

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

OCTOBER 2012 ₹ 30

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SURESH WADKAR

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A call to arms

These are not statistics—but tragedies that bleed through the pages of the newspapers. The murder of silvers continues unabated across the country. And we continue to watch, appalled, and seemingly powerless.

For our booming metros that pride themselves on their indices of development and growth, this particular graph reads like a litany of shame. The Mumbai police recently announced that of the 40 cases of murder of silvers in the city since 2007, 31 have been 'solved'. In actual fact, 27 of these cases are still at the trial stage, lumbering through the justice system. Meanwhile, as I write this, in Delhi, four silvers have been murdered in September alone. Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai... all these cities too are reporting a rise in crime against silvers. The fact that we don't monitor these figures on a sustained level across the country is telling in itself—it speaks of the apathy of our society where silvers are concerned, a sort of bemused resignation to the situation as it stands.

It's an unacceptable state of affairs. And none of the 'solutions' devised by law enforcement authorities seem to be working. Registration schemes, identification cards, help lines have all come a cropper when it comes to keeping our silvers secure. The latest idea put forth in Mumbai is that of a shadow-cop for each senior citizen—as the media has already pointed out, this is laughable considering how skewed the numbers are. An already stretched police force of well under 50,000 to shadow a silver population of 1 million? The scenario is pretty much the same in all our cities, making the idea universally unfeasible.

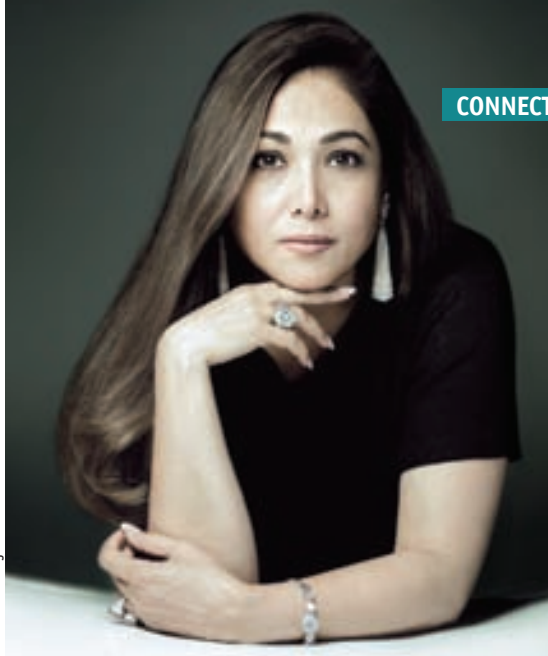
I've said it before in these pages, but it bears repeating. There is only one way out, one solution: self-empowerment. A proactive approach to your safety may involve some tough decisions—suspension of blind trust in those around you (from domestic help to new acquaintances);

investment in home security devices (as far as your budget allows); training in self-defence techniques (from the use of pepper spray to the martial arts)—but they will be worth it. What's more, rather than cowering behind closed doors fearful of what tomorrow may bring, take the initiative in crafting a web of safety with fellow silvers: mutual monitoring of homes, a neighbourhood watch, a community patrol, so to speak, that puts control back in your hands.

These are not just empty words. Such community safety networks have been tried and tested world over, in countries as diverse as Argentina and Albania; America and Italy; Indonesia and Guyana; with a sustained effort, they do pay dividends over time. Most significant, they ward off a large percentage of attacks just by letting potential criminals know that silvers aren't soft targets. It's time for us to send out that message, loud and clear. We've all taught our kids, and grandkids, that they must fight their own battles. It's time to practise what we preach.

Pina Ambani

Suresh Natarajan



A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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SHIVA'S DANCE: Devotees throng Tarakeshwar in West Bengal for Shraavan Purnima

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column one

Transformation and self-actualisation lie at the core of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Playback legend Suresh Wadkar firmly believes the roadmap to these goals is music. On our cover this month ("The Master's Voice"), the 58 year-old is determined to ensure that a new generation of singers retrieves music's "lost" soul with his Ajivasan Music Academies in cities like Mumbai and New York that draw from the classic *gurukul* model.

For Ambi Subramaniam, this *guru-shishya parampara* is the most natural thing in the world. Growing up at the feet of violin maestro L Subramaniam, he tells us how his father is both guide and best friend in "The Right Notes". In a similar vein, our star centenarian India's first Mr Universe Manohar Aich ("Man of Steel") continues to mentor successive generations.

Of course, as legacies go, none is more significant—and relevant—to us than the Mahatma's. To celebrate Gandhi Jayanti this month, we feature four Gandhian centres ('Marching with the Mahatma') that take that legacy forward in the future even as they honour the past. Saluting the past in her own lyrical way is Yasmeen Premji. In "Shades of Sepia", she reminisces about the charms and characters of Bombay long before it became Mumbai, in her debut novel *Days of Gold & Sepia*.

Great escapes can be both literary and literal. The breathtaking Hogenakkal Falls is our travel recommendation this month ("Smoke on the Water"); while the healing waters promise to soothe the body, the fire and the fury of the Cauvery will ignite your senses. A complete experience—much like your favourite magazine!

—Arati Rajan Menon

I came across *Harmony-Celebrate Age* at Professor Yash Pal's residence; I am his nephew. I am truly impressed by the depth of your cover feature on pain management ("Ooh, Aah, Ouch!", September 2012) and happy to see that you correctly attributed the credit to my late father Dr Vijay Sheel Kumar for pioneering the technique of ozonucleolysis. I wish your magazine the best!

Dr Vikram Sheel Kumar *By email*

Every issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* features unknown yet unique personalities on its last page ('Speak'). The article gives a comprehensive account of the person, his mission and service rendered to humanity, particularly to the poor section of society. In most cases, the services offered are free and are run by ordinary silvers like a postman, clerk, a cycle mechanic or a self-employed person. With this Harmony experience, I started collecting old and new copies of the magazine—these unsung heroes were my special interest. I am trying to distribute this amazing and motivational nano-collection among my silver friends. While going through the old issues, I realised that the magazine has evolved in many good

ways. All in all, it's a wonderful experience reading the old issues; I would go to the extent of equating them to holy books. Thank you for making me aware of all things that 'celebrate life'.

J S Bakshi

*Proprietor, BSP Information Technology & Communication
Ahmedabad*

Harmony-Celebrate Age is a sincere effort in offering support and encouragement to seniors—it's such a useful publication for them. Many senior citizens are harassed by their children and stepchildren for estate; this results in mental trauma. There are two ways by which they can protect their own interests. First, they can file an FIR at their nearest police station or through a dedicated helpline for silvers manned by the police. Their second option is to opt for reverse mortgage to get a loan against their house, live in it and get paid every month. These schemes are available through nationalised banks, or they can call 1800-100-1111.

Ashok B Ulman

*Former Secretary Legislature
Government of Goa*

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

- You had an experience related to money
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
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► TRENDS

Nomads in New Zealand

Met a genus native to New Zealand: the grey nomad! That's how newspapers and websites in the country have dubbed a **group of silvers in the Nelson and Tasman areas who have eschewed 'traditional' houses or retirement homes in favour of caravans and motor homes.** As news website *nelsonmail.co.nz* reports, this trend has become noticeable in the past few years. Take the case of Tahuna Beach Holiday Park in Nelson, where

half of the 100 permanent residents are over the age of 65, with the oldest clocking in at 91. "We have people who have money but they don't want to shell out huge amounts of it on a home where they would feel isolated," says Ann Cumpstone, manager of the Park. "They'd rather live among their friends in a community setting. And with motor homes becoming increasingly hi-tech, they don't lack any modern amenities."

Declaration of intent

As far as the statement of intent goes, this is a welcome one. This September, **India joined 10 Southeast Asian countries in adopting the Yogyakarta Declaration on Ageing and Health, initiated by the WHO, which aims to improve national response to the health of ageing populations.** "WHO follows a life-course approach to promoting healthy, active ageing," Dr Margaret Chan, director-general of the WHO announced to media. "The countries who have signed the declaration have committed to the development and strengthening of a national policy for healthy ageing and the formulation of multi-sectoral national alliances for promoting healthy ageing; ensuring the provision of sufficient resources for programmes dealing with ageing and health taking into consideration the economic aspects of long-term care of the very old, both at the facility and household levels; strengthening the primary healthcare system to address the health needs of the elderly including the in-service training of health professionals; and supporting the creation of dedicated cadres of caregivers within existing health and social



2013
100 million
silvers

2030
198 million
silvers

support systems." With the number of silvers over the age of 60 set to increase to 100 million in 2013 and 198 million in 2030, we only hope our Ministry of Health begins to translate these lofty goals into concrete action.

Pen-sioner's paradise



Buenos Aires has always been a haven for lovers of literature, with vast bookstores that stay open till midnight and even a skyscraper, the Palacio Barolo, inspired by a book (Dante's *Divine Comedy*). Now, as *The New York Times* reports, this beautiful city has moved to the next chapter—in a bid to strengthen the 'vertebral column of society', it has begun to offer **pensions to published writers, supplementing their retirement income**, which is often paltry. The offer is open to all Argentines over 60 years of age with a minimum of 15 years residency—they must have written at least five books, released by known publishing houses. Already, 80 writers have availed of the scheme, which grants up to \$ 900 (about ₹ 50,000) a month. One of them is Alberto Laiseca, 71, a horror fiction writer. "The programme is magnificent," he tells the newspaper. "It delivers some dignity to those of us who have toiled our entire life for literature."

MAHARASHTRA'S MOVE:
THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT IS FINALISING A POLICY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS AND A DRAFT WILL BE PLACED BEFORE THE CABINET SOON. THE POLICY WILL CONTAIN FISCAL, HEALTHCARE, WELFARE AND RECREATIONAL MEASURES.



RICE surprise

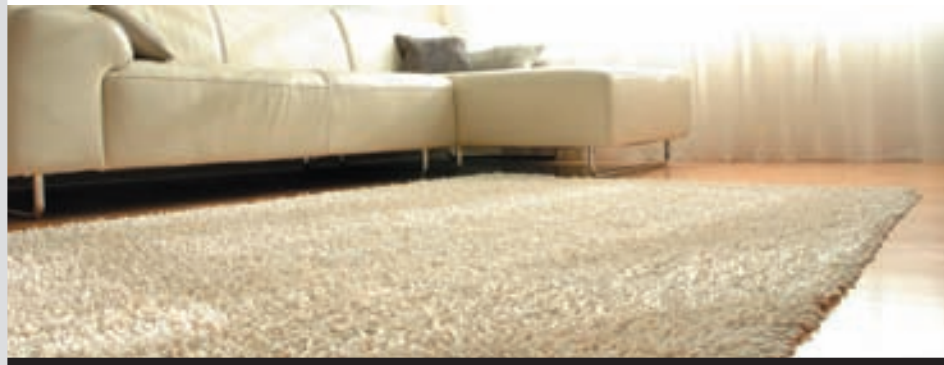
We know that rice (in moderation) is good for silvers—it's an instant energy source that aids gut health, stabilises blood sugar and blood pressure levels, and is easily (and cheaply) available. Now, researchers in Taiwan have made this dietary staple an even more attractive proposition—following a decade of research, they have developed **a strain of rice for silvers that cooks very soft.** “We’ve developed the rice with elderly consumers in mind to make the rice taste very



soft and a little sweet,” researcher Chang Su-jeing of the Miaoli District Agricultural Research and Extension Station in central Taiwan tells the *New York Daily News*. “It also gives a stable yield and can be stored for a long time.” The team hopes the government will subsidise the rice, which is expected to hit the market next year. According to the country's latest census, silvers (over the age of 65) account for 10.7 per cent of Taiwan's population of 23 million.

MAGIC CARPET

This magic carpet won't transport you away—instead, it will keep you firmly anchored on the ground. In September, at the Photon12 conference (www.photon.org.uk/home) on optics and photonic technology held in the UK, researchers from Manchester University in the UK showcased **a carpet that can detect falls and predict future mobility problems.** As the BBC explains, the product is essentially a mesh of fibres driven by an optical network that ‘learns’ walking patterns. Grooves along the length of the fibres make them sensitive to the deflection caused by pressure, while detectors at the carpet's edge convert the light into electrical signals. “Identifying changes in people's walking patterns and gait in the natural environment can really help us identify problems earlier on,” says Chris Todd, professor of primary care and community health at the university's department of nursing.



Hello, Hector!

BRIGHT YELLOW and incredibly smart, he comes when you call, maintains your schedule, reminds you when to take your meds, helps you Skype with your family and friends online, catches you when you fall and, probably best of all, hangs on to your glasses so you don't lose them! Say hello to **Hector, a robot**



created by the European Union's CompanionAble Project, which works in collaboration with a smart home to enable silvers to live independently. As webzine *forbes.com* informs us, the four-year project is in the final stages of field trials in Holland and Belgium. “We hope Hector will help people stay independent for longer, receive care in their own homes and avoid unplanned hospital admissions,” says team leader Professor Atta Badii of the University of Reading's Intelligent Systems Research Laboratory in the UK. To learn more about the project, check out www.companionable.net



Care-less

While millions of dollars are spent each year on caregivers for silvers in the US, an alarming new study suggests that some of that outlay may be misplaced. Researchers at Northwestern Medicine in Chicago argue that **many nursing agencies across the US hire people as caregivers from the Internet without checking up on their training and experience or conducting drug and criminal background checks.** This, clearly, leaves the door very wide open for elder abuse. For instance, of the 180 agencies they surveyed, only 55 per cent conducted a criminal background check and only 30 per cent administered drug tests on the caregivers they hired. "People have a false sense of security when they hire a caregiver from an agency," writes team leader Lee Lindquist in the *Journal of American Geriatrics Society*. "There are good agencies out there but there are plenty of bad ones too; consumers need to be aware that they may not be getting the safe, qualified caregiver they expect... Also, consider that seniors often take pain medications, including narcotics. Some of the paid caregivers may be illicit drug users and could easily use or steal the drugs to support their own habits."

Superagers

Allow us to introduce you to the 'superagers': **octogenarians and nonagenarians at the top of the cognitive game with the brains of people half their age.** In a bid to fight dementia, scientists at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago have made it their mission to discover what exactly makes them tick. When the researchers sampled a group of 10 average octogenarians, a group of 14 middle-aged participants aged 50 to 65, and 12 superagers (who scored the same as the 50-65 year-olds on memory tests), they found that the cortex (the outer layer of the brain) of the superagers was much thicker than in



the average 80 year-old, which showed significant thinning. Even more surprisingly, another region, the anterior cingulate, which sends signals in the brain, was actually thicker in the case of the superagers than in the 50-65 year-olds. "These findings are remarkable given the fact that grey matter or brain cell loss is a common part of normal ageing," team leader Emily Rogalski writes in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*. "These are a special group of people. Many scientists study what's wrong with the brain, but maybe we can ultimately help patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease by figuring out what goes right in the brain of superagers."

STROKE OF NEGLECT: ACCORDING TO RESEARCHERS AT RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTRE IN CHICAGO, WHO STUDIED OVER 1,000 PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 55, PEOPLE WHO FELT IGNORED AND UNSUPPORTED AS CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER A STROKE AS ADULTS. THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW STUDIES THAT HAVE EXAMINED THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EMOTIONAL NEGLECT AND STROKE.

It's a guy thing

Genetic mutations are the culprits responsible for a variety of disorders such as autism, schizophrenia and low intelligence levels. Now, researchers from Icelandic firm deCODE Genetics have established that **97 per cent of genetic mutations are caused by the age of the father**; the later men opt for fatherhood, the higher the chance of mutations. Interestingly, the mother's age was found to have no effect whatsoever. The team studied the entire genomes of 78 families involving 219 individuals and found that the rate of new mutations rises steadily in men's germ cells, doubling every 16.5 years. For instance, men in their 20s carry about 25 random mutations, while a 40 year-old man has about 65 mutations on average. Compare this to women, who have about 15 mutations on average, whatever their age. "This is astonishing and extremely important both from the point of view of human evolution and diseases to which new mutations contribute," Kari Stefansson of deCODE Genetics writes in journal *Nature*. "It certainly raises questions about whether older men and their partners should worry about the genetic risk they pose to their offspring." The team has a suggestion: if you are planning to become a father later in life, freeze your sperm now to lower the risk of passing on mutations to your children.



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Jane, again!



She's irrepressible. Between writing a book that explores sexuality for silvers and finishing the draft for a new tome that demystifies the birds and the bees for curious kids, two-time Academy Award winner, activist and fitness guru **Jane Fonda** has squeezed in time for a sensitive new

film, *And If We All Lived Together*. Originally released in France (in French) with the title, *Et Si On Vivait Tous Ensemble?*, the film features the 74 year-old as Jeanne, a silver in Paris suffering (in secret) from a terminal disease while caring for a husband who has Alzheimer's. Confronted by

universal silver challenges like deteriorating physical and mental health and alienation from their grown-up children, the couple, along with three of their oldest friends, decide to move into an old French estate together to form their own support system.

Despite the melancholy that underlines the film, the mood of the characters is distinctly upbeat—even occasionally raunchy—emphasising that silvers, when they come together, can make their lives a better place.

"We're very youth-oriented and there's this feeling that you're born, you peak at middle age and then you decline into decrepitude," Fonda tells news agency *The Canadian Press*. "I am bound and determined in whatever way I can to say that it doesn't have to be that way. We live a third of a lifetime longer than we used to and must understand that late life can be something very beautiful in every way; intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, sexually. We have to make old age less scary for young people."

Robo-ethics

Here's a sci-fi flick with a unique silver angle. In *Robot & Frank*, an ageing conman, played by **Frank Langella**, uses the caregiver robot his son gives him to further his career of crime. The star cast includes James Marsden, who plays the son, Susan Sarandon, Liv Tyler, and Peter Sarsgaard as the voice of the robot. While throwing light on future avenues of healthcare, this thought-provoking yet amusing film, directed by Jake Schreir and written by Christopher Ford, raises questions



about ethics and the possible (if not probable) subversion of technology in the years to come. "This movie isn't saying that robots are going to kill us, and it's not saying that they're the an-

swer to all our problems," Schreir tells news and entertainment website *www.theatlantic.com*. "It's important to see what the positives and negatives are and form an opinion."

At life's **crossroads**



What would life be like if the silence between a couple becomes deafening; if touch induces revulsion, proximity breeds disdain, and commitment becomes a life sentence? That's the crossroads where ace actors Meryl Streep, 63, and 65 year-old Tommy Lee Jones find themselves in **David Frankel's film *Hope Springs*, which explores the process of ageing amid alienation and a loss of love.** Do they find their way to a better, more companionable place or are they forced to languish in a loveless existence, compounded by the challenges of their advancing years?

"We have tried not to flinch when it comes to telling the truth about real couples when they get older," Frankel tells news agency AFP. "This film is about emotional intimacy, the search for which consumes not just the young, as is popularly believed, but every one of us, until the day we leave this earth. And it's important to understand that older people have sexual and intimate needs the same way as younger people; and that they are equally entitled to them."



Act it out. If you fancy a turn on the stage, maybe it's time to get your friends together and launch your own theatre group. Take a cue from Bridie Moore in Sheffield in the UK, who is launching Passages, a theatre group for performers over the age of 50. "It is well known we have an ageing population, so the way older people are represented on stage and in the media is of growing interest," she says. "This group will offer older people a chance to explore ways in which they are and would like to be represented."



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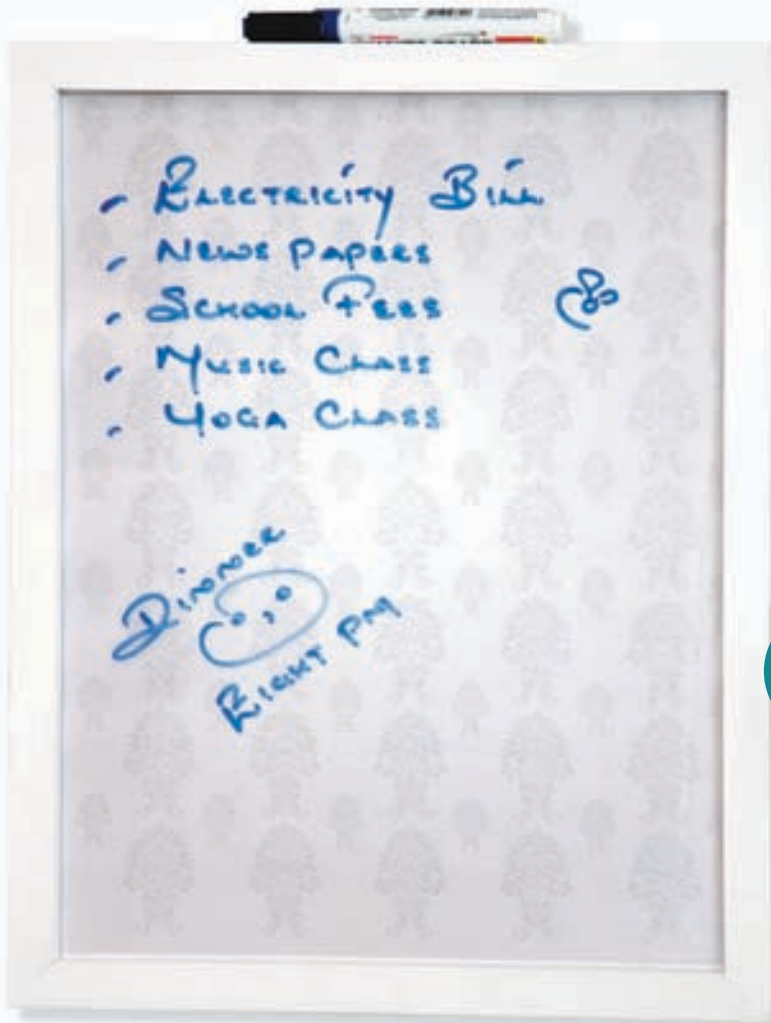
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FACTS

- » The energy from recycling glass the size of a bottle can power a computer for 30 minutes.
- » Glass manufacturers plan to use 50 per cent recycled material in the production of new glass bottles by the end of 2013. This will save enough energy to power 45,000 households for a year, and 181,550 tonne of waste from landfills each month.

Haresh Patel



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Empire state of mind



Susheel Menon

*In New York, concrete jungle where dreams are made...
These streets will make you feel brand new
Big lights will inspire you...*

As we drove through Manhattan, the chorus from New York rapper Jay Z's *Empire state of mind*—on the family playlist thanks to our teenager Karuna—ran on a loop through my head. Soaring buildings, streets overflowing with people, a frenetic energy that pulsates 24/7, this megapolis sends you into instant sensory overload.

Our guide Eugene took us on an entertaining bus tour that introduced us to the iconic buildings and people that breathed life into them. Tall, lithe and wearing his 60-something years with incredible lightness, this male hospital nurse—the guide job is his weekend gig—was quintessential New York: irreverent, brash and abundantly likeable. He was actually on duty as the wounded poured in after 9/11, a fact he threw in almost nonchalantly, only a catch in his throat giving away the emotion underneath—making our first sighting of One WTC, the uber-high tower rising from the rubble of Ground Zero, that much more poignant.

Manhattan is home to some of the priciest real estate in the world and, as Eugene told us, much of it is inhabited by silvers, in large part owing to NYC's Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Programme (SCRIE)—tenants over the age of 62 (who pay at least one-third of their disposable income as rent) are granted exemptions from any increase. It's a silver-friendly initiative that draws considerable flak in a city that has been overrun by young tycoons from across the world in recent years, yet the municipal authorities have managed to stand firm.

That's why 'Home Sharing', developed by non-profit organisation New York Foundation for Senior Citizens (www.nyfsc.org), has struck such a chord in a city that doesn't appear to have much truck with sentiment—at least at first glance. The programme brings young and successful professionals looking for that perfect address in the Big Apple together with silvers living alone in cavernous apartments who want to hang on to their homes, yet long for company. The contribution to household expenses doesn't hurt either—a happy accommodation in a city that prides itself on its knack for adaptation.

Indeed, adaptation is a skill shared by adopted New Yorker Bill Clinton, who set up home here after wife Hillary was elected as a US Senator in 2001. The 66 year-old has transformed himself from bad-boy president to elder statesman of the Democratic Party almost seamlessly. Burying all previous baggage with incumbent President Barack Obama (who battled Hillary for the party's presidential nomination four years ago), Clinton came out swinging at the Democratic Party's National Convention in favour of re-electing President Obama. His speech—passionate, folksy and ad-libbed in large part—brought the house down, and drew widespread acclaim for its focus on numbers rather than rhetoric and plea for bipartisan political cooperation. On the heels of that master-class performance, a poll conducted by *The New York Times* and CBS News rated his popularity among registered American voters at over 69 per cent, higher than at any time ever during his political career.

Some things clearly get better with time. But then you knew that!

—Arati Rajan Menon

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OMEGA-3 for obesity

A recent study from Ohio State University, USA, claims that **Omega-3 supplements help lower inflammation in obese elders.** These supplements have also been known to prevent and treat certain illnesses that are directly linked to inflammation markers in the body of older people. Chronic inflammation is linked to diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, arthritis and coronary heart diseases. It is also linked to Alzheimer's and various age-related problems. The 138 participants of the study—45 men and 93 women—consumed Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, which are also known as 'good fats', as part of supplements. Though these adults were in good health, they were

obese and led sedentary lifestyles. Researchers also set limits while selecting these participants to gauge the exact amount of Omega-3 supplements. People consuming a variety of medications to control mood, cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes were excluded; so were smokers and vegetarians. A few months of taking Omega-3 supplements decreased inflammation markers in these people.

"This is the first study to show that Omega-3 supplementation leads to changes in inflammatory markers in the blood in overweight but otherwise healthy people," says Jan Kiecolt-Glaser, professor of psychiatry and psychology and lead author of the study. "We have also discovered that Omega-3 fatty acids may be both protective and therapeutic to control inflammation and to bring it down."

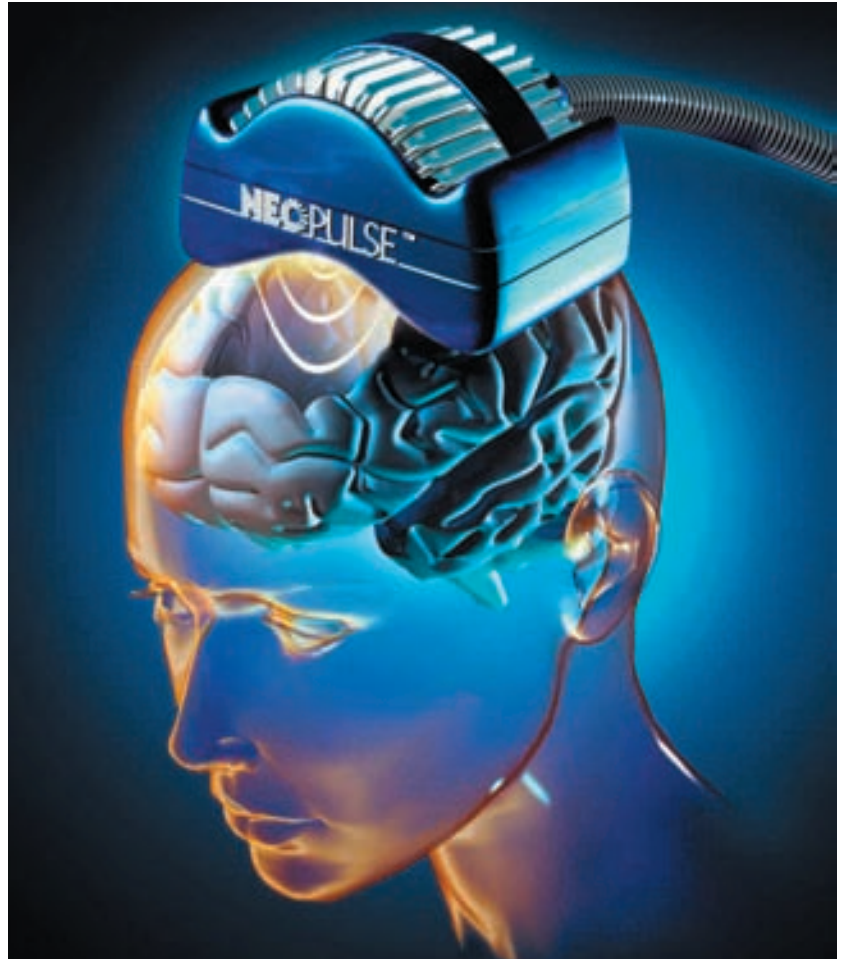


Skin and sugar

In 2007, an American study revealed high similarities between risk factors of psoriasis and diabetes. Five years later, in 2012, scientists at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia have confirmed the link—they say **people who already suffer from skin diseases like psoriasis have a greater chance of developing Type 2 diabetes.** "We already knew that some of the risk factors for psoriasis and diabetes are similar; for instance, weight. We do think that psoriasis itself puts people at a higher risk," says Rahat Afzar, the lead author of the study. In the past five years, Afzar's team collected electronic medical records of 108,000 adults suffering from psoriasis and 400,000 adults who were not suffering from it and established a conclusive link between psoriasis and diabetes. They also followed the patients' age, weight and blood pressure—major factors that contribute to Type 2 diabetes. "Psoriasis may induce chronic inflammation through changes in the bloodstream, thus upping the risk of diabetes," concludes Afzar, whose study also suggests that people suffering from psoriasis are highly depressed and avoid exercise, which could also lead to diabetes. Looking at the conclusions, researchers are warning people with psoriasis to keep a better watch on their diet and exercise to ward off the consequent risk of diabetes.

Shun the pills

Drug and vitamin dependency in everyday life has reached its peak. With this alarming fact in mind, Indian clinicians are looking at alternate solutions, including magnetic therapy, which is fast creating a buzz in the medical field. **Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), or simply magnetic therapy, is a line of treatment for patients suffering from depression** and those who do not respond well to treatments involving anti-depressants. TMS involves magnetic stimulation of specific areas in the brain to produce neuro-physiological changes and eventually result in recovery. "A course of drugs is not the only solution anymore," explains Dr Rajeev Gupta from Manas Psychiatry clinic in Ranchi. "There are various cases where drug consumption doesn't help at all. There are times where medicines work initially and then cease to react; there are also cases where people go through severe depression and recurrent trauma. In such cases, TMS has been known to help even those with suicidal tendencies." Agreeing with Dr Gupta, Dr Shamsah Sonawalla from Trans Mag Well-Being Clinic in Mumbai, and a consultant at Jaslok Hospital in the city, says, "This treatment works well with senior citizens, as they have already tried medication and medicines need to be avoided at a certain age. We have people from all ages and all cities coming to us for it." What's more, the observations of



the study clearly indicate that people who haven't undergone any kind of treatment for depression earlier have a 90 per cent better chance of TMS working for them. "This treatment is

available all over the world and yet we have international patients coming to India for this treatment because of low costs and highly efficient practitioners," concludes Dr Sonawalla.

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To the TEA



S Bhattacharjee

At 90, **Ananda Chandra Dutta** feels at least two decades younger. An early riser, he cycles to stay fit and believes in continuous learning to keep his mind active. A matriculate by formal education, he was recently awarded a D Sc by Dibrugarh University. A resident of Jorhat in Assam, he almost quit when he was in Class V at the Jorhat Practising School. “I had seen absolute poverty and my father Bholaram Dutta had to struggle to make ends meet—he worked on a daily wage of six *anna* at the Jorhat Sugarcane Research Station.” His mother Sorumai Dutta encouraged him to continue his studies at the Government Boys’ School. “I still remember how she would work on the loom all night to weave clothes to help run the family,” recalls Dutta, who soon found a teacher’s job in a middle school in nearby Mariani.

A chance meeting with William Wight, a renowned botanist at the Tocklai Experimental Station, got him a job of ₹ 50 as technical assistant. That meeting was a turning point. Dr Wight and his wife Jessie became akin to parents for Dutta; even after they finally left for England, they wrote to him regularly, until they passed away in 1990.

Dr Wight’s guidance spurred his interest in plant anatomy; he began conducting his own experiments, including a path breaking discovery on tea chromosome, which brought him international acclaim when the findings were published in the *International Journal of Phytomorphology*. By then, Dutta was in-charge of the Tocklai Herbarium. In 1972, he wrote his first book, *Some Common Weeds of the Tea Estates in North East India*, which was reprinted in 1983. His next book *Shade Trees, Green Crop & Cover Crop Plants in Tea Estates of North East India* was published in 1977, followed by *Dictionary of Economic and Medicinal Plants* in 1985, which has been well received by the scientist community.

“I keep receiving letters from scientists, particularly regarding this book. But my proudest moment was when I received a letter from Melvin Calvin of the University of California - Berkeley, a Nobel Prize winner in 1961,” says Dutta. Music and nature also bring him joy—he plays the harmonium, and likes spending time with the ducks and birds in his garden.

—Tapati Baruah Kashyap

IN PASSING

● American actor **Michael Clarke Duncan** (right), who has been nominated for the Academy Awards as well as a Golden Globe, passed away on 3 September following a heart attack. He was 54.



● Engineer and social entrepreneur **Vergheze Kurien** (left)—best known as the ‘Father of the White Revolution’ for spearheading the world’s biggest agricultural development programme, the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation

—succumbed to a brief spell of illness and passed away on 9 September. He was 90.

● Award-winning Pakistani feminist writer and connoisseur of Urdu literature **Hajra Masroor** passed away on 15 September. She was 82.

● The longest serving editor of Indian national newspaper *The Hindu* **G Kasturi** (right) passed away in Chennai on 21 September. He was 87.



● Magician **Kantilal Girdharilal Vora** (left), famously known as **K Lal**, breathed his last on 23 September. In a career spanning 62 years, he performed 22,000 shows, the most recent in June 2012. He was 88.

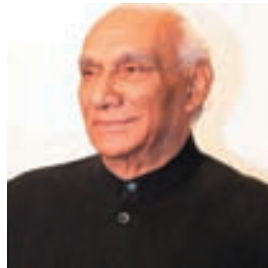
● Malayalam actor and National Award winner **Thilakan** died following a cardiac arrest on 24 September. He was 77.

BIRTHDAYS

● Hindi film actor-turned-producer and director **Rishi Kapoor** (right) turned 60 on 4 September.



● American singer **Gloria Gaynor**, also known as the Queen of Disco, turned 63 on 7 September.



● Filmmaker **Yash Raj Chopra** (left) of Yash Raj Films turned 79 on 27 September.

● Fashion designer and creator of the iconic label **Donna Karan New York (DKNY)** **Donna Karan** turned 63 on 2 October.

● Academy award-winning American actor **Susan Sarandon** turned 65 on 4 October.

● Legendary Hindi film actor **Amitabh Bachchan** (right) turns 69 on 11 October.



OVERHEARD



“I don’t let the word ‘old’ happen in my house. Some people say, ‘Oh, I feel so old.’ I don’t want any of that. I just want to go on working. You know, I just think if you put the car away in the garage it’s not going to start. And so, I just want to keep going, doing something new which is a challenge...new and different.”

—British actor **Dame Judi Dench**, 77, in an interview with **ABC News**

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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THE CELESTIAL SONG

I was introduced to the celestial song as a child, when I listened to my father reading and chanting verses from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the 'Song Divine'. Most of us regard the *Gita* as a scriptural book meant only for religious rituals. We read and hear the pundits without realising that its principles can be imbibed in our daily lives.

This celestial song is actually one of the finest philosophical documents of wisdom and knowledge for mankind. I have attempted to articulate this very wisdom in a book on how the *Bhagavad-Gita* can be used as a guide to a fruitful life. It was a great challenge, for two reasons. First, the text of the *Gita* is in Sanskrit. Second is the myth that its teachings are meant for those who have moved away from active life. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The primary message of the *Gita* is that we must work tirelessly without attachment and expectation of any reward.

The word *gita* is derived from *geet* or song, which has to be sung. A deeper examination of its 700 verses reveals music in its construction and once we discover its metre, everything else falls in place. To write my book, *Krishna's Enchanting Rhythms of Gita*, I chose 101 *shloka* that cov-

ered karma yoga, *gyan* yoga, a stable intellect, balance, harmony, attaining yoga, God's benevolence, and more.

Two years before I retired from bureaucratic service, I began to learn Sanskrit; my knowledge was then limited to what I had learnt in school. I memorised all 700 *shloka* and now I can recite the *Gita* anytime, anywhere. But the *Gita* is a song and we do justice to it only when we sing it. So I chose 10 ragas and recorded two CDs. I believe their textual reading combined with a musical rendition helps understand the wisdom of this divine song at another level.

I interpreted the *shloka* by drawing on the sum total of my life's experiences. This includes what I have heard about the *Gita* from various experts and seeing its spiritual meaning as it applies to the physical world. My book sold 10,000 copies including its Hindi translation. I now travel across the country to management institutes as guest faculty, delivering lectures and attending conferences and seminars to share this interpretation of the divine song.

We can apply the concept of karma yoga to any aspect of human endeavour. I play golf every morning and discovered to my surprise that the best results are obtained if you play this game keeping those tenets in mind. Usually, golfers raise their heads to see the result of their shot and fail to connect with the ball. This is exactly what happens in real life. We are so concerned with the result and reward and fail to make the effort and really connect with what we do. The result is either failure or inadequate reward.

I have also written books on cosmic energy and gene theory, which explores the perception of God and energy and its connection with our karmas. Another work, which is still under print, is on demystifying death. It looks at death as a celebration because death is nature's way of maintaining its pristine purity by destroying the old and creating the new. I have also written books relating to subjects like lifestyle management, leadership and stress management.

In addition, I run an NGO called Association of Child Aid Organisation, which has counterparts in the US and Norway. We identify people working in child healthcare and contribute by giving Vitamin E capsules to combat child blindness in the malnourished. I feel if we imbibe the essence of the *Gita* in all spheres of our lives, we can build a better society together.

—Vinod Malhotra, Delhi

Malhotra: Well-versed



AGAINST ALL ODDS

It's odd how you sometimes stumble upon just what you need to get you through a difficult time. My ray of hope came from something I read in a newspaper, quite by chance. It said, "If you don't get what you want in life, try for something better!"

But before I tell you how that changed my path, let me give you some background. My hearing began to deteriorate when I was 16 but, with minimal hearing, I managed to earn a bachelor's degree in English literature from Madras University. Financial constraints prevented me from studying further. But I secured a Central Government scholarship offered to students whose first language was not Hindi, for a master's degree in Hindi, at Agra University. I had to work really hard because Hindi was not my mother tongue and my hearing disability made it that much more difficult. Owing to this, I relied more on self-study than lectures. My hard work paid off and I secured the fourth rank in the university.

Things began to look up and I landed a job as a Hindi teacher at Kendriya Vidyalaya in Ernakulam, Kerala. I thought I had arrived—a Central Government job, a good salary, pleasant work, plenty of holidays and additional income from tuitions. Life was perfect! But life can also be a bed of thorns. I began to lose the minimal hearing I had. Not only did three surgeries fail; worse, I completely lost my hearing. As a result, I lost my job. I was devastated. Not long after that, I came across that beautiful message: "If you don't get what you want in life, try for something better!" I yearned for a PhD in Hindi but didn't have the funds. Fortunately, an old issue of *Saptahik Hindustan* I had casually picked up from a wastepaper shop gave me new direction. It carried an article titled "Man is not eyes or ears alone" by Dr Dev Raj Upadhyaya, head of the Hindi department at Udaipur University, no less. The article was meant to encourage physically challenged people to forge ahead in life. I couldn't believe what I was reading!

I wrote to Dr Upadhyaya and asked him whether he was prepared to practise what he preached by accepting me as his student for a PhD programme. He recommended my application for admission but the university rejected it because of my disability. Dr Upadhyaya then took up the matter with the vice-chancellor, who wrote on my application: "Deafness is no disqualification for academic pursuits." I was getting all the encouragement I needed—and more. With the help of these two gentlemen, I obtained a PhD in 1970, becoming the first completely hearing-impaired person in the country and the third person in Tamil Nadu to obtain a doctorate in Hindi.

My hearing loss prevented me from getting a teaching job. But my basic degree in English literature came to my res-



Chennai Pix

Sreedharan: A life without full stops

cue and I was taken on as an editorial assistant in English at the Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi. Emboldened by this development, I got married and returned to Tamil Nadu, where I worked as a clerk at the district collector's office at Kanchipuram.

Then, the state government announced the reservation of 3 per cent of government jobs for the physically challenged. I secured a professor's post at Rajah's College in Pudukkottai in 1975. Three years later, the President of India presented me with a National Award as the 'most efficient physically handicapped employee'. After 22 years of service, I was promoted as head of the Hindi department at Presidency College in Chennai. I couldn't have asked for more! I retired in 2000 with a decent pension. As a professor, I used to have long vacations, which I used to write books. I have written 40 books in Tamil, prepared the *Learn Hindi* series and compiled dictionaries in three languages.

Despite the odds, I was determined to make a career out of a talent I loved: teaching. Today, I have a flat of my own, and my children are well educated and settled. I have learnt an invaluable lesson: If it wasn't for my disability, I would have remained an obscure high-school teacher. I owe my doctorate, stint in journalism, professorship, my writing and financial stability to my hearing loss. As they say, 'Stopping is a sign of death; only movement is a sign of life.' The march continues.

—Dr N Sreedharan, Chennai



Anshuman Akash Jha

Beyond boundaries

COL (RETD) ARUN GUPTA, 65, NOIDA

God has been kind to me. It was my dream to join the Air Force as a pilot but a slightly weak vision prevented that. Instead, I joined the Army and enjoyed a three decade-long, fruitful career. I was doing my engineering from IIT-Kharagpur when I joined the Army. So it was natural for me to become an engineer after undertaking the Young Officer's Course from the College of Military Engineering in Pune. During my early years, I fought the 1971 Indo-Pak War in the Shakargarh Sector (J&K). I even commanded a special task force of national importance at Pokhran during 1982-84 in preparation for nuclear tests.

On a posting, I shot two terrorists and a bullet went through my hand. I was honoured with a commendation by the General Officer Commanding in Chief, Central Command, for rendering services beyond the call of duty and was awarded the Wound Medal.

In 1996, after retirement, I had some family estate matters to look into. While settling these, on the insistence of a cousin, I began my career as a

stockbroker. Later, in 2002, I became an insurance advisor with ICICI Prudential and National Insurance Company. I qualified for the Million Dollar Round Table in 2003-04 and 2004-05; and for Prudential Star Clubs (Foreign) in 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05. Now, I am also a government-approved insurance surveyor. From the insurance sector, I progressed to mutual funds. I have been an advisor and distributor of mutual funds since 2003. As I had walked into the financial services after retirement, I decided to make it formal. After long hours of study, I became a Certified Financial Planner in 2006.

A guest speaker at leading business schools of Delhi and NCR, a few months ago, I joined TDI Infrastructure as executive director. It is a new milestone in my career. I am 65, fully employed and enjoying it. But I am still passionate about estate planning. I find that people are slack about making wills and getting the legalities in order for the next in line. But it is a very important task that everyone should undertake.

—As told to Ambica Gulati

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

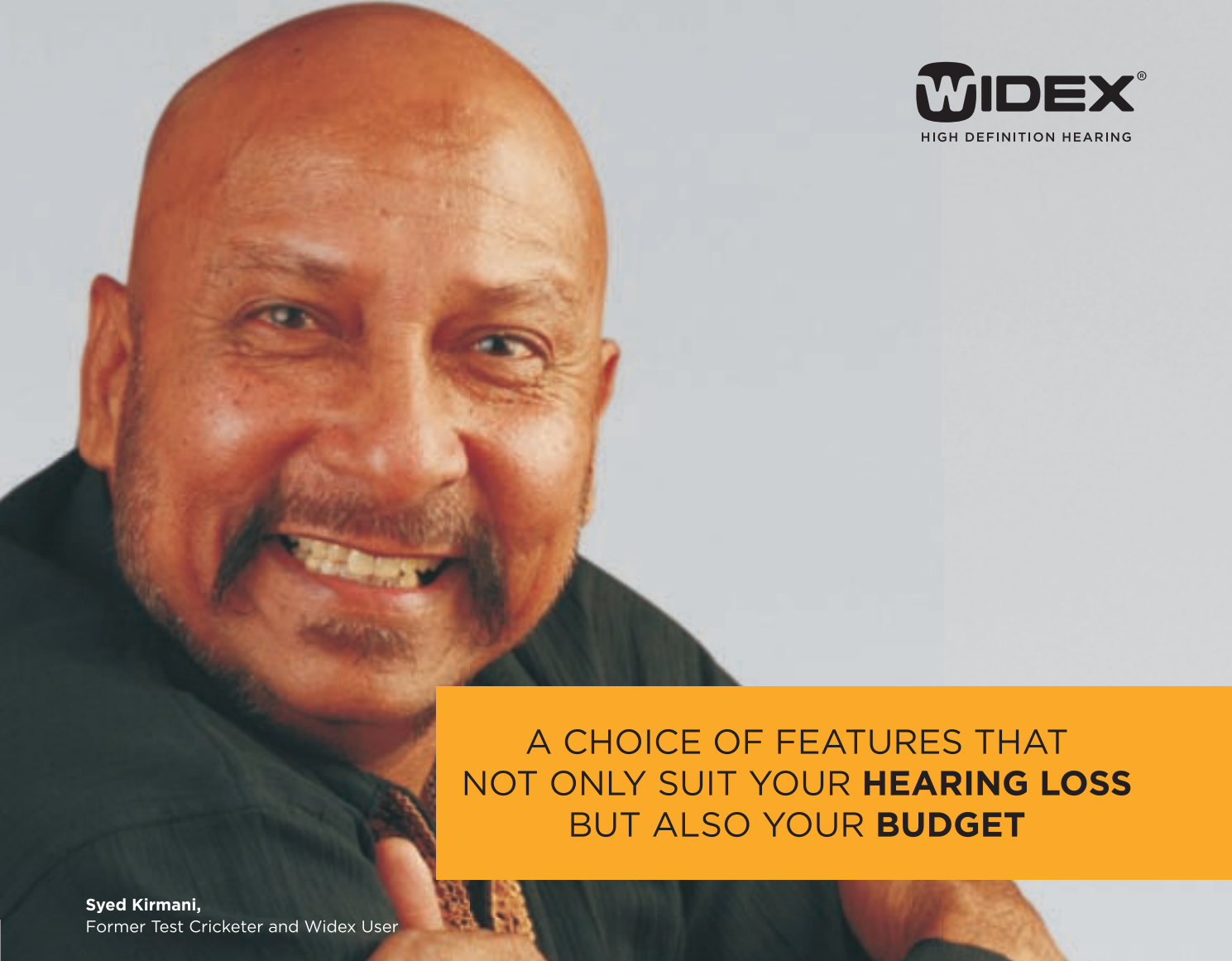
I am a retired Hindi professor. As I am also fluent in English, I want to freelance as a translator. I want to know if I need any extra qualification and how much I should expect as my fee.

As a translator, all you need is good experience and wide knowledge of two languages. As your target languages are Hindi and English, you need to have degrees in both. Taking a few short-term courses to expand your knowledge can also be helpful. It will help build your profile as a translator. If you market yourself well, this job



pays well. Instead of working as a freelancer, I suggest you work on a project basis; whether it's a book, catalogue or tourist guides. If you work hard and keep your existing clients happy, you can earn anything between ₹ 40,000 and ₹ 60,000 every month. Also, consider working on public holidays and weekends; these are the times when agencies need translators. Apply at embassies and publishing companies. Look for international websites that need translators. Online media is flourishing and many international companies are willing to launch in India. They pay well for Hindi translation.

—Sonali Misra works as a freelance translator in Ghaziabad



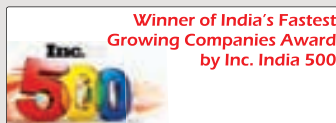
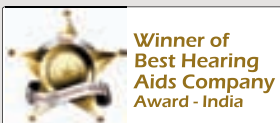
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EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Puree it! A liquid diet for people with Alzheimer's

My mother is 80 years old. She is suffering from Alzheimer's and, with every passing day, becoming anorexic as she refuses to consume any solid food. Can you recommend a liquid diet plan for her? She also doesn't like to consume the same things everyday and likes a change.

Alzheimer's affects the brain in multiple ways and can lead to a variety of eating problems. This can be challenging both for the patient and the caregiver. The eating habits of people suffering from Alzheimer's can have a direct effect on their health and the progression of the disease. It is very important that patients maintain a good nutritional and fluid balance, as being hydrated helps reduce symptoms such as agitation, confusion and restlessness during the early evening hours. As dementia progresses, patients may develop a poor appetite or lose interest in food altogether. This can cause weight loss and affect their overall well-being. A poor appetite may develop for numerous reasons: change in food preferences, difficulty in chewing and swallowing, coordination problems affecting eating and drinking, or depression.

There are many ways to stimulate the appetite and an interest in food. It is important to find out the types of food a person likes and what she/he can physically manage, but the following tips may also be helpful:

- Make food and meals look presentable; try different colour combinations.
- Offer small portions at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- Some people eat better at certain times of the day, whether it's at breakfast or later in the day at teatime. Be flexible.
- It is easy to lose interest in food once it has gone cold. If someone has difficulty with coordination or swallowing, their food is more likely to go cold. Serve half portions and keep the remainder warm until the first portion has been eaten.
- Help build a healthy appetite through daily activities such as monitored walking.
- Offer positive encouragement and gentle reminders to eat and describe the food being offered to build the person's interest.

Providing a balanced diet will go a long way in helping patients combat some of the symptoms, especially in the earlier stages of the illness. A balanced diet is a sensible blend of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals. The key to providing quality Alzheimer's care during meals is to understand how the disease affects eating behaviour so that you can handle mealtimes with patience, planning and flexibility.

Regular, nutritious meals, however, may become a challenge for people with dementia, like your mother. As a person's cognitive functions decline, he or she may be overwhelmed with too many food choices, forget to eat, or have difficulty handling utensils. If patients are underweight owing to a small appetite, it is important to stimulate their appetite and encourage them to eat well. In case they totally reject solid food, a liquid or pureed diet is the best solution. In a liquid diet, the patient receives all the important nutrients needed, without spending too much time or energy in consuming only a few bites. You can puree almost any food. Use herbs and spices, tomatoes, lemon juice and sauces to add flavour to food.

Here are some helpful menu options:

Breakfast: Yoghurt and fruit make for a healthy and tasty breakfast. Just make sure you puree the fruit to a manageable consistency. Yoghurt is rich in calcium and fruits are a great source of vitamins and minerals. You can try fruit and vegetable juices like apple, beetroot, carrot, tomatoes. Add salt and lemon juice to enhance the flavour. Also, try pureed wheat porridge with vegetables or custard with pu-



READERS ASK

How much water is necessary for an ageing body and how does it help?

Three-fourth of our body is water and it plays a vital role in body processes. It is important to maintain a healthy level of fluids in the body. Water regulates our body temperature and carries nutrients, hormones, and antibodies to and from body organs through the bloodstream. It also carries carbon dioxide and waste products to the lungs, intestinal tract and kidneys for expulsion. Hypertension, circulation disorders, kidney stones, arthritis, indigestion and constipation are all common disorders found in silvers; these can be directly, or indirectly, caused by inadequate water intake. Joint and muscle stiffness also occurs as a result of deficient consumption of water. Over the age of 65, thirst diminishes and a person is not likely to drink without making a conscious effort. A simple guideline on whether you are drinking adequate water is to check if you have a urine frequency of every two hours; it should be pale white in colour. Urinating only a few times a day and concentrated yellow urine are signs of dehydration. If this happens, you may need to increase your water intake. Everyone needs a minimum of eight glasses of water throughout the day. To remain hydrated, opt for higher fluid intake with juices, soups, yoghurt and milk. Most fruits like watermelon, apples and oranges and vegetables like lettuce, carrot, tomatoes and cucumbers also contain a decent amount of water that helps improve hydration.

In a liquid diet, the patient receives all the important nutrients needed, without spending too much time or energy in consuming only a few bites. You can puree almost any food. Use herbs and spices, tomatoes, lemon juice and sauces to add flavour to food

reed fruits. Other options include pureed bread, pancakes and French toast, using milk or juice.

Lunch: Lunch can be a monotonous meal. Often elders don't work up a lunchtime appetite, especially if they eat a late breakfast. A well-made fruit smoothie is a rich meal and not too overwhelming. A fruit smoothie is a blended combination of fruits and ice. You can use yoghurt or banana as a thickening agent. Bananas are a great source of potassium. A smoothie is a great way to tailor the liquid diet to personal taste and exercise creativity. You can puree almost every food using gravies, milk, vegetable or chicken broth and juices. Try pureed rice with different gravies like *rajma*, chickpeas or *paneer*, pureed *idli* with *sambhar*. Another lunch or dinner option can be soup. Cheese-based and potato-based soups are good for a liquid diet; although, almost any soup can be pureed for easy consumption.

Dinner: Various dinner options include pureed *khichdi* with vegetables and curd, pureed chapatti with *dal*, pureed noodles, pureed vegetables like carrot, potatoes with gravy and light cream, and soups with pureed bread.

Desserts: For dessert, you can serve ice-cream, puddings or custards.

Snacks: Try pureed soaked almonds with honey, fruit shakes, pureed marinated *paneer*.

To improve the intake and nutritional status, it is important to puree and eat a variety of foods from each of the food groups. With the right tools and knowledge, just about any food can be served in a pureed form. To make the foods more appetising, blend different foods separately and layer. As it may take longer to finish a pureed meal, spread out meals into five or six small portions throughout the day. Follow these suggestions and lure your mother into eating healthy. Use your own creativity and tailor these ideas to the needs of your mother. Do consult your doctor before diet alterations.

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



SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

Steady intervention: Awareness can help manage tremors in later years

Some silvers suffer from tremors (involuntary movement of fingers), finding it difficult to sign cheques. When these cheques don't get honoured, they have to get a letter from a doctor, attesting their signature with a statement about disease or disability. What is the cause of these tremors? Is it a treatable condition?

Tremors are common with increasing age. They can be disabling and/or socially embarrassing. A major cause of concern for elders, they can be classified into two groups.

Essential tremor: Also called senile or benign tremor.

Tremor secondary to drugs or disease: Excessive alcohol intake, drugs, hyperthyroidism or Parkinson's.

The classic postural tremor of old age could be worse during action—hands are static at rest, but one tends to spill tea while holding a cup; continuous nodding of head (titubation); jaw/vocal tremor. In this, the legs are rarely affected. Mostly asymmetrical, about half the cases have a family history. The condition mostly manifests itself in middle age, occasionally earlier, and worsens gradually. It is often more socially embarrassing than physically impairing. It could be improved by alcohol and beta-blockers but these are often unacceptable treatments in the long term, as

alcohol suppresses the problem and causes some patients to abuse alcohol. It is worth considering beta-blockers as the first choice of treatment for other conditions such as hypertension, where benign essential tremor is a symptom.

Essential tremor may affect people of all ages, although its incidence increases markedly with age. It was once referred to as senile tremor because it is most prevalent among people over 60 years of age; prevalence is 1.3 to 5 per cent in this group, although some estimates are as high as 22 per cent. Some forms of this tremor are also referred to as familial tremor because it has a genetic basis.

Symptoms and signs

Essential tremor is a chronic condition. In some elderly people, it remains mild, affects only the upper limbs; in others, it progresses dramatically. Most often, it involves the upper limbs (affecting the ability to eat or carry objects), followed by the head (making the head shake when unsupported) and voice (making speech unsteady). It is an action tremor, which means that it occurs with both arms stretched (postural tremor) and with voluntary movements such as writing, drinking from a glass, or touching one's nose with the hands. Sometimes, it's made worse by nervousness, embarrassment (which may be because



Essential tremor may affect people of all ages, although its incidence increases markedly with age. It was once referred to as senile tremor because it is most prevalent among people over 60 years of age. In some elderly people, it remains mild, affects only the upper limbs; in others, it progresses dramatically

of the tremor), and handling objects in uncomfortable or strained positions.

Treatment

Many patients with mild essential tremor need reassurance that they do not have Parkinson's. To reduce embarrassment caused by the problem, they can be advised to hold objects close to the body so as not to drop them, place napkins between cups and saucers to keep them from rattling during use, avoid having coffee or tea in public, and avoid uncomfortable or awkward positions. Drug treatment is not necessary for mild tremor. Drug treatment or surgery is required for more severe tremor. However, tremor often does not respond to drugs as well in silvers as it does in younger adults. Patients with particularly severe and drug resistant tremor may be candidates for thalamotomy or high-frequency deep brain (thalamic) stimulation devices, which are available only at special centres.

Tremors from other causes

Alcoholism: A permanent and generalised tremor, it could be because of excessive intake of alcohol.

Withdrawal: Sudden withdrawal of alcohol can produce tremors. A rapid course tremor that involves the entire body, it is abolished or diminished by a drink.

Use of drugs: Antiasthmatics, antidepressants, antiepileptics and caffeine are known to induce tremors if taken in excess.

Hyperthyroidism: This occurs owing to hyperactivity of the thyroid gland and excessive secretion of thyroxine. The cause is usually secondary to an overacting gland or a tumour in the gland. Sometimes, the tumour is not large and obvious and may be difficult to detect. The characteristic symptoms of heat intolerance, bulging of the eye ball and excessive sweating may be lacking in silvers, who may experience a rapid tremor that is usually confined to the outstretched hands and fingers. The diagnosis can only be confirmed by a blood test.



Metabolic disorder: A tremor characterised by irregular flapping movements of outstretched hands, it could be because of liver or kidney failure.

Parkinson's: This is a neurological disorder characterised by tremors and muscular stiffness. It is insidious during the onset and progresses slowly. The tremor classically involves movement of fingers in a pill-rolling motion. It is present at rest, usually decreases with voluntary movement, and disappears during sleep. The disease makes daily activities like dressing, bathing and eating difficult to perform. As no cure is available for the condition, most patients require life-long drug treatment.

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



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Good nights: Bid farewell to your nightmares

Psychologists expend a lot of ink on nightmares, analysing why we have them and how to rewire our thinking to sort out the problem. For many simple people distressed by them, nightmares seem to predict impending doom. However, they could often be owing to a high-stress event or chronic state of anxiety over a seemingly insurmountable problem.

In yoga, nightmares are said to be triggered by the sixth chakra, *ajna*, going out of sync. Interestingly, this centre is related to the nervous system, especially the pineal gland that biologically affects our sleep patterns.

In psychology, nightmares are symbols of the subconscious trying to cope with a stressor. In yoga, this can be tackled by practising poses that impact the *ajna* chakra. These include certain poses that involve a focus or *drishti* that makes us look upward. These are the horse pose (*ashwa sanchalanasana*), lion pose (*simhagarjasana*),

all variations of the dancing Shiva pose (*Natirajasana*), simple poses that work the upper body like the cow pose (*gomukhasana*), and advanced poses like the scorpion (*vrschikasana*), to name a few. Cleansing practices like yogic eye exercises (*trataka*) also work on the pineal gland, as do breathing practices (*pranayama*) like the energy channel purification practice (*nadi shodhana*).

Other lifestyle changes that will encourage undisturbed sleep include not watching television too late in the night. Even working on computers or electronic gadgets affects sleep patterns because flickering lights affect the secretions of the pineal gland that induce deep sleep. Working for long hours in artificial light also disturbs these secretions and causes severe depression that could set off nightmares. Further, eating too late or heavily affects the sensitive digestive system—the stomach is said to have one of the highest clusters of nerve endings—that may disturb sleep.

YOGIC MOVES

Horse pose (*ashwa sanchalanasana*)

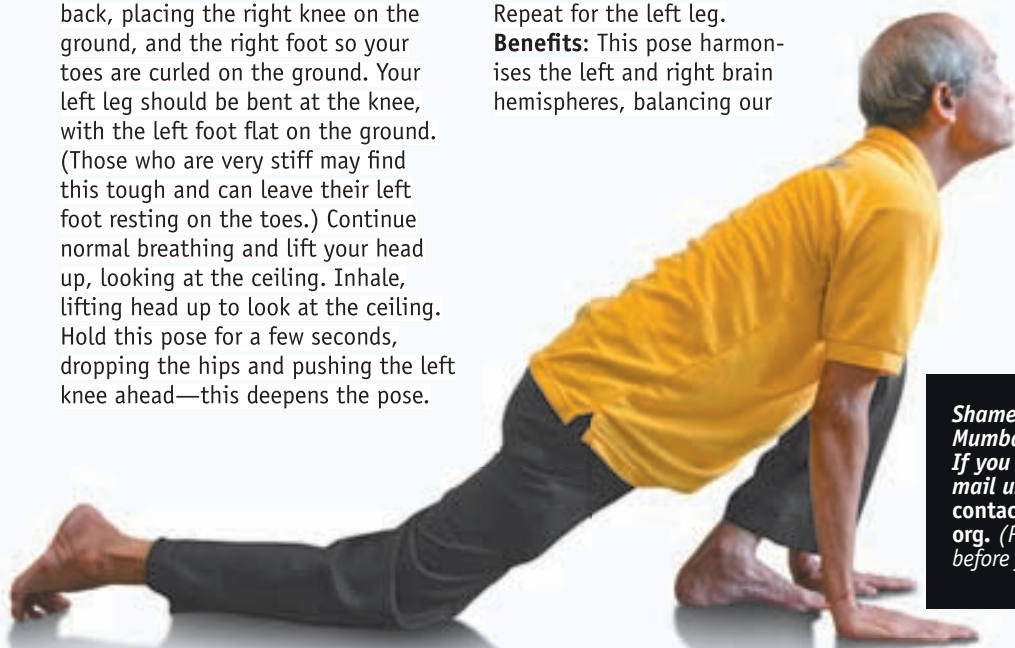
Stand up straight. Inhale, exhale, dropping palms or fingers to the ground. Inhale and draw the right leg back, placing the right knee on the ground, and the right foot so your toes are curled on the ground. Your left leg should be bent at the knee, with the left foot flat on the ground. (Those who are very stiff may find this tough and can leave their left foot resting on the toes.) Continue normal breathing and lift your head up, looking at the ceiling. Inhale, lifting head up to look at the ceiling. Hold this pose for a few seconds, dropping the hips and pushing the left knee ahead—this deepens the pose.

Hold for a few seconds initially. Then, draw the right leg back to the starting position to stand up straight. Repeat for the left leg.

Benefits: This pose harmonises the left and right brain hemispheres, balancing our

logical and emotional parts. It tones the legs and helps to remove the tension and stress lodged there. The chest is pushed out, uplifting the mood and creating confidence. The pose builds upper body strength, helping us handle stress better.

Model: Shriram Achrekar,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel



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

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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN MEET MRS RASHEEDA, CHENNAI

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

At times, an uncomplaining gaze can convey much more about life than a thousand words of complaints and pain. That is exactly what happened when I met Mrs Rasheeda, a homemaker from Chennai. For the first time, I realised the price elders have paid for their new-found freedom. It's the price of loneliness. Many of Rasheedaji's contemporaries sacrificed their youth for the larger family, and continue to do so for their children. Many women, such as she, have been the epitome of sacrifice all their lives. And now, at dusk, they find that the needs and ambitions of their children have taken many of them away from the joint family system to nuclear families. While the others have moved on, her eldest son and his family stay in the old house and take care of the parents.

Life is good and she is content, she says with a peaceful smile that touches me deeply. Married to Shaik Adam, she is the mother of nine children, grandmother to 18, and great-grandmother to five. Affection and cheer come naturally to her, as does her contagious laughter. Determined to understand what makes her so cheerful, I settle down to talk to her, as her family and friends help fill the communication gap between us, as she speaks only Tamil. And finally, the icing on the cake turns out to be the *biryani* recipe that comes as a pleasant surprise as it is the vegetarian version of this dish.

Rasheedaji, have you always lived in Chennai?

Yes, both my parents' and my husband's families are from Chennai; in

fact from Triplicane, the same locality. Except for one year when my husband moved to Visakhapatnam, Chennai has always been my home.

In your time, how easy was it to adjust when you got married?

Like most of my elders, I grew up in a joint family. I got married in 1948, even before I became a teen. I think I was all of 12 at the time. Even at that age, I learnt to cook and take care of the house as my mother-in-law was 80 years old and not keeping well.

"In a joint family, there are so many people to look after the children and bestow affection upon them. It is good for everyone"

That does not sound easy. How did you manage?

I don't think we thought about life in terms of 'easy' or 'tough'. We just took things in our stride. It is these days that people look at choices.

I have to agree with that. What was your lifestyle like back then?

It was simple: work, work and work. Rules were very strict and there was no way we could break them. My eldest sister-in-law helped a lot with household work. We did all the housework—cooking, washing, cleaning and grinding the batter for *idli*. There was no time to think and there

was no break. But I still think those were better times.

What makes you say that?

Contentment. Whether we had more or less, it did not seem to matter. We were content with our daily routine. I still remember how I always misjudged the amount of salt. I would get scolded for that but I did not mind. I just learnt.

How do you keep yourself happy and busy now?

I enjoy spending time with children. I enjoy my evening walks. I have never missed my evening walk at the beach for the past two decades. And the newspaper; I never miss reading it and like to keep myself updated with what is happening.

From what I have heard, you seem to have made some good friends at the beach.

Yes, many people of my age walk there. We share our experiences. In fact, when I look at many of them, I count myself lucky. My eldest son and daughter-in-law stay with us and take good care of my husband and me.

In your view, what is the main difference between a nuclear family and a joint family?

In a joint family, there are so many people to look after the children and bestow affection upon them. It is good for everyone. But in a nuclear family, one is free. My daughters live in nuclear families and they can do as they like. In fact, nowadays, the





Vegetable Biryani

The fabulous *biryani* recipe shared by Mrs Rasheeda and her family was like a song sung in chorus. They were particular about everything; the exact measurements, timing, exact spices, and even a common rejection of the bay leaf (*tej patta*). I was also warned against using ghee as it lends dryness to *biryani* if eaten after a while.

Ingredients

- Basmati rice: 1 kg
- Oil: 300 ml
- Cinnamon: 2 (1-inch pieces)
- Cloves: 4
- Cardamom: 2
- Onions: 250 gm
- Ginger: 100 gm
- Garlic: 100 gm
- Potatoes: 200 gm
- Carrots: 250 gm

- Beans: 100 gm
- Fresh peas: 100 gm; shelled
- Tomatoes: 300 gm
- Coriander leaves: ½ bunch
- Mint leaves: ¼ bunch
- Green chillies: 2-4; stems removed
- Fresh yoghurt: ½ cup
- Red chilli powder: 2 heaped tsp
- Salt to taste

Method

Wash the rice and soak for half hour in 1.5 litres of water. Wash all the vegetables. Slice the onions thinly. Chop the potatoes, carrots, beans and tomatoes into medium-sized pieces. Peel and grind ginger and garlic into a fine paste. Chop the coriander and mint leaves finely. Heat the oil in a wok and add cinnamon, cloves and cardamoms. Lower the flame to medium heat, add onions and sauté until they turn translucent. Add the

ginger-garlic paste and sauté for 4-5 minutes until the aroma rises. Add all the vegetables including the tomatoes, coriander and mint leaves. Sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add green chillies, yogurt, chilli powder and 1 tsp salt. Allow to cook until the potatoes are tender (but not overcooked). Transfer the cooked gravy into a rice cooker or pressure cooker. Add the soaked rice along with the water and add some more salt, as required. If the gravy does not have any liquid in it, you may need to add another half litre of water.

Allow to cook until the water has evaporated and each grain of rice is cooked. In the pressure cooker, you can cook for up to 2 whistles. Take care not to overcook as each grain of the rice must be separate. Serve hot with any *raita* of your choice.

joint family system is dwindling. It is a better system in my opinion, where people take turns to do routine tasks.

Any special moments?

I saw a movie in 1949; and the next one I saw was *Avvayaar* in 1953 along with my husband. Those were memorable days. I also remember how I sat with my husband on the motorcycle for the first time in 1967. I used to walk till the corner of the street where he would be waiting. I would not sit on the bike in front of the elders.

That is so sweet. You would have made a good history teacher with your memory for dates.

How can I not remember? In fact, my memories are quite vivid.

I notice that none of you is wearing the *burkha* here. Is your family very liberal?

It happened when I went to Visakha-patnam with my husband in 1962.

As no one wore the *burkha* there, my husband asked me to stop wearing it. In our family, most of them do not wear the *burkha* any more.

“My father was always very encouraging of whatever I wanted to do. He was a musician and taught us to sing well and play many instruments”

My daughters are also not compelled by their parents-in-law. Things have changed a lot now.

Your family says that you were a tomboy when you were young.

My father was always very encouraging of whatever I wanted to do. He was a musician and taught us to sing well and play many instruments.

I would love to hear one of your favourite recipes.

That would be vegetable *biryani*. Our children love this dish, much more than the non-vegetarian *biryani* we generally prepare.

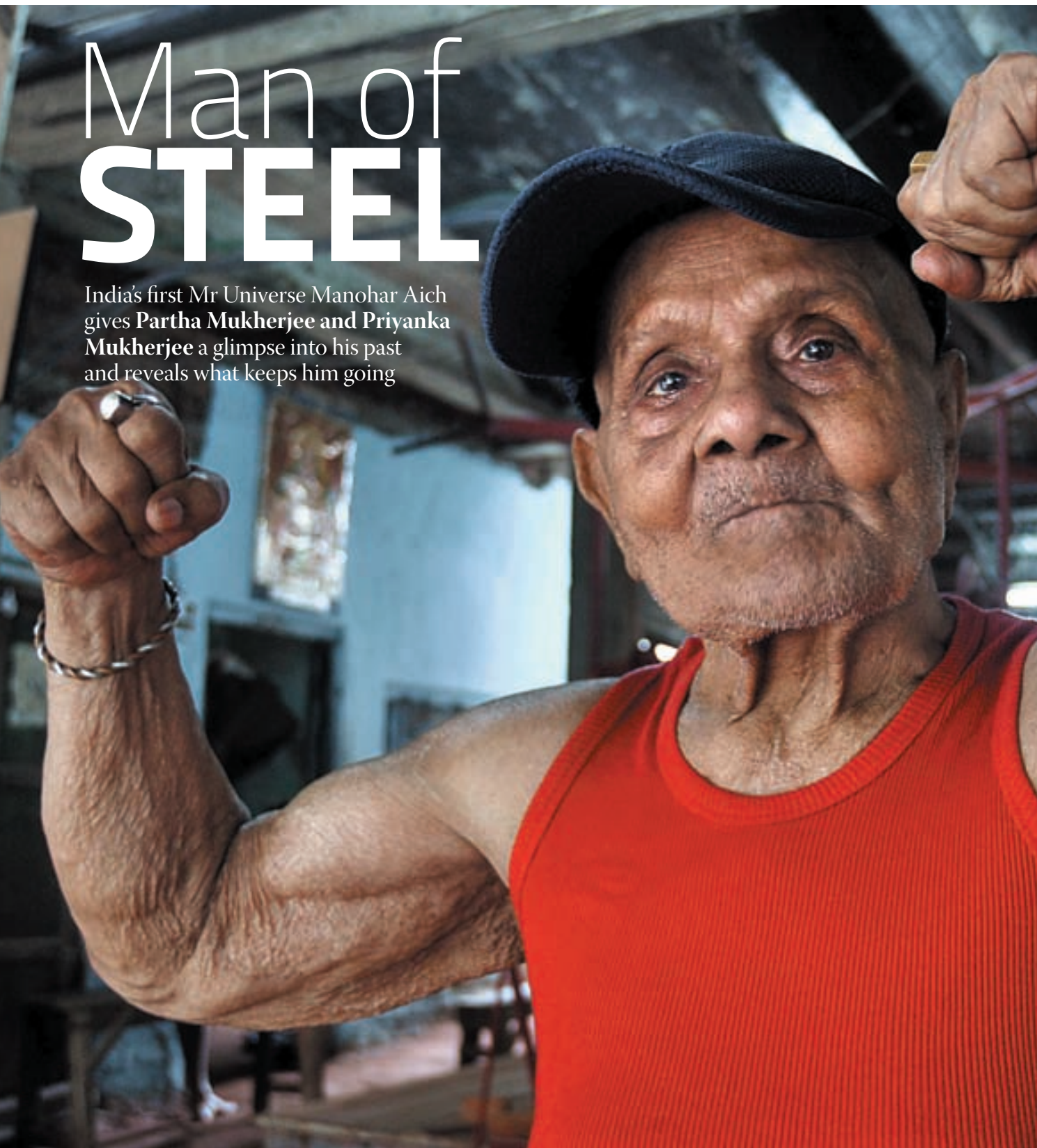
This is a real treat. Is this your family's traditional recipe?

Not really. This was not a common dish. It was generally prepared by cooks during weddings. I learnt it from them. At home, the common dish is *brinji*, which is rice tempered with onions, ginger and garlic.

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

Man of STEEL

India's first Mr Universe Manohar Aich gives **Partha Mukherjee** and **Priyanka Mukherjee** a glimpse into his past and reveals what keeps him going





Shilbhadra Datta

In 1987, Dennis Stallard, president of the World Physique Federation, wrote in a letter: “Honestly, I couldn’t believe my eyes looking at your picture. You must be kidding... people say you are 75 years old. It is the body of a 37 or 38 year-old with your head on top...” It was addressed to Manohar Aich alias Pocket Hercules, a body builder from West Bengal, and India’s first Mr Universe. This year, he celebrated his 100th birthday on 17 March with characteristic vim and vigour. “To me, age is just a number and nothing else,” declares Aich, a shining example that all you need is grit and determination to accomplish any mission.

Indeed, it has been quite a journey for the boy from a poverty-stricken family in Dhamti village in Coomilla district (now in Bangladesh) who went on to win the title of Mr Universe. Lovingly called Pocket Hercules after the 4’11” tall hunk won the Mr Hercules contest in 1950, he displayed his muscle strength at the Spring Pulling World Championship by tearing a spring of 275 pounds tension. He stood second at the Mr Universe contest in 1951 when he was nudging 40. But Aich didn’t let that weigh heavily on him. “I hate frustration! It finds root in the minds of only those who are lazy and spineless. I decided to stay back in England and anneal myself in the flame of my strong will. Ultimately, I tasted the sweet aroma of success when the judges declared me Mr Universe [Group III] in 1952,” he says, an iridescent smile flitting across his face.

The title holder of 1952 registered his name again for the contest in 1955 and won the third position. In 1960, he stood fourth in the same contest; he was 47 at the time. A host of awards followed, including top positions in Asian bodybuilding championships. Besides body building, Aich developed a repertoire that included squats with 300-kg weights, muscle control and tearing of 1,500-page books. Each of these tricks was so spectacular that invitations from all over the world filled his mailbox everyday until recently.

Evidently, Aich was always determined—and destined—to excel despite every setback life threw his way. “I wasn’t robust as a child; I was plump and a sudden bout of black fever had left me in a run-down state of health at the age of 12,” he recalls. “My parents Mahesh Chandra Aich and Chapala Sundari Debi didn’t have enough to spend on my diet and medicines. I tried to regain my health with push-ups, single leg squats, leg raises, chin-ups and crunches with 100 repetitions.” He also believed in Swami Vivekananda’s lesson: “It is impossible to achieve anything great by playing tricks.”

At Jubilee School in Dhaka, he met the legendary magician P C Sorcar who recognised his talent. The duo went on to create history through unique talent shows that became a runaway success. Sorcar’s sleight of hand and Aich’s incredible

feats like bending steel with his teeth, bending spears with his neck, and resting his belly on swords would leave the Dhaka audience spellbound.

In 1942, Aich joined the Royal Air Force where Reub Martin, a British officer, encouraged the young man to build his physique—what followed was a rigorous schedule with thousands of repetitions of freehand exercises. On one occasion, Aich couldn't tolerate a British officer's remark in favour of colonial oppression by the British Raj. In patriotic fervour, he slapped the officer's face, which landed him behind bars. As the saying goes, a weaver works at a loom even in heaven! While in jail, Aich began taking his weight training seriously and spent up to 12 hours on freehand exercises. This made the jail authority sanction a special diet enriched with stimulants for him. "Call them atrocious or oppressive but the British never overlooked a hard worker. In fact, they helped me prepare for the world championship," recalls our 100 year-old hero.

So, what has enabled him to slam an unbeaten century even on a sticky wicket? "I never let any sort of tension bother me. Throughout my life, I have never lost my cool," says Aich, seated in the parlour run by his eldest daughter Bani Banerjee—the place is lined with posters and memorabilia echoing his eventful past. A strict disciplinarian, he begins his day at 4 am. Thereafter, he chants *sloka*. Though his mornings were marked by rigorous exercise sessions until recently, a minor cardiac ailment has robbed him of his ability to lift weights. These days, he spends time meeting acquaintances and guiding youngsters at the gym and fitness centre run by his sons Bishnu and Monoj; in fact, eight-time national champion Satya Paul and Mr Universe Premchand Dogra are his disciples. He has also started in-

"The human body is like a holy shrine; you have to keep it free from any ignoble strife. And without self-control, we are nowhere near it"

dulging in a power nap in the afternoon. In the evening, he reads newspapers, spends time with family and does some freehand exercises.

For Aich, discipline has always been a way of life. "We have never seen him deviate from discipline and honesty," Banerjee says with pride. A follower of the Baishnav sect, Aich lives a contented life with his four children, six grandchildren and six great grandchildren. His wife Jyotika passed away 10 years ago. "But I always feel her presence and will feel it until my last breath," he tells us, staring at her photograph with moist eyes. "Both *Baba* and *Ma* were very good *kirtan* singers," Banerjee remembers. "*Ma*'s voice used to be supported by the rhythmic beats on the *khol* played by *Baba*. With *Ma*'s passing away, he doesn't sing anymore."

Aich is yet to receive any recognition from either the state or the central government for his feats, but that doesn't bother the centenarian, who is looking forward to leading many more years of healthy life. In his view, bodybuilding doesn't just train the body; it enables purity of mind too. "The human body is like a holy shrine; you have to keep it free from any ignoble strife," he points out. "And without self-control, we are nowhere near it." ✨



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The right notes

Ambi Subramaniam thanks his father violin maestro L Subramaniam for his musical legacy. And for being his best friend, as he reveals to Sai Prabha Kamath

Awards and honours sit lightly on the shoulders of internationally renowned violinist L Subramaniam, the 'Paganini of Indian classical violin.' Whether it is the classical genre or western music, his 21 year-old son Ambi Subramaniam is following closely in his footsteps. Roaming the world together since his childhood, Ambi, like his father, believes education and passion need to go hand-in-hand—while L Subramaniam is a medical doctor by profession, his son stands proudly on the doorstep to a master's degree in finance.

To me, music was definitely by choice. Since my childhood, there has always been music around me and I have imbibed it subconsciously. I always wanted to be like my father and used to imitate him holding a baby violin. Looking at my father playing the violin was motivation enough for me to practice.

One of the greatest things about my father is the unconditional support he has given his children. However, for him, education comes first; he asked us to educate ourselves before taking any career decisions. Both my siblings and I were given the freedom to pursue fields of our interest and encouraged to take up the kind of music we were interested in. My elder sister Bindu Subramaniam is into western music—her expressions are in English. My elder brother Dr Narayana Subramaniam is doing his MS in surgery and is into *ghazal*. I am doing an MBA in finance; but, I am passionate about being a violinist.

As children, we used to travel with our father during his concerts. More so after my mother's passing away when I was four. Being the youngest, I was extremely naughty. During one of the concerts, when I was about six, I remember I was so badly behaved that my father disciplined me by handing over a tanpura and making me sit behind him on stage. My father is probably the only person I listened to till I entered my teens.

Whether it is western violin or a classical one, he is my guru. He rarely works or plans for a particular concert—most of his performances are extempore. At one of our concerts at Mysore Palace during Dussehra, he was so inspired by the beautiful palace and the occasion that he made a spontaneous composition and asked me to follow him. This is the wonderful kind of training I get from him; it calls for extreme alertness on my part. I always enjoy such challenges.

He always says you can have only one love—there is no room for another. I started taking music seriously when I was about 13. Until then, I used to play a lot of cricket. My turning point came when I started playing violin with him on stage. I realised how hard I needed to work if I had to make a mark in this field—which I am determined to.

I want to create a niche for myself. My father and mother Kavita Krishnamurthy have always guided and encouraged me to be original and not copy anyone. He always cautions me about disciples who sound exactly like their gurus. According to him, why would then someone listen to the student and not the teacher? I want to learn from my father, imbibe from him and create my own space; I would like to keep what I play as mine.

It is not always easy to perform with a person who is called the 'God of Indian violin.' There have

been great expectations whenever I have played with him, though I have also got a lot of encouragement from people around me. Though there is a lot of pressure involved, I feel it gives me amazing opportunities. At the same time, I have also realised that I perform the best when I am under pressure!

He prepared me by making me listen to the world's greatest musicians like Jascha Heifetz and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. This was his way of inspiring me. Just the way my grandfather Professor V Lakshminarayana took

"There have been great expectations whenever I have played with him, though I have also got a lot of encouragement from people around me. As there is a lot of pressure involved, I feel it gives me amazing opportunities. I have also realised that I perform the best when I am under pressure!"



my father through the techniques of violin, my father has been my guide. He is the one who opened my eyes to music. I still have classes with him—he lets me improvise and experiment and guides me to ensure quality.

My father is my best critic. I also take cues from his facial expressions. It's not often that I get to hear praise from dad. He says he would rather pinpoint the things that went wrong before anyone else does.

According to him, there is a lot of difference between playing music and being a musician. My most cherished moment came when I was around 16. I remember playing really well at a concert in Lille, France. After the event, my father came to me and said: "Now you are a musician."

Comparisons are inevitable. But I cannot let that bother me. Not everyone gets this kind of platform and musicianship that I have been blessed with. I have been fortunate to perform with the world's best musicians like Dr M Balamurali Krishna, Pandit Jasraj, Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Ernie Watts, Larry Coryell, Corky Siegel and Solo Cissokho—something people only dream of. To learn music from a legendary musician from a young age and to keep

performing with him is such a great challenge. It keeps me on tenterhooks and lets me set high standards for myself. At the end of the day, if I learn one lesson, I realise I have 100 more to learn! Music has no end.

"To learn music from a legendary musician from a young age and to keep performing with him is such a great challenge. It keeps me on tenterhooks and lets me set high standards for myself. At the end of the day, if I learn one lesson, I realise I have 100 more to learn! Music has no end"

When we are not playing the violin, he treats me like a friend. He is the first person I open up to if I have something on my mind. There are no barriers between us; he is extremely open and accessible at all times.

He is an absolute perfectionist. Whether it is music or something trivial like closing curtains, he expects perfection. He is focused on giving 100 per cent to every task he does and expects the same from others.

It is a great feeling when the five of us perform together. My mother Kavita brought me closer

to Bollywood. I have learnt Hindi songs from her; we also do concerts together. It is great to have her sitting in the audience as well. She looks at things from an entirely different perspective. Very rarely are all of us at home at the same time; on such occasions, we just enjoy our moments together. ✨

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The master's voice

His tone and tenor transform magically as his slender fingers tease the tanpura with a passion bordering on the divine. And when SURESH WADKAR starts singing, he is a man in a trance, transported from the mundane to the sublime. **SRIREKHA PILLAI** demystifies the man, his music and his moods

He has *sur* written all over him. When Sur-esh (meaning the God of *sur*) Wadkar was thus christened, little did his father know that it would be prophetic of the path his son would take. A mentor to many youngsters who land up in Mumbai, harbouring aspirations of the playback variety, Wadkar is synonymous with ingenuity and soul-stirring lilt.

Not surprisingly, music permeates every crevice and colonnade of the spacious Ajivasan Music Academy in Mumbai. This institution is home to the singer and his students, who hail from far-flung corners of India following the long-forgotten tradition

of a *gurukul*. Wadkar's voice, wafting from a music player and accompanied by the strains of the sitar and tabla *bol*, tell you that you are about to enter the portals of a musical shrine. It's a spiritual escape in the midst of a metropolis that is a totem to a crushingly materialistic way of life.

With a repertoire ranging from the melodious *Ae zindagi gale lage le* (*Sadma*) to a fast-paced track *Raat ke dhai baje* (*Kaminey*), Wadkar has belted out many chartbusters in a career spanning 35 years in the playback industry. With a National Award in 2011 for Marathi film *Mee Sindhutai Sapkal*, and his music schools dotting the globe, this 58 year-old is blissfully at home in the world of notes, chords and strings.



Photographs by Vilas Kalgutkar

IN HIS OWN WORDS

At home, I was called 'Suresh' although my real name is 'Harishchandra'. But nobody knows me by that name any more. As a toddler, I used to listen to songs on the radio. My parents noticed me singing entire songs by the time I was four. Seeing my keen interest in music, my father started taking me to musical concerts. Although he was a millworker, he was very fond of music. He used to play the tabla and learn *bhajan* under Parshwanath Digrajkarji, who used to come home to tutor him. I was not allowed in the class as I was barely four. So I would sit outside and learn the *bhajan*. One day, Digrajkarji heard me singing and called me inside the class. He told me to sing a *bhajan*. Later, he told my father to teach me music.

I was introduced to Guruji Acharya Jialal Vasant when I was just nine—he took care of my school fees, studies and musical training for years. Initially I would travel from home to school and then to Guruji's training institute in Bandra. But watching me struggle while running from school to home and then to the music class, Guruji told me to stay at his house. When I went to college, I was more interested in bunking lectures and sitting in the canteen, listening to the radio. When Guruji learnt of this, he told me not to waste my time attending college. I left college in my second year and started concentrating full-time on my musical training.

Suresh Wadkar with a photograph of his guru Acharya Jialal Vasant



The Madan Mohan Award I won in 1976 during the Sur-Singar contest was my ticket to Bollywood. Ravindra Jain, one of the judges, had announced before the results were declared that he would give the winner a break. Luckily for me, Rajshree Productions' film *Paheli*, for which Jain was composing music, was happening around that time. I sang all the songs in it.

Lata Mangeshkar recommended me to all the established music composers of the time. Jain was doing *Mera Rakshak* in which both Latadi and I were to sing together. When she learnt that I was from Kolhapur, she was very happy as she also comes from there. She heard all my recorded songs and called up music directors, speaking on my behalf. Lakshmikant-Pyarelalji were among them. The composer duo was working on Subhash Ghai's *Krodhi*. I was offered *Chal chameli bagh mein*, and I started getting noticed.

Hearing Latadi sing is nothing short of a spiritual experience. I have learnt so much listening to Latadi and Ashatai do their *riyaaz*, do the markings on musical notes, and the way they pronounce every word. They are my idols. Latadi used to tell me, 'Just imitate the music director in your own voice.' During rehearsals, Ashatai would sing the portions marked for me as well, telling me how to go about it. When the sisters would sing, the atmosphere in the recording room would be charged.



(From left) Daughter Ananya, wife Padma, Suresh Wadkar, daughter Jiya, his guru's daughter Prem Vasant

To me, Lata Mangeshkar is no less than Goddess Saraswati. I have watched her recording for close to two hours, barely moving but for an occasional lifting of her hand. The expressions she brings to her rendition are so powerful, but there's no strain and effort whatsoever on her face—just a sombre look and over-sized spectacles perched on her nose. If you look at the new generation of singers, you'll see them literally dancing in order to sing, to get the right expression in their songs. Music has to come from within, without any external props. I have seen that in only one person: Latadi.

Music has lost its soul. If you look at the songs of the 1970s and '80s, you'll find a strong base of classical ragas. The songs were so melodious. If you look at modern numbers, you find a rise in Western influence. The softness and natural warmth that characterised the songs of the olden days have given way to sounds of electronic equipment. In the bargain, the soul is lost.

When you record a song these days, you end up recording sound. Most modern numbers are devoid of meaningful lyrics. We have a rich cultural tradition but we are busy aping the West. Even now, if one's musical ability has to be gauged, one has to take the help of old numbers to display the sheer variety and depth in one's singing. That's the irony! Modern music is like the rampant, easily available, cheap imitations that pass off in the name of Chinese goods at every street corner.



Hit tracks

- *Seene mein jalan – Gaman*
- *Megha re megha re – Pyaasa Sawan*
- *Mere kismet mein tu – Prem Rog*
- *Saanj dhale gagan tale – Utsav*
- *Surmayi shaam is tarah aaye – Lekin*
- *Khamosh sa afsana – Libaas*
- *Ae zindagi gale laga le – Sadma*
- *Yaara o yaara – Ram Teri Ganga Maili*
- *Huzur is kadar – Masoom*
- *Tumse mil kar aisa laga – Parinda*
- *Chappa chappa – Maachis*
- *Sapne mein milti hai – Satya*
- *Tere liye – 7 Khoon Maaf*
- *Raat ke dhai baje – Kaminey*



Suresh Wadkar on a song with Asha Bhosle

When analogue recording was the order of the day, the basic quality of your voice was reflected. Only good singers could carry it off. The present digitalised system allows the manoeuvring of a singer's voice by editing out the lows. So what you hear is not the real voice but a tweaked one.

Music has immense power and music therapy is practised worldwide. Music is known to have transformed lives—and not just for human beings. In Australia and Holland, music is played in cattle fields and milking areas for increased production of milk. Music is also known to influence plants. In the room where I do my *riyaaz*, flowers don't droop for four to five days. Classical music is played to premature babies in the incubator to aid their growth. Singer Anuradha Paudwal's son, who was born premature, was exposed to music in the incubator. I know for a fact that he could play the tabla when he was just one-and-a-half years-old! In earlier days, there was such purity in music that singers could light lamps by rendering *Raag Deepak* and cause rainfall by singing *Megh Malhar*. Such is the power of music!

At Ajivasan, we believe in keeping the guru-shishya tradition alive. The children that come to us are auditioned and categorised into different classes, based on their understanding of music. We believe that just the way a child grows in its mother's womb before facing the world, a singer has to have a complete understanding of music before he or she goes public. Students who come from other parts of India are accommodated in our school; the rest are put up in hostels. Their teacher training starts from the second year, when they sit with other teachers and see how music classes are conducted. They also take classes.

"In earlier days, there was such purity in music that singers could light lamps by rendering *Raag Deepak* and cause rainfall by singing *Megh Malhar*. Such is the power of music"

Ajivasan runs schools in New York, New Jersey and Dubai besides the one in Mumbai. We will be opening a school in London very soon.

My wife Padma was only eight when I met her for the first time; I was 26 then. She has literally grown up around me. After Guruji passed away, I started teaching her. Because of the huge age difference, I always treated her like a kid, without knowing that she 'hero-worshipped' me! I started getting a hint of her feelings for me when I saw her sulking and crying when I would ask someone else to do things for me. During a concert abroad, I was laid up with dehydration. She took good care of me. That's when I started reciprocating her feelings. But when I had bypass surgery, I told her I would find a good boy for her. She said she would not leave me and go anywhere.

I had proposals from Bollywood heroines. But I wanted a girl who understood my lifestyle and was well-versed in my day-to-day activities and was completely involved with my music school. I had known Padma for a long time and knew that she would fit in perfectly and would take good care of my school. ✨

The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
The first board meeting you addressed
The first day after retirement

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Be penny wise

Priya Desai tells you how to stay unruffled in inflationary times

I must carry a bagful of money and a small basket for fruits, vegetables and groceries when I go shopping. What is our FM doing sitting in North Block in Delhi? It will be better if he visits our *sabji mandi*," bemoans Sundarabai, 71, venting her grouse against inflation as she returns from the market. This anger against the finance minister, holding him accountable for uncontrolled inflation, is finding widespread expression among silvers.

Is this feeling of desperation among silvers justified? Yes. As the gap between their expenditures and incomes widens, their household budgets are going haywire. The need to pay higher prices for daily purchases, medical expenses, electricity and telephone bills, travelling, and many other needs, is driving them crazy.

No escape from inflation

Inflationary trends started taking root a couple of years back. Simply

put, the inflation rate measures how fast prices rise over a period of time as measured by the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI); the latter being more representative of people as it affects their standard of living.

In a fast-growing economy like India, some inflation is considered inevitable. However, uncontrolled inflation over a sustained period at the rate of over 7 to 8 per cent poses enormous problems for vulnerable sections of the population, like those below the poverty line and silvers. This situation becomes more worrisome when both the Reserve Bank of India and the government do not coordinate their efforts to rein in inflation, exposing consumers to volatile price trends in goods and services.

Why are silvers worst affected?

Senior citizens are vulnerable in various ways but inflation presents a major threat to their day-to-day life-

style, as it erodes their incomes. Their major source of income consists of interest on their fixed deposits and pensions, if any. With the inflation rate being higher than the prevailing interest rate, a decline in the real value of incomes and purchasing power of senior citizens is invariable. While 87 per cent of senior citizens are outside the purview of pension; the rest who enjoy pension can hardly keep pace with the rise in prices.

Not many silvers are stock market and mutual fund savvy. However, those who are, feel worried as their investments turn riskier. Truncated dividend incomes have almost halved in the last two years and the loss of capital common in times of inflationary recession has increased the helplessness of silvers. Hence, their success is limited in managing their asset allocation to hedge the risk of inflation.

Expenditure poses a bigger challenge. The unique spending pattern of senior

citizens renders them vulnerable to inflation at a higher rate than others. Expenses such as rising medical costs, escalating food budgets, and mounting house maintenance and transportation costs make them nervous about living within their means, given their inability to expand their income.

Few people in India have adequate mediclaim policies. A large number of seniors suffer from a variety of medical problems that trap them in expensive treatments. Nutritious food, essential to maintain good health, is the first casualty. Sacrificing travel and entertainment reduces their mobility and affects their mental wellbeing. These are some of the non-measurable costs of inflation peculiar to senior citizens. They neither have the flexibility nor the ability that younger consumers have to substitute necessary purchases in response to changes in prices, nor the same options as younger consumers to supplement their income. It is a catch-22 situation.

Survival strategies

Yet, survive they have to, with increase in life expectancy endowing many even a tag of 'super seniors'. Some alternatives to combat inflation can be inclusive of income expansion strategies and expenditure reducing strategies. Here is a short list:

Undertake a detailed review of your assets such as investments, value of the house owned, and other financial assets like gold and silver. Investment review would indicate ways to turn dormant assets into income-earning assets.

Liquidate some investment in stocks and mutual funds that is capital eroding owing to inflation and convert it into fixed deposits. Remember that the mental agility required to manage these investments also reduces with age.

Reverse mortgage your house to expand monthly income without taking away the roof over your head. Outright sale of a bigger house and relocation to a smaller house is an attractive option too. The tempta-



With the inflation rate being higher than the prevailing interest rate, a decline in the real value of incomes and purchasing power of senior citizens is invariable

tion to leave it as a legacy to children who are today unwilling to fund your expenditure deficits can only add to your woes.

Convert your gold and silver possessions into cash. As the price of gold crosses ₹ 33,000 per 10 gm and silver ₹ 58,000 per kg, an attractive opportunity exists to keep robbers away from your home.

Lending money to trustworthy children as car and housing loans can be an added source of income, provided senior citizens are good at judging their creditworthiness.

Seeking part-time employment opportunities suited to one's skill set is an option. Recent employment fairs for senior citizens in cities like Bengaluru have established their viability.

Complementing income expansion strategy with small cuts in a variety of expenses will increase your comfort zone. Extra efforts invested in maintaining health will reduce medical costs, freeing money for healthy living. Do buy a mediclaim policy as a cover for contingency.

Assess alternatives to substitute your daily purchases like fruits, vegetables and groceries. For example, replacing *ragi* for expensive oats provides the same health benefits.

Reducing new purchases of non-financial possessions like clothes, linen, crockery, etc, will make life tidier to suit the needs of inflationary times. An exercise in backtracking desires as age advances will always provide a dividend of mental peace and contentment.

Remain financially young

Inflation in India is a medium-term issue and cannot be wished away. We are not as lucky as senior citizens in the US where the Senate has moved a legislation to consider a separate Consumer Price Index for elderly (CPI -E) to protect their social security benefits.

Silvers in India are living in a modern age but in an inhospitable economic environment. The Indian finance minister is not even willing to free the elderly from tax payment on their inadequate incomes. So they need to adopt newer methods to remain financially young. Seniors, get armed to combat inflation—and muster tonnes of will power to stay healthy and happy.

Priya Desai is a Mumbai-based economist

“My life is my message”

The greater the passage of time, the more relevant his philosophy. After all, at the core of Mahatma Gandhi's ideology are truth, non-violence, abstinence and service—antidotes to the self-serving and avaricious appetite of modern times. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* takes a look at four Gandhian memorials and how they are taking the Mahatma's legacy forward



SABARMATI ASHRAM, AHMEDABAD

Etched in history as the place where Mahatma Gandhi launched his Dandi March, Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad is the most famous memorial to the Mahatma. But it wasn't always located here. Gandhi originally lived in Kocharab Bungalow, which belonged to barrister Jivanlal Desai for two years before the ashram shifted to its present site in 1917.

This site, on the banks of the Sabarmati River, was chosen as it was large and barren and Gandhi wanted to focus on animal husbandry, farming and teaching the villagers to be self-sufficient. Also, it was close to a temple, a jail and a crematorium, and Gandhi had philosophically remarked, “This is the right place for our activities to carry on the search for truth and develop fearlessness, for on one side are the iron bolts of the foreigners and, on the other, thunderbolts of mother nature.”

When the Mahatma launched the Dandi March against the British in 1930, he said he wouldn't return to the ashram till the country gained Independence. After the mass arrests of *satyagrahi* that followed the march, the government seized the ashram and Gandhi decided to disband it in 1933.

Now administered by the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust, the museum houses an impressive collection of the Mahatma's books, manuscripts and photocopies of his correspondence, and memorabilia like his writing table and a spinning wheel. “The ashram imparts higher education to around 500 resident girls and to boys up to the secondary level,” says Amrut Modi, secretary of the trust. “As Gandhian philosophy is rich in educational values, we conduct a course called Gandhian Education for Primary Teachers' Education.”



MANI BHAVAN, MUMBAI

Stark in its simplicity like the Mahatma himself, this old-style, two-storey mansion was the Mahatma's home in Mumbai between 1917 and 1934. It once belonged to the Mani family and later Revashankar Jhaveri, friends and hosts of Gandhi when he stayed in Mumbai. But the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, which now administers this memorial, has preserved more than just the Mahatma's memorabilia. Amazingly, as soon as you step inside its humble portals, you are enveloped by the serenity that once resonated through the Mahatma's spirit.

It was at Mani Bhavan that the Father of the Nation made the transition from Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to the Mahatma. It was here that he scripted one of the most significant chapters in India's history by initiating his Civil Disobedience, Satyagraha, Swadeshi and Khalifat movements. As he pondered the freedom of his country, Gandhi

spent hours spinning yarn on a *charkha*, which is now the prize exhibit at Mani Bhavan.

Mani Bhavan maintains a research centre and Gandhi library and organises discussions and lectures on the Mahatma's life and philosophy, democratic values and current issues. Other activities include exhibition-cum-sale of articles prepared by women's organisations, publication of books and articles on Gandhi and related subjects, a khadi exhibition and screening of films on the Mahatma. "Though we are happy to get visitors from around the world, what makes us happier is the delightful participation of more than 8,000 school and college students from Mumbai every year in our competitions [essay writing, elocution, singing, plays]," says Dr Usha Thakkar, honorary secretary, Mani Bhavan. "The response of these kids makes Mani Bhavan a living place of Gandhian ideals."

SEVAGRAM ASHRAM, WARDHA

The Mahatma, who once famously said, “My life is my message”, gave the term ‘hands-on’ a whole new meaning when he built this mud-and-thatch house with his bare hands. Located in Wardha district near Nagpur in Maharashtra, this Spartan abode was his home from 1936 to 1942. It is a complex of several huts built on the land donated by Seth Jamnalal Bajaj at a time when Gandhi turned his attention to his village work programme. Here, Gandhi served the people and treated the sick himself, while attending to matters of national importance.

When Gandhi first came here at the age of 67, he lived with his wife Kasturba in Adi Nivas but shifted to Bapu Kuti as the number of friends, colleagues and followers who came to visit him and live here increased. While touring the complex, visitors can get a glimpse of his belongings on display, including an old phone given to Gandhi by the then viceroy so that he could keep in touch with the colo-

nial administration from his secluded abode! Perhaps the most poignant hut in Sevagram Ashram is Akhri Nivas—literally, Gandhi’s ‘last residence’. Before leaving Sevagram, the Mahatma recuperated from the flu in this hut and left from here for Bengal in 1946, never to return.

Today, the ashram is still alive with the Gandhian way of life. “After early morning prayers, the ashram’s devotees, seven to 10 boys and girls, engage in field work,” says Amit Kohli, a former student at Sevagram who now teaches there. “All the food consumed in the ashram is grown in the fields and the rest is sold to the public. Devotees also spin yarn and stitch their own clothes while some cloth is sold in the shop in the ashram. A section is reserved for a school, where the village children learn about life from Gandhiji’s point of view.” Not surprisingly, he adds, “Being raised here has taught me to see life from an altogether different perspective.”





GANDHI TEERTH, JALGAON

Could there be a richer treasure-trove of the Mahatma's work and teachings than this: 7,350 books, 4,090 periodicals, 4,019 photographs, 75 films, 148 audio recordings of Gandhi's speeches, and coins and stamps from 114 countries? Yet, it's all here, at Gandhi Teerth in Jalgaon district, Maharashtra.

This simple but spacious structure belies what lies inside—a museum, the Gandhi International Research Institute, archives and publications. In the words of the Gandhi Research Foundation (GRF) and Jain Irrigation and Bhavarlal Kantabai Foundation, which administer the centre, it's a 'Gandhi Experience Centre'. The Khoj Gandhiji Ki museum occupies 20,000 ft and comprises five levels. It offers a thematic presentation of the Mahatma's life and

uses digital books, audio guides and short films that draw around 100 visitors a day.

Primarily a centre of learning of Gandhian ideology, the Gandhi Teerth conducts various programmes for rural development. "We take care of five villages that were adopted by Gandhiji," says Yatin Sonar, data analyst at the GRF. "We look after schooling and construction work in these villages, and make sure their kitchen and sanitary needs are taken care of."

Sonar adds that the foundation spreads the Gandhian way of thinking, and, as a reality check, conducts an annual examination called the Gandhi Vichar Sanskar Pariksha, which is open to everyone. "Last year, a staggering 80,000 people took the examination!"



DESTINATION

SMOKE ON THE WATER

The captivating cascades of Hogenakkal Falls and the majestic Cauvery river in her many moods make for an unforgettable experience

❖ 📷 Susheela Nair



Taking a detour from the sultry, dusty town of Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu, we began to savour a slice of rural charm as we zipped past endless sugarcane fields, a sprinkling of tiny hamlets, shrub forests and brightly coloured Aiyanars, the guardian deities that are believed to protect each village. We couldn't resist stopping on the outskirts of the settlements to click pictures of these mammoth statues sporting their impressive moustaches—they really looked formidable! As our vehicle headed towards the Toppur Hills, 12 km from Pennagaram village, thickets of thorny vegetation loomed into view and the air reverberated with the distant sound of water gushing from the mountains as one reached lower and lower still.

THE CORACLE RIDE TO THE LOWER REACHES OF THE RIVER IN THE ROUGH WATERS WAS EXHILARATING WITH THE BOATMAN DEFTLY MANOEUVRING US THROUGH THE WEATHERED ROCKS LINING THE SIDES

The falls and the majestic, meandering Cauvery River form the centrespread of Hogenakkal. With her origins in Karnataka, the Cauvery is said to have come down running in hiding to Tamil Nadu to be married at Hogenakkal. Hiding, because she was so thickly clothed by the green splendour of the dense forests of yesteryears. Today, this dramatic spectacle—a big tourist draw—is strung together by the rugged beauty of the hewn rocks and the endless stretches of both turbulent and quiet waters.

Unlike other falls, these are not located in just one spot but a labyrinth of high, narrow canyons through which the river snakes. Here, you can see the varying moods of the usually sedate Cauvery, who undergoes a fascinating transformation. She is placid at one moment gliding sedately over the boulder-strewn bed; the next moment, as if possessed by demonic force, she explodes into a frenzied downpour and plunges down a 22-m precipice, seething

with passionate fury and boundless energy in the chasm below. The result is Hogenakkal, which literally translates to 'smoking rocks' in local parlance, a name derived from the pall of mist and spray of water that shroud and envelop the chasm as the Cauvery waters hurtle over the rock-face. At first glance, the rocks appear to be spewing fumes into the air.

The falls are steeped in legend too. The Cauvery is believed to be particularly sacred at Hogenakkal—the pool into which the river leaps is called the *yaga kundam* (site of sacrificial fire) of Brahma. It is said that a Chola king was out hunting in the wilds of Toppur Hills when he found the Cauvery swallowed up by a vast cleft in the earth; he laboured for a long time to fill up the yawning gulf but in vain. Then, a wise sage interpreted that Lord Vishnu's *chakra* had entered the earth at the spot and unless a virtuous king plunged into it in self-sacrifice, the abyss would





(Clockwise from top) A local woman frying freshly caught river fish; coracles on the bank; the rugged beauty of the hewn rocks

never close and the water of the river would run waste forever. The king then gave his life to save the Cauvery for the welfare of his subjects.

Hogenakkal is also known for its curative powers. The river hurtles down from the dry deciduous mountains; by the time it descends the less imposing frontages downstream, it has washed along several mineral salts, rendering the water a healing touch that draws millions of bathers here. Bathing in the *yaga kundam* is considered penitential cleansing, particularly on the auspicious new moon days of the Tamil months of *Tai* and *Adi* during the Tula festival and on solar and lunar eclipses. The most important ritual, though, falls on the 18th day of *Adi* when large crowds of pilgrims gather to perform ablutions in the sacred stream. *Aadiperukku*, the festival day, is marked by colour and gaiety.

Just beyond the falls lies the rugged forest with the river widening and flowing through it, and tiny fishing hamlets. We ventured to the left of the bathing ghat and walked across the Hanging Bridge, a short suspension bridge that links us to the scrubby forest. Standing atop the bridge, we had an awesome view of the falls.

On reaching the spa-hamlet, we saw a small, bustling market complex of stalls scattered on the slopes of the valley, gazing down at the water-woods on the other side of the road. The coracles looked like black mushrooms, propped against trees on the banks of the river. In local parlance, they are known as *parisal*. These circular boats have a



bamboo frame with their underside covered in tarpaulin. The boatman ferried us across the river and gave us the experience of a lifetime. The coracle ride to the lower reaches of the river in the rough waters was exhilarating with the boatman deftly manoeuvring us—with just a single oar—through the weathered rocks lining the sides. At the end of the trip, when he twirled the coracle, we screamed our lungs out.

The long, slippery flight of steps leading to the 'Bathing Falls' are flanked by stalls selling soaps, shampoo sachets,



FACT FILE

HOW TO GET THERE

By air: The nearest airport is Bengaluru, 130 km away.
By train: The nearest railhead is Salem, 114 km away.
By road: Hogenakkal Falls is 47 km west of Dharmapuri.

WHERE TO STAY

The only decent accommodation is at the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation's (TTDC) Hotel Tamil Nadu in Hogenakkal. Call 080-22286181, 04342-256447 or the TTDC Office in Chennai at 044-25367850.

CONDUCTED TOURS

- Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) organises a two-day trip to Hogenakkal Falls and Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary near Nanniyal combined with a stay at Haritha Lake View Resort at Kuppam. Call 080-41136373 for details.
- Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) organises a one-day trip to the falls and Krishnagiri Dam. Call 080-22275869, 41329211 for details.
- TTDC organises trips from Chennai to Hogenakkal. Call 044-25367850 for details.

soft drinks, swimming shorts and special fried fish; in the background, popular Tamil songs blare from transistors. We saw some women enjoying a dip in the river while others were busy laundering their clothes. You even find *dhobi* with makeshift tables and irons. Other vendors offer everything from tea and snacks to handicrafts. Freshly caught river fish are fried on huge griddles. We observed some *maliskaran* or traditional masseurs giving tourists gingly oil massages before their showers. The demand for these massages is high as they are considered a prelude to a dip in the holy river.

Hogenakkal also offers visitors a deer park and a crocodile farm. Still the primary draw remains the craggy, forbidding rock face and thundering waterfalls, so dramatically captured in many a fighting sequence and romantic interlude in commercial cinema. This is where Tamil hero (turned politician) MGR bashed up a slew of villains; actors Dimple Kapadia and Rishi Kapoor plunged from the cliff top in the climax of *Bobby*; where the delightful musical sequence *Choti si asha* was pictured in the much acclaimed *Roja*; and where the villain takes a nosedive in the dramatic opening scene of Mani Ratnam's *Ravan*. Indeed, Hogenakkal Falls is special—just consider the fact that while politicians continue to squabble over the waters of the Cauvery, this destination is promoted by the tourism departments of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. ✨

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Sound of MUSIC

Viren Bakshi's affordable audio systems are giving music lovers a chance to sing out loud, reports Anju Mohan

MUSIC

An audiophile is too clinical a description for someone who—besides being technically equipped to handle turntables, woofers and acoustic treatment—is sensitive to music in every sound around him. Viren Bakshi's engagement with all things musical—the blues, jazz, hi-fi, digital and super-audio—symbolises a deep-seated passion that has only deepened with the years. The 61 year-old has made it his mission to make budget music gear available to everyone on the lookout. Huge markups on branded equipment, unreasonable import duties on international budget products, and entry-level phono-stages (amplifiers that convert low-level music signals from a turntable cartridge into a line-level signal) available at double the price than in the US or Europe are some reasons that deject music lovers in India. But Bakshi's Lyrta Phono Amp brings home hope. Having been tested by scores of aficionados, it not only sweetens the best of music but also removes bad surface noise from very old LPs. That apart, while you audition the equipment you buy from Bakshi, you can also swim through his to-die-for jazz LP collection. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* meets the man who has played a pivotal role in popularising high-fidelity sound in the hearts of the



Photographs by Anju Mohan



common man through his affordable audio systems.

What brought you back to India from the US?

My wife Bobby and I wanted our children to grow up knowing their grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. We wanted them to enjoy the sense of security and unconditional love a family gives children. Moving back to India in 1994 was a big change and I decided to reinvent myself professionally and pursue my passion for music. This I did by catering to the niche market of high-end audio systems here. Two years later, I started the company LyritaAudio.

When did you start manufacturing audio systems?

While I was working in Chicago, I used to listen to live music at con-

certs and nightclubs. I wanted to emulate the experience at home. The US thrives on open information and enables people to pursue their individual interests. In 1985, I subscribed to some do-it-yourself magazines. This helped me understand electronics, speaker design and amplifier design. Soon, I started experimenting with audio systems. Today, of course, with the Internet opening up several avenues, there are people ready to explain what they are doing and help you grow and pursue your passions.

How big is the market for your audio systems?

In 1994, the Indian market for high-end products was at a nascent stage. I had to create a market then. One needs a discerning ear to promote good music. Very few Indian manufacturers provide high-fidelity sound. People hesitate to buy Indian prod-

ucts because of concerns about quality. Initially, I sold through friends and family. Later, orders came in on faith and trust. I always encourage people to come and listen to music; they need to be convinced that they are getting what they are paying for.

Music evokes a lot of emotions, which, in turn, are subjective. I want people to sense that. These are intangible emotions that cannot be explained by engineering specifications. Each instrument should be distinctly audible. These are normal recorded CDs, which give the impression of live music being played in your living room. Once you hear this kind of reproduction, it is difficult to go back. It is unfortunate that such products are not available in large numbers and are actually overrated. There are some customers who say that they actually sit down to music now more often as they love the sound quality.

What kind of music do you like to listen to?

That always depends on the mood. I enjoy listening to all kinds of music, although jazz and classical are my favourites.

Where do you procure your components from?

In today's commercial world, I have still managed to forge personal relationships with some vendors, who provide me with good quality products. The tube amplifiers I use were used in the 1930s and 1940s; I import them from China and Russia.

Why don't you sell Lyrita products the same way as other commercial ventures?

All my systems have evolved after consultation with my customers. Music lovers seek me out; I show them what good, reproduced sound should be and then they decide what they want. I then customise the products according to their needs.

What are your future plans?

When we think of age, it is very important to plan ahead. Hence I operate from home, so taxes are lower. It is an online business. I sell only in India. Most of the business comes from word of mouth. My website, www.lyrita-audio.in, helps avoid the need for brochures.

How can one develop an ear for good music?

My advice to music lovers is to listen to a lot of live music. This will help them appreciate music better. You just need to look at cultural events taking place in your city; there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy good, live music and feel the emotions it evokes in you.

EPIC FEAT

THE EPIC TRADITION OF RETELLING THE *MAHABHARATA* AND *RAMAYANA* IS FAST FADING AWAY. WITH EVERY PASSING GENERATION, THE LINE BETWEEN MYTHOLOGY AND FICTION IS BLURRING AND MYTHOLOGY IS TURNING INTO FICTION. AT THIS CRUCIAL JUNCTURE, KOLKATA-BASED INDOLOGIST AND SANSKRIT SCHOLAR NIRSIINGHA PRASAD BAHURI HAS TAKEN UPON HIMSELF TO CHRONICLE THE ANCIENT SCRIPTURES AS AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA THAT ONE CAN REFER TO FOR EVERY EVENT AND NAME THAT MYTHOLOGY HAS TO OFFER. BEGUN IN 2010, THIS VOLUMINOUS MISSION IS SET FOR COMPLETION IN 2015. FAMOUS FOR HIS ELOQUENT NARRATION OF ANCIENT STORIES IN BENGALI JOURNALS, BAHURI THOUGHT OF WORKING ON THIS ENCYCLOPAEDIA 15 YEARS AGO. "WHILE REFERRING TO THE *PURANA* FOR MY STORIES, I FOUND NO REFERENCE LABELS THAT COULD ASSIST ME WITH NAMES OR EVENTS," HE EXPLAINS. "SO I STARTED MAKING CARD ENTRIES. A LITTLE LATER, I THOUGHT OF INCLUDING THE *MAHABHARATA* AS IT SHARES A CONTINUITY OF TRADITION WITH THE *PURANA*." IN FACT, BAHURI, WHO USED TO TEACH SANSKRIT AT KOLKATA'S GURUDAS COLLEGE, WAS APPROACHED BY THE OWNER OF SAHITYA SANSAD, A RENOWNED PUBLISHER OF BENGALI DICTIONARIES, TO START WORKING ON AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF EITHER THE *PURANA* OR THE *MAHABHARATA* 15 YEARS AGO. "WHILE SOME CONVENTIONS AND RITUALS FOR MARRIAGES, CHILDBIRTH AND FUNERALS IN THE *VEDA* ALSO FIND MENTION IN THE *MAHABHARATA*, THE GAPS IN THE LATTER CAN BE FILLED FROM BOTH THE *PURANA* AND THE *VEDA*," HE SAYS. AGAINST SANITISING CHARACTERS, THE SCHOLAR BELIEVES HIS WORK WILL CHANGE POPULAR NOTIONS. THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA WILL FIRST PRINT IN BENGALI AND THEN IN ENGLISH.



Smell the bread

KHURSHED DINSHAW SAVOURS A SLICE OF OLD-WORLD CHARM AT IMPERIAL BAKERY IN PUNE

At Imperial Bakery in Pune Camp, the smell of freshly baked *brun* and delicious *khari* turns heads, without exception. Across the crowded counter, the glass canisters with brownies and *nan khatai*, a variety of biscuits and cakes melt whatever resolve you may have of resisting these Irani delicacies. Finally, you give in to olfactory pleasures. True to its literal meaning—‘special; or of superior size or quality’—Imperial has lived up to its name for 57 years. One of the few vestiges of the simple lives

Sorab became a partner in 1966. At the time, the bakery was known more for bread; there weren’t more than two varieties each of cakes and biscuits.

“Fresh *brun* with butter was a common breakfast then and most of our customers preferred to start their day with us,” says Sorab Irani, now probably the only silver running a bakery in Pune. Today, though it’s the other refined goodies that attract people, some things haven’t changed. For instance, the entire family still helps out at the bakery. “We are two brothers and two sisters and we helped our father make biscuits and cakes. While my elder brother and sisters moulded the biscuits, my

job was to glaze them. Our customers praised everything we made,” recalls Farokh, Sorab Irani’s younger son. It was hot *laddhi pav* then; today, it is sliced bread. Other popular items include the chocolate walnut cake and chocolate brownies. Another ‘must-try’ from Imperial is the special rum-soaked plum cake that is baked for Christmas, with orders being placed in advance. “But the brownie is one item that never skips the menu,” says Farokh with pride. “It’s always picked up in large quantities as a dessert for every party.”

With good reason. While prices at every outlet selling brownies seem to burn a hole in the pocket, Imperial’s

FOOD

Photographs by Hemant Patil





brownies cost only ₹ 17 a piece, without compromising on the taste. “I was very clear that we would cater to price-sensitive clients who wish to enjoy good quality bakery products,” adds the senior Irani. While Imperial’s cashew nut and pistachio biscuits with coconut macaroons are bestsellers, their vegetarian, egg and chicken puffs are the perfect mid-day snack. “After filling their bags with takeaways, people stay a few moments to taste Imperial’s puffs. Even though it takes a while before clients get to the counter in the evenings, they await their turn patiently,” says Farokh who, inspired by his father, launched Donut Magic in 2008. Today, these quality doughnuts are sold out of nine outlets in Pune, and will soon travel to other cities.

Farokh is proud that he, along with elder brother Rohinton, is keeping their father’s legacy alive. In the 1990s, they decided to include many more varieties of cakes and biscuits in their menu and also acceded to the popular demand of selling eggs and milk to make Imperial a complete breakfast place—recently, they also included brown bread, whole wheat biscuits, soya whole wheat crispies, paprika whole wheat *papdi*, *ragi* biscuits and oatmeal raisin cookies for health-conscious customers. “On an average, 2,000 customers visit the bakery every day,” says Irani, who at 72 still reports to work every day. For his part, he’s proud to share long working hours with his son—it makes him feel as young as ever.

IN THE MAESTRO’S MEMORY

JAGJIT SINGH’S PASSING AWAY UNDENIABLY CREATED A VACUUM IN THE *GHAZAL* WORLD—ALL THE MORE BECAUSE HIS PARTNER IN LIFE AND MUSIC, WIFE CHITRA SINGH GAVE UP SINGING AFTER THEIR TEENAGE SON’S DEATH IN AN ACCIDENT MANY YEARS AGO. BREAKING HER SILENCE OF OVER TWO DECADES, SHE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A MUSIC FOUNDATION THAT WOULD SHOWCASE THE MAESTRO’S MUSIC AND MEMORABILIA (WITH A SECTION DEDICATED TO CHILDREN’S EDUCATION), AND TWO ‘TRIBUTE SHOWS’ EVERY YEAR ON HIS BIRTH AND DEATH



ANNIVERSARY. ON 10 OCTOBER, SINGH WILL ALSO RELEASE *THE MASTER AND HIS MAGIC*, AN ALBUM WITH HIS UNRELEASED COMPOSITIONS. EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT THE STATE OF SOME OF JAGJIT SINGH’S OLD *GHAZAL*, SHE SAYS THERE IS A NEED FOR MUSIC COMPANIES TO COME FORWARD TO HELP RESTORE THE MAESTRO’S WORK. THE SAD NOTE: SHE DENIES ANY POSSIBILITY OF SINGING AGAIN, INSISTING HER PROLONGED ABSENCE HAS RENDERED HER UNABLE TO MATCH UP TO HER EARLIER QUALITY. OUR LOSS.



Shades of sepia

SELF-EFFACING AND GENTLE, YASMEEN PREMJI IS GARNERING PRAISE FOR HER ELEGIAC RENDITION OF THE TIMES WHEN MUMBAI WAS BOMBAY. **SRIREKHA PILLAI** DISCOVERS THE DEBUTANT AUTHOR'S LESSER KNOWN SIDE

At a meeting with the matriarch of a multibillion dollar software empire, and the wife of one of the richest Indians, Azim Premji, (*Forbes* pegged his personal wealth at \$ 15.9 billion in March 2012), you expect an extra-protective, hawk-eyed entourage hovering around her, waiting to pounce on you and shove you around. But there's no drama or ugly face-off here, only a pleasant jolt of awakening when an unassuming Yasmeen Premji greets you with an endearing smile.

Thereafter, it's a rapid unspooling of the mental image one has conjured. A welcome throwback to an era of unflinching etiquette and old-world charm, she is concerned that the young boy reading on a nearby sofa at the bookstore (the venue for our meeting) might get disturbed with our excited conversation. "I'm completely old-fashioned," admits the 65 year-old, who wrote her debut novel, *Days of Gold & Sepia*, in long hand. For 20 years, she worked on it in her "awful scribble", before approaching publishers with it.

Admitting she is not much of a computer person, Premji says, "I started using email as a tool to communicate only six months ago. And I wasn't using a mobile phone till two years ago." Not one to be taken in by the fancy smartphones on the market, she prefers to stick to a basic cell phone. That said, everything about Premji is simple. Her black *churidar*, her footwear, watch and bag...no haute couture brand can dream of hitchhiking on her social status.

Premji, whose first story was published in *The Indian Express* when she was just 17, was initiated into the magical world by her mother Shah Chinoy, and later her mother-in-law Dr Gulbanoo Premji. "The stories of people around me fascinated me no end. I grew up in my grandmother's house, where I wandered around big rooms filled with people. Among the relatives, there was a divorced aunt. Those days, divorces were unheard of. And when my mom would say, 'See this aunt...this is her background... this is why her marriage ended...,' I would be glued." Drawn from Premji's grandmother's house in Bombay, the protagonist of *Days of Gold & Sepia*, Lalljee Lakha wants a big house "filled with people".

The gentle streak in Premji is unmistakable as her eyes well up talking about the joint families of yesteryears and Bombay (much before it became Mumbai). "In the Indian joint family, there was place for everybody, whether it was a poor relative, an unemployed person, a sick person or someone physically challenged." The portrayal of her favourite city through sepia-tinted glasses has been appreciated for its "elegiac evocation". "Bombay is very much a part of me. I was born, grew up and went to school and college in Bombay. It was a peaceful and exciting city, which gave women the freedom to be what they wanted to be. It was safe to venture out alone. Maybe times were gentler then," she says wistfully. "One doesn't know whether it's the city that has changed or us who have changed as we have grown older."

Haresh Patel

Growing up, Premji played team games like basketball, netball and athletics. But it was hockey that she enjoyed the most. She played for her college at the university level and Bombay, and captained the team. Right now, though, it's only yoga that bears semblance to any regular physical activity for her.

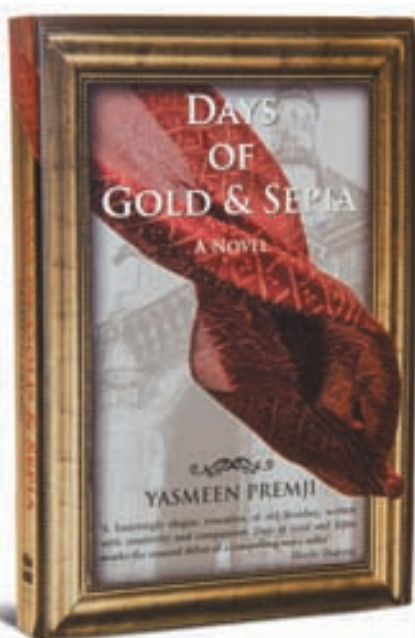
Though Premji wrote and published short stories and poems in her younger days, the decision to write a novel was taken soon after her father's death. "Shortly after my father passed away, one day the whole family was sitting together and narrating stories about earlier days. Listening to them, I realised I don't have to wait for amazing characters or events to happen. All these stories I was listening to were fascinating and worth retelling."

However, it has been a two decade-long wait for this debutant novelist, a wait that was populated with poring over historical accounts between 1857 and 1947. "It took me so long because I was busy trying to understand the times by reading whatever little I could. The more I read, the more fascinated I was. I also realised how little I knew. It was a cycle of reading, jotting down interesting facts, and reading more. Finally I said, 'This is it. I need to close the book; otherwise I'll drop and the book will still not get written.'"

Enamoured by "the amazing assortment of characters—from the maharaja and courtesans to merchants, princes and freedom fighters", Premji chose to set her story in the pre-Independence era. She started looking around for older people to understand and stay as faithful to the period as possible. "I started asking my friends whether their grandfathers and grandmothers would talk to me." Her friends just thought it was for some short story that she was writing. No one was kept in the loop about the book; not even her husband. "At the tail-end, he saw me scribbling something and asked, 'What are you writ-

ing?' I fibbed, 'Some of the old short stories are lying unfinished. I'm trying to wrap them up.'"

The family was let into her little secret only after the deal with her publisher HarperCollins was signed and sealed. "I'm not one for counting chickens before they hatch," she quips. Though she was jittery about how Azim Premji would react, she was hugely



relieved when, after reading the book, he told her he was "impressed". "I took that as a compliment because he's a man of few words."

Premji describes *Days of Gold & Sepia* as a part of her. "I certainly don't have any raving ambition to write," she says with candour. "Writing has been a pleasure. I'm not sure what will come out of it in terms of a novel or a short story, or if anything will come out at all. But as long as there is pleasure in writing, I shall continue to write."

Another reason, though, why she took up writing *Days of Gold & Sepia*, besides the obvious one of having a story to tell, was that she enjoyed her stint as an assistant editor with *Inside Outside*, a magazine on in-

teriors, and wanted to keep up the practice of writing. "I felt that like any other skill, my writing would wane if not practised."

With a background in interior design, Premji has designed the interiors of Azim Premji Foundation and a couple of buildings for the family. Recollecting the first time she designed the family home 25 years ago, Premji says, "When I had finished designing the whole house, the contractor asked me, 'But Mrs Premji, how do we get to the terrace?' I had forgotten to put in the staircase! We then had to go in for a winding staircase. Later, we joked that probably the concept of the winding staircase was born because the architect had forgotten to put in the staircase."

Premji may have now established her brick and word building credentials, but this grandmother of two is not comfortable telling stories to her grandchildren. "I can write but I can't narrate a story." The book, however, has been dedicated to her grandkids Rhea and Rohaan, in the hope that one day they will grow up and read it. Leading a laidback life in Bengaluru, Premji says she is not as busy as people assume. "Though I'm on the board of the Azim Premji Foundation, which is geared towards education, I'm not involved in the day-to-day running. I spend most of my time reading and writing. I don't seem to be doing much, but time just flies. I really seem short of time and I seriously wonder whether I'm day-dreaming it away!"

Her simplicity is once again on display as we wind up the meeting, switching off the cell phone from the recorder mode. "Oh, one can record voice on the phone?" she asks, and with child-like enthusiasm, remarks now she can record her thoughts as well, as and when they come. Her basic phone, we are happy, will find some additional use. After all, when it comes to Yasmeen Premji, it's all about utility and functionality. No frills whatsoever!

Tribals & I

Former cricketer Saad Bin Jung is an all-rounder, juggling many roles adeptly: batting for the tribals of Karnataka, indulging in his passion for wildlife and donning the hat of an entrepreneur through The Bison, a first-of-its-kind wildlife deluxe tented camp on the banks of the Kabini river in Karnataka. His book, *Subhan & I* (Roli Books; ₹ 295; 256 pages), was launched in Hyderabad by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy, a childhood friend. The 52 year-old, who is also the late Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi's nephew, talks about the tribal route he has taken and his interest in wildlife conservation with **Shyamola Khanna**.



Who is Subhan?

Subhan was the master angler from the tribal areas around the river Cauvery. Subhan and I together battled the odds to save the *mahseer*, the dream catch for every angler. The book also covers the crisis of identity; Subhan had no doubts about who he was or where he was coming from. Right up to the very end, he knew he was an angler and that was what his life was all about whereas, for me, there were these huge doubts: Who am I? Will anyone ever remember me; not just for my family and my heritage but for myself? The fundamental philosophy of the book is 'less is more.' The less you have, the happier you can be. I look around me and find it very strange that material wealth is being chased so diligently.

Erstwhile cricketer, wildlife enthusiast, social entrepreneur; which of these many hats is closest to your heart?

Definitely working for the forgotten people of India—the tribals—who are eking out a living on the edges of society. They are like my extended family now.

Tell us about your work.

Nearly 30 years ago when my wife Sangeeta and I chose to make a life with the tribal people of Karnataka, we decided that we would work with about a thousand homes, train at

least one person from each home, educate him and train him in skills so he could be self-sufficient and earn some money. There is no infrastructure, no industry where young people from these tribal areas can get jobs. So when they go home, they cut down

trees and kill animals for food, ivory or their skins. The mother pats them on the back and says, 'Well done.'

Meanwhile the government thinks all tribals who live in far-flung areas are either poachers or smugglers—hence the conflict! My earlier book, *Wild Tales*, also addressed this conflict as much as *Subhan and I*.

We have set up resorts in Bandipur, Nagarhole, and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary of Karnataka where all our workforce comprises the people we have trained. We have managed to rehabilitate over 900 people in the past 10 years alone.

Why didn't you do this with the tribals of Andhra Pradesh?

At the time we started, the Naxalite menace in Andhra was high.

Not that we haven't had trouble in Karnataka—our camp has been burnt down, we have been shot at, we have lost limbs. Yet we have not given up because we built the trust of the people very slowly and deliberately and we realised that we were making a difference.

AUTHORSPEAK



Making of the Mahatma

We pay tribute to the Father of the Nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), with an excerpt from his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* that reveals a defining moment in his journey towards becoming the Mahatma

On the seventh or eighth day after my arrival, I left Durban. A first-class seat was booked for me. It was usual there to pay five shillings extra, if one needed a bedding. Abdulla Sheth insisted that I should book one bedding but, out of obstinacy and pride and with a view to saving five shillings, I declined. Abdulla Sheth warned me. 'Look, now,' said he, 'this is a different country from India. Thank God, we have enough and to spare. Please do not stint yourself in anything that you may need.'

I thanked him and asked him not to be anxious.

The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 pm. Beddings used to be provided at this station. A railway servant came and asked me if I wanted one. 'No,' said I, 'I have one with me.' He went away. But a passenger came next, and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'coloured' man. This disturbed him. Out he went and came in again with one or two officials. They all kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, 'Come along, you must go to the van compartment.'

'But I have a first-class ticket,' said I.

'That doesn't matter,' rejoined the other. 'I tell you, you must go to the van compartment.'

'I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it.'

'No, you won't,' said the official. 'You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out.'

'Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily.'

The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting room, keeping my hand bag with me, and leaving the other luggage where it was. The railway authorities had taken charge of it.

It was winter, and winter in the higher regions of South Africa is severely cold. Maritzburg being at a high altitude, the cold was extremely bitter. My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again, so I sat and shivered. There was no light in the room. A passenger came in at about midnight and possibly wanted to talk to me. But I was in no mood to talk.

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice.

So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.

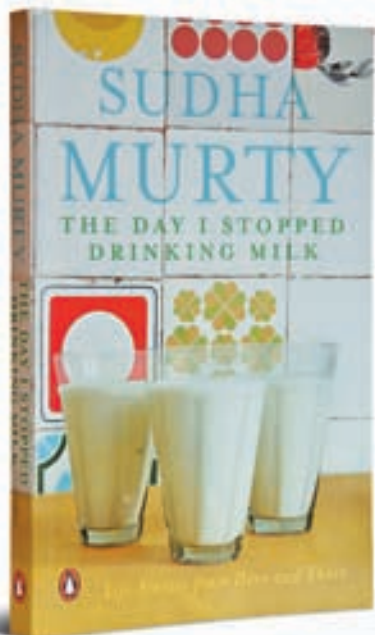
The following morning I sent a long telegram to the General Manager of the Railway and also informed Abdulla Sheth, who immediately met the General Manager. The Manager justified the conduct of the railway authorities, but informed him that he had already instructed the Station Master to see that I reached my destination safely. Abdulla Sheth wired to the Indian merchants in Maritzburg and to friends in other

places to meet me and look after me. The merchants came to see me at the station and tried to comfort me by narrating their own hardships and explaining that what had happened to me was nothing unusual. They also said that Indians travelling first or second class had to expect trouble from railway officials and white passengers. The day was thus spent in listening to these tales of woe. The evening train arrived. There was a reserved berth for me. I now purchased at Maritzburg the bedding ticket I had refused to book at Durban.



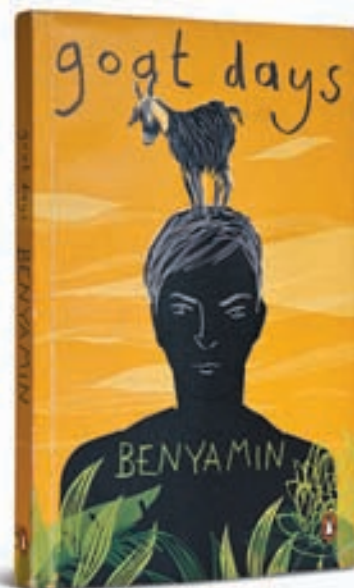
Between the lines

In a voice that is as fluid as it is forthright, **Sudha Murty** offers vignettes from her travels around the country and her encounters with Indians at home and abroad in **THE DAY I STOPPED DRINKING MILK** (Penguin; ₹ 199; 212 pages). Most of the people featured in this book are



ordinary folk who make small but extraordinary decisions that begin to change lives in a way that Murty, having spent decades driving the Infosys Foundation, must be familiar with. These are not tales of heroic poverty or grace under fire; just true stories of people, the author included, who reminded themselves to follow their hearts when it really mattered. For the reader, each short story—told in a voice totally devoid of self-congratulation and cliché—ends almost too quickly, some in a heart-wrenching flourish of pathos and humanity, others in a subtle lifting of a veil, offering just enough of a peek into an unseen corner of India to remain unforgettable.

The Malayalee's migration to the Gulf in search of a better life is one of the cornerstones of the Great Indian Dream. **Benjamin's GOAT DAYS** (Penguin; ₹ 250; 255 pages), translated by **Joseph Koyippally**, is based on one such true story, ignited by dreams fuelled by the oil economy. Najeeb's predicament, originally told in Malayalam as *Aadujivitam*, went on to win the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 2009. The pathos underlying Najeeb's story is brilliantly brought home by the soliloquies. What work in large measure for the book are the wry humour and simple language that draw you into Najeeb's life and loneliness and keep you glued till the end. The book also has echoes of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, with a shepherd as the main protagonist in search of a great destiny. Compelling and calamitous, it's a story of faith, determination, survival and triumph of the human spirit against all odds.



Think of the last time you promised yourself a reward. What was it? A piece of chocolate, a new pair of shoes, an extra hour of TV? In **THE FIX** (Collins; ₹ 399; 279 pages), a compelling book by a recovering alcoholic, author **Damian Thompson** argues that it is no accident that our brains crave consumer goods just as much as we once craved a hug, a smile or an extra hour with a loved one. Simplifying a number of medical theories on



addiction, Thompson explains, for example, how the brain's reaction to a mother's embrace is almost identical to its reaction to certain hard drugs, and how impulses of desire are triggered by sound, smell, texture and sight. Bit by bit, he pieces together a revelatory theory as simple as it is terrifying: we are all at some point on the addiction spectrum. Most of us have no idea of this, and those of us that do have, have no clue to the intricate mind games played by major corporations to influence our brains and then our bodies to choose the 'addictions' they sell. It all hinges on the fact that desire/anticipation can be triggered far more easily than satisfaction. And yes, that is the reason you ate an entire box of chocolates last night—and regretted it immediately afterwards.

One and all

In his profound treatise *Happiness*, Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh dwells on the inter-connectedness of the cosmos

In society, much of our suffering comes from feeling disconnected from one another. We often don't feel a real connection even with people we live close to, our neighbours, our co-workers, and even our family members. Each person lives separately, cut off from the support of the community.

Practising mindfulness, we begin to see our connection with other human beings. To flourish in our own practice and to support others, we need a community. In Buddhism, a practice community is called a *Sangha*. The Buddha had a *Sangha* of monks, nuns, laywomen, and laymen. We can make our families into a *Sangha*. We can make our workplace into a *Sangha*, our neighbourhood into a *Sangha*, local government into a *Sangha*, and even the Congress could turn into a *Sangha* if everyone knew the art of deep listening and loving speech.

Being with a *Sangha* can heal these feelings of isolation and separation. We practise together, sometimes we eat side by side and clean pots together. Just by participating with other practitioners in daily activities, we can experience a tangible feeling of love and acceptance.

The *Sangha* is a garden, full of many varieties of trees and flowers. When we can look at ourselves and at others as beautiful, unique flowers and trees we can truly grow to understand and love one another. One flower may bloom early in the spring and another flower may bloom in late summer. One tree may bear many fruits and another tree may offer cool shade. No one plant is greater or lesser or the same as any other plant in the garden. Each member of the *Sangha* also has unique gifts to offer to the community. We each have areas that need attention as well. When we can appreciate each member's contribution and

see our weaknesses as potential for growth, we can learn to live together harmoniously. Our practice is to see that we are a flower or a tree, and we are the whole garden as well, all interconnected.

To be really means to inter-be. Just as a flower relies on the sunshine, on the cloud, on the earth in order to be, so it is with all of us. None of us can be by ourselves alone. Interbeing is the teaching of the Buddha that everything is made by and made up of everything else. If we return everything to its source, there's nothing left anymore.

If we return the sunshine to the sun, the water to the cloud, the soil to the earth, then there can no longer be any flower. A flower is made only of non-flower elements. That is why we say a flower is empty of self; it's empty of a separate self. It's full of everything and empty of a separate self. We are empty, and we are made of the cosmos. Looking at one person, we can see the whole cosmos and all our ancestors. In each person, we can see the air, water, journeys, joys, and sorrows that have come before us. We contain all information needed for the understanding of the cosmos. If we can see the nature of interbeing, then we will suffer much less and we will understand why it is important to be in community.

In practising together as a community, our practice of mindfulness becomes more joyful, relaxed, and steady. We are bells of mindfulness for each other, supporting and reminding each other along the path of practice. With the support of the community, we can practise to cultivate peace and joy within and around us, as a gift for all of those whom we love and care for. We can cultivate our solidity and freedom—solid in our deepest aspiration and free from our fears, misunderstandings, and suffering.



Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, teacher, author, poet and peace activist. *Happiness* (Jaico; ₹ 195; 160 pages)

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The gentle WARRIOR

This is one Gandhian who has lived up to the values of his idol, Mahatma Gandhi. When Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was imprisoned in 1962 on charges of sabotage and later sentenced to life imprisonment, Gandhism took a new form: a non-violent struggle against apartheid. While in jail, his reputation grew, and so did his stature as an icon of the anti-apartheid movement. It was a long walk to freedom for Mandela, who went on to serve 27 years in prison, till his release in 1990.

Following his release, Mandela led his party, the African National Congress, to a majority in the first multi-racial elections in South Africa. He also went on to become the country's first black president, serving from May 1994 to June 1999. His presidency was marked by a wide range of progressive social reforms, targeted at uprooting long-entrenched social and economic inequalities in South Africa.

Recipient of the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, Nelson Mandela may not be active today in the political scenario of the country he has led from racism and oppression to equality and democracy, but for millions of oppressed around the world, he is still an icon, much like his inspiration, the Mahatma.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: OCTOBER 1962

- On 1 October, James Meredith, the first black student to enroll at the all-white University of Mississippi, registered for classes while being escorted by US marshals.
- On 5 October, *Dr No*, the first James Bond film, premiered.
- On 5 October, The Beatles released their first single, *Love me do*.
- On 26 October, a state of emergency was declared for the first time ever in India by President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan following the invasion of India by Chinese troops.

“Anyone who stops learning is old,
whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps
learning stays young.

— Henry Ford, American industrialist and founder of Ford Motor Company

Fat finger trade

n. An erroneous or inadvertent trade, particularly one that has significant market consequences, caused by a typo.

Example. A trader at RBS has admitted to making a **fat finger trade** in the EUR/CHF pair Monday, a spokesperson for the bank told Reuters.... Initial reports had claimed that it was RBS's algorithms that caused the spike. However, those reports were later proven wrong. It turns out that it was a simple fat finger trade that caused the spike and algos reacted to send the pair even higher.

—Matthew Kanterman, “Another day, another trading glitch: RBS admits responsibility in EUR/CHF spike”, *Benzinga*, 9 August 2012

Omnishambles

n. A situation or person that is a mess in every possible way.

Example. Looking at the **omnishambles** he presides over, I'm driven to the conclusion that if David Cameron were a Soviet-style sleeper, inserted into the Tory party in his youth on a secret mission from its enemies to destroy it from within, he could not have done a better job.

—Nigel Jones, “So, what price the ‘loonies, fruitcakes and racists’ of UKIP now, Dave?”, *Daily Mail*, 20 August 2012

Thrillax

v. To do something that is both stimulating and relaxing.

Example. Tim Locke, head of marketing at Mark Warner, said there was a “growing trend for people wanting to combine fitness and well-being on holiday”, which he put down to the Olympics.... PR wags have even coined the term **thrillax** to describe the trend.

—Josie Gurney-Read, “Olympic Games inspires interest in active holidays”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 2012

Binge viewing

n. A period of excessive indulgence spent watching previously broadcast episodes of a TV show.

Example. **Binge viewing** is transforming the way people watch television and changing the economics of the industry.... Now, technologies such as on-demand video and digital video recorders are giving rise to the binge viewer, who devours shows in quick succession—episode after episode, season after season, perhaps for \$ 7.99 a month, the cost of a basic Netflix membership.

—John Jurgensen, “**Binge viewing:** TV's lost weekends”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 July 2012

LULU

n. A remarkable person, idea, or thing.

Example. I told my students about an incident from my boyhood, my first-ever interaction with a fungus, and it was a **lulu**.

—Robert Klose, “The three-legged woman and other excursions in teaching”, *University Press of New England*, 2010

MOOC

n. An online course that is open to anyone and designed to handle an extremely large number of students.

Example. MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are the latest addition to the acronym-bound lexicon of higher education, and quite possibly the most significant of them all. They represent a new generation of online education, freely accessible on the Internet and geared towards very large student numbers.

—Mike Boxall, “MOOCs: a massive opportunity for higher education, or digital hype?”, *The Guardian*, 8 August 2012

CUI BONO

n. To whose benefit?

Example. Cui bono? Surprise, surprise, it's the banks.

—Carol Hunt, “Debt would be a release next to this travesty”, *Irish Independent* (Dublin, Ireland), 29 January 2012



BUZZ

Dance to health!

Bored of your morning walk? Can't bear the sight of your yoga mat anymore? Try movement therapy. It uses dance movements to improve physical and mental well-being and build self-awareness. In fact, the movement therapy offered at The Creative Movement, run by dancer and wellness consultant Dilshad Patel, promises to target specific pain regions. To make an appointment with a therapist who can suggest the kind of therapy you need depending on your individual problems and body type, call (0) 9769644418 or email wellness@dilshadpatel.com. Each three-hour session costs Rs 1,800. The good news is that each session can accommodate up to three people—invite your friends and share the costs!

“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of the people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will have truly defeated age.

— Sophia Loren, Italian actor

“Physically challenged people are normal people who deserve to be happily married.”

Prabha Panse, 75, for launching a marriage bureau for the physically challenged



Haresh Patel

Shailesh Kulkarni met Vineeta at a social meeting in Mumbai; they tied the knot after a whirlwind courtship and have been happily married for over two years now. A regular boy-meets-girl story—except for the fact that both of them suffer from cerebral palsy. Playing matchmaker to them, as well as for over 500 other physically challenged couples over the years, is Mumbai-based Prabha Panse. A recommendation from a family friend led this housewife to discover her calling; after a year of training, she joined the Lions School for Deaf in Mumbai in the 1990s. “I spent over a decade teaching there,” she says. “The thought of retirement was painful; I wanted to continue helping my students in some way.” Thus, she began conducting social gatherings at her own house and community

halls that gave the physically challenged an opportunity to interact and find a potential life partner. When they had to rent a space, Panse and her friends would chip in with the costs. Today, her Jeevan Saathi Marriage Bureau has completed 13 years with many happily-ever-afters to its credit. “Petty things like religion and caste are not a major issue with the physically challenged,” explains the mother of three. “Their only concern is to be able to connect with their life partner and have a good rapport.” Panse’s greatest reward is when the happy couples come to meet her with their children. And her biggest challenge? To get more visually challenged people to tie the knot—she believes society will have to overcome its prejudice in this regard.

—Radhika Raje

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