh Mann**, a native of Lova Kalan village under Bahadurgarh Tehsil in Jhajjar district of Haryana, was given the 'award for centenarian' for having rendered exemplary service for the betterment of the community and society at large. The award was presented under the 'National Award for Senior Citizens 2015' by President Pranab Mukherjee.
- **Hidekitchi Miyazaki**, 105, took part in a 100-m dash in Kyoto, Japan. Dubbed 'Golden Bolt', he clocked 42.22 seconds to set a 100-m world record in the over-105 age category.
- Nobel Peace Prize winner of 2014 **Kailash Satyarthi** was conferred the 2015 Humanitarian of the Year Award on 16 October. The award is given annually by the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations of Harvard University.

## OVERHEARD

**"In a few years, a large number of the population will be made up of older women. We want to define this age in a new way and use film and TV to tell their stories. Just because you've reached a certain age, it doesn't mean you no longer have a sense of sexuality. I'd love to break through this taboo."**

*—Jane Fonda, 77, speaking to the media while promoting her new film, Youth*



Dinodia Photo Library

## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

### DISPOSAL PROPOSAL

Living in a cluttered city like Mumbai, there is no escaping pollution and dirt. The sad part is, everyone cribs about this but few are willing to make the effort to do something. I am a mechanical engineer and was wracked with guilt every time I watched my garbage can being carted away.

So, one day, 12 years ago, I decided that no trash of any sort would be generated in my home, and put up a small board that declared 'We Do Not Produce Garbage' on my front door. Yes, you're right, it is not possible to avoid garbage generation but it's how you dispose of it that makes the difference.

To start with, I got rid of all the dustbins in my house and replaced them with three disposal containers. The first container is for the collection of dry waste, which I regularly sell as scrap. Next, I created a small device called *Avirat Patra* or 'continuous processor' that takes care of my wet garbage. This is a basket filled with layers of husk, followed by sugarcane bassage and, last, soil accompanied by innumerable earthworms and snails, attached to a taper cone.

It is a slow processor and decomposes wet garbage like leftover food, vegetable and fruit peels and curd. It produces fertile compost, which is further collected in a plastic container below the taper cone. Microbes in the soil gradually and naturally decompose the waste, in turn producing the compost I use to grow flowers and plants in my balcony.

Every morning, I layer the previous day's degradable leftovers with soil and sprinkle some water over it. Every day, for 12 years, I have been filling the basket in this manner and not once has it overflowed. And, oh yes, about the smell... my *Avirat Patra* is powered by aerobic decomposition, which takes place with the help of air and all its elements, which further fuels the process sans any smell.



**Tamhankar takes the lead in producing zero garbage**

I have a third plastic bag in my balcony, which is used to collect sanitary napkins and diapers, which I send to an incineration unit in Thane. The incinerator burns non-decomposable material at a temperature of 850° Celsius. I believe there is no material that cannot be disposed of appropriately, provided one uses the right sources of disposal, which breaks down and recycles materials to the best of its potential.

The problem lies not with waste but with us citizens, who are not sensitised to the magnitude of the problem of waste disposal. For instance, there are certain waste items that even scrap dealers refuse to accept, such as thin and flimsy plastic bags, and chocolate or biscuit wrappers. I pondered the problem and finally used the plastic and wrappers, after carefully washing them, as stuffing for cushions. Their natural elasticity and softness made for excellent stuffing!

I am a businessman and I had a factory that manufactured pipes and flow meters for chemical industries. I make



small pouches, miniature versions of my stuffed pillows, as cushioning for the transport and delivery of these products. The problem with Indians is that we want cleanliness all around us but do not want to work hard to achieve it in its truest form. At its heart, this would involve effective garbage disposal.

At the age of 66, I am now retired and spend a lot of time making *Avirat Patra* for my friends and neighbours, who have followed my lead. I have also written a book called *Shunya Kachra* (Zero Garbage) in three languages—Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati—to spread my message  
—Kaustubh Tamhankar, Mumbai

## ART NOT APART

My father P Murugan, 73, is an artist more by accident than design. He wanted to become an architect but became a mechanical engineer by default. His father, who hailed from the small, mining town of Kolar Gold Fields, envisioned his son as an engineer, and told Murugan, when he was all of seven years old that art was “a pure waste of time”.

My father acquired a degree in mechanical engineering from the College of Engineering in Malnad, Hassan, Karnataka, and had a very successful career. He founded an engineering firm and later worked on many civil engineering projects. He finally quit engineering in 1991 and moved to sketching and commercial art, full time. One of his greatest muses was the royal architecture of Bangalore and Hyderabad, which he visited many times.

Shruti with dad Murugan and mother Jaya



Shyamola Khanna

My dad became a full-time commercial artist in 1995, and has held 80-100 exhibitions of his work. He also received several commissioned orders from corporate houses, realtors, private collectors and a wide range of buyers. His art graces an array of spaces: art galleries, private homes, five-star hotel lobbies, restaurants, realty homes, corporate offices, clubs, the tourism department, the Department of Archaeology, and murals at the entrance of boutiques.

Although proficient in many genres, architectural drawings have remained his favourite. He has done perspective drawings for architects, sketches of completed projects for builders, and sketches of monuments for collectors.

Art is the very air he breathes. He has always stretched physical and mental boundaries and, to me, he is the epitome of living life to the fullest. This is evident from the following anecdote, which is very dear to my heart. A friend of mine from a small village called Mulluru Krishnapuram (M K Puram) wanted to help the children in her village develop a sense of self-esteem. We decided to conduct an art camp and give the kids something to create. We would, of course, give them art supplies.

My father was very excited at the prospect of what we were doing, especially because it was for children. He has a problem with his speech and his left arm but that did not curb his enthusiasm. In fact, he wanted to come along to the village but we had to veto that.

At the end of September, I opened the art camp at M K Puram and introduced my parents. I told the kids *Thatha* (grandfather) called Sri Murugan who was an artist, and there was one *Jaya Ammama* (grandmother) who had put together these art supplies for them. They listened to me spellbound as no grandparents had ever done something like this for them. They had not even seen these grandparents! Then, I told them they could be anything they wanted—engineering and medicine were not the only things to aspire to. I quoted the example of my father who made a living through drawing pictures and teaching art.

I was very touched to see how all the villagers had crossed the boundaries of age, caste and community to be a part of our art camp. Just the week before, my friend had been told by the teachers of the local school that the parents had refused to be involved in the children's education. Now here they were, many eager mothers who also wanted to draw and paint like the kids. Then there were these members of two communities who usually never even sit next to each other, let alone share anything!

We came away, very satisfied that our one little effort had made such a big difference to the lives of these children. And wrapped in this gift was my father's indomitable spirit.

—Shruti Murugan, Hyderabad

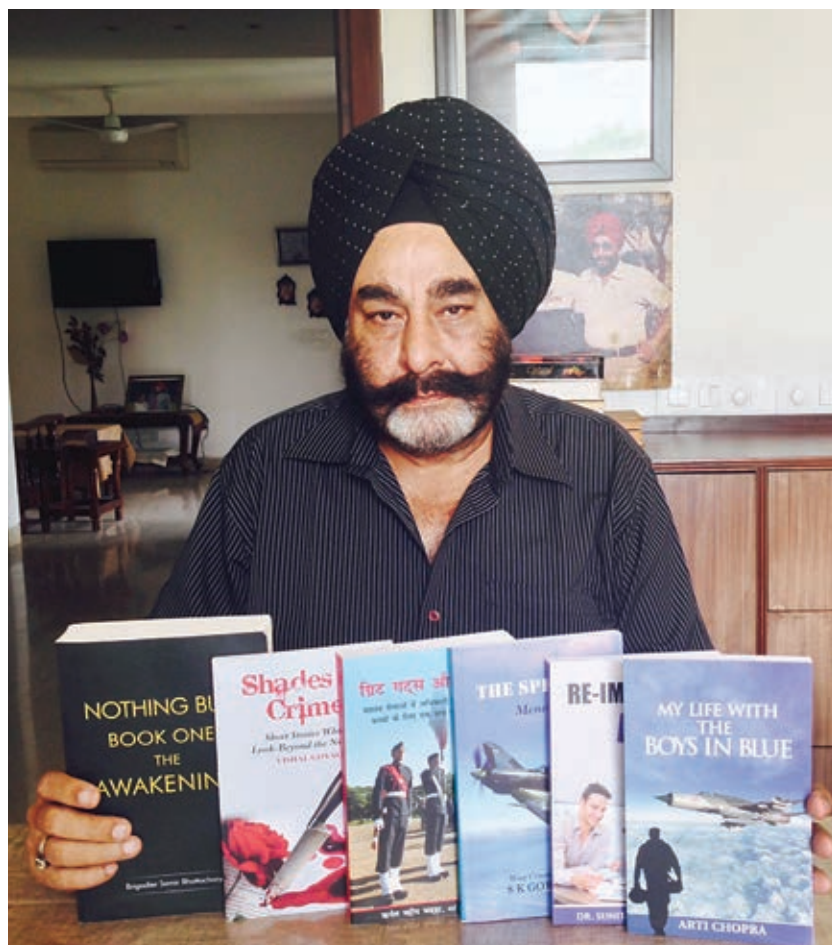
# Grit and gumption

**COL (RETD) MAHIP SINGH CHADHA, 69 DELHI**

**M**y career in the Army was preordained as my father was an Army man. I was commissioned in the Second Battalion of the Third Gorkha Rifles in 1966. I retired 34 years later, in June 2000, but that did not mean I was going to spend endless hours in retirement, doing nothing productive. So I worked for a brand marketing company as an administrative officer; then moved to an aviation firm as general manager - sales and sold Sikorsky helicopters. Next, I joined a call centre as administrative officer and was then invited to build an aviation company from scratch.

As you can see, I worked in many places but found it tough to work with young bosses who, despite being highly qualified, had no clue what I was capable of delivering. Meanwhile, a friend told me to stop looking for a job and start writing. I took his advice and never looked back! Around the same time, my wife Kiran began to show signs of serious ill health and she finally succumbed to cancer in April 2010. That was the year my first book, *Grit, Guts And Gallantry: Officers And Gentlemen of the Indian Army*, was published by Rupa. It was a runaway hit!

I must mention here that my love affair with books began early thanks to my father, who introduced us to the world of the classics. My mother too was a voracious reader and that also rubbed off on me. Coming back to authoring books, I spent a fortune publishing two of them, *Soljer Soljer* and *Gin And Lime, Whiskey or Wine?*,



Courtesy: Col (retd) Chadha

as I was fleeced by two publishers. Finally, I decided to branch out on my own. When I look back, I had never once dreamt I would get involved in publishing. A soldier who wrote books? Nah! Yet, here I was, getting ready to take the plunge. For a while, I worked with a company called Y S Books International and then opened my own publishing house called Creative Crows Publishers LLP in September 2014.

I forayed into this world without any experience, but with a lot of encouragement from Kanwardeep of Deep & Deep Publishers in Delhi, I gained the confidence to walk down this road. My company has published 35 books to date and I have carved a name for myself in the publishing circuit.

You may assume that most of my clients are *fauji*, but that is not true. I have published many civilian authors as well, including Dr Anuradha Bhattacharya's academic study, *20<sup>th</sup> Century European Literature*, a reference work for students of English literature. Although I distribute books through Deep & Deep Publishers, I am in the process of converting [creativecrowspublishers.com](http://creativecrowspublishers.com) into a dynamic site so that we can take orders on the Web.

I don't spend much on myself and I plough back the money I earn into my publishing business, which they say takes at least three to four years to break even. But that doesn't matter. I am blissfully employed and enjoying every minute of it!

—As told to Shyamola Khanna





## YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Scientists recently found that there are hidden blood vessels passing through our sinus cavities; these blood vessels service an important part of the brain that deals with immunity. To date, scientists had no clue that there was any blood movement inside the sinus cavities, which are hollows created by nature to make the skull light. The breath we draw also passes through these six pairs of cavities in our skull. Now, we realise that the yogic practice of *kapalabhati* (hyperventilating breathing practice, also called skull brightening practice) would work out these hidden blood vessels. It is exciting to see how the yogis knew the connection between activating these blood vessels and strong immunity, because *kapalabhati* is said to keep your immunity strong and stimulate the brain.

## SCORPIO

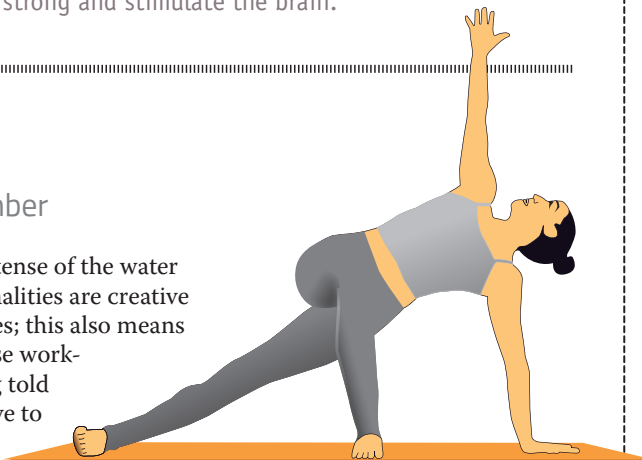
22 October to 21 November

**S**corpio is the most intense of the water signs. Scorpio personalities are creative and prone to extremes; this also means addictions and intense workouts. They hate being told what to do, so their choices have to be made with passionate commitment and come from their emotions rather than intellectually choosing to do something that is good for them. Yoga in its most creative and exuberant form has immense appeal to them.

Their weak spots are the upper body, arms and the uro-genital system. Managing the latter with dietary care is equally important. They would like a dynamic yoga practice with the intensity of sun salutation (*surya namaskar*) appealing to them. Doing strong variations of poses in sequence is a good way to keep their interest piqued. Arm balances, inversions that challenge and dynamic movements in the poses also provide a similar high to the Scorpio. When suffering from a urinary tract infection (which could be a chronic issue with them), they must avoid inversions. The upper body can be strengthened with arm balancers like the crane (*bakasana*) and many of its variations. The warrior series (*virabhadra* series) is also a stamina builder and powers the arms. Planks (*setubandhasana*, or bridge) are simpler upper body strengtheners.

Addictions—a reactive, protective mechanism behind which Scorpios hide their reactive, creative selves—are best controlled through regular breathing (*pranayama*) exercises. This will also help them cultivate a sense of dispassion (*vairagya*) that will make them less reactive to perceived insults or imagined slights. As they may be too restless for seated meditation, they can focus on the mental focus practices (*dharana*), which is the sixth limb of yoga. These practices include eye exercises (*trataka*) and sacred geometry (*yantra*) drawing.

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



## Side plank

(*Sage Vashishtha pose*)

Sit on your right side, stretching legs to the side. Brace your right palm under your shoulder to use it to hoist hips off the ground. Pass the left leg/top leg over the place in front of the body, folded at the knees, foot flat on ground in front, as shown. Hoist the hips off the ground, pushing into the ground with your right palm, while the right leg (bottom leg) remains straight. You have to remain on the edge, powering your balance with the left foot and leg. Your left arm may be raised up, or remain along the waist. Hold the pose initially for just a few seconds, building up stamina to half a minute or so. Breathe normally when in the final pose. Exhale to release the pose. Repeat for the other side. In case you find the balance or strength required is intimidating, you can do this pose by bending your right arm at the elbow, and resting the forearm on the ground. This is less demanding. You can execute the final stage of the pose after developing strength. Avoid if you have a wrist problem.

**Benefits:** This pose improves balance and posture, aligns the spine, powers the limbs, and builds core strength and stamina.



## Love your liver: A protein-rich diet helps in regeneration of the liver

**My grandfather has recently been diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. What are the foods he can consume and avoid? Please recommend a diet plan best suited for him to get the right nutrition.**

Liver cirrhosis is a chain of events initiated by necrosis of hepatic cells and resulting in collapse, regeneration, fibrosis and altered liver circulation. Liver cirrhosis is the end-result of diffuse liver injury secondary to infections, toxins, biliary obstruction, decreased blood supply and poor nutrition.

### Causes

- **Infections:** The hepatitis viruses B, C and D can cause chronic liver

disease progressing to cirrhosis. Cirrhosis in patients who are negative for virus B markers and who are non-alcoholic is likely to be owing to the C virus. It is possible that tropical infections like malaria, *kala-azar* and dysentery play at least an indirect role by aggravating malnutrition owing to ill health.

- **Alcohol:** It is a well-known liver toxin. The modes of consuming alcohol whether with food or on an empty stomach, diluted or neat, sipped slowly or gulped quickly all determine its rate of absorption and the concentration in the blood reaching the liver. Intake of about 80 g alcohol daily for 15 years may produce cirrhosis. Associated protein malnutrition may aggravate the damage from alcohol. Smaller

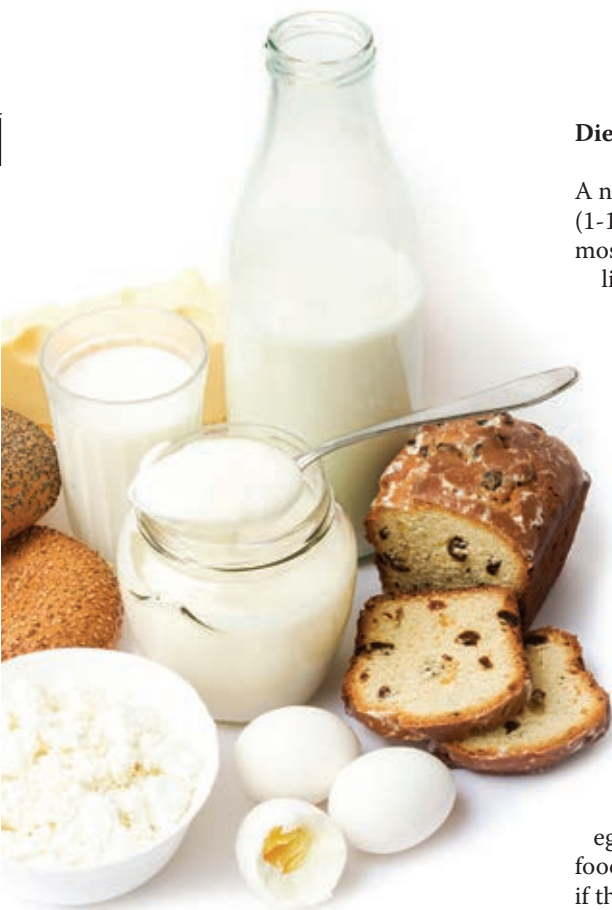
build and gender (being female) may be other factors increasing susceptibility.

- **Aflatoxin:** Groundnuts stored for prolonged periods in moist conditions get contaminated with the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*. Many other foodstuffs, particularly nuts and pulses, are also known to get contaminated with aflatoxin.
- **Iron:** Hemochromatosis is an inborn error of iron metabolism. Increased intestinal absorption of iron results in excessive deposition in the liver (causing cirrhosis), pancreas (diabetes), skin and heart muscle.
- **Copper:** Wilson's disease is an inborn error of copper metabolism with deficiency of copper-binding serum globulin which results in excessive deposition of copper in the liver, producing cirrhosis.
- **Galactosemia:** It is an inborn error of carbohydrate metabolism owing to deficiency of the enzyme, because of which galactose is not converted to glucose. Such an infant on a milk diet has malnutrition, diarrhoea, and jaundice with liver cirrhosis.
- **Long duration of congestive cardiac failure:** This may induce fibrosis around the central veins of the liver.
- **Malnutrition:** A low protein diet can lead to liver injury and cirrhosis. Deficiency of the sulphur-containing amino acids methionine and cystine produces necrosis of the liver cells, leading ultimately to liver cirrhosis. Clinical kwashiorkor (protein-energy malnutrition) is known to result in fatty changes in the liver. A diet high in carbohydrates and relatively low in proteins and



Photographs by iStock Library





the amino acid methionine may enhance liver necrosis caused by toxins or infections.

## Symptoms

The cirrhotic liver is either shrunken or palpable 1-3 cm below the right costal margin or epigastrium. The symptoms include:

- Weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Weight loss and muscle wasting
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Jaundice
- Body itching
- Frequent infections
- Bruising easily
- Stomach discomfort
- Red spots on skin, redness of palms
- Oedema (swelling owing to water retention)

## Diet

A nutritive high-protein diet (1-1.2 g/kg body weight) is the most essential part of therapy for liver cirrhosis. Protein-rich foods help regeneration of the liver and formation of albumin and serve to combat anaemia and ascites. About 80-100 g of protein must be consumed daily. Eggs and flesh foods are excellent. Skimmed milk or its powder, dried beans and pulses, *channa* (Bengal gram), groundnuts, cereal preparations, chapattis, *khakhra* and biscuits are also good. These are best utilised for protein synthesis when taken as a combination of bread, pulses, milk and groundnuts at each meal than eggs or meat alone. Protein-rich foods are temporarily withheld if the patient deteriorates into a pre-comatose state. Protein restriction is maintained till the patient recovers fully; protein intake is then increased gradually, starting preferably with vegetable proteins. Sodium intake is restricted in patients with cirrhosis and ascites; not more than 3 g per day is permitted. Cirrhotics without ascites do not require sodium restriction.

## Permitted foods

- Bread or chapattis of wheat, rice, maize, *jowar*, *bajra* or *ragi*
- Breakfast cereals of wheat, rice, oatmeal, maize
- Rice
- Pulses (dal) and beans
- Soups
- Vegetables
- Potato, sweet potato, yam
- Meat, fish, chicken
- Eggs
- Milk or milk products (should have liberal helpings of skimmed milk)
- Fat for cooking or butter
- Sugar, jaggery or honey

- Jam, *murabba*
- Fresh fruits
- Dried fruits
- Nuts
- Condiments and spices in minimum quantity to encourage better food intake
- Beverages
- Water as desired

## Dietary don'ts

- Salt intake should be restricted during ascites, Avoid *papad*, chutneys, pickles.
- Avoid processed foods like canned foods, fast foods, chicken nuggets, chips, frozen foods
- Red meats, beef, canned meats and fish
- Undercooked meats, dairy and eggs
- Soups and drinks high in sodium like packed juices and processed soups
- Alcohol

## Sample diet plan for a patient with cirrhosis of the liver

- **Breakfast:** 2 slices of toast with 15 g butter and jam, 1 cup of tea or coffee
- **Mid-morning:** 1 glass of fruit juice, 20 peanuts (fresh roasted)
- **Lunch:** 1 cup minestrone soup, 1 cup of vegetable lasagne, 2-3 chapattis, 1 cup of rice and dal
- **After lunch:** 1 banana
- **Evening:** 1 cup of tea or coffee, 2 biscuits
- **Dinner:** 1 bowl of creamed potatoes and carrots, 2 chapattis with 10 g butter or 2 *khakhra* with 10 g ghee, 1 cup of *khichdi* and 4 tbsp of ice-cream
- **After dinner:** 1 glass of milk

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



**HIS LADLE LOVE** BY PRATIBHA JAIN

# Organic reinvention

**DEEPAK JATKAR • JATH**

An engaging series about silver men who wield a deft ladle in the kitchen

There are some who believe in reinventing themselves whatever the stage of life. Commerce graduate-turned-farmer Deepak Jatkar is one of them. Attending to the organic farm in his hometown Jath, the 61 year-old has taken his passion for cooking to another level—he proudly shares the recipe of wheat *kheer* from the wheat growing in his own farm. A great believer in family values, he also affirms that encouragement and mutual support are the ingredients of happiness in life.

**Namaste Deepakji. To begin with, tell me about your childhood.**

I was born in Jath, a small town on the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka. My father was in the transport business, so we moved home several times within Maharashtra. In 1985, I moved to Thane in Mumbai. Now, we have settled in Jath, though Mumbai is a second home as my son lives in Mumbai with his family.

**Your education and work?**

I graduated in commerce and then joined a transport company. I am now retired and spend most of my time at our organic farm in Jath.

**How did you develop an interest in cooking?**

When our children were young, they would ask for something different to eat now and then. I would rustle up something for them. Based on their responses and comments, I began to

improvise. I also watched television cookery shows and tried some dishes.

**What are some of your most favourite dishes?**

I think I first started with *pav bhaji* which is an absolute favourite. I also love *shrikhand*; especially mango *shrikhand* and dry fruit *shrikhand*.

**“When our children were young, they would ask for something different to eat now and then. I would rustle up something.... Based on their responses, I began to improvise”**

**How did your wife respond to your culinary experiments?**

My wife Jyothi has always been supportive in whatever I do. Right now, we are both totally absorbed in organic farming.

**Yes, I have heard much about your passion for organic farming from your wife's cousin, Aruna.**

In our *taluk*, many people are into farming. But the problem is water shortage. So the crop is mainly dependent on rainwater. Some use

water from the borewell and canal. Water shortage makes farming very difficult for poor farmers. For me, the challenge is organic farming with less water.

**What do you grow in your farm?**

We mainly grow grains such as *jowar*, *channa*, wheat and sunflower seeds. We also grow *kardai* [safflower]. I have been farming for three to four years now.

**Do you only cook with organic products? How is the pricing?**

We try and buy our provisions from wholesale vendors and, therefore, the variation in price is very slight. But it is definitely a much healthier option.

**According to you, what is the key ingredient of success?**

Support and appreciation from your loved ones. I have been able to follow my dreams because I have my wife's support. The children are also encouraging. In fact, you cannot do anything without the right support. Appreciation is important to grow in life.

**Jyothi, would you like to add your view to this point?**

**She:** Even though he is giving me the credit, he has been equally nurturing. He has taken good care of all of us. I believe that when a couple live happily and the children can see the affection between the parents, they will grow up believing in relationships and adapt easily. We are blessed to have children as caring as ours. My daughter-in-law is also very caring and always abides by our family values.

**That sounds like an ideal reached in real life!**





Hareesh Patel

**She:** You may think that we are praising each other but I am happy to share with you that we are considered an ideal couple by the rest of the family.

**I have already asked him, but I want you to tell me how it was working alongside your husband in the kitchen.**

**She:** He has always been helpful around the house. When I cooked, he would pitch in by chopping the vegetables. He is very adjusting. He even helps my daughter-in-law when she

is in the kitchen. He chops vegetables very skilfully. We were a small family: the two of us, our children and my mother-in-law. Hence we had a lot of freedom. We never forced the children to eat what we wanted to cook. We cooked what they wanted to eat. I must tell you that we have one simple rule between us—we always have our two meals together.

**What is a typical meal for you?**

**He:** We cook typical Maharashtrian food at home. But as Jyothi is from a Telugu family, she has introduced us

to Andhra dishes such as *pesarattu* and *dosa* varieties. I remember when she was newly married, she did not enjoy our Maharashtrian meals but ate them silently without making a fuss. Now, we have come to enjoy more varieties and other cuisines. In fact, over time, cooking and serving good food have become a way of life.

**And healthy food too.**

Oh yes, good health is important. I am a diabetic but I love sweets. So I use brown sugar or jaggery instead of processed sugar. I also take

morning walks without fail. During a recent trip to Rajasthan, we walked extensively. When I returned and went to the doctor, my sugar level was much more stable. So the doctor

advised me to resume my walking. He asked me to give up sweets but I am using sugar substitutes so I don't have to deny myself these treats.

### Do you also cook Andhra dishes?

My specialty is Maharashtrian dishes but I have learnt to make *dosa* and *vadai* from my wife. She actually learnt cooking after she was married. As you know, in our community, the focus is on education. So girls do not do much housework as in other Indian communities.

### What recipe would you like to share today?

*Gehun ki kheer*, which means wheat *kheer*, a sweet dish. We make this from the organic wheat grown in our field. This is known as *khapli* wheat and is different from regular wheat. It is lighter than regular wheat and high in protein.

**Thank you. That sounds healthy and must be delicious.**

## Broken wheat *kheer*

Prepared with organic wheat that Deepak grows in his own farm, here is a healthy and delicious Indian dessert. He enjoys substituting sugar with healthier options such as jaggery and brown sugar in many dishes.

### Ingredients

- Wheat: 1 cup
- Milk: 3 cups
- Almonds and pistachios: 6-7 each
- Saffron (optional): 8-10 strands
- Fresh coconut: ¼ cup; grated (or chopped fine)
- Poppy seeds (*khuskhus*): 1-2 tsp
- Jaggery (preferably the dark Kolhapur variety): 1 cup; crushed
- Nutmeg powder: a pinch
- Cardamom powder: ¼ tsp
- Ghee: 1 tsp (for serving)

### Method

Soak the wheat for 10-15 minutes. Strain; while the wheat is damp, grind in the mixer coarsely, almost crushing each grain of wheat into four bits.



Photographs by Sanjeeta K K





## Tomato chutney

Deepak and Jyothi Jatkar enjoy preparing tomato chutney with many variations. The recipe below is a favourite with chapattis. For *dosa*, they like to grind the boiled tomato pulp with coconut and chillies and mix with a simple tempering.

### Ingredients

- Tomatoes: 4, large
- Yoghurt:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup
- Salt: to taste

### For tempering

- Cooking oil: 1 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Red chillies: 2; broken
- Green chillies: 2; slit into half
- Curry leaves: 7-8
- Turmeric powder: a pinch

### Method

Boil the whole tomatoes in water for about 5 minutes. Switch off flame, discard the water and remove the skin and stem of tomatoes. Mash the boiled tomatoes gently. Heat the oil in a pan for tempering. Add the mustard seeds. As they start spluttering, add the remaining ingredients of the tempering. Mix the tempering along with the mashed tomatoes. Cool and add the yoghurt and salt and mix well. This chutney can be preserved in the refrigerator for 2-3 days and tastes delicious with chapattis.

Transfer to a vessel that fits into a pressure cooker, add 1 cup water and cook for up to 3 whistles. Soak the almonds and pistachios for 1 hour; peel and sliver. Prepare saffron by rubbing it in 1 tsp warm milk until the milk turns orange. Set aside. Dry-roast the poppy seeds for 1-2 minutes. Set aside. In a thick-bottomed pan, bring the milk to a boil and let it simmer for 4-5 minutes. Now, add the

cooked wheat, grated coconut, roasted poppy seeds and crushed jaggery and continue cooking over low flame for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally to avoid the grain sticking to the bottom. Stir the prepared saffron into the *kheer* along with slivered nuts, nutmeg and cardamom powders and switch off flame. Serve in small dessert bowls, either warm or at room temperature, with a dollop of melted ghee.

*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*

# Make the **switch** online

It's time for silvers to embrace the digital world, says **Priya Desai**

**D**uring my visit to an ATM, I saw a grandmother learning to use her ATM card from her teenage granddaughter. When she saw the crisp, new, hundred-rupee notes rolling out of the machine, she appeared delighted. She was obviously impressed that she did not have to stand in the queue to encash the cheque. In a simple way, she was establishing contact with the digital world.

The word *digital* describes electronic technology that generates, stores, and processes data and information. Today, digital technology powers innumerable products used every day such as mobile phones, desktop and laptop computers, iPads, kindle, digital music players, TVs, washing machines and the Internet.

The digital world is expanding in variety, expanse and complexity and becoming an integral part of our daily lives. This new world beckons silvers as never before to improve the quality of their life. Are they ready to take the leap?

## Digital India

"Digital India" is a favourite vision of the Government of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This initiative, launched on 1 July 2015, is a flagship programme of the Government "to transform India into a digitally-empowered society and knowledge economy". A number of government services will become electronically available through twin channels of improved online infrastructure and Internet connectivity.

The fast-growing silvers' demographic will constitute one-fifth of India's total population (about 250 million) by 2050, creating an attractive market for technology providers. No technology company can ignore this market for its products like cell phones, tablets, computers, wallets and the Internet. All these converge to provide a single-point solution to our needs for financial transactions.

Banks and financial institutions woo silvers for their products and facilities. Net banking, ATM and debit cards,

credit cards and digital wallets have attained common currency among younger generation users. These facilities cover a number of payments for which we visit banks, stand in serpentine queues and struggle to complete banking operations during the bank's business hours.

Silvers can make their lives more comfortable by learning to use these modern facilities that have been made possible by the digital revolution to make purchases online and payments for a variety of services.

## Why use ATM, debit, credit cards?

It is not rocket science as many would think. In fact, it is a game to keep the brain ticking as it encourages new learning and eases financial chores.

Today, an ATM and debit card (at an annual charge) is made available when a savings bank account is opened; ATM booths are more common than convenience stores. Any bank's ATM can be used for a certain number of transactions, free of cost; this multiplies the availability of booths. Passbooks can be updated at the ATM, without having to wait in long queues.

I have heard silvers expressing a sense of relief that they are able to access cash from the ATM as required. This is distinctly better than keeping large amounts of money at home, as most of us did

earlier. But there still exists a large section of seniors who are apprehensive about using these simple facilities, as they are either averse or technophobic. They still prefer to visit their bank branch and will avoid the Internet like the plague. Today, many grocers accept payment via debit card and yet it's common to see silvers use cash for regular purchases. This practice is slowly but surely changing.

## Mixed signals

Why do we see these conflicting signals? Is it more prevalent among Indians compared to seniors across the world? A Pew Research Centre study has some interesting findings about silvers in the US where digital technology

**Silvers can make their lives more comfortable by learning to use modern facilities such as net banking and digital wallets to make purchases and payments online**



had an early start compared to India. Seniors now have deeper roots in the digital world; this is more the case with the younger group of highly educated and affluent seniors.

Contrastingly, less affluent seniors and those with significant health and disability challenges are disconnected from the digital world, both physically and psychologically. Ageing makes technology adoption more difficult for them than for younger people; the latter almost have it in their DNA! These findings would apply to an Indian setting too.

### The challenges

Internet technology is a more recent phenomenon. Silvers in the 65+ age demographic did not grow with technology in India; they find it difficult to acquire new technology skills. Sadly, this section will remain at a disadvantage as the world transitions to the online space. Technology products like computers require maintenance and involve cost and Internet services are not hassle-free in India; this adds to the disinterest of silvers in using these products. Very few family members have the patience to educate the elderly in their family in computer usage and the latter often find themselves at sea. Training facilities to make seniors computer-literate and technology-friendly are few and far between and this widens the digital divide.

### Online transactions

Net banking means conducting our financial transactions via the Internet. Today, most banks offer a net banking facility and a few cooperative banks also offer these for limited purposes. There are multiple benefits of net banking:

- It enables account holders to manage bank accounts from the comfort of their home, via the Internet.
- It's easier to make payments as well as instantly transfer money to different bank accounts.
- It is possible to pay income tax and manage investments online and access data any time, from anywhere.
- If you are e-trading your share transactions, linking the account to a savings bank account enables seamless money transfer. As the intermediary is removed, it is more peaceful to manage financial transactions online.
- Have you suddenly remembered, just as you are getting to bed, that you have forgotten to pay your mobile bill? No worries, log into your net banking account and pay the bill within the deadline and avoid the penalty.

A word of caution: When using these facilities, it is important to be alert while entering passwords or other information about your net banking account. Keep in mind that hacking and phishing are very common and silvers become an easy target for cybercriminals.

### Payment wallets - added online security

Digital wallets like Paytm and Pay U are now hotting up the financial place, along with payment apps on banking platforms. New technologies are making inroads into old financial products. A digital wallet is a virtual wallet that holds your money online and allows you to make payments, ranging from post-paid mobile bills and groceries to umpteen purchases on websites. Payments are made using money stored in the wallet instead of using a debit or credit card or net banking, thereby making it unnecessary to access your bank account. But you will have to use these modes to fill the wallet. In the near future, retail banking will be dominated by digital wallets, as these wallets are now emerging as the most preferred financial instruments.

Younger silvers familiar with digital devices will easily adopt these new instruments. Older seniors are already proclaiming their irrelevance, saying they have no use for them and that they are too complicated to understand. The truth is, once any new technology rolls in, if you're not part of the road roller, you're just part of the road.

### Jump onto the digital bandwagon

The digital revolution, fed by the relentless work of geeks and nerds all over the world, will grow exponentially in the years to come. Look at the iPhone series, a new one hits the shelves even before the earlier version is mastered; the older version lands in the hands of silvers who start their struggle to understand its endless features.

I feel amused to see my mother-in-law starting WhatsApp to chat with her grandson on the discarded iPhone sent by him. These are the new-age silvers who are gaining strength and empowering themselves to keep connected with the world. Their efforts to be online, whether through email, Skype or Google, should be rewarded by enabling them to be financially literate to enjoy the benefits of net banking, wallets, travel bookings, etc. They have the time to learn—all that is needed is a helping hand.



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*The author is an economist based in Mumbai*

# What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson  
to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.







If you're above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the magazine for you. Filled with human interest stories, exciting features and columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.

*harmony*  
**celebrate age**



Subhendu Ghosh/Hindustan Times



# return of the legend

special  
report

Iconic footballer Pelé returned to the City of Joy after 38 years, and relived past moments.

**Partha Mukherjee** captures the frenzy on the field

**T**hirty-eight years is a long time but not long enough for the King of Football—or his fans—to forget. So when Emirates flight EK 0570 touched down at Netaji Subhas International Airport in Kolkata at 8:07 am on 11 October, the media that had assembled to share this unforgettable moment began to scramble over the barricades to catch a glimpse of the legend.

Moments went by and excitement began to bubble over. Then, all of a sudden, the aircraft door snapped open, and Edson Arantes do Nascimento, known to the world as Pelé, stepped out. Wearing his trademark smile, black jacket and grey trousers, the Brazilian football legend, arguably the greatest football player of all time, waved warmly to the crowd. It was a special moment for the football-crazy city, for their beloved legend had returned.

Pelé was escorted from the tarmac to the terminal and when he emerged from the transit lounge, he fed the media frenzy with practiced ease. Perched on the footboard of his car, he waved slowly and obliged photographers, who couldn't get enough.

Pelé was in Kolkata on a four-day private visit on a schedule chock-a-block with soccer-related appointments, media moments and Q&A sessions. Only 12 days away from his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, the former football superstar now takes the help of a walking stick. But that is the only sign of the passage of time. The flight from Rio de Janeiro via Dubai to Kolkata was long and punishing but there was no evidence

of either jet lag or ill health—he has only one kidney, and suffers from an impaired retina and a damaged hip.

Before his car pulled away, Pelé said to the media. “I want to be a world citizen. I enjoy travelling from one country to another just as I shift from one room to another in my home. The entire world is my home.” That age is only a number for Pelé is evident from his remark made in hospital in São Paulo, where he was being treated for a urinary infection. “I will be ready to play for Brazil as one of the three over-23 players at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro!” Here, in Kolkata, Pelé remarked in his baritone, “Thank you Kolkata, I am happy to have come to the city again.” Then he blew kisses at his fans, who chanted “Pe-lé! Pe-lé!” The chant subsided only after his seven-car convoy sped away, to take him to a hotel in South Kolkata.

The football legend last visited Kolkata in 1977, to play an exhibition match against West Bengal's Mohun Bagan Club. The Kolkata club's request to host a match had, in fact, been turned down by Brazil's Cosmos Football Club as the Kolkata football club couldn't bear the exorbitant appearance fee. The club then wired a personal message to Pelé, who realised the importance of playing in front of 80,000 spectators. The match itself was a 2-2 draw but football fans, who watched the legend play on their home ground at Eden Gardens, will never forget those precious moments.

Back to the present and Pelé's convoy wended its way through a sea of people waving the Indian tricolour and the Brazilian flag. While security personnel struggled to cut a path through the hysterical crowd, Pelé waved

# Journey of the Black Pearl

Edson Arantes do Nascimento

aka  
**Pelé**

**Date of birth:** 23 October 1940

**Games played:** 1,365

**Total no. of goals:** 1,281



September 1956

Made professional debut with a four-goal performance



Became the youngest player to play in a World Cup final at 17 years

**19 November**  
**1969**

Scored his 1,000<sup>th</sup> goal in Rio de Janeiro

**1970**

Played for Brazil's World Cup team; Brazil beat Italy to lift the Cup

**1971**

Announced retirement from international competitions

**1977**

Retired from the sport at 37 years

Dinodia Photo Library

**Accomplishments:** World Player of the Century by the International Federation of Football History & Statistics (1999); listed among TIME's 100 most influential people of the 20th century (1999); listed in *Guinness World Records* for most career goals scored in football and most FIFA World Cup Winners' Medals

through the window and dazzled with his winning smile. As he approached his destination, nostalgia weighed heavily on him. Referring to his previous visit to the city, he recalled, "I was 37 then, and 38 years have passed since. My visit to Kolkata in 1977 is still fresh in my mind. It rained heavily as we arrived at Dum Dum airport. The [football] ground was so slushy."

The clock struck 10 as Pelé's convoy and the media pulled in at the hotel in Alipore, where he was staying. Chuni Goswami, also called the 'Pelé of Asian Football', was all smiles as he received the 'Black Pearl'. After the manda-

tory photo-shoot, Pelé caught questions from the media, dribbled past some and also scored a few winning goals. "Is Pelé the best footballer the world has ever seen?" Goswami took this question. "Pelé is the greatest of all greats—arguably the *numero uno*. Diego Maradona might look charming on the field as a dribbler, and De Stefano, Garincha, Vavá, Didi and Zágalo were footballers of outstanding quality and so is Messi, but Pelé is a legend and will remain one as long as there is football." The next one was aimed squarely at the 'King' himself. "Would you be a fan of Pelé if you weren't born as Pelé?" His adroit reply pointed to his impeccable reflexes. "I would be the fan of



## A STAR IS BORN

His wasn't just a bad case of itchy feet. Edson Arantes do Nascimento, aka Pelé, was destined to become the greatest footballer of all time. Yet his roots were more than humble. His parents couldn't afford to buy him a football, so the little boy practiced barefoot, with an old sock stuffed with rags.

The lad often skipped school to play football in a nearby playground. Sometimes he was found shining shoes or selling roasted peanuts in front of a movie hall. Perhaps to mock his luck, he formed a team called 'Shoeless Ones'—this is where he learnt his unorthodox dribbling manoeuvres and honed his electrifying reflexes that later stunned the sporting world and earned him monikers such as 'Black Pearl' and 'King of Football'.

The Brazilian football genius caught the attention of Waldemar de Brito, a former soccer star, when he was only 15. De Brito took Pelé to Santos FC and told them that the teenager would one

day be 'the greatest football player in the world'. Santos signed him on de Brito's recommendation. And thus, on 7 September 1956, Pelé made his professional debut at an exhibition match, and proved that the club had made no mistake. He scored a goal within a few minutes.

After that, there was no stopping the legend-in-the-making. In 1958, Pelé became the youngest player to play in a World Cup final, at 17 years. He was also declared by the media to be the 'greatest revelation of the 1958 World Cup'. And just when it seemed like it couldn't get better, Brazil went on to win its first-ever World Cup that same year, beating hosts Sweden, 5-2.

There truly has not been another player like Pelé, who is credited with revolutionising the game with his inimitable style. Not surprisingly, he was courted by European teams with the promise of great wealth but Brazilian president Janio Quadros declared Pelé "a national treasure" who could not be exported. On 19 November 1969, Pelé scored his

1,000<sup>th</sup> goal in Rio de Janeiro. In 1970, Pelé played for Brazil's World Cup team once again, and in Mexico City beat Italy to lift the Cup. It was Pelé's play, both in scoring and in setting up goals for his teammates, that won them the title. When he announced that he would retire from international competition in 1971, the event was televised across the world—a feat in those days. By the time he left the game, he had scored 1,281 goals.

After Pelé retired from pro football, he was signed by the New York Cosmos of the North American Soccer League. He retired for good in 1977, at the age of 37, but continued to be active in sports circles, becoming a commentator and global ambassador of soccer. He also did a stint in politics, serving his country as Minister of Sports in 1977. He has published many autobiographies, starred in documentary films and has composed musical pieces, including the soundtrack for the film *Pelé* in 1977. The footballer has also acted in Hollywood film *Escape to Victory* featuring Sylvester Stallone.

the parents who made Pelé." Then more questions: "How would you rank Messi?" Snatching the ball from Pelé, Goswami offered a short and crisp reply, "Both Messi and Diego will be near his rank." Then the in-swinger: "Do you know that 'White Pelé' [former Brazilian footballer Zico] is currently in India coaching a Goan team?" To this, Pelé shot back, "There cannot be a Pelé of a different complexion. There is one and only one Pelé, and he is black." Goal!

On the following day, the legend visited a Durga Puja *pandal* in South Kolkata, accompanied by former India cricket captain Sourav Ganguly. The combination of the 'King' and the 'Prince' together certainly set the mood of Durga Puja in the city.

Finally, Pelé's most nostalgic moment of his Kolkata visit had arrived: felicitating the Mohun Bagan team that played the 1977 exhibition match against him 38 years ago. First, he felicitated P K Banerjee, the coach of the team back then. "I had instructed my boys not to rough-tackle him for his feet were priceless," recalled Banerjee. Then, the other former players gathered around the living legend, chatting and catching up with him. Did he think

the penalty awarded to Cosmos during the exhibition match was legitimate or was it awarded under pressure as the appeal had come from Pelé? It was a question Kolkata's football fans—and Mohun Bagan—had been wanting to ask for close to 40 years. "Yes, I remember that the spot-kick was converted by Gergio Chinalia and the match ended in a 2-2 draw. To err is human."

Later in the day, at a Q&A session at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Pelé was asked to pick the greatest footballer he had ever seen. "It would have to be Bobby Moore, who captained the England team in the 1966 World Cup and led them to victory. Almost 50 years have passed, yet his superb ball control is still etched in my mind. But in the past 10 years, it has been Lionel Messi who has enthralled me every time he has played the game. Ronaldo is also a skilled footballer. I would love to have both, LM10 and CR7, in my team."

Q&A done, Pelé rose from his chair on the podium. Leaning on his walking stick, he stood up and flashed another warm smile. Then the Black Pearl, who scored 1,281 goals in 1,365 games, bid adieu. ✨

# Mother of TREES

Will 'Saalumara' Thimmakka who raised over 300 trees as her 'children' be recognised for her labour of love? **Natasha Rego** reports on an astonishing legacy

**T**he year was 1958. The location: Hulikal village, Magadi Taluk, a lifetime away from the bustling Bangalore city, but only 80 km in distance.

Back then, people lived in mud-brick houses with thatched roofs and ploughed *ragi* and paddy fields for a living. The nearest town for trade and commerce was Kudur, 4 km away.

Like in most other Indian villages, the people of Hulikal lived in abject poverty, their lives ruled by superstition and stigma. The roads were muddy and the only way you could go anywhere was by foot or bullock cart, if you owned one, or caught a ride with a fellow villager who did. Once in a while, a car would go by. Many a time it was the same white Ambassador belonging to Hulikote Chennappa, a local leader from the neighbouring Hulikote taluk.

One day, when Chennappa was driving to the Suggunahalli cattle fair, he noticed something out of the ordinary. Two villagers, a man and woman, were watering banyan trees that were slowly forming a canopy over the Hulikal-Kudur road. It was a ghostly but beautiful sight—the beginnings of a tree-lined avenue rising in the middle of nowhere, flanking fields and brush on either

side. Chennappa had stumbled upon two extraordinary souls who had planted over 300 banyan trees along the road to Kudur. The couple, barren and without child, considered these saplings their 'children', and nurturing them had become their mission in life.

Chikkaiah and Thimmakka were casual labourers who lived in Hulikal village. "We used to live with my mother-in-law in a thatched house just off that road," says Thimmakka,

With tender love, Thimmakka and her husband Chikkaiah dug trenches around the cuttings and watered them regularly. This went on for 10 years till they had planted over 300 banyan trees

pointing through the open door of her now two-room house. Located at the entrance of Hulikal village, her home is today a shrine for hundreds of awards and plaques she has received for the work she has done. She sits on a metal folding chair in the centre of the room narrating her story, as lorries thunder past. Her adopted son B N Umesh hangs off a bench at the far end of the room.

"I could not have children. We tried adopting but no one was willing to give us their baby," says Thimmakka, matter-of-factly. "For 20 years, we scraped together a living by doing *coolie* [labour] work." She rattles off numbers with practiced ease, having told her story several times. A barren daughter-in-law was a matter of shame to Chikkaiah's mother, who treated Thimmakka like a maid and worked her to the bone. Chikkaiah was a seasoned victim of ridicule owing to his stutter and empathised with her. "Then, my mother-in-law died and my husband said there was no value to our lives because we didn't have children... we didn't have a legacy," recalls Thimmakka. "He said we should grow some trees and look after them as our children. Then one morning, he brought 10 banyan saplings loaded on a bullock cart."

Together, they planted the 10 saplings on either side of the road leading out of the village. With tender love, they dug trenches around the cuttings and watered them regularly. The next year, they planted 20 more saplings, watered them and started weaning them as the monsoon approached. This went on for 10 years, till they had finally planted more than 300 banyan trees all the way to Kudur!







"The number of trees kept increasing and we had to go farther and farther away," says Thimmakka. "We drew water from tanks and wells in the surrounding fields. I would balance two *matka* [earthen pots] on my hips and one on my head, and my husband would hang two on a pole, which he balanced on his shoulder."

Although their needs were meagre, the couple needed money to survive. Thimmakka would return to work as a casual labourer while Chikkaiah stayed back to care for the plants. "My in-laws had many cows and my husband would sell one every year to earn his share of our livelihood," she recounts. "He built a fence of thorns around the young plants to protect them against hungry cows and goats. Sometimes, he would simply stand guard with his stick."

Of the over 300 saplings the couple planted, they lost a number to grazing animals, unfavourable weather and fellow villagers foraging for firewood. They also uprooted and replanted a number of trees, perfectly distanced, so that when the road came, none of their 'children' would be uprooted. Chikkaiah and Thimmakka's invaluable legacy now stands at 284 trees, strong and easily 50 years old.

"Their lifelong work has benefited an incalculable number of living beings, besides providing a continuous cool corridor to travel through," says Siddarth Machado, a junior research fellow at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bengaluru. "The *Ficus benghalensis* variety of banyan supports a multitude of species including insects, birds, small reptiles and small mammals. Fruit-eating birds such as barbets, parakeets,

mynahs, hornbills and bats are attracted to the figs, and the leaves are used as fodder. The wood can be used to make implements and furniture as well as firewood. The sheer size of the tree provides shade to all below."



"When I travel on this road, I feel great happiness. I worship the trees and seek their blessings for my people"

Although illiterate, Chikkaiah was a sensitive soul, who was surprisingly discerning towards his surroundings. "He would stand guard at the village pond to tell people not to wash their cows in the stagnant water and to instead use buckets and wash them some distance away," Thimmakka reminisces. Chikkaiah would feed the cows left to starve at the village cow shelter, till their owners paid the fine to reclaim them. And, for the annual village fair, the couple built a *bund* to store water for visitors to use. "I don't know where he got the idea. One day,

he just said that we should plant these trees," says Thimmakka, who was used to her husband's quirks by now to not be surprised.

Ten years after they started planting the banyan saplings, in 1958, Hulikote Chennappa spotted them on his way to the Suggunahalli cattle fair. After listening to their story, Chennappa invited them to the fair that evening but didn't tell them why. Not sure what to expect, they went. They were presented a silver medal for their contribution to their village. "I've kept it safe," says Thimmakka, "because it was the first medal we ever received."

It would be almost four decades before anyone else would recognise them. But by then, Chikkaiah was long gone. After spending 60 or so years together, Thimmakka had to face the world on her own. When Chikkaiah died in 1991, she was well into her 80s and continued working as a casual labourer, now with only herself to feed.

But everything changed for Thimmakka in 1994, when M V Negalur, a college professor from Thyamagondlu Government Pre-University College in Nelamangala taluk, sent an article to *Prajawani*, a leading Kannada newspaper, featuring her work. She started receiving letters of appreciation and invitations to functions around the state. She further shot into the limelight when, a year later, Negalur published an article in *Deccan Herald* titled "Thimmakka and her 284 children". Now organisations also honoured her and donated money.

It's been an adventurous journey for Thimmakka, who had never once left her village. That year, she flew to





Delhi to receive the National Citizen Award from then prime minister H D Deve Gowda. Over the last 20 years, she has been used as a mascot for all things 'environmental'. She has attended hundreds of award ceremonies, plantation drives and book launches.

To the people of Karnataka, she is a hero. Whenever they spot her, they seek her blessings and refer to her as *Saalumarada*, which means '...of the banyan tree'. In times when we pay lip service to 'saving the environment', Thimmakka is a shining example of someone who devoted her life to actually making a difference. Still, the government has not taken note of her life's work. While it sanctioned a site close to her hut for a new home, and even laid the foundation, it failed to put up walls! Thimmakka used her savings to build the two rooms we are seated in, where she's telling us her story. And when she asked for a government maternity hospital to be set up in her village, the authorities

argued that the village did not meet the criteria.

With only primary healthcare centres available at Kuddur and Suggunahally 4 km away, the government hasn't budged in 15 years. "I thought it was a fair request, considering the kind of labour my husband and I had put into growing those trees. Now my boy is trying to get it done," says Thimmakka, referring to her adopted son Umesh with whom she now lives. The 27 year-old from Belur, who has himself distributed free saplings to schools, sought out Thimmakka 15 years ago after he read about her. "During my many visits, we grew fond of each other; she was growing old with no one around to take care of her needs," says the boy who 'adopted' his mother. In fact, Umesh has made it his mission to preserve Chikkaiah and Thimmakka's legacy.

Just as she tots up her other numbers—using milestones to mark the years—Thimmakka does the

**Thimmakka at her residence with a collection of awards and plaques**

same while calculating her age. The number she has come up with is 105. But despite her age, she is still pushing the environmental cause in Karnataka. She is frequently invited to speak at various functions and to cut yet another ribbon at a 'green' cause. There is also hope that Thimmakka might finally win official recognition as the Karnataka government has recommended her name for the Padma Bhushan.

But, in truth, the enormity of her and Chikkaiah's legacy is much larger than any award can honour. Says Thimmakka, in her Kannada dialect: "When I travel on this road, I feel great happiness. I worship the trees and seek their blessings for my people. Both of us did all the work but my husband died before news of our trees reached anywhere. Still, the blessings of his lifetime have fallen on me." 🌸







# word power

Multifaceted and erudite,  
Mrinal Pande continues to create,  
inform and inspire, discovers  
**Suparna-Saraswati Puri**

## HER NAME IS SYNONYMOUS WITH CREDIBILITY

and her presence commands respect. One of India's most distinguished media professionals and a respected author, Mrinal Pande's popularity cuts across geography and language. While her (bilingual) literary oeuvre has won her critical acclaim, her work as a print and TV journalist has helped her forge a unique connection with the people of the country.

Multifaceted doesn't even begin to describe her. But then, Pande, born to Hindi litterateur Gaura 'Shivani' Pant, a prolific short-story writer and pioneer in scripting women-based narratives, was raised in a home where creativity and intellect were prized. Moving from Nainital to Allahabad for further studies (with even a stint at the Corcoran in Washington DC), she has carried the torch with aplomb, studying—and excelling in—an array of subjects, from English and Sanskrit literature to ancient Indian history, archaeology, classical music and the visual arts.

While she has taught English literature at the University of Allahabad and College of Jesus and Mary, Delhi University, and history of art and architecture at Maulana Azad College of Technology, Bhopal, journalism was a natural fit for Pande, who began to 'copy-edit' her mother's work when she was just 14. Having cut her teeth so young, she went from strength to strength, serving as editor of *Vama*, a Hindi publication of The Times of India Group (1984-87) and *Saptahik Hindustan*, a Hindi weekly of The Hindustan Times Group (1988-92).

Making the switch to television, she became a familiar face across the country with her stints as a news anchor on Star News (1996-98) and Doordarshan as presenter and senior editorial advisor for the channel's news and current affairs programmes (1999-2001). Then, it was back to print when she was appointed chief editor of *Hindustan*, the Hindi daily of The Hindustan Times Group, the first woman to hold the post (2001-09). Awarded the Padma Shri for services in the field of journalism in 2006, she was appointed chairperson of Prasar Bharati, India's largest public broadcasting agency, in February 2010, a post she held till April 2014.

Through it all, she never ignored her literary muse. Having published her first story at the age of 21 in Hindi weekly *Dharmyug*, she went on to display her dexterity as a writer of short stories, plays, novels and essays; prominent works include *The Subject is Woman* (Sanchar Publishing House), *Daughter's Daughter* (Penguin), *That Which Ram Hath Ordained* (Seagull Books), *Devi: Tales of the Goddess in Our Time* (Viking/Penguin) and *My Own Witness* (Penguin).

As many of her titles suggest, women are central to Pande's work. She was founder-president of the Indian Women's Press Corps, serving from 1990-94 (and again in 2001-02). She also spent many years on the National Commission for Self-Employed Women, engaged in the socioeconomic development of groups such as rag-pickers, vegetable sellers and domestic help.

“I was an introverted student; I was inducted into a few good clubs that helped me overcome my shyness... I always fought off power as I was put off by the cheap machinations of many power-seekers but it has continued to be handed to me and I have tried to cope as best as I can”

Today, at 69, Pande continues to do what she does best—she showcases her skills as interviewer on the popular *Baaton Baaton Mein* on Lok Sabha TV; writes fortnightly columns for *Mint* and *Jansatta*; and serves as trustee on the Board of the Wildlife Trust of India and chairperson of The Media Foundation, an NGO that monitors the Indian media. With a book on the growth of Indian classical music after 1857 on the verge of release, she’s also working on a literary series for TV. In the midst of all this activity, she makes time for an exclusive interview on her work and life.

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

##### **Who do you identify yourself with the most—daughter of ‘Shivani’, writer or journalist?**

My output is created not in parts but from a mingling of all three elements: Shivani’s daughter, writer and journalist.

##### **Please share some of your childhood memories of your mother.**

My mother was a hands-on mother and writer. She brought up four of us, plus numerous cousins who were sent to us from time to time for better schooling facilities, which Nainital offered. She never differentiated between her children and others; and was equally truthful and demanding of all of us of excellence and family values.

##### **What was it like, growing up in such a culturally rich home?**

Great Hindi writers like Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kamleshwar, Sumitra Nandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma, Amritlal Nagar and Amrit Rai were family friends, mentors and frequent visitors whom we treated not as great creative minds of their time but well-loved gurus. The house was always full of books and magazines and we discussed literary trends and specific works on the dining table like others discuss family and money

matters. We had, for very long, very little by way of earthly possessions. Our school uniforms were few and needed constant recycling; we often bought textbooks second hand. We were accountable for every pencil and eraser and used them as long as they were usable. Our house didn’t have posh sofas and ACs or even a fridge but we did not miss them as we were confident of our intellectual calibre and creative minds.

##### **What kind of relationship did you share with your siblings?**

I was closer to my elder [step-]sister than my siblings who were six and nine years younger. My sister was affectionate but a bully. She was musically gifted while I was the one with brains. She did not wish for me to pick up music for fear that I would do better. So, even though I loved it, I learnt it only after I married. We were a close-knit family and still are even though my brother has migrated to the US with his family.

##### **And your father... what kind of relationship did you share with him?**

As was in vogue then, he was a distant figure whom we hero-worshipped. He was a quiet, pensive man with a brilliant mind, but given to bouts of depression that were scary while they lasted. He was extremely fair and inculcated in us a deep compassion for all those who, like him, had a hard time finding their feet being from a poor family.

##### **Tell us a little about your maternal grandmother, *Ama*, who was such a powerful influence on the family.**

*Ama* was a doughty fighter. Widowed in her 40s with nine children and no support, she worked to give them all a good education and sent them into the world with the same spirit that refused to bow to bullies and money power. That quality has come down to all of us through our mother.





Clockwise from top left: with parents and elder sister in Orcha; with mother and sisters; with younger daughter Rohini and grandchildren Kabir and Arnaaz; with Shabana Azmi at the launch of her book *Stepping Out: Life and Sexuality in Rural India*; at the Calcutta Raj Bhavan with then president of India Zail Singh; interviewing Rajiv Gandhi for *Saptahik Hindustan*, a news weekly she was editing

### How early did you become aware of your own strengths and potential?

I knew I was different but not in which way. I did very well academically despite being schooled in a government-run school in the Hindi medium. By the time I entered college, I was proficient in both English and Hindi, thanks to my mother. I was an introverted student but got noticed because of my performance academically and was inducted into a few good clubs at college that helped me overcome my shyness. I discovered I was a good debater and singer-dancer and formed wonderful friendships with some of the best minds in Allahabad University in the 1960s, who also opened my eyes to the political changes and their significance. All this helped me a great deal. I always fought off power as I was put off by the cheap machinations of many power-seekers but it has continued to be handed to me and I have tried to cope as best as I can.

### Your mother wrote her first short story when she was 12; you wrote yours when you were 21. Would you call it a curious coincidence?

My mother's first story was published in *Shantiniketan* magazine and not *Dharmyug*;

the latter did not exist when she was 12. I do not believe in creative writing being full of coincidences and sudden miraculous insights. It is as hard and demanding as building a brick-and-mortar structure.

### In an article, your sister Ira writes that you would "insert the punctuation marks in Didda's [your mother's] hastily scribbled novels" at the age of 14, calling it your first lesson in editing. How did that come about?

Mother felt as my Hindi was good, I could be entrusted with copy-editing her writings and I accepted the job without wondering about my being a mere 14 year-old.

### What determined your choice to study subjects as varied as English and Sanskrit literature, ancient Indian history, archaeology and classical music? Is there a new subject that has caught your attention in recent years?

I got interested in ancient Indian history because I read the texts that were around. You see my elder sister had opted for (and hated) this subject in college. My mother felt I must study Sanskrit to understand ancient references better, and my



father felt that as a bridge language English must also be part of the bouquet. I agreed. My love for music, I have already explained. I learnt it formally after I married and continued learning it for three decades till my *guruji* passed away. I had vowed I would never sing in public but have written on the growth of classical music in post-1857 India and the contribution of women singers to it. The book will be out next month.

#### **What drew you to journalism?**

I entered it as a special correspondent for culture, a category Hindi journalism lacked. Circumstance pushed me into the mainstream and after working as an editor with The Times of India Group, I accepted a lateral entry into The Hindustan Times Group as editor of their Hindi magazines and later the daily.

#### **How did your stint in television come about?**

Television happened after the weekly magazine I was editing closed down owing to lack of ad support. I decided to give the newly privatised TV a shot and liked it. Later, personal misgivings about bureaucratic and linguistic discriminations made me rethink, and I returned to print. To her great credit Ms [Shobhana] Bharatiya, owner and editorial director of *The Hindustan Times*,

Pande with husband Arvind and their dog Mojo

unhesitatingly offered me the prime slot as chief editor of her Hindi daily. The paper took off and is today the No. 2 daily in India.

#### **As chairman of Prasar Bharati, what was your vision for the national network?**

I visualised a truly secular and autonomous entity that would function like the BBC. It would be the voice of the government but not subservient to transitory political thinking and free of bureaucratic interference from the ministry.

#### **What are your impressions of the television news broadcasting you see these days?**

I think people want more professional and serious work. Even the poorest are now better off and there are more TV sets in rural areas than our cities. Also, many villagers who can afford cable and dish do not wish to watch substandard, poor quality programmes beamed through the terrestrial network.

#### **What entails good editing skills?**

Brains. An ability to handle not just news but views and, above all, language. HR skills and personal integrity are important too because as editor, you must work with an army of intelligent but edgy and ambitious people who may have initial misgivings about having a female boss.

#### **In your view, is media in India performing its role as the fourth estate? Are we suffering from yellow journalism?**

Yellow journalism will always be there. I think, by and large, the mainstream media is fine on professional parameters, though the ownership patterns exercise political and economic pressures. Sometimes, that is not healthy.

#### **How did you feel when you received the Padma Shri for your contribution to the field of journalism?**

I was frankly surprised. The news came to me through my bureau chief when he received the official list from the PIB [Press Information Bureau].

#### **What made you want to write fiction and how did your mother react to your first work?**

My mother was startled and thrilled. I did not plan my career as a writer; it happened over



“Yellow journalism will always be there. I think, by and large, the mainstream media is fine on professional parameters, though the ownership patterns exercise political and economic pressures. Sometimes, that is not healthy”

decades as I kept writing, not just fiction but reportage and political analysis, and researched health and women's issues.

**From being the daughter of a famed writer to establishing your own credentials as an author, how do you view the journey?**

It has been an interesting journey whose ultimate worth is for others to evaluate.

**Despite the expanding English readership, you prefer to write in Hindi. Why?**

It is my first language, one I am most comfortable in.

**What is your advice to young Hindi writers and enthusiasts of Hindi literature?**

*Lage raho!* [Keep at it!]

**With such a busy schedule, how do you make time to sit down and write? Do you maintain a routine when it comes to writing?**

I learnt from my mother that if you want to write, time becomes available. For a working mother and wife, routine is too big a luxury.

**From short stories and novels to poems, memoirs, essays and political commentary, what enables you to handle such a wide range of genres?**

You just pick the genre that best suits your thoughts on the subject.

**What are your thoughts on translation emerging as an independent and popular form of writing?**

It is a good trend but good Indian translators and editors are still rare in India. Translations by foreigners that I have read show a frequent lack of understanding of the cultural and social contexts of the writer. The young in India are becoming alarmingly monolingual. [1857, *The Real Story of The Great Uprising*, by Mrinal Pande, published by

HarperCollins, is a translation of 19<sup>th</sup> century Marathi classic *Maaja Pravas* by Vishnu Bhatt Godshe Versaikar.]

**Do awards and recognition put pressure on a writer's creative abilities?**

I don't think so, unless they are mediocre enough to get a swollen head.

**Please tell us about your immediate family.**

My husband Arvind Pande is an economics graduate from Cambridge. He joined the IAS in 1965. In 1986, he joined the public-sector steel company, SAIL, and retired as chairman in 2002. We have two daughters; one is an oncologist and the other a professor of public policy at Harvard. The older one is married and has a girl and boy. My son-in-law is an economist and teaches at the business school at Yale.

**What are your leisurely indulgences?**

Sleep, read, think, listen to music.

**What is your take on ageing and what impact has it had on your writing?**

God has been kind to me. I try to eat simply, sleep well, walk regularly and do yoga to keep my body supple. My writing has matured. It has less anger, more compassion and thoughtfulness, I think.

**What is your day like?**

I get up early. Feed the birds, change water in the bowl, let the dog out, wash balconies. By then, my husband is up so we have tea and read the papers. Have breakfast with my husband after our yoga class. Sit at the computer checking mail and write if I need to. Occasionally go for usual shopping for fresh ingredients. Post lunch, rest a bit and read. In the evenings, drive to Lodi Gardens to walk our dog Mojo, whom only my husband can manage outdoors as he is a big fellow and prone to excitement at the sight of open space. Occasionally, if there is a good music recital or lecture, attend that. Eat early. Retire by 11 pm. 🌸



DESTINATION

# Apple county

Thanedar, the Apple Basket of India, is home to some delicious varieties that have captivated the taste buds of the nation

✦ 📷 Gustasp and Jeroo Irani





Whorls of mist swirled around us like whirling dervishes, forcing our car to inch along the narrow road that sloped away into a ravine below where river Sutlej flowed. Our destination, Thanedar—80 km beyond Shimla—seemed remote, even inaccessible. We were on the Hindustan-Tibet road (now NH 22), commissioned by Lord Dalhousie in 1850, parts of which felt like the road hadn't been repaired since!





After many twists and turns, Thanedar finally appeared dreamlike on the horizon, a Himalayan market town enfolded in apple and cherry orchards with misty mountains un-scrolling in the distance like a mighty accordion. Nestled in a hollow was the Banjara Orchard Retreat where we were to stay for a few nights, complete with family suites and log cabins, where enchanting views held centre stage.

Located at an altitude of 7,700 ft, Thanedar is the epicentre of the Himachali apple belt where apple trees are lovingly shrouded in netting to protect them from the occasional hailstorms that happen in the monsoons. As we sipped tea on the balcony of our log hut on that first morning, we saw that most orchards had been terraced into the valley below us; indeed, some of the tight little green apples were temptingly close enough to grasp. In that pearly dawn, mist rolled in and out of the valley, billowing like a giant bridal veil in flight. Breakfast in the

dining room of the Banjara was a treat, as it was cantilevered over the lush orchard-studded valley, the aroma of fresh *pohe*, buttered toast and coffee vying with the magical views.

In Thanedar, you can't go far without hearing various versions of the apple story. Samuel Evan Stokes, the scion of a wealthy Philadelphia family, came to India in 1904 with good intentions: to work in a home for lepers in Solan. By a quirk of fate, he arrived in Thanedar, fell in love with the place and a local girl, and settled there. Legend has it that his mother bought him an existing tea plantation. Subsequently, Stokes brought a few saplings from the US and planted them in his orchard in Kotgarh (17 km away from Thanedar), which is today known as the Apple Basket of India. The Red and Golden Delicious variety of apples bore fruit and ensnared the taste buds of an entire nation. Local farmers in the Shimla hills in the western Himalayas too started planting them, with Stokes keeping a watchful





**Clockwise from top left: the right way to pluck an apple; a road carved into the side of the mountain as the Sutlej River flows through the valley; the wood carved temple atop Hatu Peak; St Mary's church at Kotgarh; nets to protect the apple orchards against hailstorms; early 20th century residence of Satyanand Stokes; village locals on their daily rounds**

eye on the newbie planters and advising them on how to reap rich dividends.

In search of the Stokes story, we travelled to Kotgarh where Satyananda—as Stokes was later called—had recuperated after a bout of illness. There we stumbled upon the quaint St Mary's Church, built in 1872, and said to be one of the oldest in India. With its polished wood pews made of fragrant cedar and Belgian stained glass that filtered light into the enchanted space, the quaint yellow-coloured church in the midst of silent woods was well worth the hike. Nearby, children in neatly pressed uniforms poured out of a local school like a bunch of frolicking lambs even as a shepherdess sauntered past with a flock of bleating goats.

That night it rained, pattering on the slate roof like a hundred dancing elves. The next morning, the skies were a clear blue, innocent and devoid of any memory of the previous night's tantrums. So we drove to Hatu Peak, 15 km away, via curvy roads bordered with blue pines, sturdy soaring cedars, fir and spruce; past silent feral forests inhabited, we felt, by mythical creatures.

At 11,000 ft, the air was fresh with a piney fragrance and we stumbled on a quaint temple with a tiered slate roof and an exquisite wood-carved façade. The temple seemed to languish in its own pool of serenity, detached from the world around. The snow-capped Himalayas arched across the northern horizon but when we were there, they were smudged with mist and clouds.



Anuradha and Kartik Budhraj  
set up their dream project  
Kotgarh Fruit Bageecha in Thanedar

We decided to walk down part of the way and so mesmer-ic were the views that we stopped at a local *dhaba* to take it all in. A bearded silver, with skin that resembled dried tobacco leaves, sat on a rough-hewn bench philosophising about the world. Two young men were preparing *momo* for him. Suddenly, one of them sat back on his haunches and exclaimed: “This is paradise on earth... so much beauty in one’s own land.” The silver nodded in agreement, but added a rider. “Remember, this world is an illusion. Real paradise can only be glimpsed after death,” he said, sipping his tea meditatively. Indeed, most of the locals we met were friendly and accepting of strangers, and grateful for the beauty that surrounds them.

Stokes was not the only one to fall in love with Thanedar. We met Anuradha and Kartik Budhraj—media professionals working in Singapore—who came to Thanedar on a holiday and fell in love with the place. This, they decided, was the place to set up their dream project: a boutique food processing unit. Three years on, the Kotgarh Fruit Bageecha is on track and has become a brand in the arena of fruits and preserves. Handcrafted at 7,500 ft in the midst of India’s first and finest fruit orchards, their products seem to trap in their juicy depths the bounty of this fertile fruit belt. The lip-smacking green apple and ginger chutney, Xmas plum preserve, chunky Kiwi preserve with star anise, wild apricot preserve—they are all a labour of love.

For the duo, now in their late 30s, the Kotgarh Fruit Bageecha is a passion and, even today, they are taken aback by the flagrantly beautiful sunsets that set the mountains afire. They live in a rented cottage on the Stokes estate with their two dogs; on the periphery, jackals, foxes and even leopards lope, with a jackal once gate-crashing into their kitchen. But they have no regrets about their lifestyle choice or the harsh winters.

Now as much a part of the landscape as the mountains themselves, Anuradha and Kartik reflect the glow of

## factfile

### WHEN TO GO

Thanedar is a year-round destination. However, it can snow heavily in January-February and there are showers in July-August.

### WHAT TO SEE

In terms of sightseeing, apart from Hatu Peak and St Mary’s Church, there’s Tani Jubbar Lake with the Nag Devta temple and the Saroga Forest for a refreshing morning walk. The Parmjyotir temple built by Stokes in the Pahari style and the Bhimakali temple in Sarahan are worth seeing.

### GETTING THERE

**By air:** The closest airport is at Chandigarh, from where one can drive to Shimla (122 km) and then onward to Thanedar, located 80 km from Shimla on the old Hindustan-Tibet Road.

**By rail:** Take the narrow gauge Kalka-Shimla scenic train to Shimla, and drive down from there.

### ACCOMMODATION

The Banjara Orchard Retreat is the only choice in Thanedar ([www.banjaracamps.com](http://www.banjaracamps.com)):  
Tel: (0)9816747541, 1782222265  
email: [info@banjaracamps.com](mailto:info@banjaracamps.com)

Narkanda, 17 km away, has many more options:  
The Himalayan Inn & Restaurant: Tel: (0)1782242462  
Tethys Ski Resort: Tel: (0)1782242641

For more information, visit the official website of the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation at [hptdc.nic.in](http://hptdc.nic.in)

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contentment that comes from living in sync with nature, unfazed by the hailstorms that pelt down at times and damage crops; the severe winters which transform the landscape into a white wonderland; the sight of the eternal mountains needling the blue skies with their jagged peaks; dense forests with floors mushy with pine needles and maple leaves; and the lower mountain slopes studded with apple and cherry orchards where plump fruit hangs temptingly from groaning bough.

It’s a world that Satyananda Stokes, and many after him, fell in love with; a world that induces a sense of awe at nature’s bounty and occasional capriciousness. ❀



## Craft route

Passengers travelling by the Delhi Metro were in for a treat last month when the Race Course Road station assumed the avatar of an art gallery. Forty-eight blown-up prints of intricately detailed craft maps highlighting the arts, crafts and textile identity of Indian states will now permanently grace the station's walls. Conceptualised by Jaya Jaitly, founder and director of Dastkari Haat Samiti, the maps were created in collaboration with graphic designers and artists from their respective states.

**craft**

Drawing attention to the dynamic nature of traditional art, terracotta stars emerge from the map of Haryana, papier-mâché sculptures form the lakes and mountains of Jammu and Kashmir, and Jharna Patachitra and Kalighat styles of painting depict West Bengal. "After the maps were completed in 2010, we had presented them to the Crafts Museum, Delhi, which didn't have enough space to display them," Jaitly tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. "In the context of a journey, we have put them up in the metro station and commuters can learn about the arts, crafts and textiles in their states in the time between catching trains."





Courtesy: Utkarsh Mazumdar

# Stagecraft

Theatre veteran Utkarsh Mazumdar tells **Delaveen Tarapore** how he explores himself through his various roles

For over four decades, he has been delighting theatre connoisseurs with his stage presence and dramatic flair. Indeed, Utkarsh Mazumdar is a name to reckon with in Gujarati, Hindi and English theatre today. The 61 year-old is also one of the biggest exponents of the Bhangwadi style, a unique form of theatre that infuses live music and dance to spice up its dramatic quotient. "Fusing modern compositions with well-known poems is my forte," he says.

While his strength lies in musical theatre, Mazumdar is also at ease with modern expressions, giving him the unique experience of performing across genres. In fact, his first stint in experimental theatre was as early as in 1973 in *Acha Ek Baar Aur*, directed by Satyadev Dubey, where he acted with Amrish Puri. Mazumdar has also explored the small screen space with a number of television serials, the most recent being *Samvidhaan: The Making of The Constitution of India* by Shyam Benegal, where he played Sardar

Vallabhbhai Patel. Mazumdar has also showed his acting prowess on screen in Hindi films such as *Satya*, *Shikhar*, *Parzania* and Gujarati films such as *Harun-Arun* and *Saptapdi*, besides featuring in an English film *B-flat*, directed by Brazilian director Mariana Youssef.

Mazumdar showed his finesse and dynamic spirit recently in *Maro Piyu Gayo Rangoon*, a Gujarati adaption of Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Black with Equal*, a topical play that reflects the proceedings



of a cooperative housing society's meeting in which he plays the role of a secretary. We meet Mazumdar at his modest home situated in the boulevards of Mumbai's Peddar Road, where he shares his treasure of experiences in singing and acting. Excerpts from the interview:

**Tell us a little about the origin of Gujarati theatre and the beginning of your theatrical journey.**

Gujarati theatre originated as early as 1853 during British rule in Bombay, which was further fuelled by the efforts of Parsis and Gujaratis in the city. As audiences were looking at theatre as a means to relax and unwind, the musical form of theatre gradually took over thanks to its fun quotient. In 1953, there was a spurt in the growth of commercial Gujarati theatre as cinema was yet popular. When I was in school, I developed a keen interest in music. My theatrical journey began in school with a musical play *Underi, Ganderi, Tipri, Teen* that went on to do 25 shows in various cities. Later on, I used to perform various skits with my Parsi friends with whom I loved rehearsing.

**What are the popular genres in Gujarati theatre?**

The main aspect of Gujarati theatre responsible for garnering major footfalls is the humour quotient. Though it's hard to imagine a Gujarati play without a comedy scene, these days plays with a strong social message are also garnering interest. However, traditional Gujarati theatre has always been popular owing to its songs and humour element and will continue to be in the future.

**Why are the number of regional plays dwindling today?**

Definitely, the audiences. In fact, a large number of today's generation fail to understand their

mother tongues. Today, English has a universal acceptance that has led to youngsters getting attracted to English theatre. In spite of this challenge, after Marathi theatre, it is Gujarati theatre that runs the most number of shows in Mumbai.

**What is Bhangwadi theatre? Please share your experiences in this style of theatre.**

Literally meaning 'opium dwelling', Bhangwadi theatre was run by Gujaratis and Parsis who traded in opium and cannabis [*bhang*] in the bustling streets of Kalbadevi in Mumbai in the early 1800s. Bhangwadi theatre infused the unique quotient of live music and dance in every drama. The

"The main aspect of Gujarati theatre responsible for garnering major footfalls is the humour quotient... these days plays with a strong social message are also garnering interest"

musicians would not tire of delivering encores and audiences used to join the actors in humming their tunes. Though this style was hugely popular from 1875 to 1979, it gradually disintegrated owing to the changing tastes of audiences and shortage of singer-actors. Bhangwadi style plays that I have performed include *Master Phoolmani*, a modern musical, and *Maro Piyu Gayo Rangoon*, which was performed twice at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, London.

**How do you feel about experimental theatre?**

Unlike commercial theatre, experimental theatre does not work

on a large scale because of two main reasons. First, people are averse to experimenting with new ideas; they feel safe with time-tested methods. Second, there isn't much money in it owing to the uncertainty about the response. Experimental theatre is a bit emotionally heavy and usually taps into the aesthetic parts of our lives. There is good scope for experimental theatre in English because of fresh ideas from young actors and willingness from younger audiences to explore new subjects.

**Please share some of your best theatrical memories.**

A particular Gujarati play that is engrained in my memory is *Masterful Money* in which I acted and grooved to old Bollywood songs. The audience got so engrossed in the play that they started to sing and hum along with me. *Jagi Ne Joun Toh* [*When I Get Up And See*] by Narsi Mehta is another unforgettable play. The two-hour, one-man show was completely written in verse, thereby leaving no scope for mistakes or improvisation.

**How does delving deep into the skin of a character affect your life?**

When you do a role, you tend to get engrossed in it because you are living the life of that character. I explore myself through these various roles. While a positive role gives me a way to express my feelings, a negative role also helps me open up and let go. I have indeed passed many hurdles on a personal level through acting.

**What are your current and upcoming projects?**

I have been working on the English play *Wedding Album*, a satirical black comedy, apart from *Black With Equal* and *Maro Piyu Gayo Rangoon*. I am also working on the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Raees*.

Photographs courtesy: Hast Karigar Society



## A lasting impression

Traditional craftsmen and tribal artisans from states such as Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar showcased their exquisite handmade products in 'Impressions', an exhibition-cum-sale in Mumbai earlier this month. An assorted collection of products such as Lambani jewellery, Machilipatnam hand block prints and Pattachitra paintings delighted connoisseurs of ethnic products. "Impressions is a marketing avenue for artisans to test the market for retail sale and exports," says Sarmistha Lahiri, secretary of Hast Karigar Society, which has been organising the exhibition at various cities for the past seven years. "The exhibitions provide long-term livelihood for the artisans and allow them to indulge freely in their craft." Catch a glimpse of the next exhibition at Rotary Bal Bhavan in Panampilly Nagar, Kochi, 2-7 December.



ABU

## LADY LAUGHTER

The best tool to aid deadpan comedy is the power of observation. Author N Meera Raghavendra Rao's newest offering *Chennai Collage* (Palaniappa Brother; ₹ 125; 105 pages) is a social commentary and lighter take on the disparate vignettes of the sunny city. Rao completed the book in just seven weeks, right in time for the 376<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Madras on August 22. "When I saw the call for entries for Madras Authors' Festival, I immediately decided to write a book about the changes the city has undergone through the 40-odd years I have been living here." Owing to the immovable deadline, the experience, she says, "was like making all the arrangements for your daughter's wedding when the search for a bridegroom was still on", demonstrating her flair for funny metaphors. Her inspiration: the everyday behaviour of people in public places, during shopping, at weddings, and even her "husband's loving digs" at her. Her style: free flowing, yet brusque; brief, yet nuanced.





# He nailed it!

**S**urrounded by iron nails, thread rolls, paint tubes, and handyman tools in his workshop, P Mohanudu is excited like a child in a candy store. A charge-man at Perambur Loco Works suburban railway station in Chennai by day, Mohanudu returns home every evening to immerse himself in his unique brand of 'nail art'. By hammering nails along the outline drawn on a plywood board, Mohanudu creates portraits, pictures of objects and abstract art with 3D effect by fastening coloured threads to the nails and winding them across the board. A small picture of a boat can take just 40 minutes and 350 nails to complete, while his biggest piece yet—a portrait of Sai Baba— took him two months and 8,000 nails.

**art**

"When I started making this art 30 years ago, I saw a lot of craftsmen using stones and sequins to create intricate work. That's how the idea of nail art struck me," says the 59 year-old, who religiously spends three hours a day in his workshop. The first piece took him over 20 hours to complete, and he admits that he learnt the most from it. Along with physical strength, Mohanudu's art demands patience, planning and precision skills. "One nail fastened in the wrong place can change everything." The winner of the Poompuhar District Crafts Awards in 2011-2012 now wants to introduce the craft among older children. While few schools have evinced interest in the project, Mohanudu has started giving free classes to children in his neighbourhood. Can we call him



the inventor of this unique craft? "My limited interaction with the art fraternity in South India has made me believe that I am the first, but I am not sure," says Mohanudu, who displayed his works at an exhibition recently at Lalit Kala Akademi, Chennai. So, what keeps him going? "I enjoy what I am doing; I'm always thinking what my next piece of art should be and the ideas come from within."

—Jayanthi Somasundaram





Clockwise from top: Satyajit Ray on the sets of *Asami Sanket*, 1973; actor Smita Patil; a scene from *Ganashatru*, 1989



Photographs courtesy: Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum

## Through the lens

Best known as Satyajit Ray's photographer, Nemai Ghosh built a vast photographic archive in his decades-long association with the auteur. Alongside, he also extensively documented Hindi and Bengali cinema. The over 100,000 images Ghosh took in his career are now housed at the DAG (Delhi Art Gallery) Modern. Some iconic and unseen images of actors, scenes and sets from the collection were displayed in an exhibition, *Nemai Ghosh: Satyajit Ray & Beyond*, at Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai from 9 October to 3 November. "Ghosh's consistent documentation of the work of Satyajit Ray and Indian cinema is both an aesthetic delight and a significant record of this period in Indian cinema," says Ashish Anand, managing director of DAG Modern. "We are showcasing the images through thematic exhibitions, of which this is the first."



***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***

***BUTTERFLIES*** *never retire*

**The first click of the mouse.**

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# Indira and I

On Indira Gandhi's 98th birth anniversary, **Raj Kanwar** remembers her as a suave and courteous young lady with an inimitable fashion sense

**M**y first meeting with Indira Gandhi happened sometime in the late 1950s when the Gandhi boys, Rajiv and Sanjay, were at Doon School and their mother was a frequent visitor to Dehra Dun to meet them. Sometimes she came alone, while on other occasions she accompanied her father, prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Indira Gandhi was my sister Neel Kamal's idol; she admired Gandhi's sense of fashion and the elegant way in which she draped her saris. "You are a journalist and can easily meet Indira Gandhi," Kamal insisted, and coaxed me to take her along to see Gandhi.

The opportunity came a week later on 19 November, when both Nehru and Gandhi were visiting Dehra Dun and were staying as usual at Circuit House. So, that morning, my sister and I arrived at Circuit House a little before 10 am. Kamal was farsighted enough to knit a blouse for Gandhi. Those were the balmy days when the dreaded word 'security' had not yet entered the political jargon. If you wanted to meet a VVIP, you simply called on them. The Circuit House animate fixture Ram Prasad accosted me in the veranda. "*Aap Panditji se milna chahate ho?*" he asked. "*Nahin, mein aur meri behan Indiraji ko happy birthday karne aayen hein,*" was my answer.

Gandhi was still in her suite. Fifteen minutes later, she appeared in graceful splendour. It was our first face-to-face meeting with Indiraji. Holding her nerves, my sister first introduced herself and then me in Hindi. We duly presented the knitted blouse to the 'birthday girl'!

How we were able to break the ice, spend nearly half an hour with her over tea and even got ourselves photographed with her is a long story that I have repeatedly told over the years. After the meeting, Gandhi left for the school to fetch her sons and take them out for a treat at Kwality, which was then the popular place for a rendezvous in Dehra Dun.

Subsequently, I met Indiraji whenever she visited Dehra Dun, and also did a few stories on her. From being an

acquaintance, I had graduated to being a friend of sorts. My academic background and the fact that I was a prominent student leader had obviously impressed her, and she started liking me and talking about many things. Once, she even invited me to join the Youth Congress, presumably in a position of responsibility. But, as was my wont, I declined the proffered offer. Ideologically, I was then more inclined towards the Praja Socialist Party.

Indira Gandhi's link with Dehra Dun had become stronger since her sons studied here. They were first put in Dehra Dun's Welham Preparatory School for Boys and thereafter moved to Doon School. In the process, she had developed very good personal relations with Hersilia Susie Oliphant, Welham's founder and the first principal. She had become equally friendly with Doon School headmaster John Martyn, as also with K C Joshi and Dr Hari Dutt Bhatt, successive housemasters at Kashmir House, where the two boys were housed. However, it went to her credit that she did not ever throw her weight around, and was very polite, courteous, and observed all the rules and regulations at the school. Never once did she seek favours or break the school's protocol. When headmaster Martyn sought the withdrawal of Sanjay for telling a lie, she quietly withdrew the 'admonished boy' without demur or ill will.

In the meantime, I had become a rolling stone. First, I moved to Delhi as a reporter on the staff of *The Indian Express*. Thereafter, I joined the Himachal Pradesh government as editor in the Directorate of Public Relations and Tourism. My next job was as the first public relations officer (PRO) of Oil & Natural Gas Commission (ONGC). I was posted in Baroda to help start operations in Gujarat. My next posting was in Sibsagar in Assam. Scared of spending all my life in a government company, I resigned and came to Calcutta, where I immediately found a job in a leading private company as advertising manager. Though the job was lucrative and provided me many social opportunities, I was then a bachelor and very homesick. The green valley repeatedly beckoned me. So I again put in my papers and returned to Dehra Dun.

Thereafter, I launched *Witness*, a newsweekly, on 15 August 1964, which had a successful run. It was then



that I resumed my contacts both with Nehru and Indiraji. Meanwhile, Rajiv left Doon School in 1960 and Sanjay in 1961. With her sons having left the school, Gandhi's visits to Dehra Dun became minimal. During those days, I only met her two or three times; the old warmth though seemed to have returned.

My last meeting with Indiraji was in May 1964 when prime minister Nehru had come to Dehra Dun for rest and recuperation after suffering a stroke on 8 January at the Bhubaneshwar AICC session. She had accompanied her *Papu* to Dehra Dun to look after him. When I met her, she expressed her concern and anxiety about *Papu's* health, but I reassured her that he was quite happy in Dehra Dun and would soon regain health.

Nehru and his Indu spent four days in Dehra Dun's salubrious climate; Nehru met one of his old friends, Sri Prakasa, and seemed to be in good spirits. As the sun set yonder beyond on the evening of 26 May, Nehru and Indira took off for Delhi. None in the assembled gathering at the helipad could have imagined that it was to be Nehru's last sunset. India's first prime minister and the darling of the masses, Nehru did not wake up the following morning. It was befitting that Nehru had spent his last four days in Dehra Dun, the city he loved immensely.

Indira's life was truly a rollercoaster ride with its ups and downs. At times, she was at the pinnacle of glory and power, and then suddenly she would be rolling down as if from a precipice. She remained the prime minister of India for a total of 5,829 days, spread over three tenures. The declaration of Emergency on 25 June 1975 was a black spot on Gandhi's otherwise bright image. However, on the whole, she was considered one of the most competent prime ministers India ever had. This was proved to the hilt when she returned to power with a massive majority in the 1980 elections.

The Indira Gandhi that I knew was suave and courteous, and never imperious. She was very polite with the staff at Circuit House where she lived whenever she was in town; she was extremely respectful to seniors as also the masters at Doon School. That was the Indira Gandhi I had known. I did not have the opportunity to meet her after she became India's prime minister. I sent her a few letters, which remained unanswered, and were probably not even delivered to her. When she was tragically assassinated on 31 October 1984, I shed many tears and wondered what would have happened had our friendly relations continued.

---

*The writer is a veteran journalist based in Dehradun*



Kanwar and his sister Neel Kamal with Indira Gandhi

Courtesy: Raj Kanwar

# Adolescent adventures

We ring in **Jawaharlal Nehru**'s birth anniversary with an excerpt from his autobiography *Toward Freedom*, published in 1936

When I was about eleven, a new resident tutor, Ferdinand T Brooks, came and took charge of me. He was partly Irish (on his father's side), and his mother had been a Frenchwoman or a Belgian. He was a keen theosophist who had been recommended to my father by Mrs Annie Besant. For nearly three years he was with me, and in many ways he influenced me greatly. The only other tutor I had at the time was a dear old Pandit who was supposed to teach me Hindi and Sanskrit. After many years' effort the Pandit managed to teach me extraordinarily little, so little that I can only measure my pitiful knowledge of Sanskrit with the Latin I learned subsequently at Harrow. The fault no doubt was mine. I am not good at languages, and grammar has had no attraction for me whatever.

Brooks developed in me a taste for reading, and I read a great many English books, though rather aimlessly. I was well up in children's and boys' literature; the Lewis Carroll books were great favourites, and *The Jungle Book* and *Kim*. I was fascinated by Gustave Dore's illustrations to *Don Quixote*, and Fridtjof Nansen's *Farthest North* opened up a new realm of adventure to me. I remember reading many of the novels of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, H G Wells's romances, Mark Twain, and the Sherlock Holmes stories. I was thrilled by *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and Jerome K Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* was for me the last word in humour. Another book stands out still in my memory; it was Du Maurier's *Trilby*; also *Peter Ibbetson*. I also developed a liking for poetry, a liking which has to some extent endured and survived the many other changes to which I have been subject.

Brooks also initiated me into the mysteries of science. We rigged up a little laboratory, and there I used to spend long and interesting hours working out experiments in elementary physics and chemistry. Apart from my studies, Brooks brought a new influence to bear upon me which affected me powerfully for a while. This was theosophy. He used to have weekly meetings of theosophists in his rooms, and I attended them and gradually imbibed theo-

sophical phraseology and ideas. There were metaphysical arguments, and discussions about reincarnation and the astral and other supernatural bodies, and auras, and the doctrine of karma, and references not only to big books by Madame Blavatsky and other theosophists but to the Hindu scriptures, the Buddhist *Dhammapada*, Pythagoras, Apollonius Tyanaeus, and various philosophers and mystics. I did not understand much that was said, but it all sounded very mysterious and fascinating, and I felt that

here was the key to the secrets of the universe. For the first time I began to think, consciously and deliberately, of religion and other worlds. The Hindu religion especially went up in my estimation; not the ritual or ceremonial part, but its great books, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. I did not understand them, of course, but they seemed very wonderful. I dreamed of astral bodies and imagined myself flying vast distances. This dream of flying high up in the air (without any appliance) has indeed been a frequent one throughout my life; and sometimes it has been vivid and realistic and the countryside seemed to lie underneath me in a vast panorama. I do not know how


the modern interpreters of dreams, Freud and others, would interpret this dream.

Soon after Brooks left me I lost touch with theosophy, and in a remarkably short time (partly because I went to school in England) theosophy left my life completely. But I have no doubt that those years left a deep impress upon me.

Soon, I was fourteen. Changes were taking place in our house. My older cousins, having become professional men, were leaving the common home and setting up their own households separately. Fresh thoughts and vague fancies were floating in my mind, and I began to take a little more interest in the opposite sex. I still preferred the company of boys and thought it a little beneath my dignity to mix with groups of girls. But sometimes at Kashmiri parties, where pretty girls were not lacking, or elsewhere, a glance or a touch would thrill me.





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, reaching out towards him. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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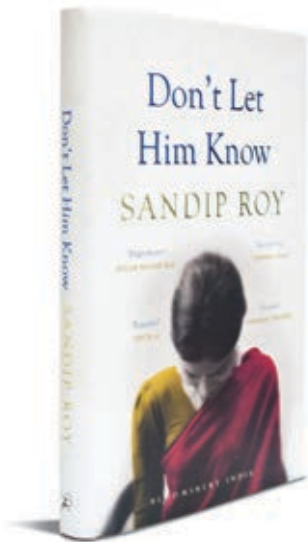
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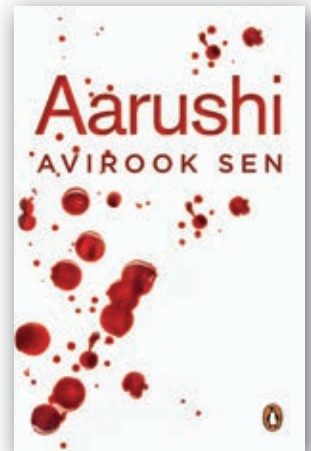
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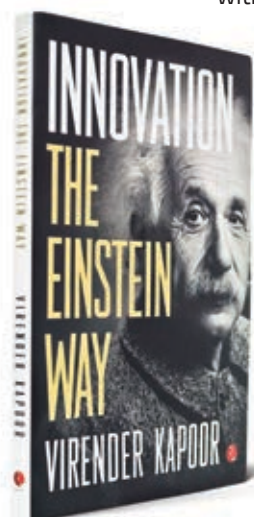


The beauty of **Sandip Roy's** debut novel **DON'T LET HIM KNOW** (Bloomsbury; ₹ 499, 246 pages) is that it's complete both in whole as well as in parts. Breaking new ground, Roy's narrative reads as much a novel as a collection of short stories, with many of the chapters previously published as standalone stories in international magazines, and nursing a life of their own. Yet, they seamlessly blend into each other. This, indeed, is the novel's biggest strength. Through non-linear storytelling that jumps time and territory, Roy spins the story of a Bengali family caught between social mores and individual freedom. While a strong sense of duty and tradition helps them stick together, Romola Mitra and Avinash, and their son Amit, fight their own individual inner demons. Moving from adolescent rooftop games to adult encounters in gay bars, the novel deals with not just sexuality but love and loss, and the sacrifices we make for our loved ones. At the heart of the novel is a secret letter with the potential to turn their lives upside down. This is an evocative tale of family loyalty, and love that must stay secret.

Seven years after the sensational double murders in Noida's Jalvayu Vihar, **Aviroom Sen's AARUSHI** (Penguin; ₹ 299, 302 pages) presents a chilling account of the ills plaguing our legal system. It also lays bare the sloppy and shoddy investigation and the insensitive handling of the case. Refreshingly, Sen makes no effort to play the detective. Instead, he lets his book—painstakingly detailed with narco-analysis and forensic reports, CBI notes, inconsistencies in testimonies of key witnesses and recorded interviews—do the talking. However, right from the outset it's exceedingly clear that Sen's sympathies are with the Talwars, who he is convinced had nothing to do with the murders, but were victims of a systematic subversion of investigative and legal procedures. Sen, who reported on the case for two-and-a-half years for a tabloid, catalogues the investigative errors, including the mis-labelling of a pillowcase stained with Hemraj's blood found in a servant's room, the loss of a DNA swab that could have concluded whether Aarushi had been raped, the tampering of specimens and pictures from the scene of crime, and what he believed was a premeditated judgment by a judge who wanted to deliver a historic verdict before his retirement. Perhaps the most telling comment in the book is the confession by late CBI officer A G L Kaul to a scientist in CFSL, "Madam, if we had placed all your tests on record, the case would have turned upside down." What Sen fails to answer in conclusive terms, though, is why the CBI chose to ignore the obvious.



**INNOVATION - THE EINSTEIN WAY** (Rupa; ₹ 195; 114 pages) by **Virender Kapoor** has a rather misleading title—the book is a simplistic account of Albert Einstein's values in life. Though it has little to do with his innovative abilities, what Kapoor brings forth is the human persona behind the Einstein enigma and encourages the reader to live life the way Einstein did. It is easy to believe that Albert Einstein viewed the physical and material world



with careful consideration. Kapoor reiterates that he was not just one of the most imaginative scientists in the world, but a conscientious person who valued humility, altruism, humour, imagination and simple living. However, one gets the feeling Kapoor is in absolute awe of Einstein, such that he would not acknowledge his shortcomings. Yes, Einstein was human and to err was in his nature—just as it is in ours. For instance, towards the later years of his career, when quantum mechanics was exciting physicists the world over, Einstein famously dismissed it, saying, "My God does not play with dice." Ironical, as he is considered one of its founders. In his final years, he distanced himself from fellow physicists who moved on to new thoughts that delved into nature's probability. Acknowledging this final event in Einstein's life would have complemented Kapoor's account well.

# Paging the past

For many writers, narrating the past is a romantic engagement that swings between an authentic telling of the events and an imaginative recollection. Rarely do we come across a work so fascinating that it allows readers a dispassionate look at history. The multifaceted **Sir William Robert Ferdinand Mount**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet of Wasing, does precisely that in his latest book, *The Tears of the Rajas: Mutiny, Money and Marriage in India 1805-1905* (Simon & Schuster; ₹ 522; 784 pages); a distinct departure from his previous 22 books, including *The New Few* (2012), *Cold Cream* (2010), *Full Circle* (2008), and *Mind the Gap* (2004). Better known as Ferdinand Mount, the 76 year-old internationally renowned author and columnist-editor has also served as head of Margaret Thatcher's prime ministerial policy unit. Related to the present British Prime Minister David Cameron as well, Mount is acknowledged by friends and colleagues alike as a quintessentially nice man.

A controversial look at the British in India, *The Tears of the Rajas* is centred on the trials and triumphs of a single Scottish family, the Lows, who happen to be the author's ancestors. The book, Mount says, "is not a biography or even a group biography. It is more like a collection of Indian tales". Tapping into personal writings—letters, diaries and memoirs—the author brings alive the past. In an exclusive interview to **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the illustrious London-based writer reveals how his magnum opus, soaked in imagery and full of surprises, came about.

**Is the book an attempt to set the record straight regarding British supremacy in India?**

I didn't set out either to justify or to condemn any specific aspect of the British rule in India. I only hoped to ferret out some truth. To put it in other words, at the start I had no idea how the book would shape up.

**Does the title refer to the expression 'The Tears of the Rajas' in the correspondence by your forefather John Low?**

No, the phrase just came to me, since in episode after episode—at Poona, Bithur, Lucknow, Gwalior, and Hyderabad—the implacable demands of the British officials led to the shedding of helpless tears by many Rajas.

**Did Ursula Low's book inspire *The Tears of the Rajas*?**

Yes, it certainly did, and my book is partly homage to Aunt Ursie, to make up a little for the neglect she suffered in her lifetime.

## authorspeak



**Given the expanse of this work, how did you plan the research?**

There was no preformed plan; only a thirst to find out more, and then to find more about the more. The whole enterprise took between four and five years.

**How did you decide upon the titles of the chapters?**

Again, these chapter titles just come to you as you go along, in this case after you have read a thousand pages about baronets and bad mutton!

**Was there an attempt to change your style of writing for this book?**

No, for good or ill, I just write as I always do, or at least I think I do.

**Does the book aim to engage a particular kind of readership?**

The book is meant for everyone in India and Britain, or indeed anywhere, who is intrigued by the experience of the British Raj.

**While detailing events and characters, did you visualise the same, considering that the book is also an exercise in reviving familial memories?**

The places where things happen in the book—the Red Fort, the Residencies, the Imambaras—are so wonderful, and the leading characters—the weeping nawabs, the devious proconsuls, the implacable brigadiers—so indelibly



colourful that their images haunt you and demand to be reflected in words.

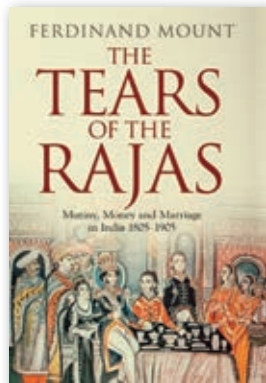
**What remained unequivocally paramount to you, both as a writer and a descendent, while writing this book? Was the experience vaguely cathartic?**

Yes, I do think 'cathartic' is the word. After finishing it, I feel that for me personally a whole load of stuff that had been shut away in the attic and was beginning to make the floorboards creak has been taken down into the daylight and dusted off.

**How did your visits to India change or reinforce your impressions of the country and its people?**

My visits to India have been, by some margin, the most overwhelming foreign travels I have ever had. I'm not sure which is the more overwhelming: the strangeness of India or its beauty.

**Now that the book is out, are there regrets or reconsiderations on any aspect that you think could have been improved upon?**



I could have taken more time and gone deeper into certain crucial questions like land tenure and taxation, but that would have made the book longer still. It is already close to the upper limits of bearable length, if not beyond them!

**How has writing on the Raj transitioned from popular reads like MM Kaye's *The Far Pavilions*, John Masters' *The Deceivers*, William Dalrymple's trilogy and Patrick French's *Younghusband*? Where would you position your book in the trajectory?**

After Indian Independence, there was, I think, a certain pause, even a great silence on the subject of the Raj, born in Britain at least of a mixture of exhaustion and embarrassment. Now I think there is a growing eagerness to recover as much as we can of our shared past, whatever the consequences. My book is one small part of that.

**What is your next book all about?**

I'm trying to write a book about the dozen most influential political thinkers in history and what's wrong with each one of them.

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# Shift happens

Embracing the fact that one cannot control everything can be redeeming, says **Susan B Winston**

**M**y 87 year-old mom is as hip as they come. She looks 60, acts 20 and, despite her hard work at staying young, she has admitted that she now “despises this generation” for becoming mired in electronics she cannot figure out. Mom has always been a first responder, meaning she will buy anything that is new. That does not mean she is ever going to use it.

As kids, my brother and I remember this syndrome existing in the refrigerator. If there was a new product, we had it whether or not anyone would ever eat it. Life was filled with new packages. We still laugh at the line-up of salad dressings my mother continues to purchase. If ever a salad dressing has come on the market, we own it. Apparently they have a shelf life longer than my mom's lifeline. The other thing that lives forever in the fridge is nail polish. If you are looking for a unique colour, just stop over at our home and ask Marge. Apparently, leaving nail polish in the refrigerator keeps it fresh. My mom has nail polish older than I am. You can use this information to astound all your friends.

So mom transferred her purchasing obsession to the electronic world. She bought a computer she did not touch for years, but she had one. She has never had a cell phone she could manage to use. For that matter, in the past 20 years she has not had a hard-wire phone that she can use. Calling my mom, assuming she has figured out how to answer the phone, you are met with a verbal barrage of how her unnamed phone company has mangled her phone and how she can never hear a word on her cell phone. It is endless. Whenever a grandchild visits, they spend the entire time trying to get grandma to press the correct button or turn off the mute button or adjust the volume. She would be happier with smoke signals.

My mom has a car that does everything except cook for her. You would have thought that the manufacturers built this car specifically to confound her. From the Bluetooth to the keyless start button, mom finds the whole thing

infuriating and worthy of some choice words. I would hate to be her leasing agent.

While my mom does whine about email and the Web, wireless and keyless functions, Bluetooth and green play icons, I understand her frustration and that of her octogenarian friends. This is new and they did not grow up with the primer of Pac-man and Super Mario for a start. But if she would practise more learning and less whining, she and her buddies could conquer this brave new plug-and-play world. Mom, you are smart and vital and mastering the art of just a few buttons or a touch pad will be the answer to all your complaints. Mom, do you hear me? Mom? Mom—mom, you have to turn the phone on first. Just press that little button on the bottom—ah, now you've got it.



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*Extracted from [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com). Winston is an American award-winning television producer, writer and psychotherapist*



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# Notes to numbers

Today, it's difficult to imagine a world without the ubiquitous CDs and DVDs that have brought movies, music and stored data to the palm of your hand. Digital storage began its journey in a rudimentary form as an optical disc in 1965, when James T Russell, an American engineer and audiophile with a huge music collection, was perturbed one lazy afternoon listening to the poor quality of sound emanating from his vinyl record. It didn't take him much to realise that the friction from the stylus was responsible for degrading the recorded material over time, reducing the quality of the sound. The solution, he understood, lay in using a light to read the music without physically touching the disc. Having already designed and built the first electron beam welder, he decided to fix this audio problem with his electron solution to create a recording device that would never touch the material, and could deliver top quality music after thousands of hours of listening. He also realised that if he could make the binary code compact enough, not just symphonies, but entire encyclopaedias could be stored on a small piece of film. That, in short, is the story of the birth of the first digital disc.

Russell patented the first digital-to-optical recording and playback system in 1970, and while refining his invention, earned another 25 patents for himself and Battelle Laboratory, where he worked. However, like all ideas ahead of their time, the compact disc too did not find takers until Philips and Sony got involved by mass manufacturing it by 1980. Thus began the shift from analogue music recordings—LPs and tapes—to the digital medium. Further, given their compactness, the discs were far more convenient to carry and store than vinyl records. In due course, CD technology was weaved into the computer storage industry for saving files and images.

Over the years, Russell has continued to create and patent improvements in optical storage systems and bar code scanners. His other inventions include liquid crystal shutters, industrial optical instruments and, most important, the Optical Random Access Memory device: the high-speed optical data recorder and player with no moving parts. Today, Russell has more than 50 patents to his credit, a long journey from the day he had a hard time convincing sceptics that music could indeed be converted into numbers and back!

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: NOVEMBER 1965

- On 15 November, American racer Craig Breedlove set a new land speed record of 966.574 km per hour.
- On 17 November, the term 'stagflation' was coined by British politician Iain Macleod to denote high inflation combined with unemployment and a stagnant economy.
- On 22 November, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was established as a specialised agency of the United Nations.
- On 27 November, tens of thousands of Vietnam War protesters picketed the White House.

The secret of genius is to carry the spirit of the child into old age, which means never losing your enthusiasm.

—English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

## Small-footprint living

*n.* A lifestyle that minimises one's impact on the environment.

**Example.** Given their lower income relative to previous generations, many urban Millennials favour **small-footprint living**: studios, a few one-bedrooms, some congregate housing, and micro-units.

—A-P Hurd, "How outdated parking laws price families out of the city", *The Atlantic*, 7 August 2014

## Virtue signalling

*pp.* Using words, actions, or symbols to indicate to other people that you are a good person or that you hold certain values.

**Example.** "My point was this whole culture of **virtue-signalling** where debates are about nothing. Look, Republicans all agree 100 per cent that we are pro-Israel, pro-life, pro-gun. So why do we spend so much time on these issues? It's just pandering, so who are they pandering to?"

—Jay Michaelson, "Ann Coulter defends 'f--king Jews' rant", *The Daily Beast*, 17 September 2015

## Boomerang CEO

*n.* A chief executive officer who returns to the company from which he or she previously retired or was fired.

**Example.** Well, if commentators had looked at the track record of returning CEOs—**boomerang CEOs**, as they're sometimes called—that's precisely what they'd have predicted. A 2014 study found that profitability at companies run by boomerang CEOs fell slightly, and an earlier study detected no significant difference in long-term performance between firms that reappointed a former CEO and ones that hired someone new.

—James Surowiecki, "The comeback conundrum", *The New Yorker*, 21 September 2015

## Purse dial

*v.* To place an unintended phone call by accidentally jostling, knocking, or applying pressure to a cell phone stored in a purse or handbag.

**Example.** The pocket dial—sometimes called the **purse dial**, or referred to often more crassly as the 'butt dial'—is clearly still alive and well, despite the well-intended cell phone manufacturers that give us lock keys.

—Jennifer Leggio, "Action and intention—tough cell phone privacy lessons from pocket dial", *KoolSpan*, 29 July 2015

## Vanity metric

*n.* A measurement or score that is used to impress other people, but is not a true indicator of quality or success.

**Example.** Use the social web and all the popular social media channels to connect with people who you know, and people you would like to meet—your target audience. It's the same as a traditional networking event, network with like-minded individuals. The trick with this is all about finding the correct people to connect with. Don't be fooled with **vanity metrics** such as followers or the number of likes.

—Anton Koekemoer, "Setting goals on social media is absolutely imperative", *Memeburn*, 28 April 2015





BUZZ

Courtesy: Penciljammers

## Unleash your inner artist

Is there an artist in you waiting to get some company? Penciljammers could be your ticket. You don't need to be a professional; all you need are your tools and passion to register with this community platform set up to expand interest in the art of drawing.

At 'Weekend Sketch Club', an initiative by Penciljammers active in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, participants meet every Sunday to document urban spaces in graphite, pastels, watercolours, acrylics and oils. Once registered, you will receive an email that informs you about the venue with a Google map link and directions. You just need to bring along your sketchbooks and material. To join Penciljammers and for more details, go to [www.penciljammers.com](http://www.penciljammers.com)

“ Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth.

—Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD)

## FACT-RESISTANT

*adj.* Impervious to reason, counterexamples, or data, especially when they contradict one's opinions or values.

**Example.** According to the **fact-resistant** former secretary of defence and CIA director, Iraq and Syria today would be flourishing in peace and stability and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) would have been stillborn if only the United States had intervened more forcefully with military might.

—Bruce Fein, “Leon Panetta's foreign policy hallucinations”, The Washington Times, 7 October 2014

## Micropark

*n.* A small, usually temporary, public park set up in a street parking spot.

**Example.** In 2011, Mr. Gemignani had bamboo flooring, tables, brightly coloured cafe chairs and dwarf fig and olive trees installed on a platform that extends from the curb over the pavement. In this way, the parking spots are transformed into a **micro park**, or parklet. Since then, the Slice House's business has quadrupled, he says.

—Claire Martin, “When the parking space becomes a park”, The New York Times, 10 January 2015

## DISS TWEET

*n.* A disrespectful or insulting Twitter post.

**Example.** A web-law tutor says EasyJet threatened to stop him boarding a flight because he posted a tweet criticising the bargain-basement airline.

—Jaspar Hamill, “EasyJet wanted to fling me off flight for diss tweet, warns cyber-law buff”, The Register, 25 September 2013



## “It is a joy to feed the hungry”

**Mark D'souza, 57, Mumbai, delivers daily tiffin to silvers**

**A**s the clock strikes 12, **Mark D'souza** rushes home, collects 30-odd tiffin boxes packed by his wife, and races his Maruti Wagon R through the streets of Borivali, a Mumbai suburb, to reach multiple destinations before 2 pm. It's a routine he keenly looks forward to, just like the ailing silvers who avail of his special gesture. D'Souza and wife Yvonne have been playing good Samaritans for close to three years. “It was a random thought about life after retirement that set me thinking about silvers unable to fend for themselves,” says the 57 year-old realtor. The initial investment of ₹ 5,000 by Yvonne was utilised to buy tiffin boxes. Over the years, the numbers have gone up from five to 30. Each tiffin comprises three chapattis, rice, dal and one vegetable. On Wednesdays, there are eggs, while on Sundays, a meat dish is included for non-vegetarians. Apples and bananas are packed for those who want to munch on something post-lunch. Of course, the most important ingredient is love. “Right from the start, we decided that we won't charge anything and were particular that the tiffin reached only those who really deserved it,” he says. Sisters Perdita D'souza, 83, and Esperta Almeida, 80, who avail of the service, speak of how D'souza darts in daily with a broad smile. “We don't have to worry anymore about where our next meal will come from.” And why does he deliver the tiffin himself? “It's beautiful to catch the glint in their eyes!” replies D'souza. The only time he deputs a boy to deliver the tiffin is when he's off on his week-long annual sabbatical to the Vailankanni shrine in Tamil Nadu. When asked how he manages the expenditure in these inflationary times, D'souza says nonchalantly, “It's something I have left to God. Whatever we do, we should do with our full heart. God will do the rest!”

—Cheryl Ann Athaide

Haresh Patel



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