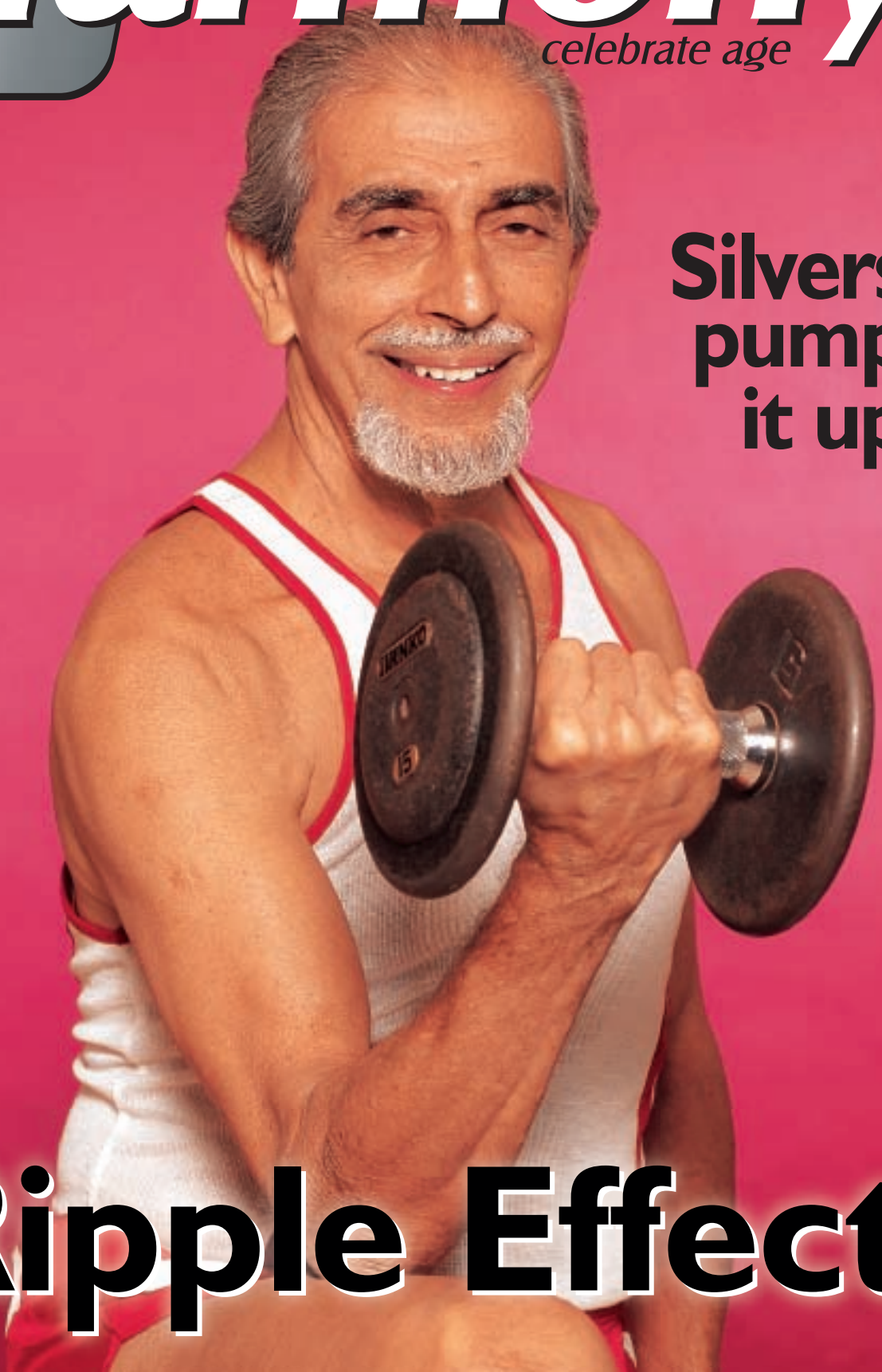


October 2004 Rs 20

harmony

celebrate age

**Silvers
pump
it up**



Ripple Effect

The right way

RITU NANDA



FIFTY-SEVEN YEARS AFTER Independence, it appears that ordinary citizens of India, silvers and others, have greater yearning for a functional, effective democracy than some of our leaders. Across the spectrum, many politicians are conducting themselves in an unseemly manner. Parliament is today a hostage of its own good intentions. Politics is reduced to name-calling. And in the rush to make headlines, the urgent need for social and economic development is tragically ignored. It is all deeply disturbing.

Much like other institutions whose work involves engaging government and society at large to make a better life for their constituents, we at *Harmony* are very concerned with the increasing lack of attention to crucial issues. Leaders talk glibly of social security, better healthcare and education, and

a better life for silvers—the stated mission of the Harmony initiative. But what does it all amount to, when Parliament is stalled over relatively trivial matters, which leads to blocking of legislation that could better our lives? What does it mean when discussion on key policy matters fails to progress? Basic accountability to the people is lost in the din of egos and non-issues.

We want to work with the government to change lives for tens of millions of India's silvers. But getting the smallest job done consumes so much time, there is so much red tape, so much misdirection. If we did not have your immense support, and our own sense of mission, I sometimes wonder if we would have the courage to continue, to urge our system to work and our leaders to lead.

For our part, we at *Harmony* have decided to go beyond quiet protests in private conversations. This is your voice, and we will together use it for the cause of silvers—even if, along the way, it means we occasionally voice our concerns about governance, political behaviour and political responsibility.

To make a significant change in the lives of so many, we need a proactive, committed, and viable system. We need performance and solutions. We need to deliver.

Tina Ambani

Managing Trustee of the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust: **Tina Ambani**

Harmony – Celebrate Age – October 2004 Volume 1 Issue 5

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from the desk

The belief that we can't do anything to forestall some of the physical changes that accompany ageing is a misconception. Research has shown that there's a virtual 'fountain of youth' to be found in exercise. High-intensity strength training is known to effectively turn back our biological clocks. As long as you have your doctor's okay, you can start reaping the rewards at any age. This month, *Harmony* trains its eyes on gymnasiums and profiles people who are pumping iron to stay healthy, and happy, in our cover story, "The Ripple Effect". Exercise may not provide you with more years, but it will certainly provide you with quality years.

Quality years are what our sports legends reminisce about in our photo essay, "Grandmasters". Defying clichés are cricketers Vijay Hazare and Mushtaq Ali whose role was to rescue the Indian innings whenever the top order came to grief; Manohar Aich, the first Mr Universe from India; grandfather of Indian tennis Sumant Misra; and hockey player Leo Pinto and Rajyashree Kumari of Bikaner, the daughter of four-time Olympian Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner. At the age of 16, she received the Arjuna Award on the same day as her father, and for the same sport—shooting.

Mehrunissa of Rampur, featured in our 'attitude' section, also feels she can hold a gun better than a ladle. It's an open field out there. So be inspired. Life is there for the taking.

—Meeta Bhatti

I read the third issue of *Harmony* with Zohra Sehgal on the cover and found the selection of articles good. Silver citizens like nothing better than to exchange their experiences in terms of professional and personal triumphs and disappointments. You should encourage this in the magazine. It would also benefit many younger people who may read the magazine. These experiences should not be only from high-profile citizens but common people too. Also, the professional expertise available with silver citizens should be given a place in the magazine. This can be helpful even for the government to formulate some of its policies. What's more, long articles should be discouraged. That way, you can pack much more into *Harmony*.

H S BHATIA

New Delhi

As a 78-year-old, I feel your magazine meets an important and social need, catering to 'silvers', whose population is growing thanks to the improvement in healthcare. The growing complexities and tensions of modern urban life do not make the twilight years easy, leaving most of us dependent on the care and affection of family members or charitable institutions for the old. Informed guidance on ways of taking care of ourselves and combating boredom would be great. You could cover a wide spectrum of hobbies, from painting to computers, Ham radio and indoor games. Also, some mechanism for coordination with agencies such as HelpAge



Group, the positive outlook of Bhimsen Joshi, and the indomitable spirit and cheer of Zohra Sehgal.

However, old age is not a song for most. In the past decade, a growing number of senior citizens have been left stranded at home while their children have gone in search of prosperity to the West. Though these seniors get regular remittances from abroad, loneliness and ill health do catch up. They need to interact with each other, to find solutions to their peculiar problems and, above all, to be in touch with their offspring.

These elders need specialised old-age homes, and most would be able to afford them. Can the Harmony initiative help set up such homes in the metros?

T V KRISHNAN, Chennai

Thank you for your letter. We have made a small beginning with our first Harmony Interactive Centre in Mumbai and are still in the process of understanding the different needs of silvers across the spectrum. Our eventual aim is to create composite, comprehensive facilities that serve the needs of every silver. Letters like yours will go far in helping us achieve this end.

—Tina Ambani

The letter of the month wins a gift from Vimal



India and Cheshire Homes could be considered.

B K RAI

New Delhi

Your articles on elderly people are exemplary and an inspiration for the younger generation. It would be nice if you could devote one page to good humour and wit, and include a good quotation.

P V SESHADRI

Kolkata

Please turn to page 94

—Editors

As a senior, I am pleased to have a magazine just for us. At a time when our children have flown from the nest, we are bound to feel lonely, and such magazines come in handy. Please include articles on spirituality, inspiring passages from the *Gita* and *shlokas*. How about contests for embroidery designs, cookery and general knowledge? Winning a prize would make us feel young and energetic!

M JAYALAXMI

New Delhi

Harmony is a commendable effort to bring elders back into the mainstream of life. In this regard, I would like to tell you about my parents, Rathna and S S Murthy, who are 77 and 84 respectively, but have the verve of those half their age.

Both are linguists, well read and widely travelled. My mother is severely arthritic, yet she teaches Carnatic music and French, and runs a children's library. Despite the lack of a formal education, she can converse on any topic, from world wars to fiction. My father, an engineer by profession, runs his own office, still drives a car and is on the way to revolutionising solar energy in the country. The visionary award given to him by the government has spurred him to strive harder and he is well known in his field for his tenacity and hard work. Undeterred by life's trials, they continue their journey onwards, and are an inspiration for their five children and all the others who have interacted with them.

SUDHA SHARMA

Bangalore

You are providing a great window for silvers to see what their peers are up to. I have been enjoying every day of life after my retirement from government service. After setting up a new home, my wife and I travelled a lot. I started reading extensively and writing too. Now, I find myself short of time with three newspapers, five magazines (including yours) and the occasional book to read and my wife's chores to share. Physical and mental activity makes it easier to deal with age.

PROLOY BAGCHI

Bhopal

Your magazine is informative and silvers are sure to eagerly await its arrival every month. It would be of immense help if a platform can be created that gives silvers the opportunity to contribute to society, enabling them to experience a sense of true fulfilment. Their experience, wisdom and expertise can still be utilised in many productive and remunerative ways.

SRIPAL C SHETH

Mumbai

contributors

An architect by training, 55-year-old **Ponnappa** started cartooning for a lark when he was studying architecture in Chicago in 1972. He finally set up base in Bangalore in 1982, and gave up architecture to draw full time. His cartoons have appeared in newspapers, magazines and in the *Penguin Book of Indian Cartoonists*, and he writes "funny" columns too. Catch his essay and cartoons on insomnia in this issue.



For *Harmony's* September issue, Kolkata-based **Shilbhadra Datta**, a freelance photographer for 20 years, took the cover picture of

members of the Salt Lake Senior Citizens' Association. This month, the photographer turns writer for our 'worth your while' section. Datta profiles a man who collects and restores antique cameras. Go figure.



WRITE TO HARMONY

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

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

Mail us at Maker Chambers IV, 4th Floor, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

FLY EASY

No scavenger hunts for cheap airfare options. Air-India has never been more affordable for silvers. Airfare to Europe and the US has now been slashed by almost 20 per cent under a new scheme. Silvers will now pay Rs 32,000 to travel to London, Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich and Geneva, and return within four months. The return fare will be Rs 36,000 for a period of six months. The normal fare for this route is Rs 41,000. The flight to Los Angeles and back, with a validity of four months, will cost Rs 50,500, and Rs 54,000 for six months. This is Rs 16,000 less than the normal fare. The return fare to New York and Chicago, with a validity of four months, will be Rs 44,000, and Rs 48,000 for six months—ordinarily, it's Rs 57,000. The new rates are applicable from September 15, 2004 to March 31, 2005. However, the facility is not available during the peak season from November 15 to January 31.



POLICY MATTERS

HelpAge India has tied up with National Insurance Company to sell non-life insurance products and services across India. The funds raised will be used for projects for senior citizens—old-age homes and day-care centres, healthcare, adoption, and livelihood support. The NGO's recent association with Life Insurance Corporation entitles it to sell both life and non-life insurance services. M M Sabharwal, president, HelpAge, calls this idea "a step in the right direction". HelpAge plans to make a cautious start, with the project operating initially from nine cities—New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

CALLING CARD

If you live in Mumbai, the next time you are denied the additional benefits that your silver status promises, flash your Senior Citizens' Identity Card. Those who don't have one, call 28889911. Launched by the Mumbai Regional Congress Committee, the help line is manned by eight people, who answer queries on acquiring the cards and their benefits. Launched on August 1, the plastic card gets you discounts on railway fare, airfare, outpatient departments at hospitals and

public transport. With details like blood group printed on it, the card is also useful in an

emergency. Following a campaign where around 5,000 banners were put up across the city, 15,000 silvers approached the organisation within a week. The help line gets close to 1,000 calls every week.

SHOT IN THE DARK

The Goa chapter of the Forum for Senior Citizens of India is planning a world conference on senior citizens. The idea came from the forum's tussle with the state government over its action plan for seniors—the policy was announced five years ago but nothing has been achieved. It promised a host of measures for economic, health and social welfare, including waiver on house tax, concession on water tariff, and a special park for silvers. Even the senior citizens' grievance cell that was part of the action plan has not started functioning. This cell was to act as a watchdog and coordinate all the other programmes. The Forum is also struggling to issue identity cards to the silver population. Of the 65,000 seniors in the state, only 3,500 have been registered. The forum now plans to reach its silver members and others across the world through a global conference—watch this space for details.



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Antiseptic soap



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Dove is now available for just Rs.25/- (MRP incl. of all taxes for 75g)



Dove is the mildest of all!

house of hope



Photos: KRISHNAN

Rather than settle down to a typical retirement, Jaya and V Krishnaswamy went on to become pioneers in special education, write [Smriti Gupta](#) and [Mukta Hegde](#)

It was always clear to those who knew Jaya and V Krishnaswamy that the couple would not settle down to a typical retirement. Krishnaswamy, now 79, retired as air vice marshal in 1988 and returned to hometown Chennai after 30 years, only to immerse himself in his work as a consultant with the Sanmar Group of Companies. And Jaya, 71, gave up her job as the headmistress of a school in Delhi to come back with her husband. She had many ideas, one of which changed the couple's life forever. And the lives of thousands of children. Says Vijay, eldest of their three sons, "Since my parents have always been an extremely active couple, we were sure they would not settle down

to gentle pursuits. But none of us were prepared for something of this magnitude."

Vijay is talking about the Madhuram Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children (MNC), set up in 1989. It is the first institution in India devoted to an early intervention programme for children with development delays and mental disabilities. As we walk into the school's open courtyard in Chennai's T Nagar, a group of children are standing in a circle, playing a game, sheltered by trees. It could be a tiffin-break scene in any kindergarten except every child has one teacher standing behind protectively, and that teacher is the mother. The

school insists on the participation of parents. "A mother is a child's natural teacher. And here we train mothers to become co-therapists."

When the Krishnaswamys started their retirement, they had no idea they would become pioneers in the field of special education. Jaya, who had done a paper on special education during her B Ed, had always been interested in the subject. After coming back to Chennai, she had a chance encounter with Vasanthi Pai, president of the Federation for the Welfare of Mentally Retarded Persons. "With her encouragement, I presented a module based on a computer programme to train disabled children at a 1987 UNICEF workshop in Delhi," Jaya remembers. There, Prof P Jeyachandran, a renowned expert in mental disabilities and principal of Bal Vihar, a training school in Chennai for teachers working with special children, decided to guide Jaya while she wrote a computer programme called Upanayan, which aids therapy of mentally disabled children. The Sanmar Group financially supported the research and then the establishment of MNC.

Today, Upanayan, a Sanskrit word that means 'to lead along', is the main reason why MNC is considered a pioneering effort. "It identifies 250

skills in children relating to motor abilities, self-help, language, cognition and socialisation," says Krishnaswamy. It is also the first of its kind written to suit Indian cultural needs, taking into account feeding and toilet habits and other cultural variances. It has also been programmed for children with various mental disabilities associated with conditions like epilepsy, autism, cerebral palsy and other disorders, so that a database is now available for children with differing challenges.

Details of each child are continuously fed into the database, helping teachers judge performance and ability levels better and accordingly individualise therapy. Partnered with early intervention, this gives far better results than just therapy, according to Vimala Kannan, principal of the school. MNC works only with children up to the age of five-and-a-half. No child within this age group is turned away. "We strongly believe intervention in early years, when all children are quicker to learn, is crucial for these special children," says Kannan.

Doctors agree with this philosophy. Dr V Viswanathan, a consulting paediatric neurologist at Kanchi Kamakoti Child's Trust Hospital in Chennai, often recommends MNC to parents. "I refer around four children every month. The youngest was three months old."

The toughest part of the job, though, is counselling new parents, which Jaya handles. "Most mothers break down frequently, and in the beginning I suffered too. But slowly I learnt to detach myself." She talks about the difficulties of 18-year-old mothers, many of whom are villagers, who don't know anything except that they have delivered a child who is not like others. "The positive part is that after repeated sessions, they cope better."

Working mothers are asked to take a fortnight off to learn the teaching techniques. Some parents even relocate to Chennai. Jyoti, in her early 30s, is a bright, positive parent who feels her life took a turn for the better the day

Left and below, children at the Centre





V Krishnaswamy and Jaya Krishnaswamy think the best time to follow your dreams is after retirement

she first came to MNC in 1990. Her son Sibbi Siddharta was a year old then. Originally from Vilupparam, five hours away from Chennai, she commuted once a month to bring him here. Due to an overdose of anaesthesia, he faced a learning disability. Then, her husband got a transfer to Chennai on compassionate grounds; they moved in 2000. "Since then, we go to MNC everyday," says Jyoti with a big smile. "Though we did waste one precious year chasing doctors who didn't really tell us anything."

Retired people have so much to offer

—Jaya Krishnaswamy

At MNC, parents visiting from other towns are taught methods that can be used at home. And the organisation has also helped children in other countries, including Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Bangladesh and in the Middle East. The school itself functions from 10 am to 4 pm (Monday to Friday) with a couple of hours allotted for each age group, with approximately 150 parents and children coming in everyday.

The staff of 21 comprises trained teachers, an occupational therapist, special educators, and physiotherapists, besides helpers. The Krishnaswamys are at the centre the whole day; while Jaya does the counselling, parent training classes and brainstorms for new ideas and schemes, Krishnaswamy handles administration and financial matters.

Recognising that more people need to get involved in early intervention therapy, MNC also holds training programmes for teachers and institutes. It has successfully trained over a hundred teachers who are the core trainers from about 50 institutions all over the country. And 15 special schools have been set up with technical support by MNC in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Increasing public awareness has been the biggest reward, says Jaya. "Slowly, the children are becoming a part of the social fabric."

So far, over 2,700 children have been educated here over the years. Though the Krishnaswamys themselves do not take a salary, funding is a perpetual problem. The annual budget amounts to around Rs 20 lakh, which includes a government grant and generous donations from the Sanmar Group. The expense incurred on each child works out to approximately Rs 15,000 per year. The couple, though, remains upbeat about their work and retirement is not an option. Krishnaswamy says, "I always tell people that if they want to keep fit as they grow older, they should look at community service. It stops your ageing process by at least 40 per cent. Besides, you do something worthwhile."

Jaya is equally committed to work. "I feel when people retire, they don't look at other options besides the work they've done all their lives. Retired people have so much talent and experience to offer. When we are young, we might have had the ideas but responsibilities stopped us from going ahead. Now is the time to do something." ■

To contact Madhuram Narayanan Centre, see page 95 for details

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News and views from around the world

ENGINEERING YOUTH

In all the scientific efforts to understand the mechanisms of ageing, this has to be among the more unique. Two biologists at the University of Chicago, Leonid Gavrilov and Natalia Gavrilova, are looking for cues from reliability engineering, a theory that describes the failure and ageing of complex electrical and electronic equipment. The scientists believe the theory can be applied to human ageing as well. Looking at human ageing data, they have found striking similarities between how living organisms and technical devices age and fail.

Their understanding turns the current view of the human body on its head. The most radical assumption they are working with is that humans don't start life in pristine condition. The reliability equations suggest that we actually start life with many defective parts. "If we accept the idea that we are born with a large amount of damage, and then work at making small improvements to the processes of early human development—ones that increase the numbers of initially functional elements—it could result in a remarkable fall in mortality and a significant extension of human life," Gavrilov and Gavrilova say in a report.



GRANDMA'S NEW CLOTHES

They are your everyday grandmothers. They knit, purl, make jams and jellies, play cards and do a bit of gardening to stay fit—except that they do all this naked and get photographed in the process. The reason? To raise good money for noble causes by bringing out a calendar. The 2005 'Bare to be Different' calendar has just been printed in Australia and this year 'the naked grannies from Tasmania', as they are called, hope to raise AUS\$10,000 to \$15,000 (approximately Rs 3.18 to Rs 4.77 lakh) for an Alzheimer's association. They also want to tell the world that growing old does not mean growing cold.

"Positive ageing means a lot of fun and a bit of daring," says Bev Lee, who came up with the idea of the calendar in 2001. Based in South Arm, a small town in Tasmania, she thought of this idea when fellow residents needed money for stage curtains for their community hall. Lee managed to persuade a few women, all of them over 50, to model for the calendar. The photographs, done with a lot of humour and spirit, were a complete hit and the calendar was sold out in three days. "Laughter is good, you know," says Lee about its success. The effort also received a national award for the best community fundraising idea for the year. Since then, the calendar has become an annual feature. Go to www.baretobedifferent.com for more information.



Illustrations: FARZANA COOPER

AGEISM, THE NEW SEXISM

It's a clash of cultures, 21st century style—the young versus the old. In a world obsessed with taut tummies and flawless faces, discrimination against the old is present in most offices and is fast replacing sexism as the most prevalent bias, according to a new Australian study conducted by Hudson, a recruitment and human-resource firm.

The researchers found that employers, and society in general, hold inaccurate perceptions about the capabilities of older workers, who are wrongly perceived as 'slow' and 'inefficient'. This bias is active not only against the elderly but also simply those who are older than others. According to Anne Hatton, chief executive of Hudson, ageism is much more than just a social issue. Age discrimination in the workplace could also lead to financial losses for companies. A workforce plagued by ageism will result in reduced teamwork and failed cross-organisational cooperation.

"The research says that older people, through a lack of effective interaction and communication with younger people, adopt self-protection strategies, effectively isolating themselves from the rest of the workforce," she said in a report.

If ageism is not stopped now, Hudson warns, it can also lead to financial losses in future, once silvers become a more established political lobby and take up active litigation against errant companies.



HOME SMART HOME

The University of Florida in the US has just tried out a prototype of a house that doubles up as a caregiver for the elderly. Though the three-bedroom house looks like any other from the outside, it's engineered to avert the daily mishaps that the elderly face as they grow forgetful and feeble. If the gas has not been turned off, a sensor alerts the resident via a computerised cell phone. If the door isn't locked, the phone will check and report back. If the occupant is not sure how long to heat frozen food, a 'smart microwave' will recognise the bar code on the package and automatically determine cooking time.

The house is designed to operate itself via appliances and devices that are connected to a computer network that can communicate with the home's occupants and caregivers on the outside. Even in the US, such state-of-the-art homes will become reality only a few decades on, says Sumi Helal, director of technology development at the university's Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Technology for Successful Aging. "The technology is there now. We're just putting it all together in a way that could be available and affordable to the public within the next few decades." Entire retirement communities might be built this way in the future. ■

sa ré
sāma



~SOLID GOLD~

A Treasure Trove of Masterpieces

Rula ke gayaa sapna mera..... sang the eternally renewable throat of Lata Mangeshkar for Vyjanthimala in Vijay Anand's **Jewel Thief**. Vijay Anand is gone.

Vyjanthimala has long moved on. But that voice which according to Jaya Bachchan, has defined feminine beauty in Hindi cinema for many decades, still endures.

For decades, 'Lata Mangeshkar' has symbolized harmony and beauty. In a world rapidly losing its contours and convictions she continues to emblemize all that's true pure and desirable.



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Active force



RAM BHERWANI

CIVIL SOCIETY IS FAST

becoming the strongest agent of change. In a democracy, people need to become active participants, not passive recipients of government policy.

The newly developed Bandstand and Carter Road promenades in Mumbai have improved the quality of life of residents. The funds came from my Member of Parliament Local Area Development Funds but the real credit goes to the residents' organisations. It is their ownership of the place and interest in its maintenance that has made it a success story.

These are the people who realise that the *mai baap* culture doesn't work any longer. They don't believe in shifting responsibility onto anyone else. Like the group of senior citizens in Ahmedabad who lost their life's savings to cooperative banks that have gone bust in Gujarat. Suspecting strong links between defaulters, bank officers and politicians, these seniors knocked on the door of the Gujarat High Court. The court, in turn, has treated their appeal as a petition and issued notices to the Reserve Bank of India, the Ministry of Finance and the Gujarat Government. It's heartening to see seniors energising themselves to champion change.

The elderly can be major contributors to their establishment and governance considering their knowledge and experience. While bright young things are perceived as the ones who can 'think outside the box', this isn't always the case. Today, freed from career and family pressures, older people frequently find that the time has arrived for them to release their creative energies. With their numbers growing, the role of older people will become increasingly important in Indian society.

staying fully engaged in a chosen career.

Whether to opt for pensioned leisure at the first dignified opportunity, or to carry on doing what one does best for as long as our physical capabilities allow, ignoring artificial age limits is the debate of today. The evidence suggests that the ageist prejudice of today's world—the idea that most of us burn out in our 50s and might as well devote our remaining years to relaxation—needs urgent re-examination.

The idea that most of us burn out in our 50s needs urgent re-examination

Last month, the news of the Supreme Court acting on Delhi-based J S Bawa's petition about the plight of seniors found favourable column space in *Harmony*. He wanted the Court to initiate long overdue action on the National Policy on Older Persons. Mr Bawa is not well enough to venture out of his house, but runs a magazine for the elderly called *Age Speak* from home, and still has the spirit to fight for his compatriots. To many, he is a shining advertisement for the benefits of

A positive force that can bring about revolution, senior citizens have so much in their favour. To begin with, they have the time. There's also the tenacity and perseverance that come with age and wisdom to see projects through. They know that impatience won't get them anywhere. The youth, with all their energy, are no match for the elderly as they lose patience easily and may take the easy route out. Not seniors. For them, the harder, the better. ■

Shabana Azmi, 53, is an actor, activist and former Rajya Sabha MP



Her majesty

Mrinalini Sarabhai's footsteps leave a trail of timeless talent and elegance, says **Jasmine Shah Varma**. Photographs by **Saurabh Dutta**

As a beautiful Japanese parasol emerges from a distance in the spacious complex of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad, students tighten their *dupattas* and roll up their sleeves. Their guru, Mrinalini Sarabhai, or *Amma* as she is referred to, is on her way. The parasol is present everywhere she goes, there's even one in her car. "I have always loved using parasols and umbrellas," she says. "I have about 25 to 30. I bought some of them, and many have been gifted by friends."

Her fetish for parasols and hand fans is perhaps one of the few things that people don't know about 86-year-old Mrinalini Sarabhai—dancer, choreographer, poet, writer, environmentalist, humanist and teacher. Her autobiography, scheduled by HarperCollins for an October release, will fill in the rest of the gaps. Sarabhai's close friend Vijaya Mehta, reputed film and theatre director and director of the National Centre of Performing Arts,

Mumbai, says: "In most people, there is a clear divide between their creative life and what they are as a person. But Mrinalini is a total human being."

"I hope my autobiography interests people," says Sarabhai. The story of her life, peopled by stalwarts she has learnt her craft from, is likely to be a good read. She has learned Bharatanatyam in the Pandanallur tradition from Sri Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, considered the master of this classic style; Kathakali from



Left, a montage of past performances; far left, Sarabhai now

the great Asan Kunja Kurup; Mohiniattam from Kalyanikutty Amma, the doyenne of this ancient tradition; and her worldview from Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan. Born Mrinalini Swaminathan, she married scientist and industrialist Vikram Sarabhai, called the 'father of the Indian space programme', in 1942. In 1948, the couple set up Darpana, an academy of dance, drama, music and puppetry, in Ahmedabad.

As a dancer, Sarabhai was the first classical dancer to turn to choreography. "New dance forms evolve," she once said. "But I would prefer that while you evolve a new form, there be some classical tradition behind it. A tree may grow in many directions, but it must grow with roots. This is what I think I have done."

Sarabhai calls dance her stress-buster, and at 86 still dances for two hours every morning. Earlier this year in Mumbai, she performed *Two Lives in Dance and One More (Samabhavana)* with daughter-dancer-choreographer Mallika and granddaughter Anahita, a biographical dance drama where the three interact, sing, and dance, telling the story of their lives. Grandson Revanta, who studies in the US, also performs with the family whenever he's home. "My mother unknowingly started a legacy," says Mallika. "The atmosphere of Darpana all around them when they were



growing up certainly influenced my children.” And her? “There is a little of the guru-*shishya* aspect in our relationship, but we are partners and co-creators too. We respect each other’s creativity though we may not agree on the form.” For this family, dance is the language of life. “Dancing breathes new life into me every day,” Mrinalini Sarabhai believes. “It is an experience of rejuvenation.”

Another thing that rejuvenates her is the outdoors—Sarabhai is claustrophobic. “It may have been a result of my childhood.

I used to be locked up in the bathroom when I was naughty,” she says with a chuckle. Former student and a dancer in her troupe, Poornima Kantawala, 65, says, “When we travelled by air for performances, she would be the first out of the door once the plane had landed. She always looked for fresh air and open spaces.” Natarani, the open-air theatre at Darpana, is a culmination of this search. “Mallika designed Natarani to reflect my personality with its vast open spaces, peepul tree and the river beyond.”

Like Natarani, Sarabhai’s lavish home in Ahmedabad echoes her tastes with its assortment of Indian handicrafts, and finely



Clockwise from top, Sarabhai with grandson Revanta; doing her *shringer*; in her study at home in Ahmedabad



sculpted Ganesha and Nandi idols. In her study, posters from her performances tower on the wall behind her busy writing desk while Sarabhai tends to the paperwork of the academy, sitting in a commanding pose. She is in charge here, and doesn't like it one bit if you talk about uncomfortable topics like age.

"My age? It keeps changing every year. I can't remember it." And then she adds: "I don't like ageing at all." She's quite happy when you steer the conversation to her slim figure, though. "I've managed to retain it because of constant practice. It's important for a performer to look good. That doesn't mean you have to do a lot of make-up."

But clothes, that's a different matter. She is noted among friends for her exclusive sari collection and unusual jewellery. For footwear, Sarabhai swears by the flat Kolhapuris and simple Gandhi *chappal* bought from the Sabarmati Ashram. "I think it stems out of a dancer's need to have comfortable feet at all times."

When she's not dancing, Sarabhai reads. "I have read all the English classics and love authors like Jane Austen, Dickens and, of course, Shakespeare." Today, she enjoys light novels by Dick Francis and John Grisham, Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, and cookbooks. Ask her some favourite recipes, and she tells you to wait for her own cookbook. When, and if, that materialises it will be one in a long line of books she has written—on dance, mythology, poetry, and even a collection of letters exchanged between Sarojini Naidu and Mahatma Gandhi.

"Writing and dancing are two parts of my personality," she says. Sarabhai has also set up the Centre for Non-Violence through Performing Arts at Darpana, which seeks to spread the message of

peace and non-violence through the arts, and heads a nature club named Prakriti, which encourages tree planting and forestation among children.

She spent the last Makar Sankranti (the festival of kites)

**My age? It keeps
changing every
year. I can't
remember it**

—Mrinalini Sarabhai

standing on a terrace under the hot Ahmedabad sun, flying kites with street children. "You have to go beyond yourself and reach out to others who need you," she says.

Mallika, though, has her own take on her mother: "I believe she only really lives when she dances." ■

The ripple effect

Across the country, gyms are witnessing a silver rush, says

Roshni Bajaj.

The incentives? Health and happiness, fitness and friendship



Chiselled muscles, clipped beard and a well-travelled accent, there is little that is not honed or toned about Rumi Taraporevala—including his sense of humour. As he lifts 30-pound dumbbells with careful nonchalance for the camera, he remarks, “I know what you should call this story, ‘Geris in the Gym,’” and then chuckles at his own joke. At 74, he does not take age seriously but is absolutely earnest about staying fit. His range of workout gear allows him to make choices between T-shirts that are “not sexy” and grey sleeveless vests that are. He “will not be seen dead” with the 10-pound weights we brought for the shoot and easily extends his time on the treadmill so that we can get more photos. Taraporevala has rarely missed a workout since May 2004 when he first joined the gym with his wife Freny and in his dedication cannot quite see why all seniors are not as fit as him.

SILVER RAIN

Maybe not all, but a lot more than there were last year. Inch by Inch, a gym facing the sea on Mumbai’s Marine Drive, has doubled its senior citizens’ membership in the past one year.

Almost 50 of the 600 members are over 55.

“Their numbers suddenly shot up after the marathon in February,” says Shital Nahar, the owner. At Regal Health Club & Fitness Centre in

Chandigarh, the number of silver members also doubled in the past one year. In Delhi, both VLCC in Green Park and Ozone in Defence Colony report a 35-40 per cent increase for the same period. The senior membership at Bowring Club in Bangalore rose from three people two years ago to 40 today. At the Bangalore Club Gym, it was zero one year ago and now it is 12. And The Edge in Chennai has trebled its senior membership from 11 to 37.

It’s a trend that is playing out countrywide and the reason is best explained by Rumi, when he says: “It’s not about living longer but about living better.” Fitness has become a part of ‘the good life’ chiefly because of the media, according to Anu Sood,

It’s not about living longer, it’s about living better

—Rumi Taraporevala, Mumbai



BAJIRAO PAWAR

Left, Dr Sheela Mehra working on her biceps, in Delhi; right, Rumi Taraporevala on the treadmill, in Mumbai



KRISHNAN

marketing manager of Ozone in Delhi. "There is far greater awareness about health today and seniors are keener to stay fit," she says. And gyms, which offer facilities ranging from strength training and cardiovascular workouts to aerobic exercises, are one-stop shops for fitness. The presence of trainers is also helpful for seniors, many of whom are taking up exercise for the first time in their lives. To cash in on the number of silver citizens signing up, many gyms are now offering discounts, organising orientation sessions and educating trainers on how to structure workouts for silvers. The weather also helps sometimes. During the monsoon, when walking outside becomes difficult, senior enrolments go up.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO START

This year, it was actor Shammi Kapoor who dropped into Gold's Gym in Mumbai to avoid the high humidity of the season.

**My red T-shirt and
slacks set off the
purple gym interiors**

—Kalpakam Raman, Chennai

the truth



ANCHAL KEJRIWAL

It sounds suspiciously like an adman's copy. In exchange for just a few hours every week, you will become richer, smarter, sexier, tougher and happier. In these few hours, you have to walk, lift weights, stretch and learn how to love your body once again. If you take up exercise, it'll be the best deal you'll ever make in your life, and here is the proof.

RICHER

The World Health Organisation says that older people spend more of their income on health than on any other need or activity. Health really is wealth. HealthPartners Research Foundation, a group of non-profit healthcare providers in Minnesota, US, has found that sedentary adults in America can save \$2,200 per year on average simply by exercising moderately for 90

about exercise

minutes per week. (Americans have an estimated per capita income of \$37,800.) There are no equivalent Indian figures available yet, but the signs all point the same way. "Exercising is like investing in your health, like insurance," explains Ramji Srinivasan, India's leading fitness expert with the MRF Pace Foundation, Apollo Hospitals and the Edge Fitness Centre in Chennai. "Medical bills are becoming bigger these days and seniors are becoming aware that they need to keep fit."

SMARTER

According to the findings of a study published in the American journal *Neurology* in March 2001, older people who exercise regularly are likely to maintain the mental sharpness required for everyday tasks, like remembering directions or to take pills, or following a recipe. Exercise also reduces the possibility of developing dementia or Alzheimer's by half. In a five-year study of 5,000 men and women aged 65 and over, scientists found that healthy blood flow and lower blood pressure from exercise helps the other organs as much as it helps the heart. The brain is no exception.

SEXIER

In a July 2003 poll of 4,000 people in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, presented by the American Neurological Association, 30 per cent of men aged between 70 and 80 reported having sex five times a month, and 40 per cent reported sexual dysfunction as a deterrent. Researchers recommended either exercise, or Viagra or a placebo to the group. The group that focused on exercise reported 80 per cent better erections compared to the Viagra group that witnessed a 74 per cent increase in the rate of arousal. It's logical; exercise improves the body's ability to pump blood, promotes the release of hormones important for arousal, increases aerobic capacity and muscle

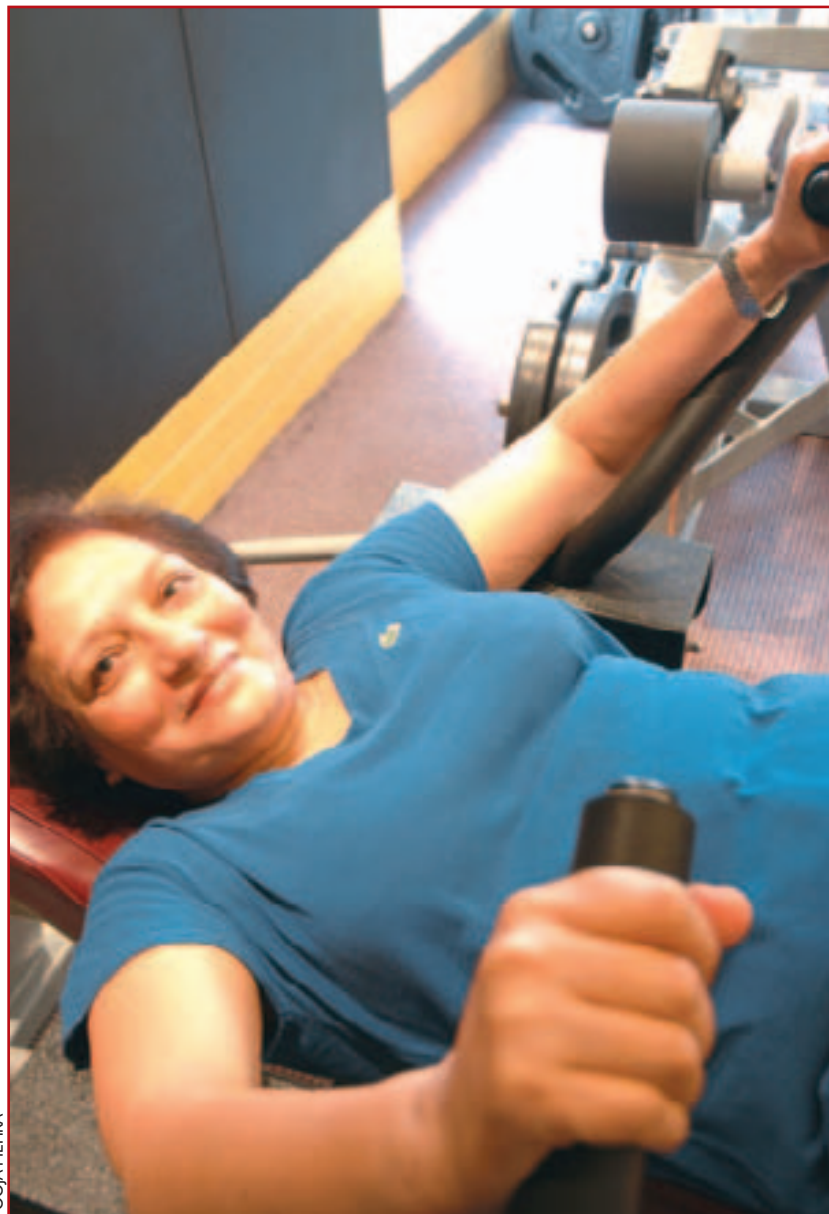
strength, and boosts self image—all potent benefits for a racy libido.

TOUGHER

Silvers who exercise combat diseases with an immune system as strong as those of people half their age. Forty-six active and sedentary men were studied in August 2004 at the University of Colorado. They were split into two age groups—20 to 35 and 60 to 79—and injected with a protein that provoked an immune response. The immune response across the younger group was optimal. The sedentary older group had predictably weaker systems, while the active seniors group had a stronger response, almost similar to the younger participants. A strong immune system makes it tougher for any disease to get the better of us, from the common cold to cancer.

HAPPIER

Lose fat, gain happiness. And this is a mantra not only for teenage girls but for people of all ages. In a John Hopkins University study, 36 people in an exercise programme were observed in May 2001. The volunteers, aged between 55 and 75, had mild hypertension but were otherwise healthy. After assessing their body fat and muscle strength, researchers asked them to complete questionnaires about their mental health. The fitter ones reported lower levels of depression, tiredness, anger and tension. Their mood was better overall compared to their unfit peers. An author of a study of 103 seniors in September 2002 at Stanford University said that how confident one is while starting a fitness programme is less important than how one's confidence grows as the result of the positive results of the programme over time. Subjects in the same study also had more satisfying sleep. They were able to fall asleep about 15 minutes earlier and sleep about 45 minutes longer at night after just 16 weeks of working out.



POOJA MEHRA

A 60-year-old's body responds just as enthusiastically to exercise as a 20-year-old's

there!' I wish I'd joined much earlier."

Fortunately, exercise is an impartial benefactor. Pretty boys and girls who work out to fit better into clothes gain just as much as older people who join mostly to rescue their health. "A sixty-year-old body will respond just as enthusiastically as a twenty-year-old one," says Dr Vijay D'Silva, director, critical care, Asian Heart Institute, Mumbai.

Numerous studies around the world have proved that exercise is a good idea at any age and at any fitness level (see *"The Truth about Exercise"* on page 22). And the benefits are always greater than simply losing weight. Sudha Mallya, 57, is part of the small but growing population of silvers joining gyms in Bangalore, a city, like Kolkata, where gentle walks in parks are the preferred exercise for the elderly. But Dr Prakash Kini, Mallya's gynaecologist, felt she needed something more intense. Her children moving out, menopause, and the subsequent loss of her parents had taken a heavy toll on her and this "one-time-teacher, but mostly home-maker", as she describes herself, was suffering from depression.

Above, Dr Mehra works out at least four days a week; right, Hameer Mullani in Mumbai tones up his thigh muscles

Kapoor started gymming for the first time in June at 73. Earlier in the year, he was hospitalised when both his lungs collapsed. "I was almost gone then," he says. When he came out, it was with doctor's orders to walk. But his doctor made him promise that he would take it slow, and even today he doesn't go beyond a low setting on the treadmill, the minimum speed. "When I first started, I did 10 minutes and thought I had broken the world record. I was so out of breath!"

Though still on dialysis, today Kapoor does up to 25 minutes on the treadmill and six minutes on the cycle. "When my grandson Vishwapratap in Houston heard that I've started gymming, he sent me an excited email saying 'Dadu, I'm so happy you've gone

Gyms are usually Dr Kini's first recommendation for menopause-related problems such as mood-swings and hot-flashes. "Hormone replacement therapy is a debatable treatment and I have found that exercise alleviates some menopausal symptoms. And gyms also become a form of group therapy because you are in an arena with like-minded people with similar goals," he says. All this was five years ago. Now Mallya is a regular at Talwalkar's gym. "I was under a lot of stress earlier," she says. "Then, I really began enjoying my

a sense of euphoria that is popularly called 'runner's high'. Endorphins also have pain-relieving properties similar to morphine. "To put it simply, exercise makes you happy," says Dr R N Jeyrajani, a Mumbai-based psychiatrist.

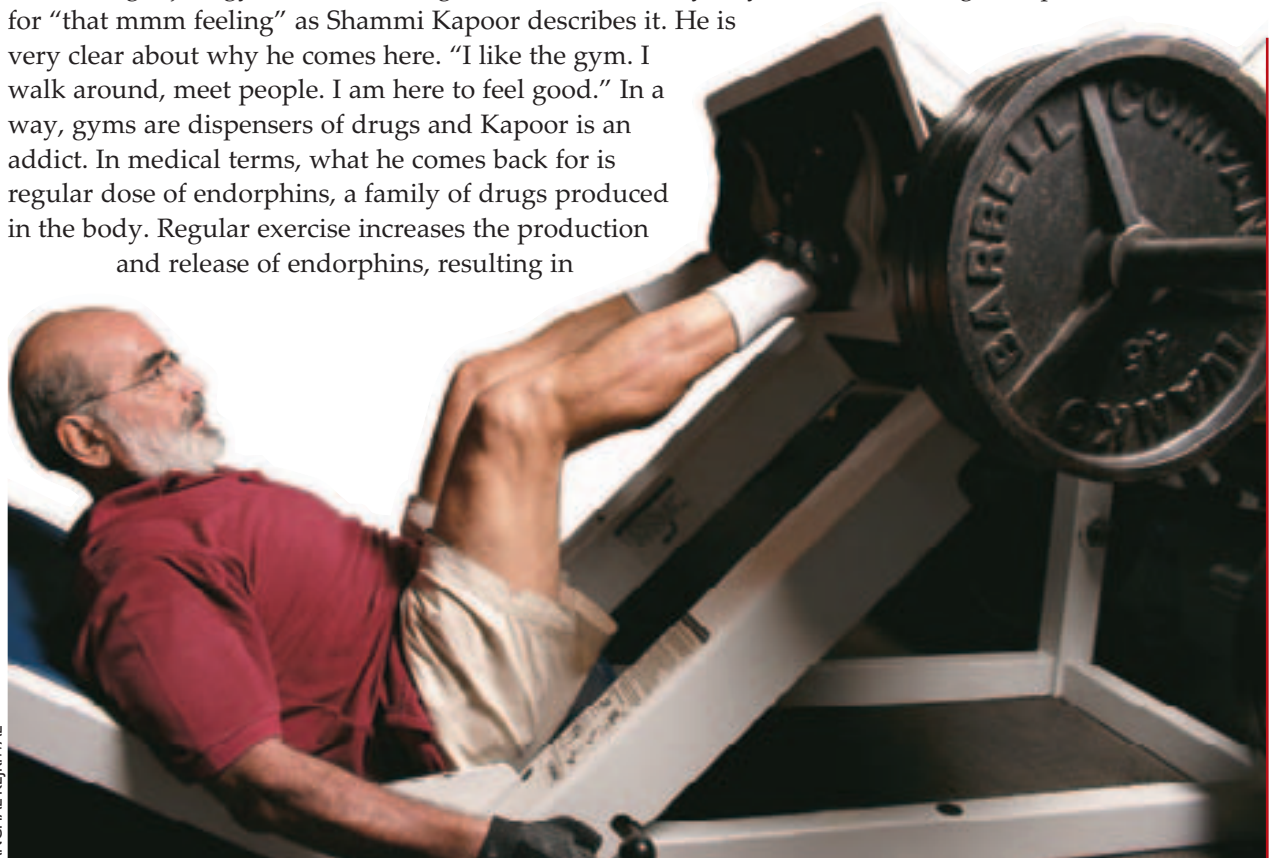
Regular exercise releases drugs called endorphins in the body that result in a sense of euphoria

routine here. I found that my incipient spondilitis was also cured and arthritis has been kept at bay." And with her sense of well-being firmly back in place, she also persuaded her friend Pammi Bali, 56, to join the gym last year. There has been a sea change in Bali's life since then. Says this homemaker, "I have thrown away my sleeping pills, I have lost weight and I now climb stairs without getting breathless."

HIGH ON EXERCISE

Silvers might join gyms with health goals in mind but they stay back for "that mmm feeling" as Shammi Kapoor describes it. He is very clear about why he comes here. "I like the gym. I walk around, meet people. I am here to feel good." In a way, gyms are dispensers of drugs and Kapoor is an addict. In medical terms, what he comes back for is regular dose of endorphins, a family of drugs produced in the body. Regular exercise increases the production and release of endorphins, resulting in

Kamal H Singh, 56, knows the benefits of endorphins only too well. Before she started going to the gym, Singh was often depressed. Her children were all settled and busy and she often found herself confined to home, feeling lonely and low. Singh found the antidote at the Ozone gym in Chandigarh three months ago, and a lot has changed in her world since then. "It has been a rejuvenating experience," she says. "I no longer feel lazy and my stamina has gone up."



muscles are forever

Interest rates on your fixed deposits may never climb to double-digit figures again but there is another rate of gain that won't ever let you down. The bulge won't be in your pocket though, but in your biceps. Or any other muscle for that matter. Repeated studies have proved that muscles respond to exercise the same way at any age—by growing to meet the challenge.

Muscle fibre is chiefly governed by two laws:

- Use it or lose it
- Demand and you shall receive

Enough studies have been done to prove this. The human body starts to lose one-third to one-half of a pound of muscle each year after the age of 40 and gains corresponding weight in fat, mostly due to a slowing metabolism and lack of dietary protein.

With this gradual loss of muscle strength, most people tend to become less active because daily activities become that much more exhausting. A progressively lazy lifestyle then makes us lose more muscle and a vicious cycle starts. But at least half the changes in muscle strength as we age are because of lack of activity rather than a function of age. Not only can this cycle be stopped, it can also be reversed through exercise and diet—at any age. Ramji Srinivasan, India's leading fitness expert with the MRF Pace Found-

ation, Apollo Hospitals and the Edge Fitness Centre in Chennai, says, "Even after the age of 70, if you put a person on a strength-training regimen for six to eight weeks, their strength component can be increased by 40 per cent."

Yet most of us continue to live under the assumption that physical weakness is a normal behaviour for an ageing body. It need not be. A study conducted in September 2000 at the Department of Biomedical Sciences, Ohio University, proved that even 75-year-old men and women show similar gains from strength training and increase in muscle size as young people. Eighteen untrained subjects between the ages of 60 and 75 were part of the study. Half were placed in a resistance-training group and the others stayed untrained control subjects. After 16 weeks of high-intensity training such as barbell squats and leg presses, their muscle fibre and body fat was assessed.

Researchers wanted to find out if muscle fibre also increased with the inevitable strength gains. The subjects lost significant amounts of body fat and also grew 30 to 40 per cent more muscle fibre. A similar study at USDA Human Nutrition Centre on Aging, Tufts University, Massachusetts, USA, conducted as far back as July 1990, gave similar results. The respondents this time were nursing home residents, all older than 90. The average gain in muscle strength was 174 per cent. Average thigh muscle mass increased by 9 per cent and walking speed increased by 48 per cent in eight weeks.

It's clear that silvers can not only handle strength training, but also thrive on it. Muscle mass and tone both come through strength training by using weights. This makes you demand a little more from your body than it can deliver. The muscle heals and builds in the rest interval to meet the need the next time round. If you're not comfortable with using weights at the gym, your trainer can include exercises like push-ups and squats that use your body weight.



ANCHAL KEJRIWAL

BAJIRAO PAWAR



I like the gym. I walk around, meet people.
I am here to feel good

—Shammi Kapoor, Mumbai

Even people who are fitness-oriented like Rumi Taraporevala—he has always been a runner and does a high-energy 45 minute workout alternating cardio and weights—insist that gym sessions total up to more than the sum of all the calories burnt. “There are no goals really,” says Rumi. “I am just having a good time.”

WORKING OUT A NEW LIFESTYLE

With more and more silvers joining, gyms are no longer intimidating playgrounds of slick young bodies. Though it’s not a vanity fair for silvers, gyms bring about a definite change in their lifestyles too. For their part, gyms are going out of the way to increase the comfort levels of seniors.

Radhika Kylasam, manager of The Edge in Chennai, says seniors, especially women who come for the first time, have a lot of inhibitions and need reassurance. “They are also scared of injuries so we have to allay those fears. We try to create a comfort zone for them. No one is allowed to work out alone and trainers communicate more with them. We try to make the atmosphere conducive to building bonds.”

This approach clearly worked with Kalpakam Raman, a 65-year-old Carnatic singer who works out there. Though she knows all about “happy chemicals” called endorphins and believes that gyms postpone senility because people have to remain alert while working out,

workout wisdom



ANCHAL KERRIWAR

Exercise, at any age, is safe and great for health. But doctors and trainers recommend a few precautions as you warm up to a new lifestyle.

- Consult a doctor before you join a gym. As a safe bet, consult your family physician. He will have a clear idea of your medical history and is therefore best equipped to advise you. Get a complete physical check-up done. Some gyms even require a doctor's certificate.
- The doctor's approval is especially important if you are highly overweight, have high blood pressure or cardiac problems, are diabetic, have had recent surgery, have joint problems like arthritis, have had organ

disease (such as renal failure) or are on medication.

- Before you start, invest in comfortable clothes and shoes. Pick a time and gym location that is right for you. Make it as easy and convenient as possible.
- Know what to expect. The trainer will set an exercise regimen for you depending on your health, lifestyle and age. For example, if you are 60 years old and in good health, you may have a beginner's weight training and a non-impact cardiovascular routine, interspersed with some stretches. Weight training includes free weights, like dumbbells and equipment-based exercise like the leg-press and bench press. Cardiovascular exercise includes walking on the treadmill and riding the stationery cycle. Some gyms may even have a short yoga routine built in.

■ Start out with a small goal. Just five minutes of exercise to start with is fine. Then work it up slowly and gently to the level you want to reach. Don't force your body to do something that it is not ready to do.

- Spend enough time warming up and cooling down. If it was important at a younger age, it's more important than ever now. This protects the body from injuries.
- Choose exercises that you enjoy doing. If it's a burden, you are less likely to continue with it.

—with inputs from Dr Hemakshi Basu, Consulting Sports Physiotherapist, Gold's Gym, (Mumbai); Radhika Kylasam, Manager, The Edge (Chennai); Ajay Tyagi, Trainer, Ozone (Delhi); and Praveen Bal, Trainer, VLCC (Delhi)

the first thing she talks about are the people she meets. "I live by myself and the gym is something I look forward to everyday. It keeps me in touch with what's happening in the world outside," she says. And when you notice her hip red T-shirt and slacks, she says, "These are to set off the purple interiors."

Ever since Mallya and Bali joined the gym, they have started feeling comfortable in jeans and slacks

Mallya and Bali, in Bangalore, did a wardrobe update too after they shed a few crucial kilos, buying slacks and jeans for the first time in their lives. Both now feel far more comfortable in 'western clothes'. "Earlier I would feel very conscious, almost half-naked. Now I can go to Commercial Street [a shopping area in Bangalore] after my workout in my gym clothes," says Mallya. Her fitter, more confident lifestyle has also led her to try out new things. "I had always wanted to learn swimming. Last year, I finally signed up with a good coach. I'm almost 60 now and I have not only learnt how to swim at this age, but also can do seven laps in an hour," she says with pride.

Kamal Singh of Chandigarh, who treasures her 30 new friends at the gym, says her workouts help her think clearly. "I don't have time for harmful or negative thoughts now and the fact that I am looking better... slimmer also helped," she says, feeling great about herself. She is now planning to take up interior decoration as a profession. Clearly, for Singh, life begins at 56.

FIRM BICEPS, FIRMER RESOLVE

Vidya Shirlekar, who manages the Talwalkar's gym in Bangalore, finds that senior members are the most committed ones. "Whether they come early in the morning or later in the day, they're as regular as clockwork about their



KRISHNAN

Dr Hariharan in Chennai rows to strengthen his shoulder muscles

ROSHNI BAJAJ



Above, Chintan Thaker works out with his fitness idol, Rumi Taraporevala

timings. Some of them are already waiting at the entrance at 5:30 am when the gym opens!"

In fact, silver gym members motivate the younger lot. Karuna Horo, senior fitness manager of Talwalkar's in Bangalore, says, "I have seen younger members get so impressed with the seniors that they go up to them and say, 'Aunty, you work out at this age! I don't know if I will be able to do this when I reach your age.'"

In Mumbai too, the Taraporevalas have a big fan following in their gym and enjoy an easy banter with the younger crowd.

Rumi sets quite an example, especially after the

'Ironman' competition this June. At 74, he competed in the 40-plus

category and won a special award for doing 40 push-ups in a minute. He also achieved a personal best of pulling 110 pounds that day. And the person cheering him the loudest was 20-year old Chintan Thaker. They are each other's "favourite gym friends" with Rumi egging on the youngster, who has lost 40 kilos in the past ten months. "What will his girlfriend hold on to now that he has lost the love handles?" asks Rumi, with a laugh.

Chintan, who has achieved his weight-loss goals, now aspires to be as fit as Rumi. "I think Rumi uncle is too good! He can do 50 dips at one go and I'm happy if I do just six. I never thought someone his age could do that. Every time I see him, I think I should be like him." ■

—with Teena Baruah in Chandigarh, Allen Mendonca in Bangalore, Mukta Hegde in Chennai and Rupam Khera in Delhi

ANCHAL KEIRWAL



बूंद बूंद में विश्वास



Kinley is a trademark of The Coca-Cola Company.



From India to London, Pakistan, Spain and finally America, life has been a journey of privilege, passion and pitched battles for Mehrunissa of Rampur, discovers **Vatsala Kaul**

The princess of yesteryear walks in unannounced. You have been conjuring up a morphed image of a bejewelled princess, caged in India, feted in London, celebrated in Pakistan, persecuted in Spain, and finally freed in America. But Mehrunissa of Rampur aka Begum Rahim Khan is not going to fit into any mould of your making. As she walks into the room, all 71 plucky, eventful years of her, clad in a chrome yellow *salwar-kameez* shining off her translucent skin, a multitude of thin gold bangles on one wrist, and the mascara carelessly leaving her eyelashes to settle on her lids, you can see that she is willing to be only what she is.

autobiography—in unusual third person though—with lines like ‘Mehru said this’ and ‘Mehru did that’. Her life as the only child of the beloved but unofficial third queen of the Nawab of Rampur, growing up in the Nursery Block of the Khas Bagh Palace in Rampur, has no linear link to her now teaching Urdu and Hindi at the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington DC. Instead, her life goes spinning and spiralling like a wondrous whirlwind through a bad marriage in Lucknow, a sudden ticket to London, a huge and deep love for a Pakistani Air Force officer, a forced fleeing to Spain and at last asylum in America.

Ahmad Jaan Thirkwa. We grew up in cotton wool, and never heard anyone raise their voice. Of course, I never saw the inside of a kitchen. I can pick up a gun more easily than a ladle!”

Part of the programming meant that the princess was groomed to marry whoever was chosen for her. Her marriage in early 1954 to Syed Ali Naqi, a Lucknow attorney, was as lavish as a royal wedding could be—her jewellery box was two feet high and four feet wide, with trays of gold, silver and precious gems. However, it turned out to be a miserable marriage between two incompatible people and her husband kept asking for keys to

The princess

She carries her heritage like a treasured bauble from childhood, often throwing it up mischievously and always catching it back in her cupped palms with proud delight.

“I have led an interesting life,” she announces in impeccable Waverley-Convent English. Then she corrects herself. “I AM leading an interesting life.” Of course, you are not surprised to hear that she is writing her

Now she is back in India after 10 years, after briefly visiting family and friends in Pakistan. “My life as a princess was so computerised,” she says. “Everything was controlled—who you met, when you went to see your father for *adaab*, when you would read, or shoot, or play.” But it was also a privileged life. “We were brought up with the classical ragas and *gayaki* of Ustaaad Mushtaq Hussain and Ustaaad

her dowry box. After the birth of two children—a girl, Zeba, and a boy, Zain—she rebelled and left her husband, upsetting her father. A bitter three-year-long divorce case later, she flew to London in 1962 where her younger brother lived.

That’s where she met her second husband, the handsome Group Captain Rahim Khan, “a compassionate, caring man” who wooed her right off the



diaries

floor. Pakistani law was changed to accommodate the unprecedented marriage between a Pakistani and an Indian! To marry Khan, Mehrunissa gave up her country, her substantial inheritance, the custody of her two children, and her mother. Today, though, she is in touch with her children from the first marriage.

"He was a Pakistani, and for my father a Pakistani was taboo," she says. As Begum Rahim Khan, Mehrunissa realised at least one dream—to travel the world. In 1969, when General Yahya Khan became President of Pakistan, Rahim Khan was made Commander in Chief of the Pakistani Air Force, second in charge to the President from 1969 until 1972. In his new post, Rahim Khan and his Begum globe-trotted, meeting dignitaries such as King Hussein of Jordan, the Shah of Iran, Mao Tse Tung and Chou En-Lai. In 1990, Rahim Khan, love of her life, died during a kidney transplant surgery.

Despite the roller coaster of her life, given a choice between the Rampur of old and America of new, Mehrunissa would choose the latter anytime. "I love my freedom and what America stands for," she declares. She is now the opposite of everything she once was—the apartment she shares with her daughter Mariam is small and its only ostentation is a carpet presented by the Shah of Iran to her husband many years ago, she gets by without too much money, and is still "looking for my millionaire!" In America, she found what she had been secretly seeking all her life—freedom. "I never looked back from America," she says. "Life as a princess was stifling, artificial and formal. It was life always bound in shoes and socks."

As the daughter of the third unofficial wife, the one chosen for love, Mehrunissa was always subjected to less in quantity and quality in everything at the *zenana darbar* than the more important princesses. But she was the prettiest, and a born fighter. "People always noticed me with my red, flowing hair, my looks always gave me confidence," she says candidly. "They still do.

When men come up to me, even now, it's easy to say, 'My son is as old as you are. Knock it off!'"



It's not just her beauty that gives her confidence but also her deep belief in herself.

"My tumultuous life has shaped me," she says. "I can make things move. I don't give up easily." Her eyes mist as she talks about Abid, her young son from her second marriage who died tragically in a car accident. A small, quiet cloud settles on her face, then lifts as suddenly. "I don't believe in self-pity. When I sink, I may hit rock-bottom, but my head comes up out of the water first."

Dreams? Of course. She is planning a book on her life and has spoken to publishers but will not reveal more details. "The idea is to share with all women that one can do what one wants." And then there's another one—the desire to learn Hindustani classical ragas again, which she first learnt in the palace nursery as a child. "There are never enough years," she rues, then smiles. "I would love to meet Amitabh Bachchan too!"

Not this time, though. She will leave the next day, her bag packed with Sufi music CDs, DVDs of Dilip Kumar movies and Hindi Harry Potters, but you know she will be back. Bouncing. ■



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Grand Masters

Legends like Dhyan Chand were heroes, but didn't walk away with million-dollar contracts. They were heroes because they rose to the occasion by playing above the expectations set before them

Much before the overpaid and over-hyped days of sports, and dope-powered Olympics, were legends like Dhyan Chand. Fans watched him playing hockey standing on the street outside the Hockey Stadium near Churchgate in Bombay, looking through a chain-link fence. Equipped with the five S's of sports training—stamina, speed, strength, skill, and spirit (the greatest of these was spirit)—they won because they weren't concerned with who got the credit.

Then, 'politics in sports' was defined as being a diplomat, and an ambassador for one's country. They were heroes, but didn't walk away with million-dollar contracts. They didn't need agents to massage their egos, or image consultants. They didn't have private jets and a handful of homes. They were heroes because they rose to the occasion by playing to, and above, the expectations set before them. Freckles of integrity, they could not be cloned. For a few years, they were gods who walked the earth.

While some, like Chand, remain in public consciousness even posthumously, others like 90-

year-old Leo Pinto, the goalie who saved India's skin in the 1948 London Olympics against the hosts, live in considerable anonymity—save an occasional visit by young hockey players like Viren Rasquinha, who also happens to be a neighbour. In large part, Pinto is forgotten. As are cricketers Vijay Hazare, 89, and Mushtaq Ali, 90; former Mr Universe 91-year-old Manohar Aich; tennis player Sumant Misra, 82, who reached the quarterfinals at the Wimbledon men's doubles championship and the quarterfinals of the US Open doubles in 1947; Nandu Natekar, 71, the first Indian badminton player to win an international tournament in Kuala Lumpur in 1956; and 51-year-old Rajyashree Kumari, who bagged the Arjuna Award for shooting the same year as her father Dr Karni Singh, the erstwhile Maharaja of Bikaner, a four-time Olympian himself.

The moment they stopped filling us with a sense of wonder and became mere mortals, they were relegated to the 'has been' shelf. Today, as the country clamours to find the next great hope, some of our heroes relive their highs, and lows.

—Meeta Bhatti

Ninety, not out

“The real charm lies in white flannel shirts” —Mushtaq Ali, Indore

The gold embroidered ‘I-N-D-I-A’ still shines on his seven-decade-old cricket cap. This and the national tie are the only two physical reminders that Mushtaq Ali has of his glorious career. For Ali, his memories are more tangible souvenirs.

Seated on an enormous wooden sofa chair in the living room of Ali Manzil, his home in Indore, the 90-year-old leisurely flips through a sepia photo album. Ali, who was captain in the army of Maharaja Yashwantrao Holkar of Indore until 1940, points to a photograph with bat raised after scoring his first ever century, at Old Trafford, England, in 1936.

Back home, the rewards came later. Ali was awarded the Padmashri in 1964. On a pension of Rs 2,000 per month from the Madhya Pradesh government since 1998, the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) also decided to grant him a pension of Rs 5,000 per month from May this year, which was increased to Rs 10,000 in August. Ali hands over the money every month to wife Saleha Khatun, 75.

With no grouses, no complaints, he is content just to remember the golden days. Like the time a toast was raised to him at Buckingham Palace for being the first Indian to score a 100 runs on foreign soil. During his illustrious international career from 1934 to 1952, he played 11 Tests, scoring 612 runs at an average of 32.21. Initially a left-arm spinner, his flamboyant batting style won him the opener’s slot.

Ali believes that keeping away from smoking and drinking has been the secret of his good health. His only debility is a cataract in his right eye. It doesn’t allow him to read beyond bold newspaper headlines, so he catches up with cricket on television.

“We were paid only Rs 250 per test match,” the former opener says wryly. “Today’s cricket involves a lot of money.” He also frowns at coloured uniforms. “The real charm lies in white flannel shirts and pants, and the skill of cricketers like Colonel C K Nayudu, Keith Miller, Frank Warren, and Sachin Tendulkar.”

The master blaster touched Ali’s feet after the Wisden Awards ceremony held in London two years ago, when Ali was awarded the Special Achievement award for his 1936 exploits.

Ali is the happy head of a family of 12—his eldest son Gulrez Ali, brother Ishtiaq Ali and cousin Qazir Ahmed have all played first-class cricket. He laments today’s free-for-all commentary by non-players and the media. “When two men in the middle are facing 11 players, no one can gauge the kind of pressure they go through.” Ali remembers the pressure—after all, he bested it.

—Mukti Masih



BHALU MONDHE

On target

“We never performed for fame” —**Rajyashree Kumari, Bikaner**



The lift opens into the top floor of the posh Prithviraj Road apartment block in New Delhi. A brass plaque reads ‘Princess Rajyashree Kumari of Bikaner’. Inside, amid Baccarat crystal and Venetian glass is a black-and-white photograph of an eight-year-old girl on the wall, receiving a trophy from Jawaharlal Nehru. Opposite, on a table, is another photograph of a young woman in a sari, standing next to Lord Mountbatten on the grounds of his Wales residence. Rajyashree Kumari welcomes you with a firm handshake, a British “hello”. Black trousers, a purple geometric print shirt, designer leopard-spots-and-diamante footwear, her eyebrows shaped in a sharp arch.

Daughter of four-time Olympian shooter Maharaja Karni Singh of Bikaner, who put India on the world shooting map, Rajyashree Kumari set a record at the age of seven. She won the National Air Rifle Championship in the under-12 section. At 10, she beat all competitors in all age groups in air rifle shooting and at 12 did an encore. In 1967, at the First Asian Shooting Championships in Tokyo, she bagged 21st place—the only woman, and 14

years old at that, in competition. In 1969, at the San Sebastian World Shooting Championships in Spain, she won the Silver Masters Shooters Badge in the Clay Pigeon Trap event, the eighth position in Ladies Trap Shooting and the third position in the Castillo de Chichon Trophy for ladies. In 1970, she scored 92 on 100 in Trapshooting at the National Shooting Championship when she was 17—a record still unsurpassed. The list of victories and achievements goes on booming right until 1974.

Courtesy: RAJYASHREE KUMARI



Rajyashree Kumari at the World Championships, San Sebastian, Spain, in 1969

Shooting and hunting was part of family life. “My father trained me from the age of six,” says Rajyashree Kumari, now 51. “I guess I had the aptitude for it.” Though born with a silver gun in her hand, it wasn’t always easy to focus only on shooting. The time, attention and dedication that her craft required sometimes irked her. “As I grew older, the competition grew tougher and more serious. Daddy was a terrible disciplinarian. And I was like any other teenager, into Beatles and the Rolling Stones,” she recalls.

If ever she was in doubt, it didn’t show in her performance. In 1969, both Rajyashree Kumari and her father were awarded the Arjuna Award—a unique achievement for a 16-year-old. “If I had to spotlight one moment of glory, it would be the Arjuna Award,” she says. “The other was the Second Asian Shooting Championships in Seoul where my cousin, Bhagyashree Kumari from Kota, and I were two of the four people representing India in an all-male Clay Pigeon Trap Shooting event. We brought back the bronze.” There were no sports camps and generous sponsorships at the time. Then, Maharaja Karni Singh single-mindedly worked to create an infrastructure for shooting—the Olympic shooting range at his Bikaner palace matched the World Shooting Federation’s norms.

“It’s an expensive sport. Today, if you win a medal, you get a hefty grant. In those days, Daddy had to fight with the government even for cartridges, which were difficult to import. He was mostly expected to dip into his own purse,” recalls Rajyashree Kumari, adding how Karni Singh also opened up his shooting range and his

home for participants before a tournament. “We never performed for fame or money, but because we were expected to put in our best for the country.”

In 1973, Rajyashree Kumari married and moved to London. “It’s always best to go out on a high, isn’t it?” she smiles. She now divides her time between Bikaner, Delhi, Jaipur and London. On the board of several trusts, the princess has also set up the Maharaja Dr Karni Singhji Memorial Foundation, which works for social development in Bikaner.

The Bikaner shooting range lies silent now. Yet somewhere—with shooters like Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore kissing his silver medal, the olive tiara around his head—the echo of a legacy rings loud and clear.

—Vatsala Kaul

The golden goalie

“If we played now, the gold medal would be back” –[Leo Pinto](#), Mumbai

ASHESH SHAH



Like its owner, the grey-green woollen 1948 Olympic blazer belies its age. Usually hung in a closet, covered in plastic with a naphthalene ball or two for company, it enjoys personal attention from Mumbai-based Leo Pinto. The metal buttons are shone every now and then with Autosol, a special brass polish, which Pinto's son Darryl, a ship engineer, gets for his father from the Middle East.

The Westminster chime gifted to him by Tata Sports Club—he retired as its assistant secretary—for ‘25 years as best sportsman’ strikes 11 in the morning. Knotting his yellow Olympic tie, the 90-year-old smiles. A disciplined routine of waking up at 5 am and regular walks on the terrace of his Bandra flat hold him in good stead for physically demanding sessions like today's photo shoot. Gripping a somewhat old hockey stick in his hands, he poses, standing, sitting, bending, looking sideways, the smile never leaving his face even for a flash. India's oldest living Olympian is a natural. Pinto then happily hands over a file of pictures taken during his days as hockey player and coach.

“That photograph,” he points to a framed moment above the main door, “was taken during our stopover in Amsterdam right after we had won the Olympic gold in London in 1948.” Lips set in a stubborn line, the gritty face of the stocky young Pinto stares back at you. After an agonising collarbone injury that forced him out of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, and the no-Olympic-war-years of 1940 and 1944, the goalie came through for India in London with extraordinary skill and mental toughness. Eyes shining and voice rising enthusiastically, he leans forward on his favourite rocking chair to show how he defended a penalty against the host country. “I won against them. I was too wily and skilful for the Englishmen.”

He also remembers how on a tour to East Africa in 1947, under the captainship of Dhyan Chand, the team played and won all 28 games. “It was a great joy to play under a man of his calibre. We just adored him,” Pinto says of Chand. On that tour, Pinto's rendition of Bach's *Ave Maria*, *Trees*, *Because* and *O Danny Boy* for Nairobi Radio astounded everybody. Pinto was born in Nairobi and its people were not quite sure what to cheer him more for—his spectacular saves or his music. During the seven-day voyage from Bombay to Mombassa on the British India boat *SS Aronda*, he had taught all his teammates Goan folk songs in between training sessions on the deck. “Though one of us got seasick, the journey was much like a holiday.”

Today, Pinto stays home most of the time, venturing out only on weekends. Accompanied by his son Darryl and daughter Susan, he sometimes attends the mass at the nearby St Francis of Assisi church. “We never leave him alone,” says Darryl. Otherwise, Leo is self-reliant. He follows his diet—nine glasses of water, soaked almonds in the morning, bran or oatmeal for breakfast, and no red meat—to the T, attends to his phone calls, and goes about his day quietly.

Staying up to watch the first few matches during the Olympics in August disrupted his routine a little. The last minute Australian goal that took the match, and any medal hopes, away from India drained him. After lying in bed for a whole day till his blood pressure stabilised, he watched only recorded matches after that.

Ask him about India's showing and Pinto's expression is non-committal, his response almost diplomatic. “We did not do badly,” he says. “We played all right. The foreign teams have improved and Indian hockey is still trying to cope with grass giving way to AstroTurf.” Young players from the national team—midfielder Viren Rasquinha, who lives across the road from Pinto's house, and goalkeeper Adrian D'Souza—still drop in to visit Pinto. The junior team, in fact, had celebrated his birthday with a grand cake in April this year before leaving for the Asia Cup in Pakistan. “I wished them all the best and told them to rattle the opposition. And they did!”

Does he wish his team had enjoyed the overpowering media coverage that today's players command? “We all played and won for the love of the game and the country. Nothing else came first,” he says with feeling. Perhaps it is this ardour that gave Pinto and his team the elusive winning edge.

What if they were to play now? “The gold medal would be back,” Pinto insists.
—Nilanjana Sengupta

A fine innings

“Quit when people ask why, not why not” –[Vijay Hazare](#), Baroda

RAHUL GAJJAR



Popular memory remembers Vijayanand Samuel Hazare for two things: being mentioned in Amitabh Bachchan's hilarious monologue in Hindi blockbuster *Namak Halal* and for his quote, "You must quit when people ask why, and not when they ask why not," which became the tag line for the hit television show, *Kaun Banega Crorepati*.

But Vijay Hazare's claim to fame runs far deeper. An ace batsman who gave India its first Test win, Hazare captained India 14 times, and amassed a career first-class average of 58.19, including 57 centuries, over 32 years of cricket. The only Indian cricketer who surpassed his Test average was Sunil Gavaskar. He recorded at least one Test century against all his opponents, and was the first Indian to make two tons in 1947-48 against Australia at the Adelaide Oval. With his splendid footwork and precise timing, Hazare's permanent role was to rein in the innings whenever the top order came to grief. A quiet and undemonstrative captain, he was dropped as captain and player after a narrow loss in the West Indies in 1952-53. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) did make amends later, by naming one major tournament for juniors after him.

Hazare's first love, though, was football. "I was a very good footballer," he smiles. "I played a number of matches. Even today, I love to watch them on TV. And tennis." One of his teachers introduced him to cricket, and he started as a bowler. A highlight of his career was bowling Sir Don Bradman out on 13 in 1947-48 in Sydney. The bails flew 64 ft away. In that tour, he got Bradman's wicket again, at 201 runs. "*Baba* and Bradman shared a great friendship, sending each other Christmas cards," says his grandson Kunal.

Like many other outstanding players of his time, Hazare depended on the munificence of a royal family. He was the captain in the state army of Maharaja Pratapsinhrao Gaekwad of Baroda. But when Indira Gandhi abolished the privy purses of princes, a Delhi school principal shot off a telegram to the cricketer, offering to take him on the staff. Hazare chose to remain where he started. He continued in the service of the Maharaja and played first-class cricket until 1966.

A household name in Baroda, his name strikes an instant chord in the city. Fingers point towards his house behind a hospital located opposite the Maharaja Pratapsinh Coronation Gymkhana Ground, venue of one of his celebrated exploits—the world-record 577-run partnership with Gul Mohammed.

Now 89, Hazare is recovering from a minor operation, and is a tad unsteady on his feet. "I drove till I was 75," he says proudly.



Courtesy: VIJAY HAZARE

Hazare meets the Queen of England

"I would go out every day to the bank and the market. My eyesight is still very sharp, though I need glasses to read." As he relaxes after the photo shoot, he is flanked by his family—wife Pramila, daughter-in-law Bharati and Kunal. His only son Ranjit, a former Ranji Trophy player for Baroda, works in Kuala Lumpur as a senior engineer with petrochemicals giant Petronas. "*Baba* is the most disciplined man I know," says Kunal.

Though Hazare was coach to the royal family of Baroda, he didn't coach either his son or grandson, who has played Ranji Trophy in the under-17 category. "*Baba* knew that my coaches were D K Gaekwad and later Kiran More, and he never interfered," says Kunal. "Anyway, he doesn't like to get involved in controversies. He is always content with what he has. He speaks very little." As the youngsters practicing at the nets for an under-17 tournament at the Motibaug Cricket Ground gather around Hazare, asking him to hold the bat again, his bright smile says more than words ever could.

—Sandhya Bordewekar

Master of the universe

“I don’t believe in God” –**Manohar Aich**, Kolkata



Reaching a narrow, endlessly winding lane peopled with cycle rickshaws near Kolkata airport, ask for Manohar Aich at Jhuggi Para and everyone points the way. Several twists and turns later, we find a three-storied white house in a courtyard. A painted

sign reads: Manohar Aich International, Western Dance, Figure Shaping, Body Building. A fitting introduction to India’s first Mr Universe, in 1951.

The courtyard is filled with women. Someone asks if we are reporters. Another, more authoritative, is his eldest daughter. “Baba has a programme at 4, please be quick,” says Bani Banerjee, 60. And a head pops out of the upstairs window questioning our presence. That’s Aich. He receives us in a dim blue room with trophies

mounted on the wall and happy mongrels wagging their tails at his feet. Never mind the 91 years, at 4'11" he is definitely the 'Pocket Hercules' the newspapers dubbed him when he won the title.

Aich grew up in a village near Comilla, in present-day Bangladesh. Even as a little boy, two things interested him above everything else: music and bodybuilding. He would follow the *kirtan* parties that went from village to village until his uncle bought him a *khol*, a percussion instrument. He would also sit for hours watching the local boys practice with *lathi* and dumbbells at fitness clubs. Caught up in that tradition, Aich, then seven, drank in the principles of bodybuilding with a passion.

When Bengal split into two, Aich came to live in West Bengal. Bodybuilding continued to be his dream, though he found himself a job as a fitter and rigger in the Air Force in 1941. That ended abruptly with a brief spell in jail during Partition. When released, he had no money. It was then that an American magazine caught his eye and he read about the Mr Universe contest. No one helped him. "I don't believe in God," Aich says, still disgruntled about having to scrape together the money for his fare to London. He found himself a job in the railways there while he prepared for the contest.

When he returned to India with the title, even though there was no official recognition, he found himself in demand. Smearing his body with grease and displaying his muscles to appreciative crowds during Durga Puja, the standard routine included tearing up packs of cards and telephone directories, breaking iron chains and bending bars. He took this routine to circuses, the likes of Gemini and Empire.

He also had a *kirtan* group where he played the *khol* and his wife sang.

At 91, Aich gives his profession the credit for having kept him healthy. He has never been hospitalised and has only been ill twice, once at 12 with malaria and once with cholera at 22. Today, his profession also brings him money as never before. His two sons run the gyms in his home, one upstairs and one downstairs. The monthly fee is Rs 200. He keeps the equipment he trained with to show what it was like before motorised treadmills.

Aich has always been a busy man. In the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, he was asked to campaign for the BJP in Kolkata because of his celebrity status. Whenever there's a local beauty pageant or a bodybuilding contest, he is in the front row. Aich is content—the only thing that upsets him is the death of his wife, two years ago. She built this house and managed his finances. Now his daughter Bani looks after him and joins him in the *kirtan* singing.

Aich is delighted at the idea of being photographed with his music—it's different from being clicked with all the trophies that line room after room, and none of them from the Government—but he refuses to be rushed and is very fastidious about his appearance. He shaves once a week, and that's when he looks his best, he says, as he poses for the camera. Hercules is back.

—Anjana Basu



Photos: SHILBHADRA DUTTA



At 3.30 in the afternoon, the indoor badminton courts at Mumbai's Cricket Club of India echo with sounds of squeaking sneakers, whacked shuttles and enthusiastic shouts. Suddenly there is silence. Coaches and players stop midway through their training to meet the man who has just walked in.

Nandu Natekar's place in badminton history may not be evident from the only wall with photographs here—four Indonesian players occupy the frames. "At least two of the photographs could have been of Indians," he says wryly. But the first Indian badminton player to win an international tournament in 1956 still remembers how fans would line up overnight to witness his matches here.

When he played, journalists used phrases like 'Russian ballet' to describe his on-court movement. Fans and fellow players called him 'gifted' and 'a magician on court'. The two scrapbooks in which his brother Arun has compiled newspaper clippings convey the awe Natekar inspired in his heyday. At least 500 articles are stuck onto the now-brittle pages, some with bold headlines like 'India needs a dozen Natekars'. Remind him about it and the 71-year-old shrugs it off modestly: "Maybe, maybe."

SURESH NARAYANAN

Holding court

Courtesy: NANDU NATEKAR



Natekar (left) on one of his overseas trips

These days, Natekar is seen more at his son, former Davis Cup player Gaurav's tennis coaching centre in Pune, giving his second love some time. Sometimes, he visits Mumbai to watch local matches and practice sessions. Natekar chose badminton over tennis in 1951 at Cricket Club of India. That year, he earned the unique distinction of playing a junior tennis final and a senior badminton semi-final. Everyone, including his father Mahadev Hari Natekar and Sushil Ruia, the then president of the Maharashtra Badminton Association (MBA), agreed he should pursue just one game—badminton was the unanimous choice.

promise that?' But they tried," he laughs affectionately.

Now, Gaurav is trying to push his father into taking a supervisory role at Natekar Sports and Fitness Shop in the Aundh suburban neighbourhood of Pune. Natekar usually pops in to

"Everything has come naturally to me" —Nandu Natekar, Pune

Natekar himself has served as the president of the MBA for three years from 1993 but today he doesn't wish to play or coach. "After retirement [he worked with HPCL till 1991], I wanted to listen to music, travel, trek, and watch Marathi plays." An idyllic plan that was marred in 1995 with the untimely passing away of his wife who shared his interest in Marathi literature, if not music. Since 2001, he has been learning Hindustani classical music. "Though the teacher is very irregular, I try to practice on my own using the electronic tanpura," says Natekar, who listens to Indian classical music and old Hindi film songs, tunes in to his all-time favourite Radio Ceylon, and reads autobiographies and biographies in Marathi. This is when he is not playing with his one-and-a-half-year-old grandson Aaditya.

None of his five grandchildren have taken after him or his two daughters and son, all tennis players. His daughters gave up tennis for what he thinks was just an excuse. "They said, 'Baba, this is too much. Everyone asks us whether we will play like you. How can we

the shop at the end of his hour-long evening walk to "nowhere in particular". He has discovered numerous tracks around his home. "Some routes end with a spectacular view of the sky. I enjoy that."

Sometimes fellow walkers come up and ask him whether he is Nandu Natekar. He enjoys that too. "I feel proud and content," he says, then smiles. "Especially because I am a lazy man, you know. Everything has come naturally to me."

—Nilanjana Sengupta

Love match

“In my time, sports was seen as a hobby”

—Sumant Misra, Delhi



POOJA MEHRA

Nicknamed ‘Tiny’, Sumant Misra carries the moniker like a crown on his 6 feet and 2 inches. Another salutation that sits well on the 82-year-old’s tall frame is the feat of playing the quarterfinals of the Wimbledon men’s doubles championship and the US national doubles, both in 1947.

Also called ‘the grandfather of Indian tennis’, Misra was initiated into the game by his father Sir L P Misra, then chief commissioner of Indian Railways. As a 14-year-old, his favourite turf was the Calcutta South Club. That’s where Misra met his contemporaries, Narendra Nath, Man Mohan and Dilip Bose. However, Misra was the only one to participate in the junior national championship, the national championship and national veteran championship. In return, all he got was a pat on the back from his boss at the Calcutta Port Trust. No appreciation from the government, let alone the Arjuna Award, no money. “Then, sports was seen as a hobby,” recalls Misra, who retired from Indian Aluminium as general coordination manager over two decades ago. He lives in New Delhi with his wife. His elder son Gaurav is a former national tennis champion and director of the tennis centre at Columbia University, New York.

Misra’s happy to talk about the ‘good’ old days. “Did you know that soon after Partition, we didn’t have any fresh stock of sports equipment for two years? All our sports accessory factories were in Sialkot, Pakistan.” Or, “At the airport in Sydney, the customs officers

never asked us anything about our baggage. All they wanted to know about was tennis. At Palam Airport [in Delhi], it was the opposite.” And, “Initially, Europeans used to freak out seeing me in stiffly ironed cotton full pants. They wore flannel trousers, and were quite amused by my sartorial sense.”

More than half a century later, Misra’s wardrobe has undergone a complete makeover. There are Adidas shorts and Benetton tees for tennis and bush shirts and finely cut trousers for golf. On weekdays, you can catch him in a suit or *bandhgala* at work in the Sir L P Misra & Shyama Misra Trust, an NGO founded by his father. “Thanks to tennis, I managed to see quite a bit of the world,” says Misra. “My expenses were looked after by the All Indian Tennis Association.” Misra was the association’s honorary secretary from 1963 to 1966.

Misra, a former Davis cup winner, says there’s more money in tennis now. “In our days, Davis Cup was only for amateurs. Now, Mahesh Bhupathi is a professional and yet plays for the Davis Cup.” At his Delhi home in Kaushalya Park, his trophies and cups lie scattered all over his living room. Misra polishes them occasionally, wishing the Arjuna Award were among them.

—Teena Baruah

Retired hurt

These lost stars gave their all for the country.

What did they get in return?

Who is the only Indian footballer to score a hat trick at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics? P K Banerjee, Sailen Manna, Shabbir Ali, or **Neville D'Souza**?" This Rs 1 crore question, which remained unanswered, on *Kaun Banega Crorepati* brought fame for D'Souza 20 years after his death. The Bombay striker died of a brain haemorrhage in 1980. However, it was only this year that the Mumbai District Football Association commemorated him with a cash award given to his wife.

Footballer **Noor Mohammad**, a Hyderabad City Police team member, competed in three consecutive Olympics in 1948, 1952 and 1956.



Refusing offers from Mohun Bagan and East Bengal, he chose to stay with his team. Living on a pension of Rs 2,000 from the National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons since 1995, Mohammad died of tuberculosis in a two-room house in Hyderabad four years ago. A year before, in 1999, the Mahindra and Mahindra football team had presented him Rs 5,000. Spurred into action, more contributions poured in from many quarters, but too late in the day.

Almost 40 goals were scored during India's hockey challenge in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. But for Pune player **Joseph Philips**, the glitter soon faded and poverty took over. He even had to pledge his medal for a meal. A year before his death in 1986, he was awarded the Shivaji Chhatrapati award. The Rs 5,000 didn't make much of a dent. It took a newspaper report 12 years after his death in 1986 for the authorities to wake up. His 74-year-old widow Mary Philips was found eking out a living cleaning utensils in his hometown Khadki, near Pune. The Indian Hockey Federation and the Sports Ministry eventually came forward with money and support.



Above, Chand in the foreground; below left, D'Souza

Dhyan Chand, who led the Indian hockey team to its thumping win over the hosts in the 1936 Berlin Olympics while Hitler watched from the gallery, is much better known than Philips. A master dribbler, he was also a part of the 1928 and 1932 gold medal winning teams at the Olympics. But in 1972, when the Munich Olympics Organising Committee invited him as a special guest, the then central government refused to sponsor his visit. On a measly pension of Rs 400, without any government or federation aid, he spent the last days of his life a bitter man. When diagnosed with liver cancer in the late 1970s, Chand was dumped into the general ward of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi—he passed away in Delhi on December 3, 1979. ■



ANURADHA KUMAR

Wrinkle erasers

At *Harmony's* invitation, two silver citizens, **Gargi Ahluwalia** and **Srinivasa Sundararajan**, indulge in high-end facials that promise to peel away the years. Here is their verdict

Gargi Ahluwalia in Mumbai

In a room filled with carefully chosen artefacts and women who don't look their age, you steal anxious looks at the mirror every passing opportunity. Just the kind of anxiety that has made Usha Shekhar, in whose immaculate home we are all sitting, one of Mumbai's most sought after aestheticians. She runs U Derma, a 'by appointment only' skin clinic known for facials that sound more like industrial overhauling in their scope.

Usha is 60, and by now indifferent to being told that she looks younger, no more than a well-kept 48. Her daughter Aradhana Shekhar, also her assistant, is in her 30s but again a guess would be way off. And finally, there is the good-looking Gargi Ahluwalia, a 59-year old retired teacher who has volunteered for a facial—something she has never considered before. And perhaps it's a schoolteacher's discipline that has kept her looking well enough to cast doubt on her credentials as the ideal guinea pig for 'facials for mature skin'.

But Usha and Aradhana don't think so as they peer zealously at some fine lines and worry creases. There is plenty to work on. Even before we start, however, they have heaped such a thick layer of compliments on Gargi, about her carriage, demeanour, personal style, her decision not to colour her hair—everything actually—that she is already a bit lambent. Maybe it's a clever part of the treatment

but Gargi deserves good things said about her. She takes such pride in all that she does—her house, her appearance, her new profession as designer of home accessories—that lack of compliments would show mean-spiritedness.

Usha's clinic upstairs is a small all-white room that seems to have the blessings of Simi Garewal. The procedures at U Derma are not what you would find in neighbourhood parlours; all of them require technical equipment that is not made in India and training that she updates with visits to Europe. But it pays off: her clients include actors Moushumi Chatterji and Dimple Kapadia, actors' parents like Pinki Roshan (Hrithik's mom) and actors' mentors like Smita

Thackeray. All the procedures here are non-invasive, though, and less painful than waxing.

Gargi is getting ready for the treatment. As she takes off her makeup and contact lenses, she tells us what made her give up spectacles: "It was my son Sanjay's wedding. There was no way I was going to stand on the stage with bloody glasses on!"

First on the list is dermabrasion, where micro crystals of aluminium oxide, which is chemically inert, are used to slough off dead skin to

reveal a face less touched by life. There is a slight pricking sensation but not enough to register on Gargi's face.

Dermabrasion is also said to be a good preparatory procedure for other beauty treatments since the skin's absorbency improves. After an ice-cold compress of rosewater, Gargi is ready for the real luxury – an oxygen bath for her face.

"I got so many compliments! Everybody said I was glowing"

Oxyjet is a patented technique through which oxygen is sprayed on the skin. This is done in conjunction with the application of a few drops of Hyaluron, the synthesised version of hyaluronic acid—the main constituent in the epidermal layer that gives the skin its plumpness and elasticity. The end effect is supposed to be a visible smoothening of wrinkles. "But for really dramatic results that stay on for six months, I recommend five sittings within two-and-a-half weeks," says Usha.

The final step is oxygen inhalation for five to 10 minutes, done through a typical hospital mask.

Gargi gets up, looking a little sleepy and peers curiously into the mirror. "My face feels very tight and stretched," she says, which is a good thing. "The real effects always show up a day later," says Usha.

Gargi has a cards session with her friends the next day, which is going to be the real test. On the phone the next day, she says her facial was a complete hit. "I got so many compliments! Everybody was asking me what I had done. They said I was glowing." Fifteen days later her face still had a glow that everybody is remarking on, "except my husband". And her final verdict: "Nothing like two compliments a day."

—Anuradha Kumar

Srinivasa Sundararajan in New Delhi

Srinivasa Sundararajan is the kind of person you want to meet in the morning—positive, talkative and peppy, he wakes you up like a brisk cup of tea at the Kaya Skin Clinic in Delhi's posh South Extension Part II market. Retired from the euphemistically called Cabinet Secretariat—the Research & Analysis Wing—he has spent a full life as a Delhi Police officer, a diplomatic representative abroad and special secretary to the Government. Now, his work comprises playing bridge from 2:30 pm to 7 pm—and don't smile, it's a serious pursuit as he plays for Delhi State and in the Nationals.

Sundararajan is fairly content with his life, his "companion-wife" and the way he looks in his 63rd year without any "powder or cosmetics". Just a little apprehensive, he is nevertheless gung-ho and walks into the doctor's briefing room, eyes bright and smiling.

The young and smiling Dr Komal Arora, a dermatologist, briefs him on what he will go through: the Kaya Photofacial or laser rejuvenation. Simply put, the Photofacial takes the laser stick to your collagen, the substance that gives skin its elasticity. Sun damage and ageing slow



down collagen production. Sundararajan's face has wrinkles, folds from the nose to the mouth and lots of crow's feet around his eyes.

Also, he laughs a lot, which one hears is not a great thing because collagen doesn't have a great

sense of humour. His is a nice, lived-in face—and here we are to make it smoother, tighter and more elastic.

The Kaya Photofacial uses light rays to stimulate and redistribute collagen around the selected area. This is done with a long Nd-VAG laser pulse. The focus areas are the face and the neck and it is recommended for reducing fine lines and wrinkles, blemishes and age-spots, as well as for sun-damaged skin. It can also be used to prevent the appearance of deep lines and wrinkles. Sundararajan will experience this for 45 minutes today. For best results, however, five to eight sessions are recommended, with each session to be undertaken after a three-week gap.

Sundararajan has a nice, lived-in face—and here we are to make it smoother and more elastic

Sundararajan sticks his face into the Wood's Lamp, a bioscope-type machine, which gives a break-up of the facial skin—the oily areas, sun damage, areas of pigmentation, and so on. Kaya specialists customise the treatment on the basis of that. Sundararajan fills in the medical profile form—you need to fill this very carefully as some of the

treatments cannot be carried out if you have, for instance, a pacemaker, diabetes, asthma, certain allergies, or are taking certain medication that may react with the treatment plan.

In the treatment room a sweet therapist called Pratima explains each step. The room is very minimal and white, and freezing at 18° C. Sundararajan doesn't like it cold, but the laser machine—the size of a small fridge—needs it. Machine wins over man and Sundararajan lies down on the bed, and promptly goes off to sleep after handing over his wallet to me with an air of finality.

Pratima starts by cleansing Sundararajan's face, places pads with rosewater on his eyes, and applies pale blue gel on his face; the gel reduces the discomfort of the hot laser. The therapist is trained to keep the laser at one spot for less than a second and what Sundararajan feels at the end is a slight pricking. While the treatment is on, the folds do look less pronounced, the crow's feet have become very fine lines and the skin looks smooth and supple. But wait, there's more to come.

Pratima wipes Sundararajan's face with cold water and gently applies a moisturiser to soothe the skin and then sprays a revitalising tonic to hydrate it. Sundararajan looks in a mirror and is quite relieved to find that all his face is still there! "It's a good treatment," he declares.

Dr Arora advises him to avoid the direct sun, and warm water and soap on his face for at least 12 hours and recommends a sun screen (at least SPF 15), two to four hourly, for a few days. If the skin is a bit



POOJA MEHRA

Sundararajan beams after his facial

irritable, splashing cold water is recommended. But the hardy Sundararajan does not face any such sensitivity and gets along fine in the next few days. His face looks fresher, but it would take more sessions to make a visible difference. Sundararajan does not really feel the need. He is "young at heart, and doesn't want to grow or look any younger!"

—Vatsala Kaul

The doctor's say

Dr Satish L Wadhwa, professor and head of department, dermatology, at Nair Hospital and TN Medical College, and consulting dermatologist at Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai, has a word of warning.

"Dermabrasions and photo facials, if done too deeply or unevenly, can cause hyper pigmentation, or darkening of the skin."

For more details on U Derma and Kaya, and costs, see page 95

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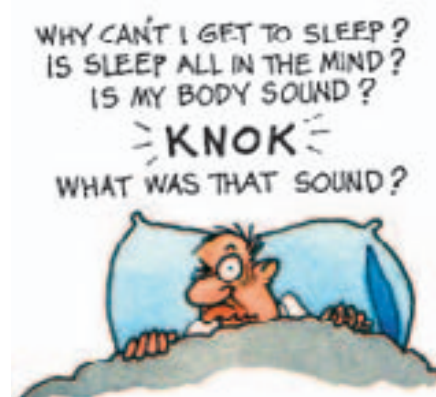


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Wide awake at 55



Ponnappa on the midnight beat

Fifty-five. Been asked to stay off liquor, the good life. Sleeping tablets are out. They make one dull the next morning and the grogginess runs through the day. Warm milk and honey are for kids. So how does one sleep as one ages? Reading does not help as the glasses keep slipping down the nose and the book feels heavy on the hands.

Dad, who was a teetotaler, could knock off as soon as he hit the sack, lived till the ripe age of 83, and advised me when I was young never to carry my worries to bed. But when I was young, the world was young too. Traffic on the roads past 10 in the night was unheard of. Those were the days when neighbours were so far away that even those sharpest of hearing could not catch each other's snores. Or the flushing of their toilets.

Slowly, as the years rolled by, music that once was music to the ears began to increase in crescendo to what obtains now. Blare. And later

still, construction workers who would pack their tools come evening now continue to chip and bang away late into the night. Cotton wool hasn't changed so drastically.

It's not easy to sleep soundly these days even

if one is much younger. Get to sleep at 10 pm and wake up at 6 am Mom would say, but Mom doesn't live here any more, having left for the land of the final nod as a comfortable 86-year-old, a life well spent. 10-6. When I tell the same to my boys, they smile back wryly and say, "Aw, come on Dad, grow up. Things are different now."

Perhaps it is the noise all around that hinders sleep, as do the next-door neighbours who are too close for comfort. Could be that sound itself has changed in its own perception to permeate through hermetically sealed rooms with whisper-soft air-conditioning. Disturbing trends. A change in lifestyle. 24x7 TV. And late-night pizza delivery. Also, of course, the good lady who condescends to share my bed, gently snoring away into the night, oblivious to the fact that she does so. One never snores; it's always the sleeping partner who does. Now, that is worrying enough to keep one awake through the night.

Will it get better at all, one wonders, as the days noisily count themselves on the





calendar. As of now, the answer is no. The traffic, the noisy neighbours, the late-night pizza delivery boy and the good doctor, bless him, who denies you your well-earned nightcap, can vouch for that. When one is 55, vacations in the hills where the orchestration of the insects in the night that lull you on to some good sleep, however expensive, are but only for a week every quarter, for one has not retired from the daily grind. For many, the farmhouse is still a dream—and even the farmhouses are inching closer to one another these days.

However, in spite of the rise in the decibel count, political rallies notwithstanding, there are some amazing persons, freaks by mutation, who can sleep through it all. It's time a scientist or two worked late into the night to study their genes and gather them so that when our children get to 55 and above, there will be a solution to the problem we face now, getting sleepless as we grow older. ■



Ponnappa is a Bangalore-based cartoonist

Sleep well tonight

- Avoid taking naps during the day
- Walk briskly for 30 minutes every morning and evening
- Preferably exercise in the mornings. Don't work out five hours before you go to bed
- Go for a light dinner, and don't head for the bed immediately after that
- Don't drink coffee and tea or eat chocolates, specially before sleeping
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- *Shavasana* and *pranayama* for five minutes each before dinner helps. In the first, lie still. In the second, take deep breaths
- Take a warm bath before going to bed
- Have a glass of warm milk
- See that your room is well-ventilated
- Listen to your favourite music
- Make sure your bed is comfortable

Contributed by M S Kanwar, senior consultant, sleep and respiratory medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, New Delhi; Jitendra Nagpal, psychiatrist, VIMHANS, New Delhi; Dr Nevin Kishore, consultant sleep specialist, Max Healthcare, New Delhi; and Dr S Manchanda, sleep specialist, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi

HEART ON THE TABLE

In surgery, as in love, young hearts heal quickly. Following this wisdom, cardiologists have traditionally kept patients older than 75 away from operation theatres, relying instead on medication. But a new study conducted at the University Hospital in Basel, Switzerland, shows that elderly patients who had surgery or angioplasty for chest pain did just as well as those treated with medicines. More important, those who had surgery also found better quality of life, defined for the

study as freedom from heart attacks, cardiac hospitalisation or the need for a repeat surgery.



In the study, 153 patients had bypass surgery or angioplasty, while another 148 patients were treated with medication such as

aspirin or statins. All were 75 or older. Patients were tracked for five years and it was found that 39 per cent of the surgery patients had better

quality of life compared to just 20 per cent of those treated with medicines. While the 30-day death rate is higher in older patients than in younger ones—regardless of the type of treatment—the elderly patients treated with surgery also found quicker relief from symptoms and needed fewer drugs.

Despite these findings, doctors warn that surgery cannot be the first option for every heart patient. Cases have to be judged on individual situations.



FARZANA COOPER

SKIP A BEAT

If you are exercising to beat the risks from coronary heart disease, Type II diabetes and obesity, stop now. And then start again in a few minutes. A recent study conducted by the University of Missouri-Columbia shows that intermittent rather than continuous exercise is better for lowering

levels of triglyceride, an artery-blocking fat. The brake-accelerate-brake approach works out the heart much better and lowers triglyceride levels after a high-fat meal.



Researchers also discovered that levels of the fat-clearing enzymes peaked about 12 hours after a workout. So if

you eat a hefty breakfast, you will benefit more from an evening workout, while those who eat big dinners will benefit more from exercise in the mornings. However, these enzymes don't linger beyond 24 hours, so you will need a daily boost.

NINE LIVES

A global study of over 29,000 people across 52 nations, conducted at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, has found nine risk factors that

predict heart attacks across all ethnic groups. Two of them—an abnormal ratio of bad-to-good cholesterol and smoking—were responsible for two-thirds of all heart attacks that take place globally. The other factors are high blood pressure, diabetes, abdominal obesity, stress, a lack of daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, and lack of daily exercise.



The ninth factor is based on a finding that people who had a moderate and regular intake of alcohol gained modest protection from heart disease. The findings contradict current thinking, which suggests that half of the risks of heart disease are unknown.



READ ALL PRINTS

Presbyopia is the beginning of a chapter of life in which we will spend most of our reading time looking for our glasses. Also called

middle-aged vision because it sets in early to mid 40s, this debility can now be rid of in a quick three minutes. A new procedure called conductive keratoplasty that reshapes the cornea has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. The procedure uses a natural property of the cornea to shrink when it reaches 60° Celsius by heating it with radio waves. As the peripheral corneal tissue shrinks, the centre of the cornea rises, improving near vision. The procedure, not available in India, costs around US\$ 1,500 per eye (about Rs 68,500). Though the cornea sometimes reverts to its original shape, most people enjoy long-term results and it can be safely repeated.

E-LIMINATE COLDS

Vitamin E can protect the elderly from getting colds. The Nutritional Immunology Laboratory at the Tufts University in Boston conducted a study of 451 people over the age of 65. The people were divided randomly into two groups, with one receiving a daily supplement of Vitamin E every day for 12 months while the other group received placebos. Those taking Vitamin E were 20 per cent less likely to get a cold over the study period. Though similar benefits were found for younger people, Vitamin E was more useful for the elderly with their weaker immune systems.



Photos: YASH GORE

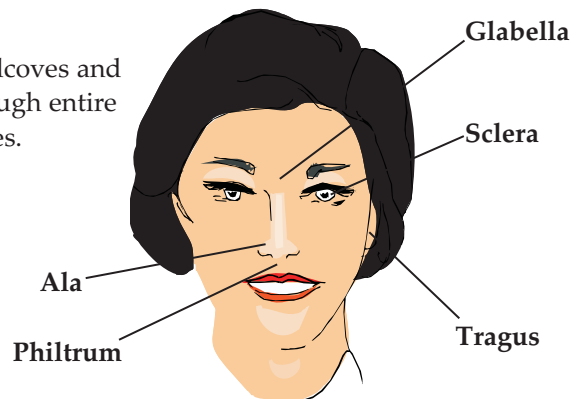
GROUP THERAPY

Talking might have been bad for your health when you were in a classroom, but in old age it is a vital part of staying fit. A University of Michigan study has shown that silvers who live alone tend to lose their ability to communicate, associated with a cognitive decline due to reduced interaction with people. It was found that people who experienced less cognitive decline were involved in a wider range of relationships, each of which challenges individuals to speak and listen to others on a range of topics. Deborah Keller-Cohen, professor of linguistics at the University of Michigan, recommended frequent interaction with friends, family and neighbours for those living alone. "A lifestyle with organised activities seems to provide the best social opportunities for the elderly," she said. Something that a number of day-care centres for the elderly now provide in Indian metros. ■

BODY LANGUAGE

This space is devoted to the bridges and ridges, the alcoves and notches on our face that we see everyday but go through entire lives without ever calling them by their rightful names.

- The bridge between the eyebrows: **Glabella**
- White of the eyes: **Sclera**
- Nostril rims: **Ala**
- The vertical ridge between the lips and the nose: **Philtrum**
- Edge protruding from the face into the ear: **Tragus**



Fast forward

The wheelchair doesn't slow oncologist Dr Suresh Advani down as he keeps pace with his patients and hectic life, says **Nilanjana Sengupta**

His day begins at 6.30 in the morning and continues well past midnight.

Oncologist Dr Suresh Advani visits three hospitals and a voluntary organisation in Mumbai, gives online consultation, attends and holds seminars, reads medical journals and writes research papers—he has contributed to around 500 national and international publications. The pioneer of bone marrow transplant in India, he was awarded the Dhanvantri Award in 2002 and the Padmashri in 2003 for his contribution in the field of

scientific research in medical oncology, the study of tumours. The 58-year-old is always on the go – only his “way of reaching destinations” is his wheelchair.

He has used one since he was diagnosed with polio in both legs 50 years ago. In the 1950s, the newly discovered polio vaccine had not yet made its way to India and correctional surgery for polio-paralysed limbs was not yet developed. There were frequent visits to hospitals for the eight-year-old Advani and the image of the kind, white-coated doctor stuck in his head. He made up his mind then to study medicine, so that he too “could give others

a chance at life”. He was determined not to let his disability overwhelm him into inactivity.

After topping Mumbai's K J Somaiya College in the Inter-mediate, Advani was ready to enrol for his MBBS at Grant Medical College in 1966. Ironically, the college initially refused him admission because of his handicap. Advani remembers frenzied attempts to meet the university chancellor and writing letters to government authorities in order to get special permission to attend. Finally, a letter from the then state health minister did the trick, and the 19-year-old's

Advani swears by positive thinking



Photos: BAJIRAO PAWAR

Brace yourself

Here are a variety of knee and ankle joints available in India in prosthetic and orthotic outlets for polio-affected patients. These include:

Automatic spring lever knee joint: Highly recommended for patients with impaired hand function. It has a spring-loaded lever system, which automatically engages the locking device when the patient fully extends his leg. The lock may be disengaged with one hand

Posterior offset ring lock knee joint: Closely approximates the movement of an anatomical knee. Is available in aluminium and stainless steel

Load response knee joint: It has a preloaded spiral torsional spring that helps keep the knee

joint stable for individuals with limb weakness. The knee can be flexed up to 18 degrees. It provides shock absorption

G-knee: A new concept that allows individuals with quadricep weakness the benefits of a free knee. The lightweight design enables bending of the knee. Gas spring extension assist is available in varying degrees to meet individual requirements

E-knee: An electromechanically operated, stance-control knee joint, the e-knee facilitates natural gait progression and uses a pressure-sensitive footplate, combined with an electro-magnetically controlled locking device, to lock the joint when not in use and allow motion when in use

Prices range from Rs 26,000 to Rs 45,000

dream came true. "Other than that minor hiccup, my disability has never been a problem for me," he says.

He began his career practicing at Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital in 1974, and he now consults at Jaslok Hospital, the Asian Institute of Oncology at S L Raheja Hospital and Breach Candy Hospital—all equipped with inclined ramps to facilitate mobility. Bharat Sevashram Sangha, a voluntary organisation in Navi Mumbai that Advani visits once a week, had a slope specially built for him. At places where there are no access ramps, though, he has to be picked up and carried by at least four people.

At the Satyam Shivam Sundaram building at Ghatkopar in suburban Mumbai, where Advani has lived with his family

since 1986, the builder put up a ramp at the time of construction. His wife, Geeta, 53, a former nurse at Tata Memorial Hospital, ordered wider doors in their second-floor flat and has minimal furniture so that he has no problems moving around. "I want him to be able to manoeuvre independently and comfortably," she says.

The couple have two children: son Mohit, 23, runs a garment business in Delhi and 22-year-old daughter Smita is in her final year of MBBS at Somaiya Medical College in Mumbai. Advani's busy schedule allows him little time with them. Family dinners happen "probably once a year" and he can't remember the last time he went for a movie. "Since 6 am, the phone rings continuously for him. He doesn't even have the time to talk to me," his wife says with a laugh.

Talk to him about oncology, though, and Advani makes the time. The soft-spoken doctor's eyes light up when he says, "Medical oncology has converted many incurable forms of cancer into curable ones. Earlier, all children afflicted with cancer died. Today, 75 per cent of them are cured. Likewise, the survival rate for leukaemia, which was zero per cent earlier, is now 70 per cent."

Advani admits that his patients rule his life. Giving them and their families the correct insight and positive information is the key to removing fear and anxiety. Even when the verdict is grim, there can be no flinching—he tells his patients to look forward, not behind. "It is all in the mind," he says. "A positive mental attitude will always make you see the brighter side of a predicament." He should know. ■

Hold your neck up



Regular yogic exercise can help you get rid of that pain in the neck, says **Shameem Akthar**

ANYTHING CAN TRIGGER

neck pain. Working long hours at the computer, TV addiction, making chapattis continuously, gardening, or even a sudden jerk while driving. Often the cause may not be obvious, like bad posture or emotional upsets. Commuting over potholed roads also unsettles the neck. Bad food habits do their share of damage too, by discouraging tissue repair, and causing degeneration of the bones, supportive ligaments or cushioning discs.

The worst part about neck pain is that it refuses to remain localised. In cervical spondylitis, it can fan out in several directions. Hands and shoulders can suffer. Sometimes, it can crawl down to the lower extremities and legs. It can also cause incontinence.

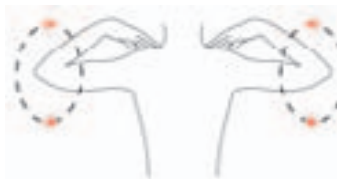
BEST TRACTION

Yogic exercises provide the best retort since all of them focus on the neck. Clasping the palms and raising them up, as in the *tadasana* (tree) pose, can correct postural defects and spinal misadventures gently. Even simple forward bending poses provide traction to the spine. Similarly, neck movements or *greeva sanchalana* strengthen the neck gently. As one advances in practice, poses like the *sarvangasana* (shoulder stand) or *viparita karani* (inverted pose) strengthen the entire upper body.

Yogic moves

Skandha chakra or shoulder socket rotation

Sit up straight, or stand. Place tips of both hands on each shoulder respectively. Upper arms should be at right angle to body. Inhaling, rotate the elbows in clockwise direction. Exhaling, bring arms down, back to starting position. Do this 10 times. Repeat 10 times in



anticlockwise direction. The focus should be on the roll of the shoulder joint within the socket. This exercise can be done anytime, particularly after a long bout of upper body inactivity such as watching television and driving and even after activity that requires bending down for long, such as

gardening, cooking or working at a table. This exercise loosens up the upper body, relieving stiffness, and encourages blood flow. It opens up the chest gently, encouraging relaxed breathing, and is therapeutic in cervical spondylitis. Breath coordination encourages relaxation.

Remember to breathe normally between inhalation and exhalation, especially if you are making slow and gentle movements. Another option is to try a variation of this movement to further relieve stiffness and pain. Inhaling slowly raise the right shoulder to the ear and drop it back, gently exhaling. Repeat other side. Do each side, 10 to 15 times.

Such poses also apply pressure on the thyroid and parathyroid glands at the throat, boosting metabolism and nutrient absorption, crucial for tissue repair. In extreme neck pain, arm exercises provide initial relief and patch-up. Regular practice can further strengthen this region, which is vulnerable not only physically but also emotionally since the neck feels the full blast of our emotional

upsets. When tense or upset, our upper body reacts by contracting its muscles in preparedness for a flight or fight. That's why yoga insists on coordinating breathing with even its simplest moves since this helps us unwind.

Just 15 to 30 minutes of yoga daily can ensure that you hold up your neck with pride, and health, forever. ■

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



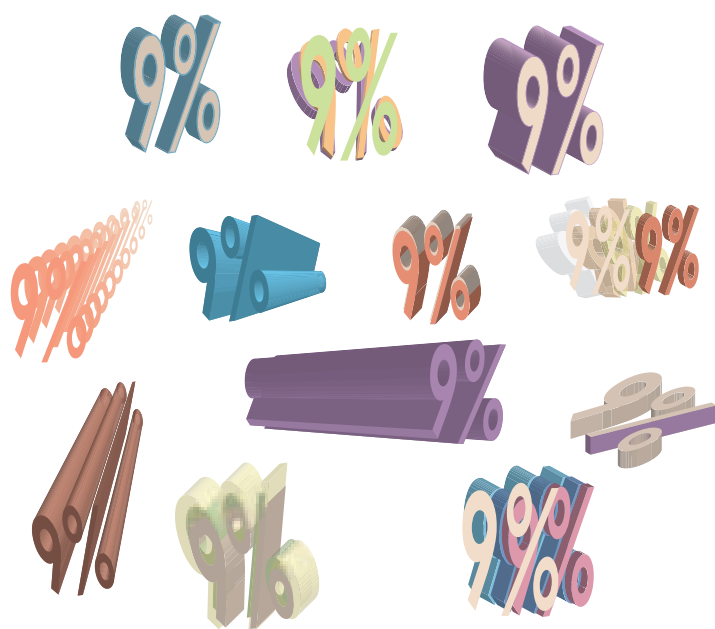
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The scheme of things



The new Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme, announced in this year's Budget, has received mixed reactions from investors and experts.

Teena Baruah does a reality check

There's a long queue at counter number 17 A of the General Post Office, near Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus. The success of the new Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme can be gauged from the number of people in line. Ninety per cent of them are here to invest in this new scheme that records an average collection of Rs 5 crore daily at the GPO. The lure: Nine per cent interest on investments, the highest so far in recent times. The other scheme that offered 9 per cent interest was the Life Insurance Corporation's Varishtha Bima Pension Yojana—in its one year of existence, LIC mobilised over Rs 1,000 crore from it.

But not everyone is drawn to the new scheme. Customers are expressing concern over its taxability, lock-in-period and the mode of payment, weighing them against other existing schemes.

To evaluate the scheme, first let's cruise through its highs and lows. Proposed in the 2004-2005 Budget, the scheme is available to people above 60 years of age. Fifty-five-year-olds who have just applied for a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) can also invest within three months of retirement. Sold through post offices, it has a high investment ceiling and liquidity in the market. You can now invest up to Rs 15 lakh and earn interest every three months. While the lock-in period is five years, you can also extend your tenure by another three years. Money withdrawn after one year gets you one-and-a-half per

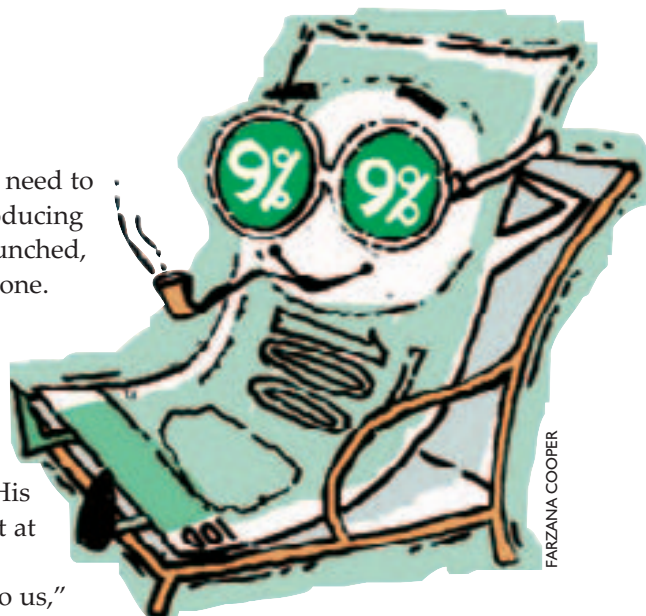
cent less returns, and one per cent less if withdrawn after two years. Another downside: The returns are taxable. Even the existing Monthly Income Scheme of the post office betters this by offering 8 per cent, non-taxable interest.

Delhi-based tax expert Subhash Lakhotia feels that the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme should also be made accessible to everyone over 50, including those who have opted for a VRS. Lakhotia is also critical about the clause that doesn't permit two or more investments from one person in one month. Then, you can't open an account with anyone but your spouse. It can be a single account, though. Nomination is a possibility, but needs extra paperwork.

There are two ways of applying for the new scheme—either approach the post office directly, or hire an agent. You don't need to pay the agent; he gets a commission of half per cent for introducing you to the scheme. From August 1, when the scheme was launched, nearly 5,000 agents have joined the business in New Delhi alone.

For some, the arrangement is wasteful. "It's a scam," fumes Delhi-based investor R D Gupta. "Or why else would the Finance Ministry deny us the half per cent interest that is now given as commission to agents? It may sound nominal, but on an investment of Rs 15 lakh it amounts to Rs 7,500." His logic: All you need to do is fill out a simple form and deposit at the nearest post office. So why fork out the half per cent commission to an agent? "Use it for development or give it to us," he suggests.

However, Mumbai-based tax and finance consultant A N Shanbhag justifies the need for an agent. "Some people need help to guide them through the technicalities of investing in a scheme," he says. "Also, some might not be in a position to go to the post office, let alone stand in serpentine queues." He calls it the "right scheme handled by the wrong agency". "The procedures followed by the post office were



FARZANA COOPER

laid down years ago, hence the queues," he says, adding how people will either have to open a savings account at the post office or queue up every three months to collect their returns.

Investors have already found a champion. Former Member of Parliament Kirit Somaiya, who heads a Mumbai-based NGO called Investors' Grievances Forum, introduced the first electronic clearance scheme (ECS) at the post office in his suburban constituency of Mulund in July 2003. ECS is a system by which investors' interest gets deposited directly to the savings bank account. Somaiya is now campaigning for ECS in 14 other cities. In the present set-up, one needs to maintain two passbooks, one for the scheme in question and the other for the post office savings bank account. Make another investment and you get another account and passbook to maintain. "ECS would clearly make life simpler," assures Somaiya. Another way to make life simpler: issue 12 post-dated cheques to each investor for his quarterly returns. ■

Is there any option?

- Yes, and no. One can still invest an unlimited amount in the Reserve Bank of India bond that assures 8 per cent taxable interest, credited to your bank account every six months. But the lock-in period for this is six years, with no premature withdrawal allowed. At best, this can be your second best option. The Reserve Bank of India's 6.5 per cent non-taxable bond was scrapped just before the Budget announced in July. Experts say that was the best investment scheme by far, for the final return on the 8 per cent bond after tax deductions is 6.3 per cent.
- The Public Provident Fund and National Savings Scheme are not ideal for silvers. Both are long-term investments that give you cumulative interest, rather than a regular income to take care of your daily needs. They have a fairly low investment ceiling too. Similarly, the post office's Monthly Income Scheme has an investment ceiling of Rs 6 lakh.

Scheme	Lock-in period	Returns	Taxability
Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme	5 years (can be extended by 3 years)	9%	Taxable
Post Office Monthly Income Scheme	3 years	8%	Non-taxable
Reserve Bank of India	6 years	8%	Taxable

Go carding!

The festival season is here, and a sweet incentive prompts **Sachin Kalbag** to teach the Purohits how to send e-cards



FARZANA COOPER

The Purohits are a religious couple. The neighbourhood always looked forward to the festival season because Mrs Purohit used to make delicious sweets as *prasad* for Ganesh Chaturthi, Dussehra and Diwali, and even chocolates for Christmas and the New Year.

Now she is a little old, and cannot run around like she used to. Besides, both her children, as we know, are software developers based in the US. "Why should I make *prasad* if my children are not here?" she often laments.

Earlier, she used to send *prasad* and other savouries to the US.

Now, she sends only greeting cards. But she often complains about the effort and energy it takes to go to the store and pick up cards for her children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Going to the store is just another chore, she once said, and promptly apologised for the weak rhyme.

For my part, I've really missed the *sheera* (a Maharashtrian delicacy), the *chaklis*, *gulab jamuns*, and *rasagollas*. There must be some way of inducing her to prepare these yummy eatables. And then a few days ago, when I was taking my customary night walk with them, epiphany

struck. Why didn't I think of this before? What a fool I have been!

I suddenly stopped and said: "Mrs Purohit, I have a deal for you. How about this? I teach you a hassle-free way of sending greeting cards through the Internet to all your relatives and friends, and you make that delicious *sheera* for me?"

"You wicked fellow," she said. But she had a twinkle in her eye. And I knew she wanted to learn all about e-greetings as much as I wanted to eat her *sheera*.

"Tomorrow, 11 am, the *sheera* will be ready. You better tell me all about sending greeting cards

over the Internet before you take your second helping."

The next morning—it was a Sunday—I landed up at the Purohits at exactly 10:55. Mrs Purohit had me completely figured out. "You couldn't wait for the *sheera*, could you?" "No, I couldn't," I replied, quite shameless about the whole thing. I ate the first helping, and then got ready for my part of the deal.

Sending e-greetings is just like sending email, I told her. And they come in all shapes, sizes, and messages. Our first stop: *123greetings.com*, a site that offers free e-cards. We opened Internet Explorer and Mrs Purohit typed in *www.123greetings.com*. Suddenly a colourful page full of options opened up. "What a bewildering array!" she exclaimed. I told her to be patient. Eventually, after scrolling down an extensive list, she spied 'Events and Holidays'. One mouse click on that moved us to another page with a calendar with festivals from across the world.

She chose Ganesh Chaturthi—an auspicious beginning—and found there were eight cards to choose from. We tried each one turn by turn. "They're all so colourful, and even have music!" she exclaimed in wonder. When we finally chose one, we clicked on the 'Personalise' option on top of the card. Mrs Purohit then typed in a greeting and filled out her daughter's email address, after which she clicked on 'Preview and Send'. There is also a multi-send function which enables you to send the card

to a number of recipients, I told her. "Next time," she chuckled and pressed 'Send' with a sigh of satisfaction.

"It's amazing how these Americans think of everything. Who would think they'd know about Ganapati?" Little did she know that one of the biggest cards markets on the Net is India. It has to be—it has the largest number of religious festivals in the world. Mrs Purohit was hooked now. She sent Dussehra cards to about 20 people using the multi-send function, and went on to send a few Diwali cards too. I just about managed to



stop her from sending Christmas cards more than two months in advance.

The good thing about *123greetings.com* is that it is totally secular. You find all religions there—from Christianity and Hinduism to Sikhism and Shintoism. Next on our list was *bluemountain.com*, another American site with a lot of India-related greetings cards. The same was the case here: lots of cards for lots of people.

Mrs Purohit didn't need my help anymore; she was unstoppable. She sent a second lot of cards to



another set of people through the site. And the fact that the cards were free was the icing on the cake. Of course, not all greeting cards on these sites are free—just like a store, you have to pay for some of them.

Closer home, *msn.co.in*, *yahoo.co.in* and *rediff.com* have a list of India-related greeting

Sending e-greetings is just like sending email.

They come in all shapes and sizes

cards, developed by Indians for Indians, and we paid them a visit. For some reason, though, *msn.co.in* does not have festival cards, but it does have anniversary cards, birthday cards, Valentine's Day cards, etc. Yahoo and Rediff on the other hand have the entire collection.

Mrs Purohit loves me now. Short of adopting me, she praised me just as she would praise her son, who had topped IIT. She knew I had my end of the deal covered. She promptly went inside to get me a second helping of piping-hot *sheera*. ■

Sachin Kalbag is Executive Editor of Digit, a technology magazine. Next month, the Purohits establish their own Internet community

Is your cash safe?

Legalpundits tells you what you can, and can't do if your bank goes bust

How safe is your money with financial institutions?

Don't let that extra per cent of interest lure you. It's unwise to invest all your money with private moneylenders or even cooperative banks with little reputation or deposit base. Check the credentials of the financial institution first. If your money is parked in a bank, it is guaranteed for up to Rs 1 lakh by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC). A government agency, it offers guarantees for loans granted by credit institutions to small borrowers. But in the event of liquidation, reconstruction or amalgamation of an insured bank, every depositor of the bank is entitled to repayment of his deposits in all branches of that bank, subject to a monetary ceiling of Rs 1 lakh.

How do you know if your bank is financially unsound?

If your bank offers higher rates, it could be lending aggressively

to less creditworthy customers who are unable to borrow at lower rates; or settling for lower spreads—the difference between the rates at which your bank borrows and lends. This increases credit risk, and has a negative impact on profits. Indications of banks' performance can be found in the annual reports of the Reserve Bank of India. However, some expertise is required to analyse this.

What are the safeguards, if any?

You must gather and interpret the available information on your bank. Annual reports are an excellent source of information. However, since small depositors cannot easily access them they must at least track news reports. Do not ignore reports of any change of auditors, removal of a director, or strictures from the regulator.

Can one take any legal action to recover the money?

Yes, but such recourse has its

limitations. In situations like insolvency, the kind of compensation you get depends on the quality of assets with the bank that may have to be liquidated to repay depositors. Going with an association or a forum of depositors will make the case stronger. A public interest litigation (PIL) and a writ petition can also be filed in a court of law.

How does a PIL work?

Though undefined in any statute or act, in simple words a PIL means litigation filed in a court of law, for the protection of 'public interest'. Only one person being affected by state inaction is not a ground for a PIL. Also, it can be filed only against a state/central government or municipal authority, not a private party. However, a 'private party' can be included as a 'respondent', after making the concerned state authority a party. A writ petition filed by the aggrieved person, whether on behalf of the group or together with the group, can also be treated as a PIL. The writ petition should be specific, asking the court to direct the state authorities to take action. It should involve a question that affects the public at large or a group of people. ■

Protect your investment in case your bank goes belly-up



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Talks by experts have brought a new buzz to the

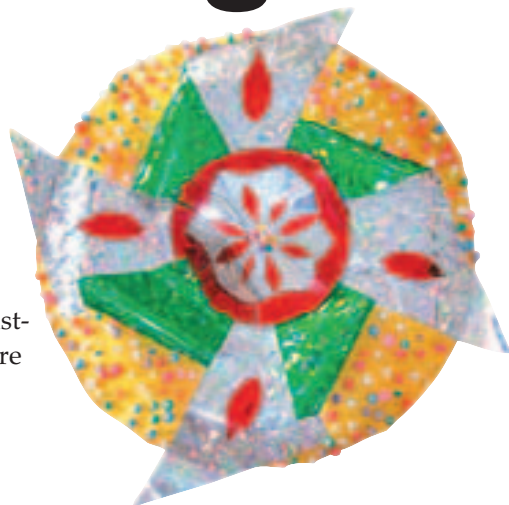
Harmony centre, writes **Nilanjana Sengupta**

The Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, is spreading its wings. First housed on one floor, it has now grown to occupy two more floors. With over 250 registered members and 19 resource persons advising them on various issues, the centre also has a comprehensive database of experts on various fields, from health and legal aid, to finance.

Last month, we wrote about the various activities that the centre organises to motivate and inform members. This month, our experts take centre stage.

When 51-year-old homemaker Deepa Agarwal was invited from Bandra to demonstrate fast-food recipes—on the menu were vegetable frankies and scrumptious *papdi* salad with *methi* chutney—she was quite surprised to see men in attendance too. Thrilled with the response, Agarwal is already drawing up a Chinese menu for her next session.

Equally upbeat are yoga instructors Shilpa Ghone and Rajeev Pandey. Regular visitors for almost three months, they have connected with their silver students. While the first few



lessons were about “knowing students and their needs”, they are now on a one-to-one level with each of them. Frozen shoulders, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol are common problems, with constructive advice quick at hand. A graduate in physical education and a diploma holder in yoga, 30-year-old Pandey is working with silvers for the first time. “I concentrate on improving their levels of flexibility, endurance and limb coordination,” he says.

The centre also invites members of the police to give silvers tips on safety. Last month’s guests were police inspector Liyaqat Ali Sayyed and sub-inspector M K Kulkarni from L T Marg police station, near Grant Road. Members took the mike without hesitation to voice their grievances and demand action. Many of them expressed their concern about safety on the roads and implored the police to tie up with the traffic department.

Common birthday celebration at the centre



Photos: HIREN MEHTA



Group therapy session for women with Dr Anjali Chhabria (far right)

Another highlight last month was the talk by Dr Deepak Namjoshi, director of Criti Care Hospital and consultant at Lila-vati Hospital in Mumbai, on ageing and cardiovascular diseases.

This was combined with tips on a balanced diet, proper medication and exercise. "Platforms like the centre facilitate two-way communication with the audience," says Dr Namjoshi. He is looking forward to his next talk, on diabetes.

Then there is dietician and nutritionist Vibha Kapadia, who practices at Ms and Mrs Clinic on South Mumbai's Hughes Road, another expert who can't wait to come back. She talked about how ageing should be combined with a change in eating patterns. "My focus was on how to choose what to eat, the effect of mental happiness on food intake and how to facilitate easy digestion at night," she says. Kapadia's talk was received enthus-

iastically and invited several questions from participants.

October also promises to be a great month at the centre. For World Elders' Day on the 1st of the month, a mimicry show by Shahid Khan from the Humour Club in Worli, Mumbai is being organised. Also invited is comedian Johnny Fever—a 'carbon copy' of actor Johnny Lever. The laughs will be followed by one hour of singer Deepak Chavan, a regular during Navratri shows in the city, with his band. His repertoire includes medleys, *bhav geet* and *lavani*, Gujarati folk songs and Hindi film songs. From music to money—on October 4, Ritika Sachade, senior manager (taxation), R S M and Co, Mumbai-based chartered accountants, will talk on personal tax. At the centre, the buzz has already begun. ■

To know more about the centre and its activities, call us at (022) 30976440/6441 or email centre.thakurdwar@harmonyindia.org

THIS MONTH

FINANCE

Oct 4; 5.15 pm to 6.30 pm.
Talk on tax by Ritika Sachade, chartered accountant

FITNESS

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays; 10.30 am to 11.30 am (men); 3 pm to 4 pm (women).
Yoga classes conducted by instructors from Kaivalyadham Centre, Marine Drive.
Oct 5; 11 am to 12 noon.
Talk on 'Benefits of Yoga' by Ravi Dikshit, deputy secretary, Kaivalyadham Centre

THE ART OF LIVING

Oct 5-9; 5.30 pm to 6.45 pm.

COOKERY

October 16; 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm.
Chinese recipes

SPIRITUALITY

Oct 25-29; 4 pm to 5.30 pm.
Discourses by Brahmacharya Satvik Chaitanya from the Chinmaya Mission.

GROUP THERAPY

Wednesdays; 4 pm to 5 pm (men); 5.15 pm to 6.15 pm (women). Sessions will be conducted by Dr Anjali Chhabria

MUSIC

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

COMMON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

October 30

All programmes are subject to last minute changes

Winds of change



Keep the channels of communication with your family open,

urges **Dr Anjali Chhabria**

Q. I am a 68-year woman and have recently been diagnosed with cancer. It's still at an early stage and, besides my husband, no one in the family knows. My children are away and I don't feel like telling them about it. I don't want them to be upset.

A. I can understand your anxiety about talking to your children but shutting them out would make you more uncomfortable. Can you imagine if one of your children had a problem and didn't tell you? Telling them will make you feel better, and their support would give you greater strength. Also, any decisions regarding your treatment should be taken by the family as a whole. Perhaps you can tell your husband to speak to them on your behalf. Let them in, and let them take care of you.

Q. I am a 60-year-old man. I recently handed over my garments business to my son. But of late he doesn't talk to me properly. If I discuss work he snubs me, saying that I am retired now and should not interfere. Have I made a mistake in handing over the company to him?

A. It's hard to let go of something you have worked for over the years. Maybe you are finding it hard to accept that he is the boss. The new generation is much more independent. Maybe

he feels you are curtailing his freedom. Talk the problem over with your son and get the real issue out into the open. If he's misbehaving because of your interference, trust him and give him some space. Visit the workplace for a few hours a day, and gauge what's going on. If you really feel that he's not doing what's right for the company, get a legal opinion on how to proceed.

Q. I live with my son, daughter-in-law and their children. My daughter-in-law works and I take care of the children when she's away. But she gets irritated with my way of dealing with the children and we argue a lot. Lately, we've almost stopped talking to each other. What should I do?

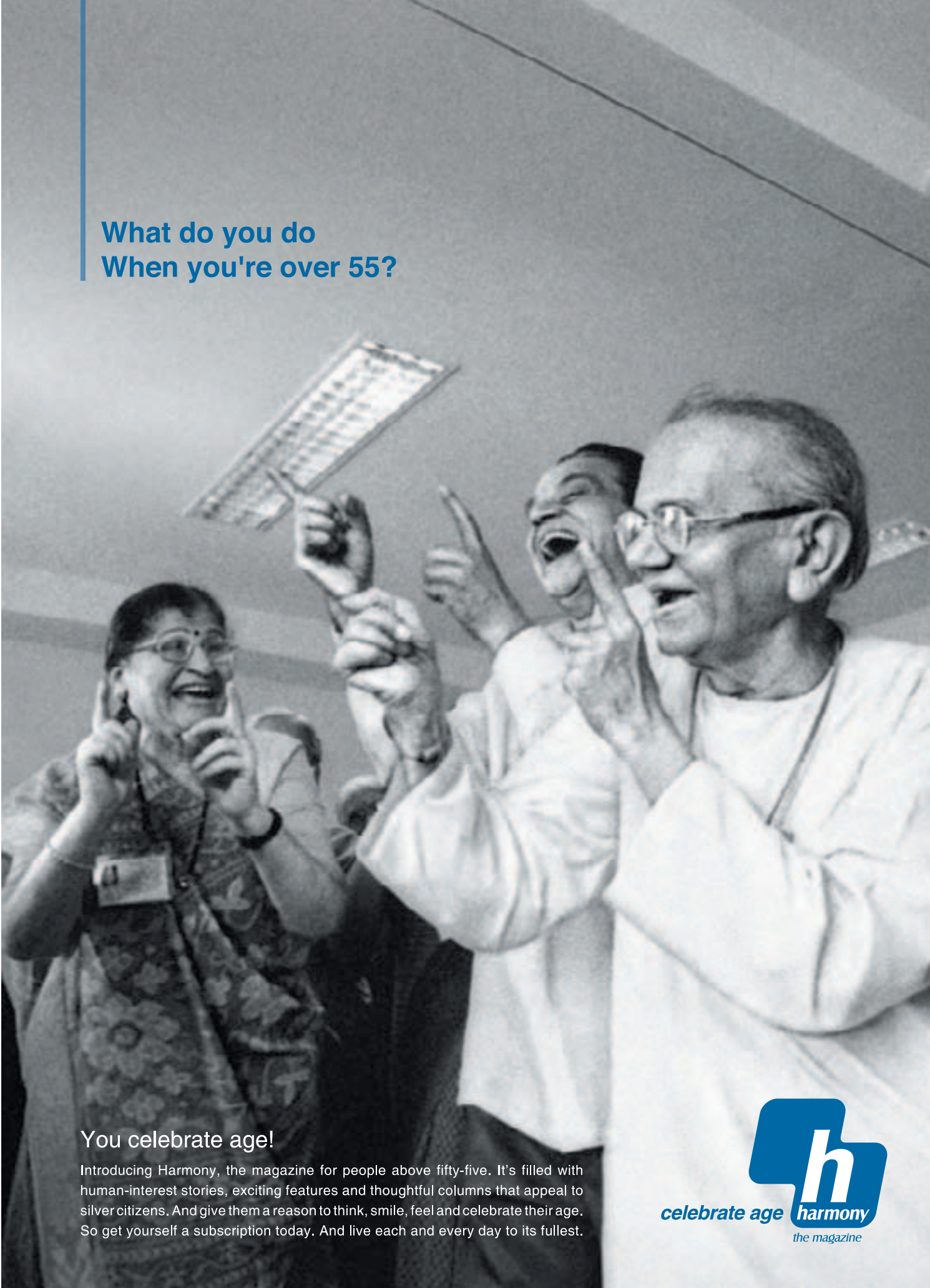
A. Every mother has her own way of dealing with children. When she sees you doing something differently, she feels you are challenging her parenting techniques. Maybe she feels that you are either too strict or too lenient with them. Arguing over it will only create unpleasantness and confuse the kids. You need to sit down and discuss some ground rules that you both agree on. Children

require a consistent atmosphere for healthy development. Since you both love them, you need to work together for their benefit.

Q. My husband and I have been married for the past 30 years. For the past seven or eight months, he has been suffering from mood swings. He is either antisocial and withdrawn or excessively garrulous, ranting about God and everything else. I wonder what's happening to him.

A. Don't be upset with your husband. He seems to be going through a bipolar disorder, where a person's mood and behaviour fluctuate a great deal. On certain days, the individual feels depressed, refuses to eat and talk to anybody and loses interest in life. On other days, his mood swings and he talks a lot and takes an interest in everything around him, however irrelevant. This can even degenerate into mania, where the person's judgement becomes impaired. He may make hasty financial decisions that he is bound to regret later. You need to deal with him patiently and support him. Get him to open up to you, and get him help from a mental health professional. ■

Dr Anjali Chhabria is a Mumbai-based psychiatrist and psychotherapist. For advice, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org or fax at (022) 22852217



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Village by the sea

It is typical small India. The village is a 20-minute ride from the station of the same name. The fare is fixed and the driver affable and forthcoming. "Everyone takes 35 rupees, there is no need for the meter, *memsaab*. Which hotel do you want to go to? Mek? Globe? You want flower garlands? How long will you stay? Do you need an auto for when you leave?" The bumpy, chatty, rattling ride is your last dose of reality. Once you reach the winding main road of Udvada *gaam* (village), you can't help but sigh and slow down and let the warp of village time take over. Just three to four hours by train from Mumbai, it is a sleepy, predominantly Parsi village on the southern Gujarat coast, with the briny warmth of the sea in its meandering lanes.

No ordinary rural nook, Udvada is the Parsi equivalent of Haridwar, Mecca and the Vatican City. Thousands of Parsis—from neighbouring Sanjan to far away San Francisco—come here every year to visit the Atash Behram (the fire temple, or the victorious fire, when translated), one of eight in India. Four of them are in Mumbai, while the remaining four are in Gujarat: Surat, Udvada and Navsari. The Udvada Atash Behram, called the Iranshah, is regarded the most important in the world.

Home to one of the most important Parsi fire temples in the world, Udvada is a place where time stands still, discovers

Roshni Bajaj



Photos: DHRUMAN SANGHVI



From left, waves crash on submerged surf-breakers; Merwanji Dastur enjoys an afternoon on his verandah

The Iranshah houses the flame that was brought in the 18th century by the Parsis from Iran. Fleeing to India from religious persecution, the flame was consecrated shortly after their arrival at Sanjan, India, and established in Udvada in 1742. The fire temple, though, is strictly restricted to Parsis. Merwanji Dastur, an Udvada resident, remembers a time when a senior police officer asked to be let into the Agiary (fire temple). “We told him that even Indira [Gandhi] was not permitted in the Tirupati temple because she married a Parsi. Every religion has its rules. So please respect ours.”

Sarosh Bana, deputy editor of *Business India*, a devout Parsi and crusader for Udvada’s preservation, wrote a letter to the Gujarat government in 1998, asking for the village to be declared a ‘Heritage Precinct’. “That would involve an architectural appraisal of each standing structure in Udvada. It’s about a century-and-a-half old and there is a certain rustic

quality about each of these homes.” Meanwhile, Udvada owes a pilgrimage centre and museum to Bana’s efforts. Today, the community is divided over the best way to preserve the village, and the Udvada museum is now closed to the public because of uncertain politics. The village, however, makes for living history in itself.

It takes a few hours to stroll and peer around it. If you sleep, doze and nap through half of your 48-hour weekend here—and you will need to, given the silence and the enveloping somnolence after the delicious, indulgent long lunches of fried *boi* (mullet fish) and *dhansaak*—Udvada will wait. You will still meet Merwanji Dastur in his two favourite places every day. When time slows down here, the illusion of being in many places at once seems most real. An hour ago, the 78-year-old Merwanji was in his *sadra* (muslin shirt tied with a string around the waist), just settling on to an *otla* (verandah) chair for a long nap. A little later,

GETTING THERE

By road from Mumbai: The NH8 to Pardi via Manor, Talasari and Vapi junction. Udvada is approximately 8 km off the highway. Buses ply from Mumbai Central to Vapi. Taxis (Rs 50 x 4 people) and autos (Rs 100-150) from Vapi take you to Udvada. Sumos are available for hire in Mumbai for Rs 5-7 per km. The roundtrip costs up to Rs 2,000

By rail from Mumbai: For a shorter journey, Gujarat Express leaves Bombay Central at 5.45 am and reaches Udvada at 8.50 am. The returning Gujarat Express leaves Udvada at 1.10 pm and arrives at Bombay Central at 4.15 pm. Other trains: Ferozepur Janta Express leaves Bombay Central at 7.25 am, arrives in Udvada at 11.14 am. Saurashtra Express leaves Mumbai Central at 7.55 am, arrives in Udvada at 11.34 am. The Virar-Valsad shuttle leaves Virar at 7.45 am and arrives in Udvada at 10.18 am

you're likely to see him at the little grocery store festooned with shampoo and talc sachets, sharing a few evening nods with other 'Udvadis'. "It is my evening pastime," he says, almost embarrassed to be run into again. Udvada, with a population of a couple of hundreds, is this kind of place. A visitor is recognised instantly because all the other faces are familiar.

Merwanji chose to live in Udvada because of the Iranshah, and enjoys the pious, laid-back life it offers. The Dasturs are a priestly family and he sustains himself with managerial work at the fire temple. Originally from Mumbai, he stayed for 18 years in Zanzibar before he came to Mumbai to work in Bombay Dyeing. "I don't want to go back to that place. I haven't been there in over two years. I get *kantala* (loosely, fed-up) in Bombay," he says.

In Udvada, Parsi old-timers fall into two clear types. The first is the private, retiring sort, who runs away from every non-Parsi tourist with or without a camera. Like the man selling *maachis* (sandalwood sticks used as an offering) outside the fire-temple, who raised his hands above his shoulders and fled from his store down the street when approached. The second sort is the gregarious, effusive Parsi who will show and tell you everything you want to know.

Rohinton Irani is the companionable sort. This 50-something, tall, fair, portly, clearing and forwarding agent from Mumbai has made Udvada his weekend getaway. "The kind

of work I do, people don't understand you without some shouting and yelling. I come here to work all the stress out of my system on the weekend. I arrive here, switch off my cell phone, sleep late, eat well and visit my parents who live in that building. Come, I'll show you the best view in Udvada."



He probably goes to the Daman border for some more exciting activity. It's an easy life."

That, in Udvada, is not surprising. All roads seem to start or end from the main street. Merwanji Dastur stays on Dastur Street. But letters reach him simply addressed to



He walks visitors to the terrace of his building off the village *chowk*. "Here's the village. It's probably two kilometres square. There's the Iranshah, the *dargah*, that way goes to Daman and Devka. That's Spenta Apartments. That's the post office and there's the sea. Do you want to have some beer?" he chuckles. If you consider Irani's offer of beer with some trepidation, he waves away your worries. "I know this is Gujarat, but nobody stops a *bawa* with some booze here. Some time ago, we had asked for one more police *wallah* at the Outpost and we were told that there isn't enough work for one. The sole cop locks up and leaves at 6 pm.

'Merwanji, opposite Atash Behram'. Nobody knows street names here and nobody loses their way. The occasional silver Honda City with a Mumbai license plate will ease down a slow, narrow, twisty corner. Evidence that the Iranshah draws another pilgrim from the city. The village *chowk* near the solitary police outpost doubles as the market and comes alive on weekends and mornings with fruit and vegetable sellers.

Udvada's attraction is not its rocky, black sand beach. The water is muddy brown and the waves foam on recently constructed surf-breakers. A fisherwoman with a lined,



Left, the stamp of time on Udvada's homes; above, low-slung roofs and meandering lanes

baked face looks out from her hut. The edge of her sari flaps its eye-popping fuchsia against a brown landscape. "When I came here 26 years ago, there were homes all along the water's edge. The beach is eroded; so many walls, houses and hotels are gone," she says, adding, "Now mostly non-Parsis live along the sea."

As more and more Parsi families leave Udvada to pursue their lives elsewhere, Udvada's architecture is changing. The landscape slowly rises from large homes with high ceilings, sloping roofs with ornamental wooden skirting, mosaic floors and double *otlas* to RCC construction in mossy pastels. The Parsi families thin out beyond the shadow of the high-walled Iranshah.

Today, only 70 Parsis, a thousandth of India's dwindling 70,000, live in Udvada. Tropical plants crowd abandoned cottages and plots. Pushpaben

and Manisha, sisters-in-law whose family manages the Hindu temple in Udvada, say the Parsi ratio has dropped a lot in the past few years.

Ninety-five per cent of Udvada's Parsis are over 50 years old. The younger bunch finds no reason to stay in the seaside village. But their hearts are still here. For the global Parsi, a visit to India is incomplete without Udvada. Newly-wed Parsis come here for blessings and before embarking on their honeymoon. No meaningful or auspicious occasion in Parsi life is quite complete without a visit to the Iranshah.

Time rattles back up to speed on the ride to the station. Urban construction may creep up on the landscape but Udvada's charm lies in its quaint folk, its seawater breeze and the meandering lanes that welcome city-weary visitors. The best time to go to Udvada: anytime you need a rethink on the tempo of life. ■

WHERE TO STAY

Non-Parsis have few options available to them, all two to five minutes from the seaside. Your best bets are Globe Hotel (Rs 375 to Rs 600 per night); Mek Hotel (Rs 350 to Rs 550 per night); See page 95 for contact details

WHAT TO EAT

Udvadis love *boi* (mullet) fish. Their specialty is the *boi* fried whole. Most hotels will serve fragrant *rava sheera* for breakfast with a second course of eggs and *keema*. Lunch is a multi-course affair of glossy veggies and a meat curry, a stack of chapattis, a bowl of rice and one of *dal*. The *dhansak* here is as genuine as it gets. Dessert is milk-based custard or pudding and some cake with a dribble of raspberry crush. Get some baked butter biscuits, *nan khatai* and macaroons at the Hormazd Bakery near Jhanda Chowk.

Shutter bug

'Camera surgeon' Syed Ghulam Yazdani dotes on his collection of antique black beauties, says [Shilbhadra Datta](#)



Have you heard of a 'camera surgeon' before? If the answer is no, you haven't met Syed Ghulam Yazdani. Since my first encounter with him, back in the autumn of 1984, when he nursed my black Nikkormat FTN back to health, I've spent many Saturday afternoons with him at Kamera Werke, his nondescript camera repair shop in the heart of Kolkata on Dharamtalla Street. Located on the ground floor of the Salvation Army Women's Hostel,

the shop is tucked in between stores selling motor parts and bedding. We always talk a lot, about Partition, riots, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, his childhood in native Jaunpur, his *ammi*, his wife Halima, mangoes, monsoons, Begum Akthar, Talat Mehmood, and his collection of 70-odd antique cameras, which he calls his "*junoon*", or obsession.

It's Saturday once more, and over a cup of hot tea, surrounded by

an array of dismantled cameras, the 68-year-old Yazdani declares, his eyes sparkling behind thick lenses, "I wish I could introduce the enigma and evolution of the pin hole camera to the younger generation." These were the cameras in vogue and much sought after by photographers since World War I, according to Yazdani. He has taken upon himself the responsibility of "collecting, restoring and preserving these beauties".

From childhood, Yazdani has been a self-taught repair artist—he fixed broken locks, and fine-tuned his mother Sidiqa Bibi's sewing machine. When he was 10, he met his “guru” Abdul Lateef, who had returned to Jaunpur in Uttar Pradesh after completing his BSc from Aligarh Muslim University to set up a studio. Yazdani started going there after school and on holidays. “Watching him process black and whites on the tray, I learnt my trade.”

A few years on, Lateef moved to Calcutta, having joined the Geological Survey of India as a photographer. After he finished school, Yazdani followed his guru to the big city choosing to work to support the family instead of pursuing higher education. Lateef repaired cameras as a hobby then, and Yazdani was a fast learner. “I remember helping him repair a German Miroflex back-focusing rangefinder camera in 1954 when I was 18. They're ideal for black-and-white photography and I'd love to have one in my collection,” he sighs.

Lateef, recognising Yazdani's potential—and passion—began to guide his young ward. “The Insign folding camera was my first solo repair job in 1956,” says Yazdani. Lateef started Kamera Werke in 1958, but gifted it to Yazdani a few years later, right after Yazdani got married. “It was an *aashirwad* from the guru to his disciple according to Indian *parampara* (tradition).”

As the years progressed, Yazdani also became a collector. “I would

buy broken down cameras and doctor them to fitness.” His first camera was a Kodex Folding followed by a Canon SII (1946), Box Tangor Ziess, Kodak Brownie, and Insign Trikon, all mechanical cameras used for black-and-white photography. “I'd often borrow money from my wife to indulge my craving, and never pay her back.” He also introduced the cameras to his sons: Javed, who now looks after the store, Naved, an electronics engineer settled in the US, Mahvesh, a Delhi-based doctor, and Nadeem, a doctor who lives in Kolkata. Although Yazdani is now retired, he still spends a few hours every week at Kamera Werke to guide staff on repairing mechanical cameras.

Yazdani's personal favourites include his Canon SII, a camera launched in 1946 to great acclaim from the Occupation Forces in Japan and foreign buyers; the Panon 140, a wide-angle camera of 1948 vintage; the Box-Tengor Ziess, produced from 1948 to 1956, a simple box camera with lots of personality; the Baby Pearl folding camera made by the forerunner to the Konica

company between 1934 and 1946; and the classic Russian Zenith 300 PhotoSniper. He refuses to put a value to his collection and many hopefuls who have ventured to buy his cameras have been rebuffed with a terse “they are not for sale”.

He's not so crazy about today's cameras. “These days, I notice people talking about how digital cameras have brought a radical change to the photographic scene and that mechanical cameras are a liability. Then what about the masters, Henri Cartier Bresson and Ansel Adams, or our own Lala Deen Dayal, Raghubir Singh, Raghu Rai? Haven't they all used mechanical cameras?”

Yazdani is upset now but a sweeping glance across the room at his treasures calms him down. “Look at these black beauties,” he says, his voice thick with passion. “They are solid and rigid metal, fully mechanical, dependable. Each camera, like a human being, has an individual character. They can get cranky, hence they require individual attention.” I leave him to it. ■

Photos: SHILBHADRA DATTA



Left, Yazdani with his Russian Zenith 300 PhotoSniper; above, repairing a camera at Kamera Werke

SHORT FICTION: PARADISE & OTHER STORIES

by Khushwant Singh; Penguin-Viking with Ravi Dayal;
Rs 295; 256 pages

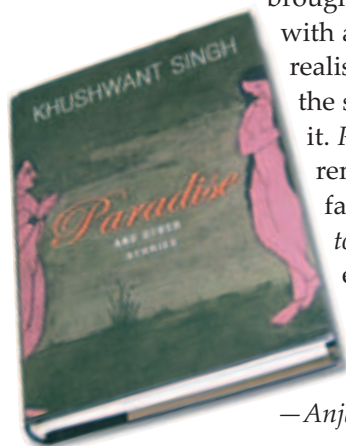
Hitting 90 has neither staled Khushwant Singh's custom nor dulled his variety. In this new collection of short stories, he returns to the subjects that have been central to his writing ever since he embarked on his career—middle-class life, sex and politics, whether of relationships or states.

The book begins with a prologue about the false beliefs raised by astrological predictions and goes on to rollick through the answers to various questions that have obviously been preoccupying him: Why do we believe in miracles? Can a horoscope guarantee the perfect wife? Is the *Kamasutra* a useful manual for newlyweds? His protagonists are ordinary people who find the things that they believe in letting them down again and again. The *Kamasutra* fails the Hindi scholar as a sex manual. The purity of the Indian ashram escapes the American woman seeking refuge.

Sex, of the 'untie the *nara* knot and let's get down to it' variety is central to every story. Acts of coition, if you like, involving the hungry woman and the relatively inexperienced male. There is a story about Samuel Johnson and a lady who came to him after his *Dictionary* was published. "Dr Johnson," she gasped, "your *Dictionary* is full of naughty words!" "Madam," he responded, "you must have been looking for them."

The 'titsy boobie' language actually made it later into Indo-Anglian writing, which is why we don't flinch at it when we meet it today. Singh, however, brought it in much earlier, coupled with a gritty down-to-earth realism that took hypocrisy by the scruff of its neck and shook it. *Paradise & Other Stories* reminds us what he became famous for. If, however, *Train to Pakistan* is the quintessential Khushwant Singh novel for you, then you may find yourself looking at the past with regret.

—Anjana Basu

**BIOGRAPHY: KISHORE KUMAR—METHOD IN MADNESS**

by Derek Bose; Rupa; Rs 395;
127 pages

Did you know that Kishore Kumar, named Abhaas Kumar, had a coarse, grating voice as a child? According to eldest brother Ashok Kumar, when he was about 10, he cut his toe, leaving him crying for a month. The result: a new, melodious voice. Or that the first time he met Madhubala—wife No. 2—he leapt at her wearing a grotesque mask, growling like an animal?

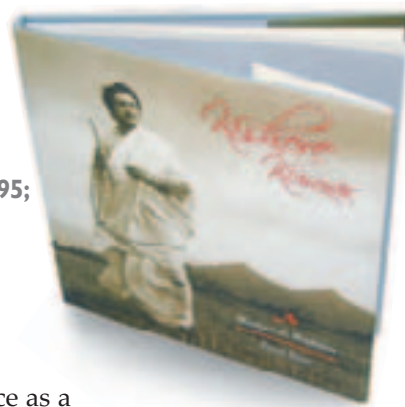
There's tons of trivia in journalist Derek Bose's biography of the singer-actor-director-entertainer. There are also some wonderful pictures with colleagues, friends and loves. Bose eschews a chronological account, choosing instead to tackle every aspect of his life separately, with anecdotes from Asha Bhonsle, Gulzar and Manna Dey among others. You go through his childhood, singing, acting, film-making, four marriages, and idiosyncrasies in the attempt to discover the real Kishore Kumar.



In search of Kishore

Unfortunately, by the end of the book, you're still not sure. Kumar once told Bhonsle: "In reality, there is more sadness in me than joy." Here was a lonely man who withdrew often into his own space, a singer who would blindfold himself in the studio because he hated people looking at him, an eccentric who used bizarre behaviour to ward off unwanted company, including pretending to be a dog and biting the hand of a director, and a fool for love—he finally found happiness in the arms of a woman 27 years younger than him. Bose is dismissive about all that was not quite kosher about Kumar, preferring to focus on the 'good stuff'. And that's what relegates this to a coffee-table keepsake for fans rather than an insightful biography.

—Arati Rajana Menon



FICTION: MOVING ON

by Shashi Deshpande; Penguin-Viking;
Rs 450; 343 pages

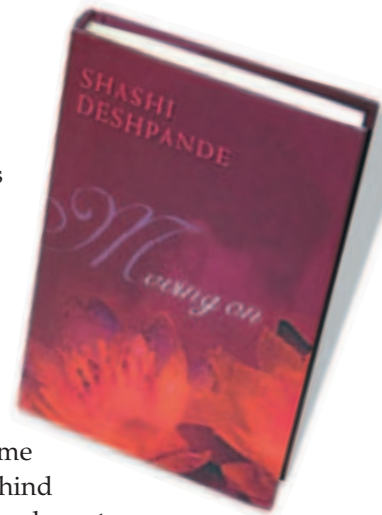
The unbearable banality of being. That's what Shashi Deshpande celebrates in her latest saga. Just like *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *That Long Silence*, here too the cast on the surface is ordinary, unremarkable, middle class, almost boring. Until she begins to casually strip the layers away, exposing the love, lust, hate and angst that threaten to rip apart the characters' lives.

There are two voices that tell the tale: the 'bone doctor' father, whose diary brings alive the past, and the daughter Manjari, or Jiji, who stands at the vortex of the tale. Jiji's discovery of her *Baba's* diary forces her to confront the past—Mai, mother, a writer who never hesitated to use love as a weapon; sister Malu separated in childhood but later a defining factor in Jiji's life; and Shyam, husband, cinematographer, object of intense desire, and ultimately her undoing. As Jiji is buffeted by memories, she has to contend with the 'now'.

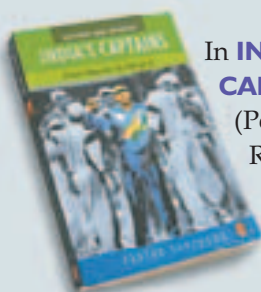
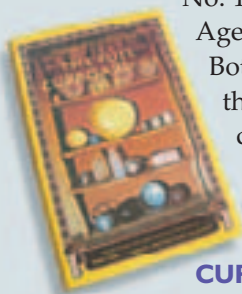
That includes a rebellious daughter whom she tiptoes around, property sharks trying to scare her out of her home, an ardent young lover and an old faithful friend, her "doppelganger", patiently waiting in the sidelines. The human body, "a supreme assertion of creation", is behind every event, every move the characters make: it inspires, instigates, betrays and rewards.

There's nothing very sparky about the way Deshpande writes. It's steady, stolid stuff. What makes it riveting is the pace of the narrative as it whips between Bombay and Bangalore, past and present, with a slew of twists and turns and a wham-bam final revelation. Deshpande draws you into her heroine's being with ease, and when Jiji, in a Scarlett O'Hara-esque way, says "the search is the thing" at the end, you want to, well, cheer.

—Arati Rajan Menon

**BRIEFLY**

Have you met Mma Precious Ramotswe? Owner of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency in Gaborone, Botswana, and one of the coolest characters in recent times, she's back in business in **THE FULL CUPBOARD OF LIFE** (Pantheon; Rs 480; 198 pages). Alexander McCall Smith's words jump off the page and sing to you.



In **INDIA'S CAPTAINS** (Penguin; Rs 250; 271 pages), sports journalist

Partab Ramchand discovers just what it takes to be a good Indian cricket captain. Twenty-eight skippers through the years, from C K Nayudu in 1932 to Rahul Dravid in 2004, the role of tactics and intuition, pressures, adulation, mudslinging, and wheeling and dealing.



What makes Indians tick? **Pavan K Varma** attempts to answer this in **BEING INDIAN** (Penguin-Viking; Rs 325; 238

pages), in the process demolishing myths and stereotypes created and cultivated not just by foreigners,

but Indians themselves. Varma's tools: Sanskrit treatises, Bollywood lyrics, and some amazing anecdotes.



Neelam Kumar tries hard to wax lyrical in **LEGENDARY LOVERS** (Jaico Books; Rs 195; 271 pages), a collection of 21 romances, spanning Laila-Majnoon, Heer-Ranjha and Sasi-Punnu to Shakuntala-Dushyant and Mumtaz Mahal-Shah Jehan. A sample: "...with none but her sorrow to keep her company, Heer languished till every bone in her body stood out." Mills & Boon, watch out. ■

A question of faith

Exploring the idea of God

A three-book set, **RELIGIONS—AN INTRODUCTION** is like a 101 course in university—all the bases are covered, but you may be left wanting more. The star of the lot is *An Introduction to Islam* (367 pages) by **David Wainess**, who presents “the

Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad as Muslims might recognise them, rather than as others have described them”. **Peter**

Harvey’s *An Introduction to*

Buddhism (374 pages) is

more academic in tone but adopts a refreshingly non-esoteric approach to Buddhism as a world religion. The weak link is **Gavin Flood’s** *An Introduction to Hinduism* (341 pages). While the scholarship is in place, it fails to capture the vibrancy of the Hindu tradition.

Cambridge University Press;
Rs 795

Rajneesh puts his own spin on Siddhartha in the **OSHO BUDDHA DISCOVERY**

DECK. This boxed set contains 53 cards—on the front, each card has a sutra, defined here as “the smallest possible number

of words packed with the greatest possible meaning”, from the *Dhammapada*, Buddha’s teachings. An example: “The way is not in the sky. The way is in the heart.” The back of the card carries Osho’s interpretation of the sutra, which the accompanying book fleshes out. For the new-age seeker, this is a novel way of merging the contemporary with the rooted.

Gateway; Rs 525; 114 pages

A book on religion can only rest on ‘purpose’. So while W H McLeod’s treatise on *Sikhism* works well as a research tool, the lay reader would do better with a book like **GURU NANAK: HIS LIFE & TEACHINGS** by **Roopinder Singh**. Peppered with reproductions of rare 18th century miniature paintings and line drawings, it illustrates Guru Nanak’s four journeys simply, and well. Look elsewhere, though, to read about the emergence of a strong Khalsa.

Rupa; Rs 295; 85 pages

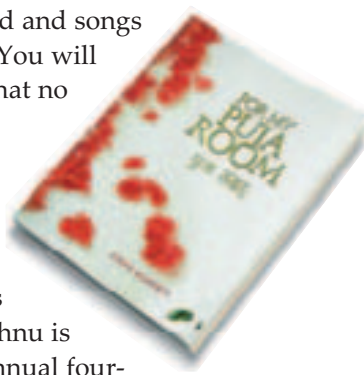
Leafing through **Kiran Agarwal’s** **FOR MY PUJA ROOM** (or *Puja Sangrah*) will instantly have you craving for the presence of your grandmother, the last word on festive rituals. That is what this book tries to be, and largely succeeds. It tells the story—in Hindi and English—of Hindu festivals and their mythologies, how they should

be celebrated and songs to be sung. You will learn here that no auspicious ceremonies or weddings are held during Chaturmaas because Vishnu is off on his annual four-month slumber then. And that on Nirjaal Ekadashi, a fast without water, should you gasp in desperation, you can drink water, but only as much as is displaced by eight grains of rice. The festivals also reveal typical Hindu prejudices. Like the one called Bachchbaaras that only mothers with sons can celebrate.

Arpan Publishing; Rs 500;
351 pages

As the world becomes more modern, and technology the new Bible, why are people still so zealous? That’s the question **Karen Armstrong**, former nun and author of bestseller *A History of God*, addresses in **THE BATTLE FOR GOD** by probing the past, and present, of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, even touching upon Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. Clearly written, thoroughly researched and always fair, this book is 50 per cent history lesson, 50 per cent primer on religion—and 100 per cent wake-up call.

Ballantine; Rs 590, 442 pages



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The grandmother tree



Adi Pocha remembers flowers fragrant with unconditional love

I HAVE A CONFESSION TO make. Whenever I stayed over at my grandmother's house, I loved to pee in my grandmother's loo. Unlike most of the loos of my childhood, which were strangers to room fresheners, my grandmother's loo always smelt of fresh flowers.

This is because her loo actually had fresh flowers. I remember them clearly as they floated quietly in my grandmother's bathtub. Pretty white and yellow ones whose names were always a mystery to a 10-year-old boy.

Every morning, fresh from her bath, with her wet hair still wrapped in a thin white towel, my grandmother would walk out into the garden to the flower tree that I knew she had planted with her own hands. Stooping with some difficulty—she was a large woman—she would pick all the fallen flowers. She was too gentle to pluck them off a living branch. Carefully, she would gather them, dusting off each petal before dropping them in her sari *pallu*. Then, panting slightly, she would climb the four steps to the house and drop them into her bathtub. This I remember clearly. Every single day.

I always wondered why she gathered them. I guess for the flowers it was as good a funeral as they were ever likely to

receive. And I was happy, because my grandmother's loo smelt so nice.

Looking back, I feel a little guilty. We used that tree for everything—from a cricket stump to a ladder to climb into the next compound, to an improvised hand-swing.

What is it with little boys? Is nothing sacred? For some reason, my grandmother never seemed to mind. She seemed to accept that that's what little boys did with happy flower trees.

Every morning, my grandmother would walk to her flower tree, pick up all the fallen flowers and drop them into her bathtub

On the other hand, thinking back, I don't think she minded anything her grandchildren did. We ran around her house and slept under the grand piano. Our hands were constantly dipped in pickle jars with large mouths that were thoughtfully big enough for little boy hands. Or stained with telltale crumbs of salt for stolen raw mango. And of course, we clambered and hung and swung all over her precious flower tree.

Then, one night there was a phone call. And the next morning, there were no flowers in her bathtub. Just like that. I watched them gather on the ground for a few days. I could not bear to look any more. But my mother was stronger. I guess the tree meant something to her as well. She took a little cutting and planted it in the small pocket garden below her first-floor balcony.

Today, there are no fresh white and yellow flowers in her bathtub. Because there is no

bathtub. But there is a tree with happy white and yellow flowers that proudly grows below her window. And I guess one day it will be my turn. And then, perhaps, my daughter's. To take a little cutting. To bury it in honest earth. To water it and watch it grow into a strong and silent flower tree whose only job is to stand still and make children happy. One day it will be our turn. To care for our tiny inheritance. The grandmother tree. ■

Adi Pocha is a Mumbai-based ad film-maker and runs his own company, Squirkle Productions

The food old days

Where have all the good cooks gone, wonders **Amita Malik**



WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP as small children in Shillong, now the capital of Meghalaya, servants were literally cheaper by the dozen. My mother ran the household with a *khansama* (cook), a *masalchi* (a washer-up and jack of all trades), a “boy”, who was actually a boy and addressed as such, an ayah, a *dhobi* on the premises and a *chowkidar* for security.

Eppe, the cook, was an expert in European as well as Bengali food; we had a four-course dinner everyday from soup to pudding. And when my parents gave formal dinners, with silver cutlery, the works, it was a tremendous affair with everyone dressing up, the men retiring for coffee and cigars, leaving the ladies behind to discuss everything from servants to saris. If I remember right, the total salaries of all our servants came to about Rs 200 per month.

When I came to Delhi and started housekeeping as a bride, my husband and I earned so little between ourselves that I started with one all-purpose maid called Mariam, who cycled to work. I am now amazed at my bravado in asking 30 people, including diplomats, to a dinner we gave for Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman & Nation* of London. I was among the first Indians to write for him. We served a *pulao*, chicken curry, *dal*,

two vegetables and *kheer*. Mariam and I cooked the whole day and everything went off fine. Mariam was paid Rs 30, and food.

As we went slightly higher up in the economic scale, we got a wonderful Muslim cook from Nizamuddin *basti* whose kababs and *kormas* were a dream. Unfortunately, he was very hard up for money. The year I was away in Canada and my husband in office, he sold my husband's complete set of books by Andre Gide and Bertrand Russell, and had to be sacked.

Viceroy's house,” he said haughtily. “My uncle was cook to Lord Mountbatten.”

It has been a great comedown now to regional *bais* in Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, who flit in and out for one hour each, doing the floors and washing, cooking *idli-dosa* or *macher jhol* of singular dullness and charging Rs 700 to 800 per hour. If I ask whether they can make a soup or cutlets, they reply, “*Angrez lok chaley gaye hain, bhool jao Angrezi khana.*” (The English are gone; forget English food now.)

As I make soup from a packet, I dream of the *masalchi*, Magh cooks and Mountbatten

My grandest moment as lady of the house was when we shared a flat in Colaba, Bombay with the late Lovraj Kumar, before he married the economist Dharma (Venkatraman). Apart from pure *ghee* and basmati rice from their farm in Dehradun, Lovraj's mother sent a Magh cook (a tribe in Bangladesh known for its good cooks). My first dinner party had a spectacular salad, with peacocks and animals carved out of potatoes and what not. “Where did you learn all this?” I asked Jatilal, the Magh cook, next morning. “In

As I make soup from a packet and sometimes dine off scrambled eggs, I dream at night of the *khansama*, *masalchi*, Magh cooks and Mountbatten. And thank my stars that I get a decent Bengali lunch from a young catering couple. And old friends who are gourmet cooks and treat me to everything from *dhansak* to *coq au vin*. In turn, I cook them prawn *malai* curry and *natun gurer payesh* (Bengali *kheer* with palm jaggery). As we eat together, we discuss the food old days and wish they were back. Alas, wishful thinking. ■

Amita Malik, often referred to as ‘the first lady of Indian media’, is a columnist and film critic

HEARD IT?

Sound Solutions, a Mumbai-based hearing aid clinic, is offering a 10 per cent discount on Widex high-definition hearing aids. Exported from Denmark, these aids are available in three models— 'In the Canal', 'Completely in the Canal' and 'Behind the Ear'.

The custom-made 'In the Canal' model comes in a variety of amplification solutions that would have otherwise required a larger instrument. The 'Completely in the Canal' series allows the aid to be worn deep inside the ear canal making it almost invisible when worn, while the 'Behind the Ear' series has larger models and can accommodate bigger batteries for longer life and larger amplifiers.



Dr Varsha Mathew, audiologist at Widex India's Senso Hearing Centre in Bangalore, says, "For

seniors, understanding speech becomes a problem. These digital hearing aids amplify sound by cutting out background noise." Widex products are available in other cities as well, though without the discount. To know more, contact: Mumbai: 9820047283; Delhi: 011-26184084; Bangalore: 080-2206384; Chandigarh: 0712-2726825; Pune: 020-26132507. See page 95 for addresses

TOP IT UP

Pickles are an integral part of Indian cuisine. The tangy blend of fruits or vegetables, spices and oil—sometimes sweet, sometimes hot—is a perfect complement to a meal. Better still if they help you cope with medical conditions. While bitter



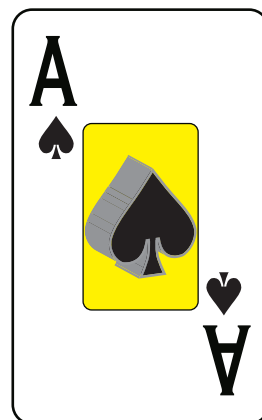
gourd (*karela*) and fenugreek (*methi*) are known to help reduce glucose content in the body, ginger (*adrak*) and garlic help in blood purification and joint pains. Delhi-based GD Foods Manufacturing (India) Pvt Ltd, under its Tops brand, has launched 28 varieties of preserves, including gooseberry (*amla*) pickle and wild berry (*dela*)—beneficial for eyesight and digestion—with oil (sesame and mustard) acting as the preservative. Priced at Rs 50 for a 400 gm bottle, these pickles are available in grocery stores across the country, except Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. For people in these states, the pickles can be ordered. Call 011-25420244 (Delhi); 9820872868, 022-28801294 (Mumbai); and 033-23348782, 033-23586037 (Kolkata). See page 95 for addresses

FOUR HANDS, ONLINE

Itching to bid and play four hands, but can't find anyone to join you? Get on to the Internet and have the time of your life. There are plenty of websites where you can not only play bridge for free but also learn the basics, and more. Dr Yusuf Matcheswala, consultant psychiatrist at Masina Hospital, Mumbai, says: "The card game of bridge is a good way to keep your brain and memory healthy."

Here are a few links for you to click on:

- www.games.yahoo.com: Play Java-based bridge. There are pointers on game rules, a brief history and background, with tips on how to win. The chat board allows you to converse with playing partners.
- www.swangames.com: Provides free lessons, an advanced rating system, trick-by-trick animated hand review, online help desk, statistics, partnership bidding and practice tables. There is also a 'BridgeCast' from live tournaments.
- www.zone.msn.com: Allows you to make your bid for fun and play against a computer, or opt for a tournament-like game. There are links on bridge news and events and an overview of the game. If you are a newcomer, experienced players will teach you the ropes.



MORNING WALKER

A recent Japanese study, conducted over a period of 30 years, reveals that oxygen-efficient aerobic exercise is the best way to maintain good physical and mental health. This form of workout revitalises the physiological system and proves it from age-related ailments. This study has led to the development of an aerobic exerciser called Morning Walker, now available in India at a discount of Rs 300. Priced at Rs 6,500 after discount, it's available through Spaceage Multi Products (P) Ltd, a Kolkata-based company.

The exerciser imitates the movement of a goldfish and can be used lying on the bed. Fifteen minutes of use, the company



claims, is equal to 10,000 steps (about 2.5 km) of brisk walking and 8 km in terms of oxygen benefit. Its passive, low-intensity rhythmic movement is said to bring balance to the nerves responsible for the proper functioning of organs, and improve blood circulation without straining the heart. It can also relieve pain associated with arthritis and rheumatism.

When Dr Ravindra Bhargava of Kalavati Medical Centre, Bhayander, Mumbai, recommended the walker to

some of his elderly patients six months ago, the feedback was favourable. "My patients were suffering from stiff neck, toe ulcer and arthritis," he says. "After using the walker in my clinic for a few weeks, their blood circulation improved, with visible changes in their health." The exerciser consumes 50 watts of power and comes with a fully automatic timer. It can be repaired at any of the company's 70 service centres in India.

For details, contact Kolkata: 033-22375761/5975; Mumbai: 022-25273984/6474; Jaipur: 0141-2651102; Pune: 020-55513659; Nasik: 0253-3090965; Hubli: 0836-2253821, 09448438571; Delhi: 011-23282741, 011-23242299; and Chennai: 09841060505, 044-25264763.

See page 95 for addresses

SWEET NOTHINGS

Miss Kutpitia, a character in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, loves creamy products from Parsi Dairy Farm in Mumbai. The landmark sweetmeat shop at Princess Street

has come of age since 1991, when Mistry's book was first published. After 88 years of making sinfully delicious shakes, *matka dahi*, *lassi* and *kulfi*, the company now also offers sugar-free desserts and dairy products. Launched last month, these are made with Aspartem, a low-calorie substitute to sugar recommended for diabetics. Low on fat, the yoghurts—in yummy strawberry, peanut and honey, and orange flavours—cost Rs 12 for 120 gm

and the cottage cheese is priced at Rs 60 for 500 gm. Traditional Indian delicacies like *rasmalai* and *gulab jamun* are sweetened with figs and have a shelf-life of three days.

Marketed under the brand Dairyland, these products can be picked up from the company's suburban Jogeshwari outlet or central Dadar and Lalbaug outlets. They can also be home-delivered on request. However, they can't be picked up off the shelf and orders need to be placed a day in advance, before 12 noon. Contact: 022-24143031, 022-24719864, 022-55732367.



WOMEN ON TOP

They add an extra glow to the military brass. **Lieutenant-General Punita Arora**, and **Air Marshal Padmavathy Bandopadhyay**, 59, are the first women to rise to their respective positions in the armed forces.

Arora, a postgraduate in gynaecology and obstetrics, is the mind behind the reproductive technology facilities in the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, and Army Hospital, Delhi. She was awarded the Sena Medal by the president for establishing gynaecology, endoscopy and

oncology facilities in armed forces hospitals. She has 15 medals to her credit, most recently, the Visisht Seva Medal for her handling of the medical emergency after the massacre of 31 people by terrorists at the Kaluchak army camp in Jammu and Kashmir in 2002.

"Improving the health of soldiers remains the first priority for me," said Arora, after her investiture on September 1.

Just a week later, came the news about Bandopadhyay. She chose to work with MiG pilots, specialising in the then nascent field of aviation medicine after trouble with her eyesight dashed



Lt-Gen Punita Arora

her original dreams of being a pilot. Bandopadhyay has dozens of other firsts to her name, including being the first woman to conduct research at the North Pole with an Indo-Russian group. Her research proved that Indians could easily acclimatise to severely cold environments.

A C H I E V E M E N T



GEORGE OF THE CHANNEL

On August 29, 2004, **George Brunstad**, 70 years and four days old, became the oldest man to swim across the English Channel. He left Dover at 9.13 am on a

Saturday morning and arrived on the northern French coast at Sangatte, near Calais, at 2.12 am on Sunday, completing the 21 miles in 15 hours and 59 minutes. He did not do the course—one of the toughest in marathon swimming—simply to break the record, but to raise over \$11,000 for an orphanage, schools and clinic for Haitian children. "The thought of the little ones helped me get through the toughest moments," he said. Brunstad has competed in several open water swims in the past, but none longer than 10 miles. The retired American Airlines pilot flew B-52 bombers before he joined the airline. With his feat, Brunstad disappointed Joe Van Horn, a 68-year-old who waited and trained for two years to break Clifford Batts' 1987 record—Batts was 67 years and 240 days old and swam the 21 miles in 18 hours and 37 minutes. Van Horn started with Brunstad, but gave up after 8.5 miles because of leg cramps. Before they set out, Brunstad had wanted Van Horn to reach before him, so that he could hold the record, if only for a few minutes.

THE 100TH GOAL POST

The world's oldest surviving Olympic medallist turned 100 on September 9. Lahore resident **Feroz Khan** was part of the gold medal-winning Indian hockey team in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. He moved to Pakistan in 1947 after Partition and was a member of the committee that selected the Pakistani team that beat India to the gold in the 1960 Rome Olympics—a moment he describes as one of his most significant. His birthday gift, appropriately enough, was the first Test of the Indo-Pak hockey series in Karachi on September 24, which was dedicated to him. This contemporary of Dhyan Chand admits, though, that a superior performance by Asian teams at the Athens Olympics would have been a better gift. "The hockey you see today is not what we used to play," he rues. "The artistry and flair are gone."

LET THERE BE LIGHT

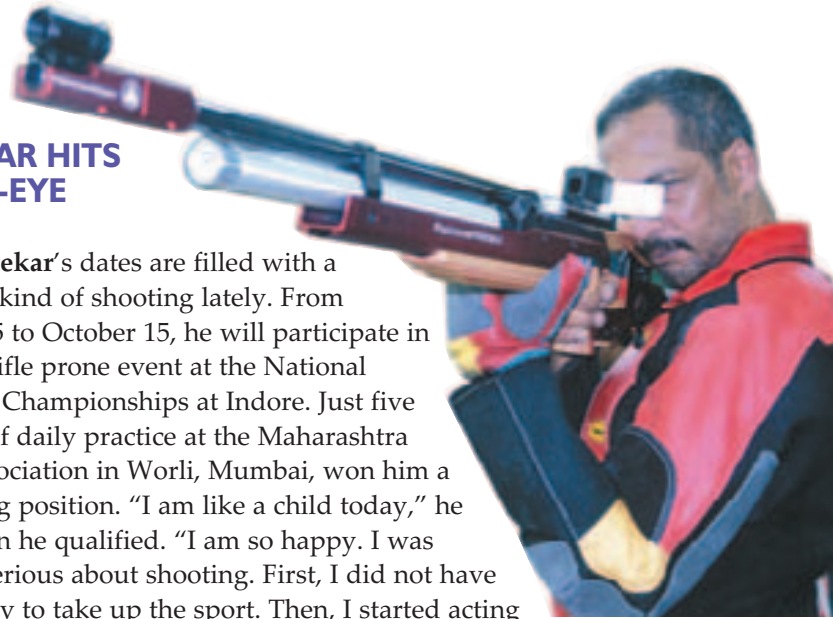
For six decades, **Tapas Sen** has been ensuring that actors stay in the limelight. At 80, the slender man with a shock of white hair remains the tireless face of stage lighting in West Bengal. "People still say that my creativity reached its apogee in *Angaar*," he says, speaking of the 1959 play where he created the effect of flooded mines with great credibility. The play also earned him the name of Tapas 'Light' Sen. He recently designed the lights for a cultural show by the Assam Tourism Development Corporation which opens this month. His roster of awards includes the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and the Kalidas Samman, but he today worries about passing on the wealth of his experience and knowledge. His plea to both the state and central governments to set up a training centre for light designers has gone unheeded. Stage-buffs may remember Sen's work in Bengali plays like *Setu*, *Chaar Adhyay*, *Raktokarabi Naam* and *Jibon* and, more recently, his lighting design for Usha Ganguli's series on Sadat Hasaan Manto's work and Dolly Basu's *Mrs Soriano*.

Sen in his younger days



PATEKAR HITS BULL'S-EYE

Nana Patekar's dates are filled with a different kind of shooting lately. From October 5 to October 15, he will participate in the free rifle prone event at the National Shooting Championships at Indore. Just five months of daily practice at the Maharashtra Rifle Association in Worli, Mumbai, won him a qualifying position. "I am like a child today," he said when he qualified. "I am so happy. I was always serious about shooting. First, I did not have the money to take up the sport. Then, I started acting and didn't have the time. Now I have both, a little money and a little time, so I can shoot." It is not easy to qualify for the finals at the first attempt, but Nana made it with a score of 553/600. The qualifying score was just one short of that. Whether looking into a camera lens or down a rifle barrel, Nana sums up his dual passions: "If you like what you do, you can never grow old." He turns 55 next year.

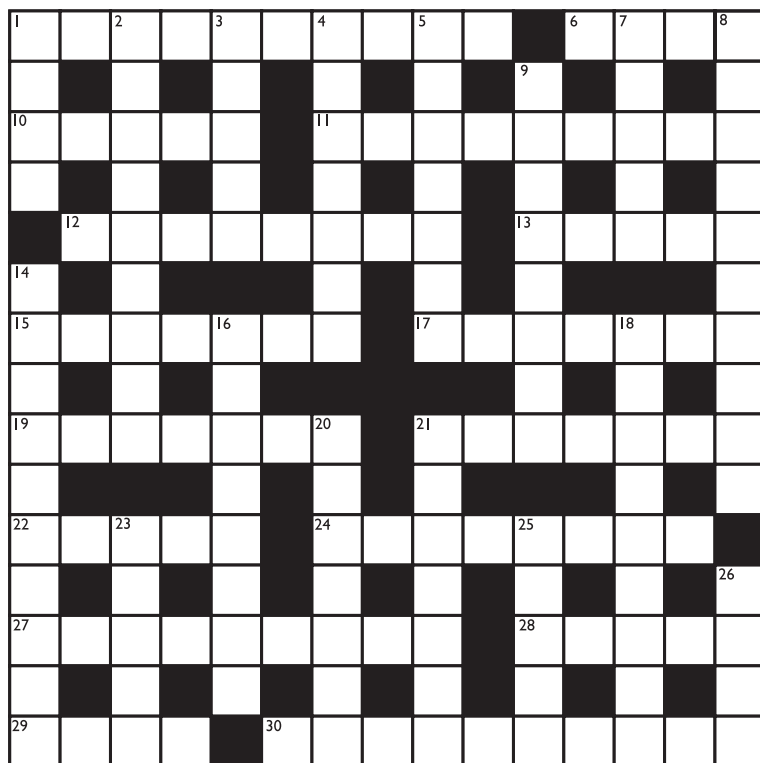


PLATINUM RECORD

India's silver voice turned platinum on September 28. At 75, **Lata Mangeshkar** says she still feels 25. "The curiosity of a youngster is still there. I am stuck in a beautiful time warp." She prefers to spend birthdays quietly in Pune or Panhalgad in Maharashtra in a house full of lit *diyas*, away from the birthday songs, cakes and candles. "*Diyas* are supposed to light up your day and your coming years. I can't relate to the concept of snuffing out lighted candles." Among her fondest birthday memories are ones from her childhood when her mother would make sweets and get her a new frock. Younger sister

Asha Bhonsle celebrated her 71st birthday on September 7th. "Yes, we've touched 70. But we're the same," says Lata. "When we're together, it's always the cacophony of teenagers yakking away like the old days." ■





EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 2

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS

- 1 The horse-betting footballer nodding home, early, what proved to be the decisive goal ensured his team did (3, 2, 1, 4)
 6 Where Mahima shoots what Leander may claim (1, 3)
 10 Brand-name figuring in Colombo scheme (5)
 11 Bury head in hands by way of confrontation? (9)
 12 Richard Attenborough did in having Ben Kingsley as *Gandhi* insisting upon a fair deal to each village in India (2, 2, 4)
 13 That 1954 title role in which we beheld Vyjayanthimala via Lata enacting *Mera dil yeh pukaare aa jaa*, composed in Raag Kirvani by

Hemant Kumar (5)

- 15 Headstrong? (3, 4)
 17 Mary knowing it's going to be a boy working in stone (7)
 19 What Sachin hit as Tony Greig announced a clean 10,000 Coca Cola pounds for Ten's sterling 143: India vs Australia at Sharjah, 22 April 1998 (3-4)
 21 Sexily got-up TVIP ironically looking Mira outside and inside (7)
 22 Dial a former US Vice-President (5)
 24 Some confusion on the Riviera! (4, 4)
 27 Fails the Everest attempt in wintry conditions? (4, 2, 3)
 28 All that noise about the princess killed? (3, 2)
 29 The Red, as prelude here, has Indira succeeding Jawaharlal (4)

- 30 Indian Cricket looked by the first 2001-quarter end, after that Chennai litmus Test vs. Australia (2, 3, 5)

DOWN

- 1 Christ, who is it if not Ms Derek at her seductive best! (4)
 2 Compulsive telewatch summed up as D = C/Y (9)
 3 Where Shammi Kapoor acquired all that computer know-how? (5)
 4 How wicked! He? I? No, us (7)
 5 Contrary to the man who came to bury Caesar, not to praise him (7)
 7 The Bedi Babe and Mark Nicholas did as he came up with that World Cup TV demo of how the new ball moved (5)
 8 2004 as Manmohan Singh never can forget! (3, 3, 4)
 9 A call to be single-minded while the bank is being looted? (1, 3, 2, 2)
 14 Tap a rare talent in Gene Kelly did MGM (4-6)
 16 Sentiments projecting Vespa-style backseats, all round in shape? (8)
 18 How outside left the Congress has Sitaram Yechury & Co feeling (2, 7)
 20 State of mind portrayed as 10s + 10n (7)
 21 Could not see the wood for the trees (7)
 23 This eater *Kamalnayani* Hema Malini's BJP refuse to be (5)
 25 Having Sonia going up and down (5)
 26 What Uma Bharti, now footloose, refuses to yield (4)

For answers, see page 95

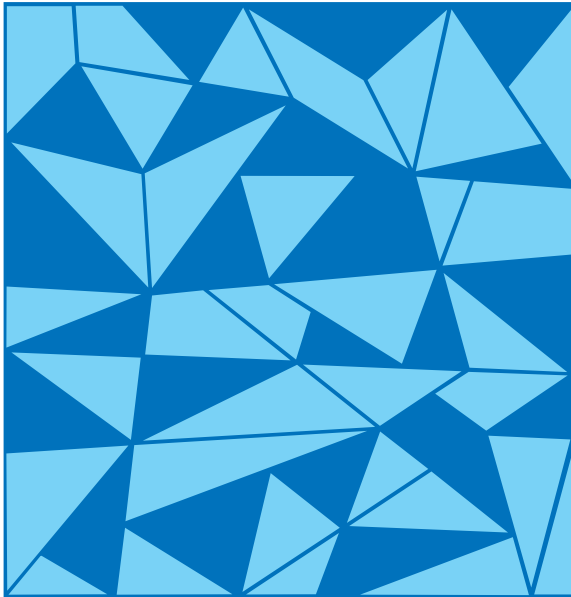
Raju Bharatan, originator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' for *The Times Of India*, uses the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary but says any standard dictionary would do to get started

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



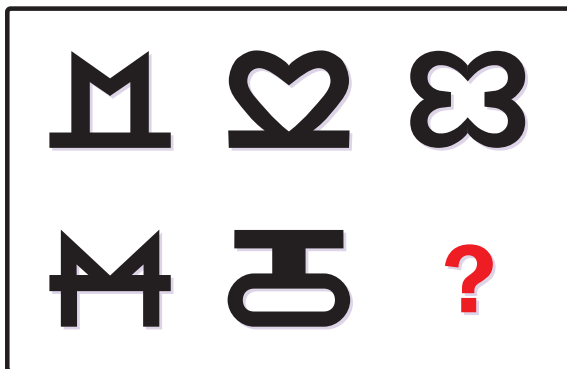
BRAIN GYM

The illustration below hides a perfect star. Can you spot it among the triangles?



WHAT NEXT?

Can you figure out which symbol will come next in this sequence of the five symbols?



These puzzles are taken from www.puzzles.com, a user-friendly site for puzzle fans. For solutions, see page 95



BACK TO SCHOOL

A refresher on facts that you once knew but could have forgotten along the way

What is the difference between algae and fungi?

Algae lack the regular root, stem and leaf structure of plants, but use sunlight and make their own food. They come in all sizes. Phytoplankton — staple food for the largest mammal, the blue whale — fit a thousand to a pinhead. The largest stretch a hundred metres from the ocean's bottom to the surface. They are an important part of pretty coral reefs, and some types of algae, like some sushi seaweed, are highly nutritious and edible. Algae are found everywhere there is light on the planet, and reproduce in any way it is convenient — sexual, or asexual.

Fungi, on the other hand, are parasites. They eat off the surface and environment in which they grow. They range from single-celled microscopic forms to the largest living multi-cellular animals. On the good side, fungi are among the largest decomposers of organic matter, and recycle minerals and carbons. Some fungi have been used in antibiotic medicine, like penicillin. We enjoy others in the form of delicious mushrooms, or yeast, which gives us the bubbles in our beer, and makes our bread. They flavour cheese too. On the meaner front, they cause athlete's foot and ringworm. In worse forms, some bread, fruit and nut mould aflatoxin is known to be the most carcinogenic substance known to man and poisonous mushrooms can strike you dead in hours. Fungi reproduce by dispersing tiny spores, which is why they sprout on every healthy surface at home.

Algae and fungi, for all their differences, form some of the richest relationships. Blue green algae team up with fungi to form lichen. The algae provide the food, the fungi the water and protection. This marriage sets up happy homes in some tough environments, like tree trunks and under rocks. There's a lesson in there for all of us. ■



LAUGH LINES

In a trial, a small town prosecuting attorney called his first witness to the stand. The witness was a grandmotherly, elderly woman. He approached her and asked: "Mrs Arora, do you know me?" She responded: "Why, yes I do know you, Mr Sharma. I've known you since you were a young boy, and frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me. You lie, you cheat on your wife and you manipulate people. You think you're a big shot when you haven't the brains to realise you never will amount to anything more than a two-bit paper pusher. Yes, I know you."

The lawyer was stunned. Not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and asked "Mrs Arora, do you know the defence attorney?" She again replied "Why yes, I do. I've known Mr

Shekhar since he was a youngster, too. He's lazy, bigoted and has a drinking problem. He can't build a normal relationship with anyone and his law practice is one of the worst in the entire state. Not to mention he cheated on his wife with three different women; one of them was your wife. Yes, I know him." The defence attorney almost died. The judge asked both counsellors to approach the bench, and quietly said: "If you idiots ask her if she knows me, I'll throw you in jail for contempt."



An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor, who fitted him with a hearing aid that allowed him to get back his hearing completely. The gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said: "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again." The gentleman replied: "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times! 🗑️"

MR BAKSHI'S VIEW

By Prriya Raj



SAY IT OUT LOUD

Age is something that doesn't matter, unless you are a cheese.

—Billie Burke, American actor

I really don't think there's any right age for creating art or creating babies. Forget biological clocks.

—Rekha, Indian actor

You're never too old to become younger.

—Mae West, American actor

HOUSE OF HOPE**PAGE 8**

MADHURAM NARAYANAN CENTRE: 126, G N Chetty Road, T Nagar, Chennai-600017.

Tel: 044-28281042, 28267568. Email: mnc@eth.net, abmvkjk@eth.net, jayakrishnaswamy@eth.net

WRINKLE ERASERS**PAGE 50**

U DERMA: 5, Basant Gardens, Sion Trombay Road, Chembur, Mumbai-71. Tel: 022-25216953, 25203903, 9820368903. Prices range from Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,500 per sitting

KAYA SKIN CLINIC: The Kaya Photofacial costs Rs 2,500 per sitting and Rs 22,500 for 10 sittings: Delhi: South Extension II, 011-51643361/62/63; Greater Kailash II, 51636058, 51636059; Punjabi Bagh, 55480558; Safdarjung Enclave, 26162488; Noida, 095120-2513817, 2513830

Mumbai: Bandra (W), 022-26424586, 26424683; Juhu, 26172255, 26174433; Kala Ghoda, 56350921, 56350922; Nepean Sea Road, 23691395, 23692140; Mulund (W), 55554292, 55554293; Worli, 56633436, 56633437; Andheri (W), 56754576, 56754577
Email: info@kayaclinic.com Website: www.kayaclinic.com

VILLAGE BY THE SEA**PAGE 74**

GLOBE HOTEL: Call Percy or Peshotan Sidhwa at 0260-2345243, 2345474

MEK HOTEL: Call 0260-2345463, 2345679

H RECOMMENDS**PAGE 88****HEARD IT?**

Bangalore: Senso Hearing Centre, No 305, Prestige Centrepoint, Cullingham Road, Bangalore-600052
Chandigarh: Senso Hearing Centre, SCO 9, Sector-20/D, Chandigarh-160020

Mumbai: Sound Solutions, Colaba Medical Centre, Kulsum Terrace, 1st Floor, Opposite BEST Depot, Walter Road, Mumbai-400005

New Delhi: Widex India (P) Ltd, 333, Ansal Chamber II, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi-110066

Pune: Senso Hearing Centre, F 105/106, Parmar Trade Centre, Sadhu Vaswani Chowk, Opposite Gold Mart, Pune-411001

MORNING WALKER

Chennai: Om Enterprises, 45, Venkatamaistry Street, 1st Floor, Mannady, Chennai- 600001

Jaipur: Kalpana Enterprises, Sector- 5, Taluka 19, Jawahar Nagar, Jaipur-302004

Kolkata: Spaceage Multi Products (P) Ltd, 16,

Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Kolkata-700013

Mumbai: 301, Centrepoint, 3rd Floor, 18th Road, Chembur, Mumbai-400071

Nasik: New Vision Pharmaceuticals, 6 Gole Complex, Basement, Gole Colony, Nasik-2

New Delhi: 4378/4B, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

Pune: Balaji Agency, 440, Shukruwar Peth, Shivaji Road, Near Shivaji Maratha School, Pune-411002

TOP IT UP

GD Foods Manufacturing (India) Pvt Ltd Durga Complex, 11/6, Second Floor, Central Market, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110018

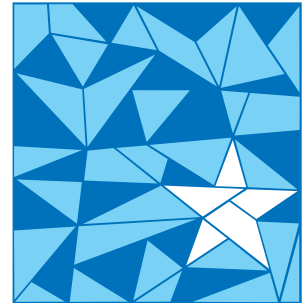
HEADSTART SOLUTIONS**PAGE 92****VISUAL CHALLENGE****The lost star**

See illustration on the right

What's next?

Each symbol in the sequence is formed by joining digits 1 to 5 with their mirror reflections.

Thus the sixth symbol is simply the number 6 combined with its mirror reflection.

**CROSSWORD**

ACROSS: 1 Led by a head; 6 A set; 10 BOSCH (Brand name figuring in Colombo scheme); 11 Interface (inter face - bury head in hands); 12 Go to town; 13 Nagin; 15 The boss; 17 Masonry - Ma(son)ry; 19 Pay-dirt; 21 Mandira — M(and)ira: Mira outside and inside; 22 Adlai (a dial is anagram of Adlai - Stevenson); 24 Nice mess (Nice is on the Riviera); 27 Cuts no ice; 28 Did in (splits as Di din — All that noise about the princess, while Did in means killed); 29 Rose (reference to The Red Rose as symbolic of Jawaharlal and Indira); 30 On the March (Sourav's India broke through in March 2001)

DOWN: 1 Lobo — Lo Bo; 2 Discovery (D is C over Y); 3 Yahoo; 4 Heinous (He I no us when splitting); 5 Antonym (Antony M); 7 Swang; 8 The one year; 9 A run is on; 14 Step-dancer; 16 Opinions (O pinions); 18 No insider; 20 Tension (Ten s ten n — 10s + 10n); 21 Macbeth; 23 Lotus; 25 Madam (reads the same going up and down, Madam as a reference to Sonia); 26 Inch. ■



Hoshang P Hodiwalla, 58, a businessman who deals in warehousing and trucking, regularly feeds strays in South Mumbai, tends to injured animals on the spot and is associated with a cow pound at Latur, which helps rehabilitate cattle. A graduate of St Xavier's College, Mumbai, his fellow alumni help him whenever they can. One friend is a veterinarian who is always on call, and three others are Supreme Court judges who support him in legal matters concerning animals. Whenever he has needed donations to help strays, people like Ratan Tata have chipped in. Hodiwalla owns two cars—both have biscuits and water tucked away for his friends on the road.



“A hundred hands being raised in praise of God are equivalent to one hand helping an animal. When I take Rudy, my Doberman Pincher, out for a walk on Marine Drive and see him enjoying life, I also see the misery on the faces of the three-legged and one-eyed strays maimed by frustrated human beings. There’s no limit to the amount I can spend on strays. What they really want is love and affection.”
—Hoshang P Hodiwalla

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Even as we in India have made a mark on the globe as a reservoir of intellectual capital, as a Nation we are grappling with “quality of life” challenges. More so, in the hinterland, where poverty is a ground reality. To address these larger issues, we work in tandem with the Government. In over 3,700 villages, we reach out to 2 million people, in proximity to our plants. Our 150-strong team endeavours with missionary zeal to raise literacy levels, take health-care to the hut-step of the villagers, train them to eke out a sustainable livelihood, empower women, provide basic amenities and espouse social reform.

The Asian Institute of Management, Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, conferred the prestigious Asian CSR Award on Hindalco, our Group's flagship Company, for its “Integrated Rural Poverty Alleviation Programme”. The Asian CSR Award is Asia's premier awards programme on Corporate Social Responsibility. Their distinguished jury chose Hindalco's work, over that of 142 projects, submitted by 80 organisations from 11 countries.

In their view, our work has been outstanding. That, slowly and silently our Group is trying to change the face of villages. From abject poverty to meeting the necessities of life. From dependence to freedom. From backwardness to progress, in more ways than one.

There is a palpable difference. Tens of thousands of villagers now seem self-assured, confident and happy at being able to move towards a sustainable livelihood. There is a new found dignity among them. For us, this is a way of living our values. A way of transcending the conventional barriers of business to send out a message that “we care”.



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