

# harmony celebrate age

OCTOBER 2013 ₹ 30

The magazine for silver citizens

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## DIARY 100

MEET THE  
GOOD DOCTOR  
KESHAB  
CHANDRA  
BORDOLAYE

## AT LARGE

RANJIT LAL ON  
'PUPPY LOVE'

art  
of living

LEELA SAMSON

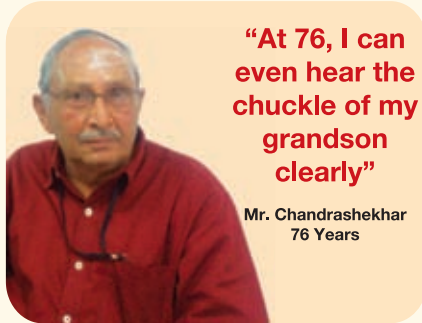


• IT'S ADVANTAGE HOLLYWOOD FOR ASHOK AMRITRAJ • WAYANAD'S TRIBAL ROUTE

# DO YOU NEED A SIXTH SENSE TO REVIVE YOUR HEARING?

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



**“At 76, I can even hear the chuckle of my grandson clearly”**

Mr. Chandrashekhar  
76 Years

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

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

**Q2. What hearing difficulties did you face?**

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

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

**Ans.** My family was trying to persuade me to

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ans.** I did not want to have them thinking that

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

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

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

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

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

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# Strength in NUMBERS

Integrating silvers into the workforce is not just philanthropy but common sense.

Last month, a spokesperson of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a specialised agency of the United Nations, commented that harnessing ageing workforces could be one of the keys to lead the global economy out of the current economic crisis. The agency also urged employers and governments alike to make a range of policy, institutional and social adjustments to support this new paradigm.

It's perfectly logical when you consider the intellectual capital that goes to waste every time we summarily put silvers out to pasture, assuming in our ignorance—and arrogance—that they have nothing to offer. What's more, it is now scientifically established that elder workers are not just desirable but preferable additions to any workforce that prizes consistency and commitment. This month, in "Performance Bonus" ('Analyse This', 'Orbit'), we feature a report by German researchers that establishes that silver workers can outperform their younger counterparts on certain tasks and are more consistent. This is not wishful thinking or motivational talk but a fact based on quantifiable tests of speed and memory.

Suresh Natarajan



We've been saying it for close to a decade; it's now time for India to understand this. While we are quick to bemoan our rising silver population—we will have 320 million people over the age of 60 by 2015—as an incipient if not full-blown economic crisis, we lack the foresight to evolve sensible and sustainable strategies to channel the potential of this population. This is not just true for the government. India Inc, too, which prides itself on its increasingly 'global' bent of mind has been extremely selective about what lessons it chooses to imbibe from international trendsetting organisations. World over, the most successful and innovative companies and corporate houses are increasingly leveraging the intellectual capital of elder workers, while we are quick to bid them farewell with a warm handshake and empty words of respect.

It's time to realise that there is strength in numbers, and there is steel in silver—India must use it to its advantage to forge a better tomorrow, economically and socially.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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# column one

There's an interesting irony in the fact that the chairman of our Censor Board believes in candour and refuses to mince her words. That's what makes Leela Samson so intriguing. Behind the controversy that appears to dog her—even as I write this, some members of the Board's advisory panel have filed a petition against her for questioning their competence—lies a commitment to her craft that runs deep and true. In our cover feature "Ageless Feet", she speaks of her life's work, as dancer, teacher, writer, administrator, with passion as palpable as her disenchantment with the cultural bureaucracy in the country.

Ashok Amritraj's journey has been less controversial but equally exciting. One of the three Amritraj brothers who found fame on the international tennis circuit, his transition from sportsman to Hollywood producer is the stuff of, well, films—and his new autobiography, *Advantage Hollywood*. He talks about the book, his early struggles and his very charmed life today in 'Authorspeak'. Life, indeed, is what we make of it. For Dr Keshab Chandra Bordolay, it has been the pursuit of perfection. At 100, the former freedom fighter continues his medical practice and keeps abreast of the latest developments in medical science. Money is of little concern; what drives him is a desire to serve others.

While their stories will inspire you, to enervate you we present a trip through sylvan, spectacular Wayanad, and a panoramic desert safari through Rajasthan captured by the lens of wildlife photographer Rajesh Bedi from hot-air balloons and with cameras mounted on high-flying kites. Read on.

—Arati Rajan Menon

The September 2013 cover feature "Heart of the Matter" brought forth statistics as well as vital information about heart diseases. Thanks to this special issue, we now know more about the latest developments in procedures and steps to take in case of an emergency. Apart from heart problems and diabetes, another challenge silvers face today is oral care and hygiene. I request you to come out with an issue on the subject.

**Sadhna Taneja**  
Delhi

"Heart of the Matter" was very timely and should act as an eye-opener to many. The heart that goes about doing its work quietly is taken for granted or, worse still, ignored and abused. The consequences, as the feature related, are evident. If only people could avoid their many vices and adapt to a healthy lifestyle and regular checkups, many untimely deaths could be avoided.

**Rajesh V Gaur**  
Mumbai

Recently, I saw an advertisement on TV related to senior citizens worth mentioning. In this ad, a young couple goes to an old-age home and meets the person in-charge. When he assures them that their parents would be cared



for properly, they surprise him—and us—by revealing that they have actually come to adopt parents. Being a senior citizen myself, I wish to congratulate the creators of this advertisement. I hope it inspires the younger generation to care for their elderly parents.

**H C Khurana**  
New Delhi

The Delhi Transport Corporation has done a marvellous job of offering AC buses for senior citizens. The Metro too must follow suit; though a few seats are reserved in the coaches for senior citizens, these are insufficient. In fact, the Metro authorities need to provide an extra coach exclusively for silvers. Auto-rickshaw and taxi unions must consider offering concessions to silvers.

**M Kumar**  
New Delhi

## CONTRIBUTOR



**Ranjit Lal** is the author of over 25 books, fiction and non-fiction, for adults and children above the age of 10. Natural history, dogs, automobiles, birds, photography and humour are areas that interest him. He has written extensively on these subjects. His book, *Faces in the Water* (Puffin), won the Vodafone Crosswords Award for 2010, as well as the Laadli National Media Award for Gender Sensitivity for 2011. He was honoured by IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People) in 2012 for his contribution to children's literature. Lal lives in Delhi.





**Dr A R Sharma**  
Chairman & Managing Director  
Ricela Group of Companies

#### What is rice bran oil?

Rice bran oil is a nutritious edible oil which is produced from rice bran, a by-product of the rice milling industry. First, paddy as grown in the fields is de-husked in the rice mills. The rice so obtained is known as brown rice. Second, the brown rice goes through the polishing process to produce white rice. The polish so removed in this process is known as rice bran. Rice bran contains oil ranging between 15-25%.

#### How does it fare in comparison to other edible oils?

All edible oils are made up of three types of fatty acids, i.e., Saturated Fatty Acids (SFA), Poly-Unsaturated Fatty Acids (PUFA) and Mono-Unsaturated Fatty Acids (MUFA). We need to have a balanced intake of all the three types of fatty acids. The edible oils commonly used in our households do not contain a balance of all the three types of fatty acids. But, how can a common man ensure that he gets the desired intake of different types of fatty acids? Rice bran oil is the answer to this. It is a convenient and perfect choice to meet the requirements of different types of fatty acids. Rice bran oil contains 24% SFA, 34% PUFA and 42% MUFA. Besides the fact that rice bran oil contains a balanced fat composition, it has a unique nutrient known as 'oryzanol', which is scientifically proven to have cholesterol-lowering properties.

A number of well-documented studies have established that oryzanol present in rice bran oil helps in lowering bad cholesterol besides giving many other health benefits. A very recent study conducted by the Department of Pharmacology, PGIMER, Chandigarh, has confirmed that rice bran oil has much better cholesterol-lowering properties than the olive oil.

#### What's the quantity of oil that a senior citizen can safely consume daily?

According to the latest guidelines issued by the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad (a premier nutrition research Institute of Indian Council of Medical Research, Government of India), the oil intake (visible fat) in the diet can go upto 50g/person/day based on the level of physical activity and physiological status. Adults with sedentary lifestyle should consume about 25 g of edible oil, while individuals involved in hard physical work require 30-40 g of edible oil. Hence, 25 g per day is the optimum level of oil intake for senior citizens.

(Source: Dietary Guidelines for Indians--A Manual by National Institute of Nutrition, 2nd edition, 2010, page no 46).

#### Is rice bran oil safe for diabetics?

Rice bran oil is not just safe for diabetics, it helps in blood sugar management too. The oryzanol present in rice bran oil has been found to have protective effect on hyperalgesia and oxidative stress which might be responsible for diabetes-induced nerve disorder called Diabetes Neuropathy. (Source Brazilian Journal of Pharmacognosy [online]. 2012, 1092-1103. Epub Sep 06, 2012)

Further, diabetics are more prone to cardiovascular diseases; they are supposed to take care of their lipid profile, which is one of the prominent reasons for cardiovascular diseases. The oryzanol present in rice bran oil helps in ensuring an ideal lipid profile and protects against the ill-effect of diabetes.

#### How does rice bran oil work to reduce LDL and triglyceride levels?

One of the most important properties of oryzanol is its cholesterol-lowering property. There are several studies on humans and animals showing that the rice bran oil has the property of lowering low density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL) and total serum cholesterol and increasing the high density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) to some extent. This effect is because oryzanol (particularly beta-sitosterol, one of four main components of oryzanol)--having a similar structure of cholesterol--takes the place of dietary and biliary cholesterol for its uptake in micelles produced in the intestinal lumen, thus reducing the intake of cholesterol. (Source: Moreau,

### A Sectional view of Paddy

Paddy Husk

Rice Bran  
(Oily layer of Brown Rice)

White Rice

R. A.; Whitaker, B. D.; Hicks, K. B. (2002). "Phytosterols, Phytostanols, and Their Conjugates in Foods: Structural Diversity, Quantitative Analysis, and Health-Promoting Uses". *Prog. Lipid Res.* 41 (6): 457-500. doi: 10.1016/S0163-7827(02)00006-1. PMID 12169300. .

This effect is further complemented by enhancing the conversion of cholesterol to fecal bile acids and sterols. The role of bile acids is to aid digestion and absorption of fats in small intestine. Moreover, bile is the natural eliminator where waste products are secreted into bile and eliminated from body through stool. Bile acids break down cholesterol, forming an insoluble complex which is not dissolved in the body and leaves it through stool. Triterpene alcohols and sterols present in oryzanol significantly lower the circulating levels of cholesterol and triglycerides. (Source: Nutritional and Biochemical Aspects of the Hypolipidemic action of Rice Bran Oil: A Review (Journal of the American College of Nutrition, Vol. 10, No. 6, 593-601(1991).) In addition to this, it is found that oryzanol also inhibits 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-coenzyme A (HMG-CoA) reductase activity, the rate controlling enzyme that produces cholesterol in the body. (Source: Effect of gamma-oryzanol on the bioaccessibility and synthesis of cholesterol (Eur Rev Med Pharmacol Sci, 2012 Jan;16(1):49-56.)

Some studies have pointed out the optimum dosage of oryzanol as 300 mg per day to be effective for lowering cholesterol. Therefore, the rice bran oil one consumes should have at least 1200 mg Oryzanol per 100 gms of oil so as to get 300 mg oryzanol with a consumption of 25 g of rice bran oil daily.

#### Is it true that one needs to keep changing oils to derive maximum nutritional benefits from various forms of oil?

The commonly used cooking oils in Indian households were not having an ideally balanced fat composition. The purpose of keeping on changing oils was to ensure balanced intake of all the three types of fatty acids. But now, when we have a convenient and perfect choice i.e., rice bran oil, there is no need to keep on changing the cooking oil.

#### How does rice bran oil enrich the skin?

Rice bran oil contains antioxidants like oryzanol, tocopherol and tocotrienol. These protect our skin from sun damage. A study in Chiang Mai University, Thailand, has found oryzanol as a potential cosmetic raw material. According to the study, oryzanol helps in skin-whitening, skin hydration and has anti-ageing properties. (Source: Journal of Pharmaceutical Biology, Thailand 2012 Feb; 50(2): 208-24)

#### Is it true that, as a rule, cooking oil should never be reused for cooking or frying?

It is advisable not to reuse cooking oils, particularly, the ones that have high levels of PUFA--such as safflower oil, sunflower oil and soyabean oil--as these oils are prone to oxidation very fast. The consumption of oxidised products leads to production of free radicals in the body, which, in turn, leads to immune deficiency. Once the immunity level goes down, the person goes on attracting ailments like arthritis, cataract, etc. It is further advised not to use oils that have high levels of Omega3--such as mustard oil, canola oil and soyabean oil--for frying as Omega3 fatty acids are prone to oxidation much faster. Also, it is advisable to use extra-virgin olive oil only for salad dressings. Extra-virgin olive oil should not be used for frying as it has a very low smoke point of 180°C.

#### How good is the shelf life of rice bran oil?

Rice bran oil with its ideally balanced fat composition and high amount of natural anti-oxidant is a highly stable oil and is most suited for Indian kitchen.

# Experience

## A second childhood

Wouldn't it be great to have a second childhood? To start life afresh? Because at Harmony, a magazine for people above fifty five, we believe that age is in the mind. Which is why, you should live young.

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INSIDE

P28: Worth its salt

P30: Gut feeling

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► FACE OFF

# The tippie effect

While it may be more fun to drink your red wine than slather it on your face, British firm Concept Health Care has recently launched **Prototype**, a cream with high doses of resveratrol, the anti-ageing antioxidant found in grape skins. The two-part 'system'—a 30-ml jar of cream and a pack of capsules—promises to reduce wrinkles in 28 days, and boost moisture and collagen levels in the skin. Resveratrol neutralises oxygen molecules, known as radicals that cause cell damage. "After 250 men and women tested the system from four to six weeks, about 60 per cent said they noticed fewer fine lines and wrinkles over a month, and 85 per cent claimed a dramatic reduction in deep wrinkles," claims Anna Briton, a spokesperson for the manufacturer in London newspaper *The Telegraph*. "It's the only topical and supplement regime available that targets ageing from the inside and the out, and the results have been outstanding." Prototype retails for £39.99 (about ₹4,000); to learn more, go to [www.skin-centre.co.uk](http://www.skin-centre.co.uk)



# Age spurt?

You've heard of growth spurts for teenagers; now, let's talk about silvers. **The process of facial ageing does not occur gradually as we assume but "in spurts"**, according to a study by Dr Rajiv Grover, the president of The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons. As London newspaper *The Times* reports, Grover followed a group of women for eight years, regularly measuring their brow



height and cheek volume and plotting them on a graph, and discovered clearly marked spurts of ageing. "Ageing occurs in spurts, particularly in the mid-face," he confirms. "Exacerbating this are dramatic weight loss, say 8 kg or more in six weeks or under; stress, especially divorce and bereavement; and, of course, serious illness." He also has some useful advice: "When you reach 40, you can choose between either gaining seven pounds of weight on your body, or seven years extra on your face."

## A happy ACCIDENT

Every accident doesn't spell trouble. When Cambridge University researchers Mike Murphy and Rob Smith blended a set of ingredients in a bid to combat liver disease, they ended up instead with **a delivery system capable of flooding cells with antioxidants straight into the mitochondria, the source of free radicals. The result: a powerful anti-ageing product, MitoQ**, which claims to reverse the signs of ageing while brightening the skin and upping its levels of collagen and elastin. "Mitochondria are like batteries that provide the energy our cells need, including skin cells," says Murphy in a media release. "Unfortunately, this process also releases free radicals, which damage our cells. As we get older, our bodies produce fewer an-



tioxidants and can't fight free radicals as effectively, causing wrinkles and lines to appear. MitoQ enhances our natural antioxidant capacity, restoring our cells to optimal function and thus, quite literally, reversing the signs of age." A 50-ml bottle will set you back \$ 185 (about ₹ 11,300). If you want more information, visit [www.mitoq.com](http://www.mitoq.com)

## CULT FOLLOWING



If you'd pay the earth to erase half a decade off your face, this may be worth a try. **Cult 51, the world's most expensive anti-ageing cream**, went on sale in the UK in July at the bank-breaking cost of £ 125 (about ₹ 11,700) for a tiny 10 ml jar—and managed to shatter every sales record in the book. What makes it so special? Well, its main ingredient is ATP, a naturally found cell-producing compound, which, according to its creator Richard Mears, stimulates the skin to produce its own collagen while increasing cell production and oxygen flow; strengthens the skin's capillary walls, boosting blood circulation; and cuts the amount of melanin in the skin, which leads to age spots. "In trials, Cult 51 has been found to reverse the signs of ageing by up to five years in just six weeks," the British chemist tells London newspaper *The Independent*. "It is clinically proven to reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines by up to 52 per cent in 28 days. It increases the skin's absorption of oxygen by up to 45 per cent and reduces the appearance of age spots by up to a quarter in 12 weeks. Further, it is suitable for the face, eyes, hands and décolletage." The cream is available online at [www.cult51.com](http://www.cult51.com)



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**Max support:** Max Super Speciality Hospital at Patparganj in East Delhi has launched a free 'citizen plus card' that offers savings to silvers over the age of 55 on checkups, diagnostics, ambulance services, room rents and medicines.



## Silver count

According to estimates by the **AUN, India will have 320 million people over 60 years of age by 2015**, representing a jump of over three times since 2010. Speaking at a conference titled 'Ageing Women: Critical Challenges and Concerns', Lise Grande, UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative in India, said, "The policy implications of such a large number of people who have crossed 60 years of age are significant. India has risen to that policy challenge and there is a very good policy framework, but additional steps are required. One is pensions, which people have spoken about, and it should be raised." We couldn't agree more. Even more significant was Grande's next statement: "The elderly are contributing massively to India's economy and through India's economy to the global economy."



## Directive principle

**I**t's a small mercy that the rash of crime against silvers across India hasn't gone entirely unnoticed. In September, **the Centre directed all state governments to ensure the safety of senior citizens** by urgently reviewing existing policing arrangements and preparing plans to face current and future challenges for their protection. This includes the preparation of state-wise databases of silvers living alone and the identification of crime-prone areas. "The police headquarters should ensure that each police station has a security scheme for the protection of the elderly in the context of local requirements, which should be updated regularly," went the directive issued by the Home Ministry. "These should provide for patrolling, both during day and night. The police should maintain and regularly update its database about the elderly and obtain feedback about security arrangements in force for them." Curiously, though, the directive announced that 'rich' senior citizens were most vulnerable, and called for fast-track security clearance process of their personal and security staff and the organisation of special drives for verification of the antecedents of servants, drivers and other domestic help. The directive didn't go so far as to define the term 'rich' in quantifiable terms though.

**BEAT THE Q: SILVERS IN BENGALURU WILL SOON BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR THEIR PASSPORTS AT THEIR NEAREST BANGALOREONE (B1) CENTRE RATHER THAN ENDURING THE LONG LINES AT THE REGIONAL PASSPORT OFFICES.**





**A** sleepy village in France is suddenly abuzz with excitement. The picturesque **Salleles-d'Aude will soon become a haven for well-heeled LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual) Britons**, the first of its kind in Europe. The brain-child of 66 year-old Danny Silver, whose real-estate company The Villages Group ([www.thevillagesgroup.com](http://www.thevillagesgroup.com)) builds active retirement communities in France, the eco-friendly project features 107 homes, a hotel, tennis courts, saunas, jacuzzis, golf and horse-riding. "It's for people who want to live; it's not a place to come to die," Silver tells news agency AFP. However, the residents of the village are reportedly divided as to the merits of the new project. While many are happy that the new development will be good for business, some conservative voices are being raised about 'promotion' of a divergent lifestyle.

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

## INDIA'S FINEST HOME FOR SENIOR CITIZENS IN 14 ACRES OF LAND IS FINALLY HERE

**Dream project of Mr Anil K Monga (NRI)  
Celebrating a dignified, secure and privileged lifestyle**

The Heavenly Palace, Doraha, Ludhiana, offers a luxurious community lifestyle retirement home, specially designed for your comfort and happiness. We bring to you the best in independent living with warmth in a secure and serene environment on the banks of a canal.

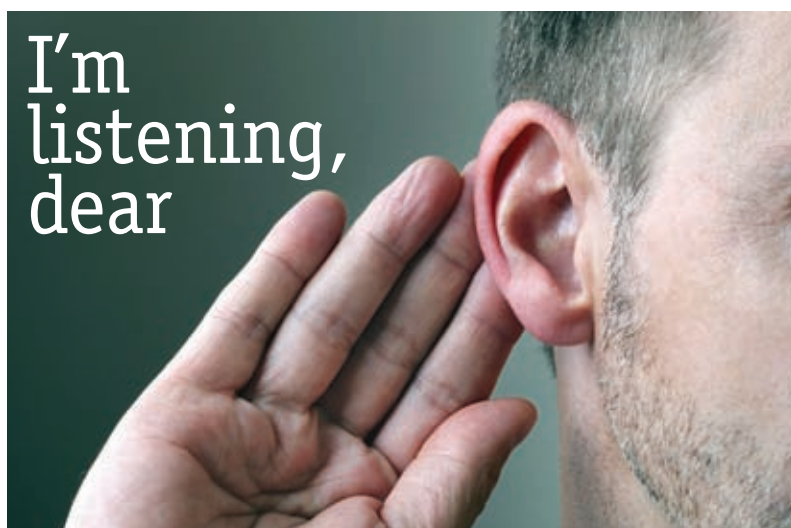
We have taken great care to ensure your safety, regular medical needs and food preferences (air-conditioned dining hall). We have 400 rooms in a 5-star ambience and special infrastructure like a mini auditorium, a library and a recreational hall spread over 10,000 sq ft under the constant supervision of qualified professionals. It is our endeavour to make you feel looked after and relaxed without any concerns of housekeeping, maintenance and laundry. Instead just sit back and relax. You can enjoy your mornings with yoga or walk around lush green gardens. Various recreational facilities like the Club, Gym, Swimming Pool, Sauna, Spa are also in the offing in the near future.

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**REMEMBER THIS: SCIENTISTS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTRE IN NEW YORK HAVE IDENTIFIED A PROTEIN CALLED RBAP48 IN A REGION OF THE BRAIN CALLED THE HIPPOCAMPUS THAT APPEARS TO BE A MAJOR CAUSE OF AGE-RELATED OR 'NORMAL' MEMORY LOSS. THIS IS DISTINCT FROM THE LOSS OF MEMORY THAT OCCURS FROM ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE. THEIR RESEARCH HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL SCIENCE TRANSLATIONAL MEDICINE.**



**I**t's the age-old, two-step between husbands and wives: he says, she says and, quite often, they tune each other out! But researchers at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, in Canada, have discovered that this **ability to ignore your partner declines with age**. As Canadian newspaper *The Globe and Mail* reports, the team asked couples ranging from the ages of 44 to 79 to record themselves reading out scripted conversations. Each participant then listened to the tape of their spouse's voice while hearing a recording of a stranger at the same time. The participants were asked to report what either their spouse or the other person had said in order to

determine whether familiar voices would be easier to distinguish. The results showed that participants of all ages were able to distinguish their spouse's voice much more clearly than an unfamiliar voice. However, middle-aged people were very effective at blocking out their spouse's voice in order to hear a stranger more clearly while participants lost this ability as they aged. "Middle-aged people can ignore their spouse but older people aren't able to as much," writes study leader Ingrid Johnsrude in journal *Psychological Science*. "This could be because as people grow older, they become less adept at separating different sounds into an 'auditory scene.'"



## Performance bonus

**W**hen it comes to work, silvers still got swag. Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Germany, have demonstrated that **elder workers can outperform their younger counterparts on certain tasks and are more consistent**. For the study, over 200 participants from two age groups—20-31 and 65-80—were given 12 tasks that measured speed and memory. These tasks were performed repeatedly over 100 days. The researchers found that for nine of the 12 tasks, the older group performed with less variability compared to the younger group, displaying more consistency and meticulousness. "Further analyses indicate that the older adults' higher consistency is owing to learned strategies to solve the task, a constantly high motivation level, as well as a balanced daily routine and stable mood," lead researcher Florian Schmiedek writes in journal *Psychological Science*. "This study makes it evident that older employees provide companies with a stable and efficient work source with fewer performance fluctuations from day to day."



# Whale watching

When scientists from Newcastle University tell you that you have something in common with a whale, don't be offended—they are talking about the fact that most whales tan in the sun much like humans. Others, though, are able to switch genes on and off to protect themselves from UV exposure. Indeed, **the way whales react to sunlight can shed new light on the human ageing process** as exposure to UV light can also harm the DNA in our mitochondria. Over a three-year period, the research team studied skin samples from three different species of whales—blue, fin and sperm whales—during their annual spring migration, when they moved to sunnier waters, and discovered that the different species react differently to the increase in sunlight. Just like humans, blue whales respond by increasing the amount of pigment in their skin. Similarly, the deeply pigmented fin whales are even more resistant to sun damage, with the lowest prevalence of sunburn lesions. By contrast, for sperm whales, instead of changes in their pigment, the sun triggers a stress response in their genes in response to UV exposure—in scientific terminology, this is called 'the activation



of genotoxic stress pathways.' "The sunburnt DNA we find in whales is the same sunburnt DNA we find in humans and that is definitely linked to ageing," writes study leader Mark Birch-Machin in journal *Scientific Reports*. "We have demonstrated that UV exposure induces mitochondrial DNA damage in the skin of fin, sperm, and blue whales and that this damage accumulates with age. However, counteractive molecular mechanisms are markedly different between species."



**RIP: THE WORLD'S OLDEST-KNOWN WILD BEAR—BEAR NO. 56—HAS PASSED AWAY AT THE RIPE AGE OF 39½ IN NORTHERN MINNESOTA IN THE US. A FEMALE AMERICAN BLACK BEAR, SHE WAS CAPTURED AND FASHIONED WITH A RADIO COLLAR IN JULY 1981, AT THE AGE OF SEVEN, FOR A BEAR POPULATION ECOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECT.**

## SECRET OF THE SEA

**IT CAN** re-grow any lost body part, doesn't age biologically and can even clone itself. Little wonder then, that **scientists are hailing Irish marine animal *hydractinia echinata* as 'immortal'**. Commonly known as 'snail fur', it lives on the back of hermit crabs and sea snails and is native to the coasts of Britain and Ireland. Now, scientists at the Regenerative Medicine Institute of National University of Ireland, Galway, are studying the animal to provide insight into human ageing. "The tiny creature, which is a relative of jellyfish and sea anemones, is perfect for understanding the role of stem cells in development, ageing and



disease," team leader Uri Frank tells the BBC. "Hydractinia has some stem cells that remain at an embryonic-like stage throughout its life. It sounds

gruesome, but if it has its head bitten off, it simply grows another one within a few days using these 'pluripotent' cells. Hydractinia stem cells are very similar to their human counterparts and studying them may provide information on human stem cells." It begs the question: Why don't humans keep their pluripotent cells as adults? Dr Frank has an answer. "Keeping them in a complex body like ours is probably too dangerous, as they can easily form cancer," he responds. "It's not so much a problem in simple animals; they would probably cut a cancer off. The price to become complex is to lose the ability to be immortal."

# Open this tab

A button-free device programmed to deliver your emails, messages and photos without any complicated logins as well as health and medication reminders—that's the promise of the **Claris Companion**. Developed by American company Claris Healthcare, the extremely user-friendly digital tablet also enables a quick connection with a healthcare provider or pharmacy. "The Claris Companion is designed to help seniors stay on top of managing their health and get in tandem with the digital age," says Geof Auchinleck, CEO of Claris Health-



care, in a media release. "We are also planning to add a video conferencing feature on the tablet." The device costs between \$ 549 and \$ 649 (about

₹ 34,500 and ₹ 40,500), and data plans range from \$ 39 to \$ 49 (about ₹ 2,500 to ₹ 3,000) per month. Visit [ClarisCompanion.com](http://ClarisCompanion.com)



**V**egetable alert—there's a new guy in town! Scientists at the British Institute of Food Research have developed **Beneforte**, a 'super' broccoli that delivers a powerful anti-ageing punch by retuning the metabolism. Beneforte was created by cross-breeding conventional broccoli with a wild Italian variety that has naturally high levels of glucoraphanin, a compound that boosts metabolism and helps reverse age-related malfunctions in the mitochondria that contribute to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer. "A diet rich in cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale and cauliflower effectively retunes our metabolism and may be able reduce the risk of many chronic diseases associated with ageing," writes study leader Richard Mithen in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. "And if we can retune these vegetables themselves to provide optimum benefit, as in the case of Beneforte, the rewards are that much higher."

## FOR YOUR IPAD:

**IN LONDON, THE IPAD SCREEN REPAIR SERVICE FOR THE CITY IS GIVING ALL SILVERS A 15 PER CENT DISCOUNT ON ALL IPAD SCREEN REPAIRS. IT ALSO OFFERS A FREE IPAD USER GUIDE FOR SILVERS ON ITS WEBSITE—GO TO [WWW.IPADREPAIRLONDON.NET](http://WWW.IPADREPAIRLONDON.NET) AND DOWNLOAD IT FOR YOURSELF.**





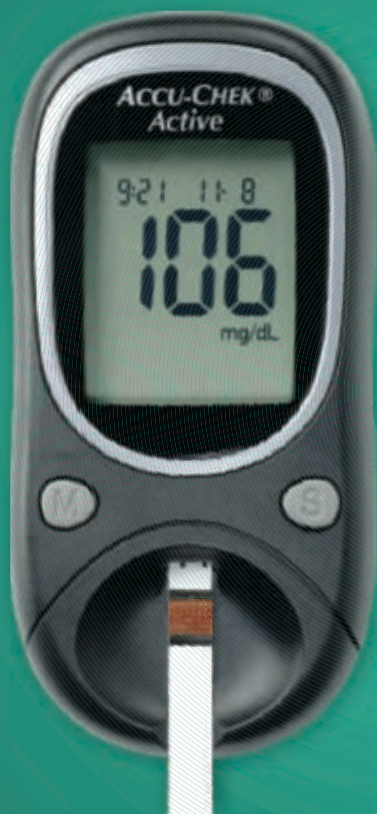
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1. Kocher S et al. J Diabetes Sci Technol. 2009 Sep 1;3(5):1136-43

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# Martha says...

Whether it's her conviction for insider trading or feud with real estate baron Donald Trump, this business magnate, home and life-style maven and TV personality has never strayed far from the headlines. Now, **Martha Stewart** has her eyes set on the self-improvement market with *Living the Good Long Life: A Practical Guide to Caring for Yourself and Others* (Random House). In this new book, she prescribes 10 "Golden Rules for growing old beautifully": eat well; maintain a healthy weight; stay physically active; get quality sleep; wear sunscreen; col-



laborate with a good primary care doctor regularly; find your passion; connect with others; stop complaining—change what you can, and accept what you cannot; stay curious. Calling fresh unprocessed food “the best anti-ageing tool”, she writes, “Healthy living is an ongoing, ever-evolving project. If you try to overhaul too many aspects of your life at once, you’ll find yourself overwhelmed. Instead, pick one small healthy habit to start practicing today, whether it’s drinking more water or walking at lunchtime. Once the first habit feels like second nature, make another change, and so on.”

## The style file

American fashion website *thegloss.com* loves tracking style—and all its purveyors. Last month, it unveiled its list of the seven most stylish silver celebrities. The final cut:

**1. Cher, 67:** Singer-songwriter, consummate diva, fashion risk-taker

**2. Diana Ross, 69:** Singer, producer, actor, African-American trailblazer (Beyonce, who?)

**3. Helen Mirren, 68:** Actor, Oscar winner, queen of the red carpet

**4. Tina Turner, 73:** Singer-songwriter, the best legs on (any) stage

**5. Patti Smith, 66:** Singer-songwriter, quirky fashionista

**6. Raquel Welch, 72:** Actor, sex symbol, pin-up queen

**7. Pattie Boyd, 69:** Model, photographer, rock muse (George Harrison and Eric Clapton married her).



CHER



DIANA ROSS



HELEN MIRREN



TINA TURNER



RAQUEL WELCH



PATTIE BOYD



PATTI SMITH



# SILVER SCREEN



While much of popular culture—especially cinema—tends to typify the silver experience, there are films that cock a snook at ageist stereotypes. *Variety* magazine has chosen its **10 best movies of all time that “make old people cool”**; while some make the cut because of their theme, others stand out because of one or more interesting characters:

**1. *The Straight Story* (1999):** Avant-garde director David Lynch brings alive this true story of a 70-something widower who drives hundreds of miles on a lawn mower—he doesn’t have a car or licence—to mend his relationship with his ailing brother.

**2. *Harold and Maude* (1971):** Hal Ashby’s black comedy about the romance between a young rich boy with a death wish and an eccentric 79 year-old woman who lives life to the nines both provokes and entertains.

**3. *Grumpy Old Men* (1993):** Legendary actors Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau play best friends-turned-feuding neighbours whose rivalry reaches new heights with the arrival of a beautiful woman in the neighbourhood.

**4. *Space Cowboys* (2000):** When retired aerospace engineer Clint Eastwood is summoned to rescue a failing satellite, he takes his former teammates—Tommy Lee Jones, Donald Sutherland and James Garner—along to space for help.

**5. *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944):** Frank Capra directs this screwball black comedy about a writer, played by Cary Grant, who discovers that his maiden aunts have a sinister hobby: they kill lonely old men and bury them in the cellar.

**6. *Amour* (2012):** This moving French film revolves around an octogenarian couple—retired music teachers—who

must grapple with new challenges and critical decisions after the wife suffers a debilitating stroke.

**7. *Venus* (2006):** This comedy drama features the legendary Peter O’Toole as a once-great actor whose world is turned upside down with the arrival of his friend’s young great-niece, a feisty teenager who changes his perspective on life.

**8. *Red* (2010):** Bruce Willis plays a former CIA agent who reassembles his old team of operatives—Morgan Freeman, Helen Mirren—to combat a hi-tech assassin. (*RED* stands for Retired Extremely Dangerous!) The sequel *Red 2* came out this year.

**9. *Cocoon* (1985):** Ron Howard directs this classic sci-fi flick about a group of trespassing silvers who swim in a pool containing alien cocoons, only to find themselves miraculously rejuvenated.

**10. *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983):** This anthology sci-fi horror film is selected for “Kick the Can”, the segment directed by Steven Spielberg, where old people kick a can—and become young.



**WHAT’S NEW? SCIENCEOFAGEING.COM IS A NEW WEBSITE THAT PRESENTS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN ANTI-AGEING PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGY. THE WEBSITE HAS DIFFERENT SECTIONS SUCH AS ARTICLES, VIDEOS, PRODUCT AND RESEARCH NEWS, AND ANTI-AGEING PRODUCT REVIEWS.**

**Indulge your dark side.** Eat a piece of chocolate or drink a cup of cocoa a day. According to a new study published in journal *Neurology*, dark chocolate may help improve brain health and thinking skills and boost blood flow to the brain in seniors. While researchers are trying to develop a chocolate pill to deliver these benefits, we think the real stuff is much more fun—in moderation of course! (And yes, diabetics please check with your doctor first.)



#### FACTS

- » Steel can be completely recycled any number of times, so much so that most steel has 20 per cent recycled content.
- » Recycling steel and tin saves 74 per cent of the energy used to produce them.

## Then: Old baking pans Now: Three-tier stand

If you have a stock of old baking pans that have seen better days, upcycle them into a useful three-tier stand to store things. You need two or three baking pans, depending on how many tiers you want, two candlesticks and superglue. If the pans look too old or rusty, spray-paint them (with colourful non-toxic paints) to brighten them up. Then, decide which one should be your base pan—this one should not be bent or dented

and ideally be the biggest if your pans are differently sized. In the centre of the base pan, glue the candlestick and let it dry completely for a few hours. Then, apply glue to the base of the next pan and fix on top of the candlestick; repeat with the next pan and candlestick. Let it dry overnight. If you want, you can give it legs by sticking four wooden blocks below the base pan. Now your stand is ready; load 'em up!

#### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. IF YOUR BAKING PANS HAVE HOLES, YOU COULD MAKE A TIERED PLANTER FOR YOUR GARDEN. OR, MAKE A HANGING PLANTER OR BIRD FEEDER BY DRILLING HOLES IN THE SIDES FOR THE STRINGS.
2. MAKE A FANCY WALL-HANGING CHALKBOARD BY STICKING A FILM OF SLATE ON THE PAN.





## Health at hand

Someone's nails can tell you a lot about them. In fact, according to Anand Ghurye, a trainer and counselor associated with Indian Society for Applied Behavioral Sciences and HELP (Health Education Library for People), nails are a mirror of your health. In his well-attended talk at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, on 23 September 2013, he explained how our nails can reveal whether we are suffering from nutritional (calcium, vitamin, magnesium) deficiencies, poor blood circulation and even emotional stress. His informative slideshow revealed the differences in nail shape and colour depending on a person's mental and physical wellbeing. "From the shape of your nails, you can even find the signs and duration of stress," he explained. "A half-circle sign at the joining of the nail and its skin is the sign of a stress-free personality." As nutritional deficiency is also reflected through the nails, he urged the audience to spot the signs and make the



Haresh Patel

required dietary changes as well as visit a doctor for a check-up if necessary. For instance, flaky nails can be an early sign of osteoporosis.

Earlier the same month, the Centre featured a similarly enlightening session on ophthalmological issues, conducted by Dr Saumil Kothari and his wife, Dr Sonia Kothari. The stage was first taken over by Dr Sonia, who elaborated upon age-related vision problems and causes and possible

treatment for diseases such as cataract, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and retinal detachment. She also offered insight into the lenses and spectacles available for seniors. Following this, Dr Saumil Kothari answered the audience's questions, most of which were related to cataract and glaucoma.

The doctors also made their case for eye donation, appealing to the audience through touching stories about the successes of eye transplants.

# Broccoli against arthritis

**I**n India, where about 80 per cent of people over 65 are affected by osteoarthritis, it's probably time to warm up to broccoli to prevent knee joints from further disintegration. Researchers at the University of East Anglia in the UK have found that **a compound in broccoli, called sulforaphane, stops the production**

**of certain enzymes responsible for inflammation**, which gradually causes the wear and tear of knee joints. Their study was carried out primarily on mice, some of whom were fed a sulforaphane-rich diet. As a result, there was much less cartilage damage in these mice than those who weren't given the compound. Sulforaphane,

which is also present in Brussels sprouts and cabbage, but more so in broccoli, has also been known to prevent cancer and inflammation. With this as the base theory, a team of researchers from Norwich Medical School and the School of Biological Sciences, UK, are preparing to start a small-scale trial on arthritis patients.



**THERE'S A CHANCE YOU WILL SOON BE ABLE TO FIGHT CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES WITH ONE SINGLE SHOT, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE A FAMILY HISTORY AND OTHER RISK FACTORS. THE POLYPILL, A COCKTAIL OF FOUR DRUGS, HAS BEEN FOUND MORE EFFECTIVE IN CURBING HEART DISEASES AND RISK FACTORS SIMPLY BECAUSE PATIENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE ONE TABLET REGULARLY THAN THREE TO FOUR. THIS WAS ESTABLISHED THROUGH A CLINICAL TRIAL IN INDIA, ENGLAND, IRELAND AND THE NETHERLANDS.**







## Copper roots

**RESEARCHERS** at the University of Rochester Medical Centre in the US have found a **crucial link between copper in our body and the onset of Alzheimer's disease**. Copper is present in minuscule proportions in water by way of flowing through copper pipes, as well as in nutritional supplements like red meat and nuts. Previous studies have shown that copper is useful in bone growth, hormone secretion and formation of connective tissues in the body. However, this new study shows that there's also a likelihood that copper accumulates in the brain as toxin and breaks down the system that removes unwanted proteins from the brain. This study was also conducted on mice; they were given doses of copper—equivalent to what a normal human being would consume every day—over a period of three months. They found that copper instigated the production of a protein called amyloid beta and caused the inflammation of brain tissues. By breaking down the system that allows for the exit of amyloid beta and other toxins, accumulated copper was found to be one of the main causes of Alzheimer's. Coming back to the importance of copper in other parts of the body, researchers suggest that a balance should be struck between too much and too little copper consumption; something that is yet to be tested.

A South Korean study suggests that **post-menopausal working women are at a reduced risk of developing heart disease and related conditions**, making them healthier than their non-working counterparts. Data from close to 2,000 women between 59 and 65 years was analysed to reveal that 55 per cent of the unemployed had some form of metabolic problem—the risk factors that lead to heart disease, cholesterol or hypertension—while this was the case in only 42 per cent of employed women. Though it could also mean that healthy women work more, the bottom line is that being active is crucial in the long run.

## Fewer calories, please



**E**very year in India, there are a million new cases of cancer, most of them attributed to poor lifestyle habits such as smoking and unhealthy eating. Not all the steps to battle cancer are expensive. A new study suggests that **cutting down on calories while undergoing treatment could be a simple and effective method to fight cancer**. While earlier studies have proved that increase in calorie intake significantly increases cancer growth, a new study by the French Institute for Health and Medical Research in Nice has found that a combination of reduced calorie intake and treatment helps curb can-

cer. The research was carried out on mice that were developing lymphoma, which is a human cancer of the white blood cells. Dividing the sample of mice into four groups, they were each given a combination of normal diet with and without treatment, and a low-calorie diet with and without treatment. The group that received treatment along with a reduced calorie diet was more likely to survive the disease. The reason this combination helps is that fewer calories slow down the rate of metabolism in the body, thereby slowing down overactive proteins responsible for the spread of cancer.

# Cut to perfection

Most people cannot believe that these are made by cutting and sticking paper," says **Meena Raghavan**, 57, pointing towards the framed art that adorns the walls of her house in Navi Mumbai. "They think it is some sort of nib work or sketch. Sometimes I've had to show some people an unframed sample for them to feel the paper."

When Raghavan started making paper art, she was not aware that it was called *Sanjhi*. One of the few *Sanjhi* artists in India today, this self-taught star is rising steadily in name and fame. She was conferred the Best Female Artist award by the International Creative Arts Centre, Mumbai, in May this year. "It was only a year ago that I found out that what I was doing is called *Sanjhi* in India and *kiri-e* in Japan!" she exclaims.

*Sanjhi* originated in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, and is usually based on the themes of Radha and Krishna's mythological stories. The Japanese version, *kiri-e* (*kiri* for paper, *e* for cut) is made with a special kind of paper called *Washi*, which isn't easily available in India. Raghavan, though, improvises and uses normal or textured paper, depending on her theme.

Not many in India are familiar with this art form, which basically involves cutting and sticking intricate and minute pieces of paper onto another paper. The talent of the artist lies in the intricacy and positioning of the pieces, each detail giving the artwork its texture and feel.

For Raghavan, *Sanjhi* began as a simple hobby in her 20s. "I had seen a small photograph in a magazine, under which it said that all one needed for it was paper and scissors. It was so beautiful that I had to try it out." She admits that her first attempt with a pair of scissors was a mess—



Gautam Ruparel

trying to get those intricate details with scissors is a daunting task. That's when her father stepped in and gifted her a surgical knife, which she uses even now.

When her first few pieces fetched her first prize at handicraft exhibitions and art shows, the motivation to make more art shot up. Her hobby took a step back when she got married and had domestic responsibilities, but Raghavan took to it again and never stopped when she realised that it was a form of self-expression. Often, a very intricate piece would take a minimum of 15 days to finish, and spending two or three hours a day in intense concentration was a stress buster.

About three years ago she began to take her art more seriously. She formed a group with five other artists who made different kinds of art, and they held an exhibition in September 2010 in Vashi, Navi Mumbai. "The first exhibition did very well and the people who were exposed to *Sanjhi* for the first time were very impressed," she says, her eyes gleaming with pride.

Most of the work she does is women-oriented, as she feels women face hurdles in every aspect of their lives. "Usually there is a solitary woman or a chained woman in most of my pieces. But now I have outgrown that phase and show women in power." Besides female empowerment, themes of harmony and nature, peace and love fill the frames, sometimes in contrasting colours, but mostly black and white. She also tries abstract art, though it is a different ball game altogether. "Trying to make an abstract *Sanjhi* is difficult because there's no concrete picture of what you're going to do. I innovate even as I experiment."

According to her, *Sanjhi* is one art form where there is no room for error. She compares it to being a surgeon where it's all about skill, patience and concentration. "One wrong cut would mean that the whole piece goes wrong, killing its beauty," says Raghavan, who has been trying to connect with other *Sanjhi* artists in the country. Brimming with ideas, she wants to show that what a painter does with a brush, she can do with paper.

—Neeti Vijaykumar



## BIRTHDAYS

● Singer-songwriter Gordon Matthew Thomas Sumner, known to rock fans as **Sting** (right), turned 62 on 2 October.



● Bollywood actor and producer **Vinod Khanna** (left) turned 67 on 6 October.



● A star who needs no introduction, **Amitabh Bachchan** turns 71 on 11 October.

● American fashion designer **Ralph Lauren**, renowned for his 'Polo' brand, turns 74 on 14 October.

● Indian theatre and cinema actor **Om Puri** (right) turns 65 on 18 October.



● British actor and comedian **John Cleese**, part of the iconic Monty Python troupe in the 1960s, turns 74 on 27 October.



● Indian playback singer **Anuradha Paudwal** (left), who rose to fame with Hindi cinema playback but later turned to devotional singing, turns 59 on 27 October.

● Microsoft founder and philanthropist **Bill Gates** turns 58 on 28 October.

## MILESTONES



● Eminent poet and writer **Haraprasad Das** (left), 67, won the Moortidevi Award presented by the Bhartiya Jnanpith Organisation on 3 September. The award was conferred for *Vamsha*, his poetic rendition of the *Mahabharata*.

● **Srichand Hinduja**, 78, and his brother **Gopichand Hinduja**, who own the Hinduja Group of Companies, were felicitated with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Asian Achievers Awards in London on 6 September.

## IN PASSING

● **Karen Black** (right), an American actor with an affinity for out-of-the-box roles, who was also a screenwriter, singer and songwriter, died from cancer on 8 August. She was 74.



● Anti-superstition activist **Dr Narendra Dabholkar** (left) was shot dead in Pune on 20 August. The incident sparked public outrage. He was 68.

● Renowned scholar, historian and astrologer **Jayantrao Salgaonkar**, the founder of the world's largest selling almanac *Kalnirnay*, passed away on 20 August after complications from food poisoning. He was 84.



● British journalist and TV presenter **David Frost** (left), best known for his revelatory televised interview with former US President Richard Nixon, died on 31 August from a heart attack. He was 74.

● **Ray Dolby** (right), who pioneered noise reduction and surround sound with Dolby Laboratories, passed away on 12 September after battling Alzheimer's disease. He was 80.



## OVERHEARD



"Having to watch yourself age on a giant movie screen can wreak havoc on your psyche. But once you get over a certain hump, there is actually less pressure. You can begin to look great for your age. You don't have to look young anymore. I've moved over to that other side; I'm 55 and feel I'm looking great."

—American actor **Michelle Pfeiffer**, in *Ladies Home Journal* magazine

## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

### A LITTLE BIT OF SUNSHINE

I am often told that I am not a 'typical South Indian wife'. And I agree. After years of being just a homemaker for my doctor-husband and three children, I became a banker but quit my job in 1984. There were so many things I wanted to do! There was so much I had to explore.

I tried my hand at Ikebana, bonsai and different kinds of flower arrangements; I sang on stage; I went back to Bharatanatyam; I learnt to make candles for Diwali; and I mastered the art of gift-wrapping. I enjoyed every one of these things and encouraged others to do the same.

I am president of the Chiran Fort Ladies Club and we meet once a month. Last year, we had a salsa instructor and last

**Hatti: Do good to feel good**



Shyamola Khanna

month we had a zumba instructor. Our ladies were more than happy to shake a leg!

In my own little way, I try to protect the environment. I am, therefore, promoting the use of cloth bags and employ two women to make bags out of old clothes donated by my friends. I give these bags to the flower vendor outside my home and hand them out at *puja* and functions where gifts are given to those who attend the ceremonies.

I also teach some of these women the basics of reading and writing. I am multilingual and it helps them to open up to me. More than a literacy class, these sessions are a platform to raise awareness where I tell them about various facilities the government offers the poor.

My recent election as president of the Senior Citizens Forum has given me a way to work with seniors below the poverty line. I have already broached the subject with the forum members, who are enthusiastic about the idea.

I am also a data bank for all kinds of services available to seniors of all social strata: Who can provide meals to a senior while their spouse is away? Where and how can I get an Aadhar card? How do I get my passport renewed? I need to move into assisted living, please help. I deal with these questions every day. I would love the forum to be involved so that seniors can be connected to the vendors who supply these services. For instance, not many are aware that there are Day Care Centres across Hyderabad set up by the municipal corporation. Seniors are encouraged to visit these centres, interact with each other, play board games, watch a movie, or listen to a motivational speaker. Attending these centres helps get silvers out of their depression and feelings of low self-esteem.

People often ask me why I do these things. Well, my answer is that it is my prayer. Helping people who cannot help themselves is like a *puja* for me. My husband is ailing and housebound now but it makes him very happy that I spend my time this way. When I come home and narrate my experiences to him, he feels that he has been part of my journey.

My message to my silver friends: Visit the nearest Day Care Centre or contact the Senior Citizens Forum. It will bring some sunshine into your sunset years!

—Kamakshi Hatti, Hyderabad





Trekking gives Harolika a high

## TRAIL BLAZER

I am 72 and I love the outdoors; it is spiritually sustaining as well as joyous. While I enjoy gardening, embroidery and reading, trekking is my biggest passion and it has taken me through some really tough climbs high in the mountains in North India and Nepal.

I owe my inspiration for these adventures to my husband, who was a mountaineer in the Indian Army. One of the most difficult treks I have ever done was the one to Panch Kedar in the Garhwal. Most people think there is just one Kedarnath but there are actually five. This was in 1998, when transport was meagre and rough. But it was well worth it.

The most fun trek I have embarked on was with my husband, from Yamunotri to Dodital in Uttarakhand, the birthplace of Lord Ganesha. From

there, we went to Gangotri. Contrary to what most people believe, the Ganga does not originate from here but from Gomukh, which is an entire day's trek from Gangotri. I cannot describe the exhilaration I felt, standing at the very mouth of the Ganga. Naturally, I collected a few drops of water and brought them home!

The first major expedition I undertook was the Dharamsala trek with a group. From Dharamsala, we proceeded to McLeod Ganj, Elaka Glacier and then to Indrahar Pass. It was my first high-altitude trek and a memorable one. I trek with groups regularly, and with family and friends. Now, my daughter and son join me whenever they can.

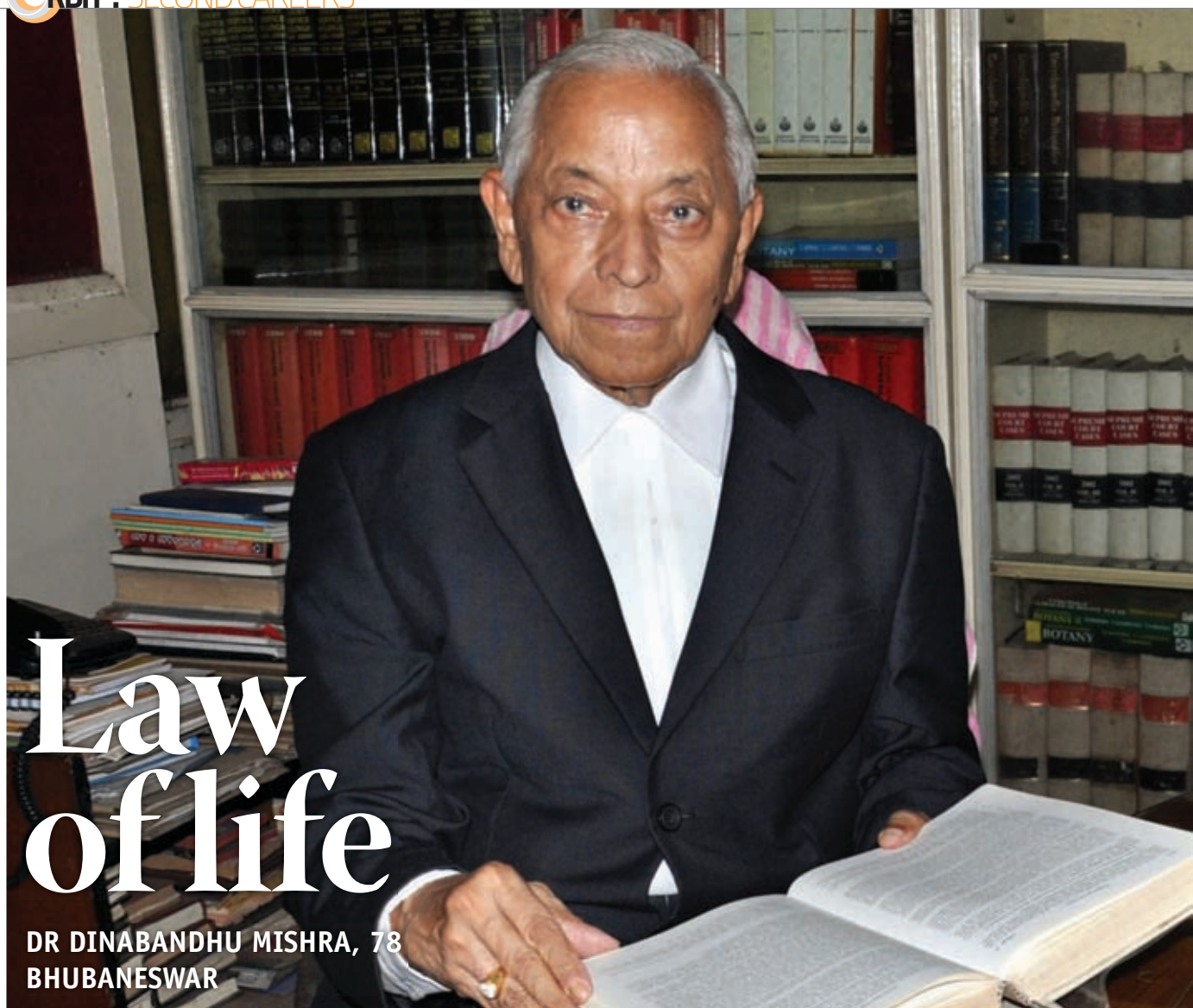
Trekking in Nepal is especially enjoyable because expeditions are very well organised and comfortable. All along the routes, at short distances, you find

small inns, where you can stop for the night, a day or two, or simply for a cup of tea and an omelette.

Even though I have done some of the biggest treks in North India, I am yet to climb the mountains in Sikkim. I have wanted to go there for a while and had to cancel plans twice owing to political uncertainty in the state. If I cannot accomplish this dream, I will probably head for Gosaikunda in Nepal instead.

I am very careful about my diet and make sure I get the right nutrition so that I can blaze many more trails. But, perhaps, the sweetest experience on these adventures is scooping up nature's nectar, cool and sweet water from streams and tiny trickles in the mountains to slake my thirst. How miraculous that something as simple as this sustains all life on earth!

—Jaya Harolika, Pune



# Law of life

**DR DINABANDHU MISHRA, 78  
BHUBANESWAR**

I had a very successful career in education. But as retirement drew near, I started worrying about the years to come. The idea of sitting idle was never an option.

After I completed my doctorate in botany from the University of Manitoba in Canada, I started my career in 1956 as a lecturer of botany in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. In the following years, I held various positions, including principal of Ravenshaw College; principal of Khallikote College, Bhubaneswar; vice-chancellor of Sri Jagannath University, Puri; as well as additional secretary to the Government Education Department, special secretary to the Government

Education Department and director of higher education for the Odisha government, in Bhubaneswar.

I have written books and articles for higher secondary Odisha Board students. Teaching is my real passion. After holding so many positions in the education service, I kept wondering what to do next. Then it struck me that there is no retirement age for lawyers. I decided to study law. I was 55 then. When I was director of the Textbook Bureau in Bhubaneswar, I applied for a law degree at Utkal University and got a seat. I was the senior most student in class. I did not face any struggle as the teachers were my students for I had been an Utkal

University syndicate member for eight years.

I retired in 1993 from all educational positions and stayed at home for a year. I had a degree in law but it is a practical subject and I had no working knowledge. I did not feel comfortable becoming a junior under any other lawyer.

Teaching and law are two very different fields. Teaching was effortless after some time, but in law you have to be very prompt. There is a constant need to stay in tune with changing law, amendments and judgements across the country in every type of case. To understand the subject,





## COVER TO COVER

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

**I have a big collection of books acquired through my years as a professor of English literature. Now I want to share them with others by starting a small public library. Can I take this up as an option that generates income? Where do I begin?**

First, figure out what your theme or purpose is. Do you want to keep the library thematic—literature, economics, religion—or general? Is your library aimed at students, older readers, or both? This vision is important as the last two factors will depend on it. Normally, small libraries cater to everyone, offering all kinds of subjects, and include magazines and comic books. This decided, you will need to choose your location. Ideally, the area shouldn't have another library that serves a similar clientele; being a start-up, it will take a long time to build a loyal following, so go safe and avoid competitive themes. When you rent space, make sure it is adequately ventilated and gets enough light.

The next task is to procure books and build your library. You could start with what you have and build further by accepting book donations from the public, going through flea markets, and networking with book publishers and independent book distributors. Your income will depend on how much you charge for book checkouts and memberships. Hosting events and book launches is a great way to get people talking about your library. If your space can accommodate enough people, start with free book readings, poetry sessions and book launches.

—Anita Harwani runs a private library and book store in Kolkata

Piusha Mohanty

I studied all the legal textbooks thoroughly for a whole year. As I had held various top positions in educational departments, I had thorough knowledge of problems faced by staffers. I decided to take up service-related cases, as I was involved in such cases throughout my career. I have now been practising for the past 18 years in the Supreme Court, Odisha High Court, and state and central tribunals. My first case was Harprasand Das versus Government Press; I went to Supreme Court for that case. I won and it was a great morale booster. I have hardly lost any cases till now.

My wife passed away in 1989 and my son passed away at the age of 34; he

is survived by his wife and two sons, with whom I live. The sole purpose of my practice is to keep myself engaged. I do not need money and accept as fee what people give me happily. My brother-in-law is a senior Supreme Court lawyer in Delhi; he has been a pillar of strength in my second career.

I believe there are two things that motivate you and bring success in life. One is *ichcha shakti* or desire and the other is *karma shakti* or action. I follow the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and believe submission to the Almighty is the end to all our sorrows. I want to leave this world unseen, unnoticed and unlamented.

—As told to Ruby Nanda



## Balance your electrolytes: Diet, water and exercise will help

I am 70 years old. Two weeks ago, I had fever. I became extremely weak, to the extent that I couldn't walk and almost fainted one day. I thought the weakness was because of fever. However, when I went to the doctor, he got some tests done and told me that my sodium level has gone down drastically and immediately put me on medication to stabilise it. Is there a diet that I could additionally follow to avoid this problem in the future?

The condition you are talking about is known as 'hyponatremia' and occurs when the level of sodium in the blood is either abnormally low or when excessive water dilutes the amount of sodium in the body (water-sodium imbalance). Hyponatremia is more common in older adults. Contributing factors include age-related changes and a greater likelihood of developing a chronic disease that affects your body's sodium balance. Medical illnesses—congestive heart failure, liver failure, renal failure or pneumonia—may be associated with hyponatremia. Although the treat-

ment for this condition depends on the causative factor, a healthy, balanced and moderate sodium diet can help.

### Dos and don'ts

Excessive intake of water lowers sodium levels in the blood; so a person with a past history of low sodium levels should not drink more than 2 litre of water in a 24-hour period.

Eat a healthy balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and natural oils, as each food component has some amount of sodium.

Different types of foods and drinks can be consumed to support an increase in body sodium. Consuming electrolytes is an easy way to supplement and support the electrolyte balance of sodium, calcium, potassium, chlorine, magnesium and bicarbonate. Kelp, Swiss chard, beet greens and oysters are foods that are naturally very rich in sodium, with over 65 mg of sodium per serving.

Choose salty and healthy snacks between meals instead of sugary ones. Some healthy options are salted roasted almonds, roasted *papad*, roasted peanuts and *chana*.

Green, leafy vegetables are not only rich in sodium but have ample antioxidants that are good for health and help fight age-related disorders.

Milk is again a very good source of sodium besides being rich in proteins and calcium, which are important nutrients required in old age.

Avoid foods that can cause indigestion, headaches or muscle cramps. These are signs of food intolerance. Eating these foods hinders the rebuilding of electrolytes.

Reintroduce electrolytes slowly back into the body with the use of an electrolyte supplement.

Maintain an exercise regime. Exercise acts as a preventive measure and as a treatment to restore electrolytes. When you exercise, your metabolism burns





## READERS ASK

**I am 58 years old. My skin is getting drier by the day. As a result, it itches as well. Despite applying a moisturiser, the dryness persists. Please suggest a diet so my skin becomes soft and supple again.**

One of the most common problems as we age is dry skin. Many seniors suffer from fragile skin, itchiness and cracking. Proper and consistent care can help prevent these problems.

Include rich sources of Vitamin C in your diet as it is a prime skincare ingredient. It aids in the body's production of collagen, a protein that forms the basic structure of skin. Consume two to three servings of citrus foods like oranges, grapefruit, acerola cherries and tomatoes every day. In case you get tired of eating all that fruit, hot peppers, bell peppers and sprouts also have a good amount of vitamin C.

Increase your intake of Vitamin A and foods rich in beta carotene like spinach, leafy vegetables and mangoes. It's best to get this vitamin from food and not from supplements, as too much Vitamin A can cause health problems.

Vitamin E is another component of good skin health. Rich sources include almonds, pistachios and walnuts. Add foods rich in omega-3, like oysters and salmon, to your diet as they reduce dryness and inflammation.

Avoid excessive intake of tea or coffee as the caffeine in these beverages dehydrates the body. Focus on wholegrain foods in your diet.

The water you drink passes through the body quickly. While it is good for flushing toxins, it doesn't help the body retain much moisture. Water in fresh fruits and vegetables is released gradually so it can be absorbed by the body over time to help keep you and your skin hydrated.


Exercise or practise yoga—both improve blood circulation to the skin cells.

Use mild soaps without perfumes or added dyes.

Evening snacks could comprise roasted *chana* or *papad* with a cup of tea. A small bowl of soybean is also a healthy option.

Dinner should be light with two chapattis, vegetable, yoghurt and salad. For non-vegetarians, chicken or fish in roasted and baked forms is a healthy choice.

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



Excessive intake of water lowers sodium levels in the blood; eat a healthy balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and natural oils, as each food component has some amount of sodium. Green, leafy vegetables are not only rich in sodium but contain antioxidants

food and vitamins more efficiently, which aids in rebuilding electrolytes.

Do not excessively lower the intake of salt in your diet.

### Diet plan

A healthy diet for the day should start with a cup of green tea with one to two digestive biscuits (these are rich in fibre, which is good for bowel movement). Constipation is a major problem among the elderly.

A warm and healthy breakfast could be a bowl of vegetable porridge with two to three slices of papaya.

At mid-morning, eat six to seven soaked almonds or walnuts with one fruit. Almonds and walnuts are not only rich in sodium but omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin E, magnesium and folate.

For lunch, go green with a bowl of green leafy vegetables, a cup of *dal* with two chapattis and some nice green salad.



**SILVER LINING** BY V S NATARAJAN

## Gut feeling: High fibre diet and fluids for relief

Bowel function varies tremendously, not only from person to person, but also for the same person at different times. The large intestine (which comprises the colon and the rectum) is taken for granted in good metabolic health. But when bowel movements suffer, the large intestine becomes the focus of attention.

Constipation can be said to be more of a problem rather than a disease for silvers. The day is never done for most people. However, handling and preventing constipation is in our own hands. Constipation can be broadly classified into two types. First, when one is capable of easy bowel movements daily, though the stool is hard. The other when the stool is normal, though the frequency of bowel movements is only once in two or three days.

Constipation sometimes develops suddenly and lasts briefly. Among older people, however, constipation more often begins gradually and persists for months or years. Fortunately, the problem usually responds well to treatment.

### Causes

- **Low-fibre diet:** Changes in diet, particularly eating food that is low in fibre, can impact metabolism because fibre helps hold water in the stool and increases its bulk. Stool that contains less water moves more slowly through the digestive tract.

- **Inadequate exercise:** Decline in physical activity owing to ageing may slow stool transit; physical activity stimulates the intestines to facilitate bowel movements.

- **Medications:** Many drugs slow the transit of stool through the large intestine. These include iron supplements, opioids, certain drugs taken for high blood pressure or coronary artery disease (calcium channel blockers), drugs with anti-cholinergic effects (for example, certain antihistamines, sedatives and antidepressants), antacids that contain calcium or aluminium hydroxide, and some drugs used to relieve nausea (serotonin antagonists).

- **Depression:** Chronic pain and certain mental health disorders, especially depression, can also slow movement by interfering with the digestive tract's bowel ability.

- **Neurological disorders:** Parkinson's disease can also cause constipation. Diabetes can damage nerves that normally help control intestinal transit. Nerve or spinal cord injury may also cause constipation.

- **Intestinal pathologies:** Various pathologies of the intestine such as tumours, carcinomas, stricture, obstruction, piles, prolapse and anal fissures.

- **Surgeries:** Abdominal surgery may also cause constipation because bands of fibrous tissues (adhesions) that can gradually form after surgery can slow or even block or obstruct movement of stool through the digestive tract.

- **Reduced fluid intake:** Elders, especially women, drinking less water for fear of urinating often are more prone to constipation.

- **Practical difficulties:** Elders abstain from bowel movement when they find it tough because of hip and knee pain or poor toilet facilities.

- **Hormones and electrolytes:** Certain disorders can slow intestinal transit, including an underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism), high blood calcium levels (hypercalcemia), etc.

- **Faecal impaction:** Constipation involving impaction of stool in the rectum





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Constipation can be said to be more of a problem than a disease for silvers. For some, it develops suddenly and lasts briefly. Among older people, however, constipation more often begins gradually and persists for months or years. Fortunately, the problem usually responds well to treatment

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may be accompanied by loss of control of bowel movements or leakage and soiling (faecal incontinence).

### The effects

When not taken seriously, constipation can lead to several serious problems, including life-threatening situations. There is no need to bother about constipation that occurs for one or two days, but constipation persisting for months to years is not a healthy sign and can have some serious consequences:

- When elders strain owing to constipation, chest pain and syncopal attacks can occur.
- Constipation can trigger hernia and varicose veins.
- It distresses and depresses the heart and mind.
- Constipation can also cause anal fissuring.
- Many a time, it can lead to urinary and intestinal obstruction.
- Constipation may create an addiction for laxatives.

### Diagnosis

A doctor usually relies on the person's account of constipation when making a diagnosis. But the doctor also examines the rectum with a gloved finger and, if stool is present, determines the amount and consistency. The person's symptoms and an examination are often all that is needed to confirm a diagnosis and determine the likely cause. When the cause remains unclear, blood tests may be done. The doctor may also recommend an examination with a flexible viewing tube, either of just the lower part of the large intestine (rectum and sigmoid colon), a major part of the large intestine (sigmoidoscopy), or the entire large intestine (colonoscopy). This examination is important if constipation has developed suddenly or is worsening noticeably.

### Preventing constipation

- Drink 2-3 litre of water per day.
- Exercise regularly.
- Stop unnecessary drugs.
- Eat fibre-rich food such as spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, bitter gourd, dates, figs, raisins, mangoes and bananas. Surprisingly, pepper, mint and chillies have a rich amount of fibre!
- If these conservative measures don't work, enema suppositories or tablets can be taken after consultation with your doctor.

### Laxatives

Bulking agents like Isaphgol, psyllium husk, and methyl cellulose help hold water in the stool and add bulk to it. Those who use bulking agents should always drink plenty of fluids. Osmotic agents like lactulose pull large amounts of water into the large intestine, making the stool soft and loose. Stimulants like senna, cascara and bisacodyl directly stimulate the walls of the large intestine, causing them to contract.

Stool softeners such as docusate help water to penetrate the stool more easily and soften it. But care should be taken not to get addicted to these. If constipation is secondary to a disease, all efforts should be directed towards treating the prime disease.

### The laxative habit

Laxatives have a place in the treatment of constipation, but are only one among many options. Not surprisingly, many people who get relief from constipation after taking a laxative turn to them the next time; this can become a concern. Many laxatives are easy to take, and the taste of some may even be appealing.

The temptation is strong for some people to set a goal of bowel movement at least once every day and think that laxatives are the best way to achieve that goal. But daily bowel movements are not necessary for good health. The laxative habit is one that is more easily prevented than broken.

*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](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

### Face the world: Tone and enhance your appearance with yoga

Is it possible to tone your face through exercise, or yoga? In a manner of speaking, yes. People concerned about their fitness are usually also concerned about their appearance as part of the whole picture. Indeed, your appearance can say a lot about you—whether you are positive or upbeat, which affects distinctly how you look—and the sort of lines your face will eventually acquire: sad lines, frown lines or laughter lines. The tone of the skin and flesh reflects your diet and whether you are eating good collagen-building foods. And finally, a toned face shows that you are dedicated to a work-out regimen that encompasses the entire body, rather than a lackadaisical routine.

In yoga, most poses that involve the upper body are face toners. This is because the muscles that support the face, from the neck upwards, are tightened and shaped, and they pass on the benefits to the face. A pose like the cobra (*bhujangasana*), for instance, tones the neck, jaw line, cheeks, forehead and the back of the neck. Obviously, for such poses to work, form and technique are very impor-

tant. Interestingly, because the upper back challengers in yoga demand a lot of strength and breath control, most people tend to cheat in them, thereby sabotaging the effect on the face.

In the upper back poses, it is important to shift the challenge to the arms, upper back and the neck, instead of shifting it to other parts of the body. Other poses that provide a challenge to the upper back and thus help tone the face are the locust (*salabhasana*) in all its variations; the camel (*ushtrasana*); bow (*dhanurasana*); wheel (*chakrasana*); upward facing dog (*urdhva svanasana*); and the snake (*sarpasana*), to name a few. Another one, exclusively for the face, is the seated goddess face (*kaliasana*), where the mouth is wide open, tongue lolls out, and eyes look upward. The rest of the body is also tensed, adding to the impact. In addition to all this, to put your best face forward, include tissue-repairing foods compatible to your normal diet, such as proteins, dairy products, lots of greens, and red and yellow vegetables and fruits.

#### YOGIC MOVES



#### Crocodile pose (*makarasana*), advanced version

Lie down on your stomach. Interlock the fingers behind your head. Push the elbow outwards, as comfortably as you can—this can be difficult for beginners. Your feet may be together (if you wish to tone the hips) or a bit spread out (if you are stiff). Inhale and exhale. Inhaling, lift your chin up, with the hands continuing to be held behind the head with interlocked

fingers. Look ahead, hold for a few seconds, breathing normally. Exhale and drop chin back to the ground. Do this a few times, or hold the pose longer, according to your stamina.

**Benefits:** This pose tones the upper part of the body, including the face. It also helps heal spinal problems and boosts the mood.

**Model:** Shriram P 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](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org). (Please consult your physician before following the advice given here)*





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## THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT ANJAMMA, NELLORE

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

Meeting 73 year-old great-grandmother Smt Anjamma and her 57 year-old son Sri Chinni Venkata Subbarao, I experienced two kinds of devotion: his devotion as a son and hers as a devotee for her Lord. In an unhurried manner, he sat beside her and played the role of translator as she spoke in Telugu. His love for her, his attention to her every need and his admiration for her values made it

obvious that for him, his mother was no less than God: *Matru devo bhava*.

Talking to Smt Anjamma was like being in the presence of a saint. Every thought of hers led to the divine, every reply was steeped in religiosity and equanimity, and every moment seemed a prayer for nirvana. A mother of three, grandmother to nine and great-grandmother to five, she truly

believes that for a woman, taking care of her family is akin to worshipping the Lord.

***Namaste Anjammaji. Tell me about your childhood.***

I was born in Kavali village near Nellore. My mother was a great devotee of Lord Hanuman, whose mother's name was Anjana. Hence I was named Anjamma. I grew up in a large family of a dozen members. My parents instilled good *samskara* in me.

***How old were you when you got married? Tell us something about your husband.***

When I turned 15, I was married to Sri Chinni Srinivasulu. Since then, I have lived in Nellore. He was a well-respected person and believed that we must instil the right values in our children from a young age. Even though he passed away when he was just 40 and did not see any of his grandchildren, I can see his positive influence on the children even now.

***Your family says that you subscribe to the values of earlier times....***

It is not about old or new times, it is about values. Earlier we believed in devotion, while nowadays people believe in donations. Can everything be bought with wealth? Life is not just about material aspirations but one's spiritual growth. I also believe that even though we did not study as much, our minds worked better. I studied only up to the fifth standard, yet I don't need a computer to do my mathematical calculations. While I was growing up, my elders also taught me the value of protecting



Chennai Pix



domestic animals such as cows and goats. I think it is very important to see animals as an integral part of our lives.

**Are you saying that people lived with far greater integrity earlier than they do today?**

I can't define it like that but, yes, honour was an important word. We did not need to draw up contracts for everything. I grew up seeing that people kept their word. But the present generation is running behind wealth. They are forgetting to take pride in one's community and protecting family honour.

**In your family, your grandchildren show a lot of respect for you. This means that you have imparted the right values.**

I feel blessed because my family has always been receptive to our value systems. My children and grandchildren have deep religious orientation. I would love to share with you that my granddaughter Madhavi and granddaughter-in-law Alakananda have borne me great-grandchildren this year. What was wonderful was how they spent their pregnancies like a spiritual practice; along with their spouses, they followed the method of *Arham Garbhasadhana* as taught by a Jain monk, Upadhyaya Praveen Rishi. One of his disciples Shilpa Katrela guided them in this *sadhana*.

**Chinni Venkata Subbarao (son):** When my daughter Madhavi won the state rank in her 12<sup>th</sup> standard, she just said one thing when she was interviewed: "My grandmother is my inspiration."

**Madhavi (granddaughter):** What I have always admired about my grandma is her harmonious relationship with my mother Smt Suneetha. They share so much affection and respect for each other. As a child, I grew up absorbing and learning whatever they were saying and doing.



Photographs by Yamini Vasudevan

**Pavan (grandson):** My wife and my sister were quite diligent in following the *sadhana* taught by Shilpaji. Now my second sister is also aspiring to do the same. For my grandma, religion is a way of life. My mother, on the other hand, is practical as well as religious.

**Anjammaji, what is the secret of such affection in your family? How does one find the path that begets such blessings?**

It is the path that leads to the Guru and not to the world. My inspiration is Guru Anubhavanandaji who belongs to the *sampradaya* of Achala Guru. From him, I have learnt to devote myself to a religious way of life.

**In your religious pursuit, what is one of the best things you have discovered?**

It is more important to be good than rich. Being warm and hospitable are important values. According to our tradition, when a guest comes home, we wash their feet and place a mat for

them to be seated. And we offer them whatever we have cooked. A guest should be served in the same manner as one would serve God. For me, talking to you today is indeed a blessed outcome of some good *punya* that I have done in the past.

**The pleasure was mine. I have been enriched by listening to your views. In fact, I can say that your voice has a mesmerising quality. Kindly sing a bhajan for me. After that, I would be delighted if you will share one of your favourite recipes with me.**

I truly love singing *bhajan*. As for the recipe, would you like to learn the *Bellam pongal*, which is offered to Goddess Parvathi, or the *Chakkarai pongal* for Lord Vishnu, or the *Vadapappu panakam* for Goddess Lakshmi?

**I can see that you prepare food as an offering for the Gods. I have heard so much of your Bellam pongal that I will be honoured to learn this dish from you. Thank you.**

According to our tradition, a guest should be served in the same manner as one would serve God



## FROM SMT ANJAMMA'S KITCHEN

### *Bellam pongal*

A sweet dish made with rice as an offering to Goddess Parvathi. The magic ingredient is jaggery, which lends the rich brown colour. The best is the red variety of jaggery, also known as *paagu bellam*. Smt Anjamma recommends making *pongali* in a mud vessel known as *rachiappa*. Food cooked in this vessel does not spoil easily and has a superior taste when compared to steel vessels.

### Ingredients

- Rice: 1 cup
- *Mung dal* (split yellow lentils): ½ cup
- Powdered jaggery (dark red variety): 3½ cups

- Cashew nuts: ¼ cup; broken into bits
- Copra (dried coconut): 2 tbs; chopped into tiny bits
- Boiled milk: ½ to 1 litre
- Ghee: ¾ cup
- Cardamom powder: a pinch
- Cooking camphor (*pachaikar-puram*): a small pinch

### Method

Soak rice and *dal* for 15 minutes; wash and strain. In a large pressure pan, add four cups of water and bring to boil. Add the rice and *dal* and cook until it turns soft. Add half the milk and continue to cook until the milk has been absorbed. Mash it gently. Now, add jaggery and cook. The consistency of the *pongali* will turn syrupy with the jaggery. As you continue to cook, the jaggery liquid will get absorbed. If the jaggery is not clean, it must be

cooked in 1 cup water. Bring to a boil and strain to remove the grit. Continue with the recipe. Add more milk if required and cook. Add cardamom powder. Meanwhile, in a small wok, roast the cashew nuts and copra bits until they turn golden. Along with the ghee, add it to the *pongali*. Cook for a couple of minutes and add the cooking camphor. Switch off the flame immediately. Once cooking camphor is added, it cannot be reheated.

*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*



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# Will power

Draw up a Will with care to ensure smooth passage of your inheritance, urges **Priya Desai**

**T**he popular maxim 'where there is a will there is a way' refers to the human will, but a legal Will can also open up the right path. When there is no Will, issues of inheritance can drag on for decades, particularly in cases where high stakes are involved. A high-profile Will battle, worth ₹ 20,000 crore, reached its culmination recently in July 2013 after almost 21 years. The property belonged to Harinder Singh Brar, the erstwhile maharaja of Faridkot. The litigant in the legal battle was his eldest daughter Amrit Kaur, now 80 years of age. The Chandigarh court declared an existing Will "forged and illegal" and bestowed 50 per cent of the colossal ancestral property to Amrit Kaur. Deepinder Kaur, the beneficiary's sister, is slated to file an appeal against this ruling. But then, that's another story.

Don't underestimate the power of the Will, because it's a piece of paper that has the power to make or break destinies. There are numerous instances of outrageous Wills as well, like the one left behind by Portuguese aristocrat Luis Carlos de Noronha Cabral da Camara. He was eccentric enough to randomly pick the names of 70 strangers from a telephone book and bequeath all his amassed wealth to them. Now, if that's not a stroke of luck, what is?

In another instance, American businesswoman Leona Helmsley, dubbed the 'Queen of Mean', left behind a \$ 12 million trust in her Will. The beneficiary was Trouble, her pet dog, while her grandchildren were left with a pittance. When the Will came to light, the grandchildren were left fuming at the atrocity meted out to them. It suffices to say that they encountered their share of canine Trouble.

## The significance of a Will

Most people don't even give a passing thought to making a Will. It would be more appropriate to say that a large number of people shy away from writing it. The problem is a global one. According to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission, 50 per cent of Australians die without leaving behind a Will. The Americans are much the same. And by the looks of it, Indians harbour what can be termed a 'Will fear'. They literally cold-shoulder the issue and refuse to even acknowledge the need for making one. It goes without saying that

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**A Will is the only way to ensure that property is distributed the way you want it to be. It is critical to understand the consequences of not leaving behind a Will**

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there are scores of instances where the wealthy have died intestate.

The general misconception is that designating a nominee for movable and immovable property obviates the need to write a Will. But unfortunately, a nominee is no more than a trustee in the event of a dispute. The sure-shot way of avoiding legal complications is to assign the property to the inheritor through a Will. This is all the more significant when people have huge amounts of wealth and property. A Will is the only way to ensure that property is distributed the way you want it to be. It is critical to understand the consequences of not leaving behind a Will. Sometimes,

irrespective of whether the deceased has left a Will or not, family feuds can crop up. Who can forget how the Birlas and the Lodhas drew their swords for the jillions of billions that Priyamvada Birla left behind in her Will?

## The who and the how

By definition, a Will is "A legal statement written by an individual, stating the manner in which his or her wealth may be distributed after his or her demise." A person who makes the Will is the Testator while the people or organisations who receive the benefits are referred to as the legatees or beneficiaries.

In simple words, the Testator expresses his/her wishes in a written document. The Will covers intentions about how the wealth will be divided and distributed amongst the beneficiaries, after his/her demise. That is when the written document is considered to be a legal declaration and actually comes into effect.

If a person passes away without making a Will, it is said that he/she has died intestate. A person can bequeath self-acquired property or any ancestral property that he/she is the sole owner of. Via a Will, the Testator regulates the succession or provides for it according to his/her wishes.

You can make your Will at any age. Very recently, my 30 year-old neighbour requested me to sign as a witness on his Will. That turned out to be an epiphany of sorts for me. It impressed upon me that you do not have to wait till you are wrinkled and old to write a Will. In India, any person above the age of 21 is eligible to make a Will. Another fact that a lot of people are not aware of is that it is not mandatory that a Will be written





on stamp paper. A simple plain sheet of paper will hold as much water as a watermarked one.

#### **The written word**

It is safer to handwrite a Will (though this is not a requirement). In the event of a dispute, a handwritten Will is easier to validate and verify. Another convoluted subject is that of inheritance and succession and the laws surrounding it are equally complex.

One more common misconception is that your property will pass on to your spouse by natural succession. Legally, children and relatives can stake claim to it. Another point that cannot go unmentioned is that some laws are specific to your religion. For example, The Indian Succession Act 1925 applies in specific to Wills and codicils (supplements) made by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Jains and Parsis. The Muslim Personal Law governs the Muslim community.

#### **Cost factor**

Preparing a Will need not burn a hole in your pocket. On the contrary, a delay or avoidance on your part has the potential to lay the burden of heavy legal expenses on your heirs. Not to mention the energy and time they will

have to spend on the entire exercise. Even if you hire the services of a lawyer to have your Will made, the cost will be negligible.

A Will is not written in stone. It can be amended, altered and, if necessary, changed completely at any point of time. The changes should never be verbal. They have to be inked. For instance, if you acquire a new house or stocks, you can incorporate those changes into your Will.

#### **Registering a Will**

You also have the option to register a Will, though it is not mandatory to do so. However, once a Will has been registered, all subsequent changes will have to be incorporated in the form of codicils. The Will has to be signed by two witnesses. Their contact details have to be mentioned on the document. The witnesses are not required to be aware of the content of the Will.

The Testator can appoint an executor to supervise the wealth distribution in the event of his/her death. It is important that this person does not have any vested interest in your property and is committed enough to execute the terms of the Will. You will have to apprise the executor of his role and

seek his consent before proceeding with the appointment.

#### **The technicalities**

There are numerous Internet resources you can access to gain some understanding about how exactly the Will needs to be written. You can use interactive platforms like [www.lawyersclubindia.com](http://www.lawyersclubindia.com) for Will-related information and sample Wills. These can be a reference point to guide you about the contents and technicalities. A Will need not be drafted according to a fixed format.

Wealth creation is only the base of the financial planning pyramid. The structure will be complete only when you decide what happens with your wealth once you are no more. Having a wealth-succession plan in place is another important face of this pyramid. It is not advisable to transfer your wealth to beneficiaries during your lifetime; there have been innumerable reports of senior citizens being financially, emotionally and physically tortured and abused by children and relatives. The ideal way to control your financial resources is to write a Will. Distribution of wealth has to take place after your demise. No one but you should be privy to its contents. However, do let them know the location of the Will, instead of sending them on a treasure hunt.

#### **If you wish it, Will it**

It is an irrefutable fact that every person will die. Thus, a person must make a clear and concise Will in one's lifetime. A Will should be a reflection of your wishes, with a clear-cut indication about the distribution of your assets and wealth. Death does not have a calling card and can come unannounced. You cannot time death, but you can definitely time your Will. And the right time is now. Make writing your Will a priority. Because, where there is a Will, you will have your say.

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*The writer is a Mumbai-based economist*

# The doctor is in

From being a physician on Assam's tea estates to being a part-time freedom fighter and still running a private practice, Dr Keshab Chandra Bordolaye has done it all, reports **Tapati Baruah Kashyap**



Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

**D**r Keshab Chandra Bordolaye has more experience than most doctors in the world can boast of—70 years of wisdom and expertise that have restored countless people to health and well-being.

And, amazingly, at the age of 100, he's still practicing medicine. Which is why you would have to forgive us for assuming that the gentleman who greeted us in the impeccable living room was the good doctor's son!

Looking not a day over 80, Dr Bordolaye breaks into a warm smile in his home in Beltola, a plush locality of Guwahati. On a table next to an armchair is a stethoscope, a sphygmomanometer and two volumes of a



recently published book on medicine. Sharp as a tack, Dr Bordolaye notices the glimmer of surprise on our faces and says, "I have to keep abreast of the latest developments in medical science. My general experience is so vast that I think I am a perfect general practitioner."

Not many can sum up their life's work with such unpretentious candour and, indeed, Dr Bordolaye's words were meant only as a statement of fact. There's a chamber on the ground floor of his three-storey home where he sees patients, a sanctum that resonates of the gratitude of a multitude of patients. "Sometimes, I see five to six cases a day. Yesterday, a couple brought their child who was suffering from stomach pain," he says, adding that he does not charge a fee. "At this age, I don't require money. But I want to keep utilising my knowledge and expertise for society."

It is rare to find a physician more passionate than Dr Bordolaye. Yet, it was a quirk of fate that led him to the medical field. After matriculation, he had intended to pursue an engineering degree in Dhaka (then part of undivided India). But with financial constraints standing in the way, he joined the Berry White Medical School in Dibrugarh (later Assam Medical College), where he acquired certification as a licentiate medical practitioner in 1941.

"We were around 40 students, but all of them, except me, have passed away," says our centenarian. That was the beginning of a career serving as a doctor on the tea estates in Assam, and a life filled with high drama during the heady days of India's independence struggle.

Dr Bordolaye's first posting at the Amguri tea estate was uneventful but the young physician was eager to learn. "I worked under a brilliant British doctor called H C Barlie, who was also president of the British Medical Association in India." The young doc-

tor spent most of his time collecting female anopheles mosquitoes from the nearby Jhanji River and sending them to the Ronald Ross Institute at Cinnamora for analysis. "In those days, malaria was a killer in Assam and I also had to ensure that every tea labourer took their quinine tablets every day."

Two years later, Dr Bordolaye found himself battling cholera at the Balijan tea estate near Jorhat. Fighting the disease was a huge challenge; the cholera vaccine was available 250 miles away at the Pasteur Institute in Shillong. "It took two days to receive the vaccines, but by then, 10 to 20 more people had succumbed," he recalls.

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**"Today, you can treat a patient even without touching or feeling him. In our times, we used to physically examine our patients. We weren't specialists but we could handle all types of cases. Also, money was simply immaterial"**

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The next chapter in his life was replete with politics and much excitement as national sentiment was approaching fever pitch. He got married in 1942 and was posted to the Soklatinga tea estate. "I had become a hardcore freedom fighter by then but I could not take an active part in the movement owing to my responsibilities as a doctor."

Or so he thought. The young and compassionate physician launched a labour union for the oppressed tea estate workers, a move that drew him in much deeper than he had intended. "The anger over the hanging of senior

Congress leader Kushal Konwar had not died down, and when the British plantation owners refused to raise the workers' annual bonus, they beat the estate manager black and blue," he recalls. "I finally rescued him and put him back into his bungalow with bruises all over."

As much as his medical duties drew him to a gentler calling, the young doctor couldn't ignore the fire in his belly and played his part in the freedom struggle. "We knew the soldiers of the Allied Forces were to pass through Assam en route to the Kohima sector," he recounts. "There was a pipeline transporting petroleum from Jorhat to Dergaon for refuelling army vehicles. Early one morning, along with a few others, I severed the pipeline with an axe." Dr Bordolaye had also played his cards well. "You see, my British employers could not dismiss me as my service as a doctor was too important. It gave me immunity," he says, smiling broadly at the recollection.

Besides the drama and struggle over helming a labour union, Dr Bordolaye also met some eminent personalities. "On one occasion, V V Giri, then labour minister in Nehru's first Cabinet, visited the tea estate to inquire about the labour problems. On another occasion, it was Aneurin Bevan of the International Federation of Trade Unions, who later became a minister in England," he says with obvious pride.

Dr Bordolaye kept moving from one tea estate to another and collected precious memories from each stint, whether battling a rabies epidemic at Sepon or sterilising locals at Tinsukia during the family planning campaign in the 1960s. It was during this time that he was elected president of the local chapter of the Indian Medical Association. On retirement in 1977, he shifted to Dibrugarh and set up a private practice at a local pharmacy. "It was tough competing with highly qualified doctors of the Assam Medi-



**Dr Bordolaye being felicitated by the Guwahati Senior Citizens' Association**

cal College but I still got quite a number of patients every day."

With his three sons and daughter settled, Dr Bordolaye and his wife travelled all over India, thanks to his youngest son Sanjib, then air vice-marshal of the Indian Air Force. "I am very grateful to Sanjib, who took us to almost every important temple in the country. You name a temple and I can tell you everything about it!" Dr Bordolaye, whose wife passed away in 1995, is a proud grandfather

of eight and great-grandfather of two. Does he have any hobbies? "Of course! Treating patients and curing them is my hobby. I have also motivated a large number of people to quit smoking and tobacco," says Dr Bordolaye.

He reflects on the completely different approaches to treating patients then and now. "Today, you can treat a patient even without touching or feeling him. In our times, we used to physically examine our patients. We

weren't specialists but we could handle all types of cases. Also, money was simply immaterial. We often treated patients without charging a single rupee. It's very different now," remarks Dr Bordolaye, who was recently felicitated on the 13th Foundation Day of the Guwahati Senior Citizens' Association.

"I have known Dr Bordolaye from the time he lived in Dibrugarh," says Bhima Kanta Konwer, who retired in 2000 as professor of Assamese from DHSK College, Dibrugarh. "He is a good doctor and a lover of humanity. He used to check my blood sugar levels and blood pressure regularly and treat every small ailment, like a fever or cold. I truly respect him for his interest in advancements in medical science. In spite of being a licentiate medical practitioner, he used to visit hospitals in Mumbai, Chandigarh, New Delhi, Pune and so on, to stay up to date."

When not meeting patients or reading, Dr Bordolaye visits friends and neighbours and can be quite entertaining too! Col (Dr) B D Borgohain, a neighbour, testifies to that. "I have known him for two years, since he moved from Dibrugarh to Guwahati. We talk about everything, ranging from current affairs to the latest developments in medicine. He is a wonderful storyteller and his memory is amazing," laughs the 90-year-old, whose career and postings mirror those of Dr Bordolaye.

Our centenarian begins his day at 5 am with a cup of black tea and two biscuits, which is followed by reading the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *kirtan*. After glancing through two newspapers and watching the headlines on TV, he eats his breakfast at 9.30 am. "If there are patients, I spend some time in my chamber; otherwise I read. If I can lay my hands on an interesting book, I stay awake even up to midnight," he says, adding that he always ends his day with a prayer before falling asleep. ✨



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A woman in a traditional Indian dance costume, featuring a purple and gold sari, is captured in a dynamic pose. She is adorned with elaborate jewelry, including a large necklace, earrings, and a headpiece. Her hands are positioned in a graceful dance gesture. The background is plain white.

# AGELESS feet

The Hindu Images



# Leela Samson has played many roles—Bharatanatyam exponent, cultural administrator, writer and teacher. Her most fulfilling, though, is that of a teacher who stays connected to her art, she tells **Sudha G Tilak**

**I**f you ever dropped by Chennai during the month of *Margazhi* (December-January) in the Tamil calendar until last year, you would have seen something special on a visit to Kalakshetra. The school that calls itself a shrine of dance came close to resembling one. Lily and lotus ponds formed soothing features around the leafy school campus and the classrooms thrummed to the beat of dancing feet, tremulous violins and musical notes against the mellow sky and the beach beyond.

Overseeing the school was then director Leela Samson, who invoked her former guru Rukmini Devi Arundale's adherence to grace, beauty and the primacy of arts in our surroundings. Born in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, Padmashri Leela Samson entered the halls of Kalakshetra when she was just nine years old and began her association with dance, even as her family shuttled between Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai.

At the time of this interview, she is at her home at a beach-side suburb in Chennai. It has to be said that Samson's presence has a calming effect on others. You always find her small and neat frame clothed in elegant saris, her hair with flecks of silver combed neatly into place and her face shorn of any makeup but for a *bindi*. Her poise, grace and dignity of bearing hide her steely interior: the courage of her convictions, dedication and intent of purpose. If there's anything that breaks the beatitude of her countenance, it's her smile that is dazzling. If you want to see what her energy is all about, witness her perform.

## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

**You have been a dancer since you were very young. You have worked as a teacher at Sriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra and at the Gandharv Marg Vidyalaya and later as director of Kalakshetra in 2005. Awards and encomiums aside, which role has been the most fulfilling: dancer, teacher, administrator?**

I taught at the Kendra for 15 years. The most fulfilling in a personal way is the role of the dancer. But the most fulfilling in terms of your connect to the dance itself is teaching. Dancing teaches you about yourself and your true potential, while teaching shows you what you might become,

what can be done with the art, and connects the world of the past with the world of the present.

**You were nine years old when you entered Kalakshetra for the first time. Do you remember anything special about that day?**

The first day was hard in that I understood what distance meant and distancing yourself from those you knew as your world. But there was also the excitement of the new and the simple. That is what I loved most about Adyar [a suburb of Chennai].

**What was your first meeting with your guru and mentor Rukmini Devi Arundale like? What memories do you have of her; what impression did she leave on you?**

She struck me as being imperial, though with the kindest eyes. She interviewed me along with several other *vaadyaars* [teachers] on my first day in Adyar. I did the *alaaripu*. I became a full-time student learning dance at Kalakshetra after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**What sets apart a dance student of Kalakshetra? What were the components of your curriculum that helped shape your art in all the years you were a student?**

The 12-odd years I studied there were made up of dance, vocal music, theory of dance, *bhajanai*, *Gita* classes, yoga, sports. I am not sure what sets apart a Kalakshetra dancer any more, or even whether they do stand apart, and from what or who! There are many dancers worldwide who practice the art who stand apart and they do so owing to their devotion and commitment. Perhaps some Kalakshetra dancers also do.

**What is the contrast you see in Bharatanatyam teaching and schooling then and now?**

The discomfiting part has always been 'item learning' and this continues to be the bane of teaching all over the world.





Avinash Pasricha

This has to be replaced with learning the tools of the art—the technique and all the allied arts like literature, music, rhythmic structures, colour, rituals, legends, the *Veda*—until the students discover the context and content of the art form and then opt to enter its core, which to me are the gems of the tradition; the compositions and how to perform. Besides, and most vital, is that we have missed working on a pedagogy and curriculum for teaching children and one for teaching teachers! Both suffer the burden of the professional repertoire when they ought to have a separate one—more realistic, fun, opening up the world of music, movement, the body, mythology, storytelling, nature and poetry attached to these things.

**You were among the select group of dancers chosen for the performing troupe of Kalakshetra. How did you feel when *Athai* (Rukmini Devi Arundale) gave you the nod?**

In every period, someone has to be selected and they are. I was not exceptional nor an exception. I would like to think that I was chosen at a time when I deserved it on merit. It always felt good to get a nod from *Athai*. After all, she was no mean observer of the dance.

**You dropped college to become a full-time performer. How difficult was it to drop your studies in those days?**

I discontinued college after two years to dance with the company on *Athai's* call. Then I went back to Delhi to complete what I had left undone. Recently, the board of Kalakshetra, including the secretary, Ministry of Culture, and its chairman asked for my degree to be furnished. This, after being director for seven years! It is laughable; but can easily be justified as a requirement for the job. The insult is not easily forgotten though, for it was not my word that was taken to be true, but the actual certificate required to prove it. Perhaps they thought that's what got me the job in the first place! Artists and crafts persons, in fact all professionals, are disrespected by bureaucrats in our country.

It is and always was difficult, at any time, to drop one's studies and take up the arts. Where is that going to get you, especially if you came from a middle-class family as I did? But fortunately I had enlightened parents and perhaps indulgent ones too. They were perhaps influenced by Rukmini Devi who had scant respect for formal degrees.

**How supportive were your parents?**

In fact, it was they who encouraged me to dance and sing and to follow my heart. They were ignorant of how they might help, but were always supportive.

2005

Became director  
of Kalakshetra  
Foundation

**Born of Jewish-Catholic parents, you chose to pursue an art form that sprang from Hindu temples. What did this mix of cultures bring to your personality and art?**

I guess it gave me an ability to view art and life with a sense of awe, yet with distance; with respect, yet not falling into the pits of prejudice that all of them have. In an interview once, I was asked if I had an allegiance to Israel and I said that although I had a Jewish surname, I was Indian and therefore owed no allegiance to Israel. In actual fact, you are only Jewish if your mother is. It was the truth! Unfortunately, till today, it has been an 'official reason' not to have me visit that beautiful country, as an artist. I have visited a couple of times privately way back in 1967, when my mother and I worked on a kibbutz through the summer, and later in 1971, when my brother was studying at the Technion in Haifa.

**What or whom do you place your faith in?**

I had faith in people but have realised that is, more often than not, misplaced. But animals and all of nature are fine! I have two dogs and a cat. They love me enough to make up for the rest.



“My dance group Spanda has been active through various periods but suffered these past seven years, like my own dancing and career did, when I took over the reins of Kalakshetra. Now, I am back on track with my life”

**A solo performer meets with a unique set of challenges while performing. When did you decide to perform as a soloist and what did you bring to your performances?**

We were all trained in the early years to be soloists. It was not a decision I made. If you mean different from the dance dramas I performed in, that was part of work in my alma mater. Today, dancers can train differently. Most university programmes abroad are very eclectic. You learn many things and Bharatanatyam could be one of them along with hip-hop, jazz, African dance, modern, classical, etc. This was not so in my youth.

**You said that dance is not just performance. It helps to have knowledge of music, theories, stories, history, to evolve. How can this be achieved by gurus in these instant noodle days?**

It is difficult to achieve. However, I see no reason not to have these subjects taught in schools, including dance. In the earlier years, you have all the time in the world. What tells us that science and technology are more important for life than art or creative processes? I don't get it.

**You founded the dance group, Spanda, in the 1990s. How involved are you with the group now?**

I founded it in 1995. It has been active through various periods but suffered these past seven years, like my own dancing and career did, when I took over the reins of Kalakshetra. Now, both Spanda and I are back on track with renewed energy. The group has some younger artists and some older ones, with a new repertoire of work. I am totally involved. I am sure though that some of the younger ones would prefer the work that Spanda does without me! Unfortunately



Avinash Pasricha



Chennai Pix



The Hindu Images

1995

*Founded  
dance group  
Spanda*

for them, it's a package; Spanda and me, we go together.

**The boundaries of Bharatanatyam are being redefined. What are your views about contemporary experiments with the dance form?**

I have no problems with them. Contemporary experiments are not the prerogative of our times. Everyone contemporised the dance in their own time. All the greats including Rukmini Devi did that. Else it would not be in the condition, good and bad, in which we have received it. I am also a dancer of what you may call contemporary Bharatanatyam. My choreographies are contemporary—both in the solo and group formats.

**Your book *Rukmini Devi, A Life* was a wonderful, warm tribute to your guru written with a biographer's adherence to the truth of the times and people involved. Why did you decide to write the book?**

Because there was a need to write about her and I loved her enough to want to do it, even though I had no credentials in writing to do it. Sankara Menon, her long-time associate, was the one who encouraged me to do the book.

**At the time you became director of Kalakshetra in 2005, dance and music performances in Chennai had become an industry. Kalakshetra seemed to have disappeared into the mist. You gave up your teaching and school in Delhi to shift to Chennai. How difficult was it for you?**

It was a very difficult decision for me as I had a good career, great students and a life in Delhi. It was hardest for my students though—many generations of them. In my sacrifice, they made the bigger one.

**You revived the beautiful school surroundings, held fests in the December season and brought the place alive under your care. Why did you nurture Kalakshetra with so much of your heart?**

I knew what the place needed and did it because I loved the ideal with which it was started. It is meant to grow, not become stultified owing to the lack of vision of the teachers, or the corruptive and mal-intent of some office-bearers, or even the 'couldn't-care-less' attitude of the bureaucracy in Delhi. Heart is what any institute needs, and foresight.

**Was resigning as the director of Kalakshetra the hardest thing you ever did?**



**“Why should I or anyone else presume to safeguard anything? Or nurture the arts? They have survived without the likes of me for centuries. I also do not believe that the arts of India are under threat from cinema”**

No. The easiest. I had had enough. I understood the games men play and their reluctance to deal with a woman. Their manipulations always plagued me and would always hamper me.

**You're now chairperson of the Sangeet Natak Akademi and Central Board of Film Certification. What are your plans to safeguard and nurture the arts that seem to be struggling in these days of commercialisation and movie and celebrity culture?**

Why should I or anyone else presume to safeguard anything? Or nurture the arts? They have survived without the likes of me for centuries. I also do not believe that the arts of India are under threat from cinema. There is commercialisation in the arts, which is sometimes what it needs and sometimes detrimental. Cinema was always a part of India's fabric and culture—now for 100 years. Films too celebrate our culture, our customs and our festivities. In fact, much of these have been immortalised in cinema for our masses.

The world is going through a phase of spectacular situations in cinema and Indian cinema will not be left behind. Sex and violence, abusive language and gang warfare is part of world culture too. Films reflect this. There is also sensitive cinema. Who cares to watch it? Does this not impact us as well?

The problem is that, very often, good cinema in India is given 'A' certification and gets ruled out of being shown on Doordarshan. These films have a right to be seen. People are happy watching fantasy lives and fanciful families that talk like 'actors' to each other. This is what we want our masses to watch. The good stuff is not seen. The documentaries are not seen. The award-winning films are not shown. Only the jury gets to see them.

**Artists like Rukmini Devi Arundale, Chandralekha and Balaamma danced late into their lives. How does ageing affect an artist?**

Like it affects all human beings I suppose. It is debilitating, I am sure. I don't know because I am not quite there yet, thankfully! But I will soon be. Rukmini Devi did not dance for long. She started late and finished early. She did other things.

**How do you keep yourself busy? Could you take us through a day in your life?**

It is different each day. But typically, when I am in station, I take my dogs out early and do some jogging or exercises after that. If I have a rehearsal, the musicians come by. Sometimes I work with the group towards a show.

**Do you miss having a family of your own? How do you keep in touch with your siblings?**

No, I do not. Else I would have had one. The family lives abroad and I meet them off and on. But email and the mobile are great binders.

**What do you read these days?**

Whatever comes my way. A friend gave me *The Wildings* by Nilanjana Roy that I liked. I picked up *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* by Mohammed Hanif. Also on my table is *Anatomy of a Disappearance* by Hisham Matar. Thank God I have time once again to read!

**What gives you fulfilment today?**

Fulfilment is a big word. I do not see much fulfilment in what I am doing, as there is little trust between the powers that be and professionals like us. In fact, rude awakenings constantly happen when you are told in no uncertain terms who the bosses are. So any dreams of seeing some good work happen is a lost dream. Only bureaucrats can tolerate bureaucrats.

**How do you keep your mind and body together?**

Through my dance and by having a philosophy.

**What do you look forward to in the following years?**

I do not dream anymore. I have learnt not to. I simply want to continue doing small things that will help our field, with small private agencies that care. ✨

1990

*Received Padma Shri  
for her outstanding  
contribution to  
Bharatanatyam*

# TRIBAL ROUTE

History, heritage and myth spin a fable around the sylvan environs of Wayanad, the land of tribal communities

❖ 📷 Susheela Nair





**T**he nip in the air was palpable as the bus made its way up the 12-km Thamarassery Ghat road through hair-pin bends and curves. The enchanting drive to Lakkidi viewpoint located at a height of over 700 m above sea level in Wayanad district in Kerala took us through picturesque locales, zipping past varying shades of greenery, stunning valleys and sparkling waterfalls hurtling down the hillsides. Lakkidi has many claims to fame. Besides being the southern gateway to Wayanad district, it also clocks the record for receiving the second highest rainfall in India after the Cherrapunji-Mawsynram region.

Just before reaching Lakkidi, atop Thamarassery Ghat, we tarried awhile at the legendary Chain Tree, a gigantic ficus tree with an iron chain embedded into the roots and trunks. One end of the huge iron is attached to the branches of the tree while the other hangs below and is tied to a root projecting from the earth. The legend goes that when a British engineer failed to devise a plan for a road running to Wayanad, Karinthandan, a young Paniya tribal, suggested a secret route across the once treacherous pass. Fearing that his professional integrity would be at stake, the Englishman had the tribal killed. Soon after completion, the roads, built over Thamarassery Ghat Pass and Wayanad, witnessed a spurt in accidents that were attributed to the unhappy spirit of the Paniya youth haunting the route and harassing travellers. An exorcist was summoned, who chained the spirit to the ficus tree; it subsequently came to be known as the Chain Tree.

From Lakkidi, we proceeded to Pookode Lake, a placid, freshwater lake



flanked by hills. The shimmering water body derives its name from the hundreds of white and mauve water lilies that grow in it. We hired a rowboat and, after a spin in the waters, took a stroll along the walkway around the lake while some tourists sat on the bank enjoying the peaceful idyll. We stopped by Uravu Eco Shop selling Wayanad spices, honey and bamboo products. We also visited their factory to watch tribal folk crafting new products and designs.

Making Kalpetta our base, we explored Wayanad's wide-ranging tourist attractions, from trekking in the nearby hills to solemn shrines for the spiritually inclined, prehistoric caves for those with a flair for history, and lakes and picnic spots for those with a laidback predisposition. Wayanad is a 365-day destination. However, during the monsoon, even more tourists rush to Wayanad to experience the thrills and spills of mud football, off-road rallying, bamboo rafting, archery, mountain biking, commando walking, crab catching and much more, all in the annual rain carnival christened Wayanad Splash.



Wayanad has wide-ranging tourist attractions, from trekking in the nearby hills to solemn shrines, prehistoric caves for those with a flair for history, and picnic spots for those with a laidback predisposition

Strategically located at the tri-junction of Kozhikode, Coorg and the Nilgiris, every inch of the mist-clad undulating hills, fringed by lush forests, which characterise Wayanad, has been taken over by coffee, tea, cardamom, ginger and pepper plantations. Interestingly, there is hardly any trace of paddy here though Wayanad in local parlance means the land of paddy fields.

Sipping steaming filter coffee and nibbling on *parippu vada* (lentil fritters) at Verdure Plantation Resort, we listened to the owner share some interesting nuggets about this hill station. He attributed the unique quality of Wayanad pepper to the large quantity of oleoresin in it. Historical records prove that the earliest settlers here were tribals and that Wayanad was ruled by chiefs of the Vedar tribe. Much later, Wayanad came under the reign of the royal family of Kotayam. After several years, Hyder Ali, the ruler of neighbouring Mysore, invaded and subjugated Wayanad. His son Tipu Sultan entered into a treaty with the British and surrendered the

region back to the old Raja. The local ruler, Pazhassi Raja, harried the British with guerrilla raids from his hide-outs in the hills of Wayanad. This was followed by a series of battles between the British and Pazhassi Raja. Local tribes, notably the Kurumbas, expert archers that they were, fought guerrilla wars against the British in these dense jungles.

The sylvan environs of Kalpetta abound in waterfalls like Meenmutty, Kanthampara, and Soochipara; these can be explored through intricate jungle paths. A winding road past tea plantations, followed by an arduous trek through dense forest and rugged terrain, took us to Soochipara Falls, also known as Sentinel Rock Falls. Perching ourselves on a rock at a distance, it was an exhilarating experience watching the waters cascading down the hard granite rocks with a rising spray engulfing us.

Close by is the Kanthampara Falls, and tucked away in the dense forests is the Meenmutty Falls, hurtling down from a great height.





(Clockwise from top left) The pre-historic Edakkal Caves; tourists explore the thrills of bamboo rafting; mucking around during the Wayanad Splash festival; an Adivasi tribal woman; (Facing page) The ancient Mahavishnu Temple in Thirunelli





Every inch of the mist-clad undulating hills, fringed by lush forests, which characterise Wayanad, has been taken over by coffee, tea, cardamom, ginger and pepper plantations

If trekking interests you, head to Chembara peak, 15 km from Kalpetta. The tallest summit in the region, at 2,100 m above sea level, it will give you a mesmerising view of the scenic beauty of Wayanad. The crystal clear lake atop the hill never dries up even at the peak of summer. Trekking uphill is a day-long affair. If you are looking at the unforgettable experience of camping under a starry sky, ensure you carry your camping gear.

Sultan Bathery, the hilly eastern gateway to Wayanad, forms an ideal base to visit Edakkal Caves, Jain Temple and Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary. Once known as Ganapativattam or the circle of Lord Ganapati, the Sree Maha Ganapati temple is the only reminder of its past. The name changed after Tipu Sultan marched in with his troops and used the 13<sup>th</sup> century Jain temple here as an ammunition dump. Over a period of time, Sultan Battery became Sultan Bathery. We had a peek at the Jain Temple at Puthangadi and marvelled at its exquisite carvings.

Edakkal Caves is one of the most visited tourist attractions of Wayanad.

Edakkal, meaning 'the stone in between' in Malayalam, is just a 10 km drive from Sultan Bathery. After an almost 1-km uphill trudge through a hillside peppered with coffee plantations, we reached Edakkal Caves, formed out of a strange disposition of three massive boulders on the crest of the Ambukuthi Mala Hills. Known for ancient stone scripts, sketching of animal and human figures with peculiar headgear, carvings of the swastika and drawings of trees and bows and knives, the caves are an invitation to a remote past. The end of the caves is situated between two mountains, both rising in a parallel manner from the ground with a 50-cm gap between them. One can take in a breathtaking view of the valley from this gap. If Fawcett, the British police superintendent of Malabar in 1894, had not stumbled upon these caves during a trip to the Ambukuthi ranges, they would have remained in obscurity amid the dense foliage. Though photography is prohibited, with special permission, we managed to click some pictures. After a steep ascent, one can reach the peak for a stunning view.

Ambalavayal, near Edakkal, has a heritage museum showcasing artefacts of various tribes. Reputed as one of the best heritage museums in Kerala, it has on display a rich collection of stone carvings, hunting traps, musical instruments, ornaments, terracotta figurines and pottery relating to the Megalithic Age. Some unique exhibits on display include engravings on stone slabs in an ancient script known as Vattezhuthu and soft stone idols of tribal gods.

From Sultan Bathery, we proceeded to the temple town of Thirunelli, through a meandering route cruising past rich bamboo forests. Against the backdrop of the looming Brahmagiri Hills lies the more than 1,000 year-old Mahavishnu Temple. Built in traditional Kerala style, it has 30 granite columns. Known as *Thekkan Kashi* (Kashi of the South), the temple is

The cascading Soochipara Falls







associated with many legends, and retains a charm of its own. Surrounded by Kambamala, Karimala and Vardiga hills, Thirunelli beckons adventure lovers. The scenic beauty of the hill is heightened by the river Papanasini, which flows downhill.

About 7 km northwest of the temple is Pakshipathalam, an avian paradise in the heart of the Brahmagiri Hills. The trek through dense forests to Pakshipathalam, a grotto of caves crafted by nature millions of years ago in Brahmagiri Hills, will take one almost 100 ft underground into the nether region inhabited by wild birds, and can be very challenging. It is believed that it was the favourite hideout of Naxalites in the late 1960s. There is a watchtower on the banks of the Papanashini, a 40-minute walk from the temple, which offers a good perch for bird watchers to spot different varieties of birds.

Equally idyllic and interesting are the Kuruva Dweep, a 950-acre maze of uninhabited islets and evergreen forests located 16 km from Mananthavady, on river Kabini. The thickly wooded island shelters a bewildering variety of birds, butterflies, herbs,

orchids and is a bird sanctuary. A kilometre from Mananthavady town is the tomb of Veera Pazhassi Raja, marking the place where he was cremated. Known as the Lion of Kerala, the Raja fought against the British for nearly nine years by organising the natives and the tribals. Close to the tomb is the Pulpally cave, where the British captured him. The Pazhassi Museum in the vicinity houses memorabilia, including stone inscriptions, swords and weapons.

We also visited the Valliyoorkavu Bhagavathi temple, an important place of worship of the tribals. The temple comes alive during the annual festival, when tribals from all over southern India congregate here. But, with the passage of time, it has metamorphosed into a local *mela*.

To culminate our Wayanad sojourn, we proceeded to Tholpetty Wildlife Sanctuary which abuts the Nagerhole range in Karnataka. Along with Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary, it constitutes the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. The next morning we drove back home refreshed, with vivid and beautiful memories, and a resolution to make another trip. ✨

## FACT FILE

### GETTING THERE

**By air:** Kozhikode, the closest airport, is 100 km away.

**By train:** The most convenient railroad is Kozhikode. From here, one can take a bus or hire a cab to Wayanad.

**By road:** Wayanad is well connected by a wide network of roads and can be easily accessed from anywhere in Kerala as well as from neighbouring states. Deluxe buses are available from Bengaluru's Majestic bus stand.

### ACCOMMODATION

#### Verdure Plantation

**Retreat:** Tel: 04936-202079, 09846661397; Email: [info@verdurewayanad.com](mailto:info@verdurewayanad.com)

**Vythiri Resort:** Tel: 04936-256716/800, 09447055367; Email: [vythiri@lezeldor.com](mailto:vythiri@lezeldor.com)

#### Windflower Resort:

Tel: 09895226611; Email: [rgm.vythiri@thewindflower.com](mailto:rgm.vythiri@thewindflower.com)

## Grit and GRACE

A glittering red costume and her signature magic set the stage, as always, on fire in Odissi exponent **Ranjana Gauhar's** latest performance, *Tejasa*. Conceptualised by Gauhar herself, *Tejasa* is the story of four women—Sita, Kaikeyi, Surpanakha and Mandodari—from the ancient epic *Ramayana*, for which she incorporated four different classical dance

**DANCE** forms of Odissi (Gauhar as Sita), Kathak (Uma Dogra as Kaikeyi), Mohiniyattam (Gopika Varma as Surpanakha) and Kuchipudi (Deepika Reddy as Mandodari). The fusion brought alive the deepest emotions and inherent strengths of these mythological women and staked their claim to dignity and respect. A contemporary script to match the innovative dance-drama added an enchanting twist.

"My love affair with Odissi started when I was in my teens and it just keeps getting stronger over the years," smiles Gauhar, a choreographer, writer, filmmaker and dance guru. As the Padma Shri and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award winner tells **Ambica Gulati**, "No Odissi means no Ranjana." Excerpts from the conversation:

**How did you conceive the idea of *Tejasa*?**

Odissi is an ocean and means the world to me. Every time I plunge into its waters, I find some hidden treasure; I feel there is so much more to find in this ocean. I like dance in all its forms, but Odissi inspired me to branch out. One of our famous fusion productions is *Chitrangada*, originally a play by Guru Rabindranath Tagore. It was a huge success as we carefully crafted the dance-drama with dialogues. I find the energy of fusion so powerfully moving. *Tejasa* showcases the integration of dance forms.







### How relevant is your dance-drama in today's times?

The world has always ignored a woman's needs; since ancient times, there has been a lack of respect.

*Tejasa* is my way of portraying and presenting a woman's point of view, which has been neglected for ages.

### What were the challenges you faced in performing fusion?

Putting together the script was a task. Blending music and theme, choosing characters, dancers, dance styles were all exciting. People asked me why I wanted to add Surpanakha's character in this performance. But she is also a woman and it was not a crime to fall in love—bringing that out was a challenge. Then, there's Mandodari, a strong woman reduced to nothing by Ravana; he had promised Sita that Mandodari would serve her if Sita agreed to marry him. There was so much turmoil in the lives of these women, but not much has been

spoken about these issues. And the same happens even today.

### Is fusion on its way to becoming a norm?

There has to be a balance between solo and fusion performances. Solo is essential to showcase a dancer's talent. This is the reason I hold regular festivals where a dancer gets to showcase her complete potential.

### You run a dance academy to encourage young talent. What is the response to it, keeping in view these times of globalisation?

Classical dance forms are the art of a chosen few. I have been teaching dance for 27 years. Odissi is deeply embedded in my soul. The focus of my dance institution Utsav Educational & Cultural Society is to enrich the cultural heritage of India. At present, we have 35 students and the youngest is five years old. They are keen to learn and I am keen to teach! Exposure and

interaction help spread the dance form and aid in its evolution. We hold regular festivals like Unbound Beats of India, Sare Jahan Se Accha and Kalingotsav, where we invite artistes from across the world to perform with my students.

### You are also an independent filmmaker, scriptwriter, choreographer and writer.

Odissi opened the world for me; the passion and madness are ingrained. The soul of the artist wants to explore and express and I had to share what I enjoyed. Odissi is like a flood and I wanted to channel this flood.

### Is Odissi a family legacy?

It's not a legacy. I think I was born to dance and only dance. As far as I can remember, I had an inclination to dance even before I knew the word 'dance'. Even as a child, I would respond to music. Those were not the days of mass media, so there was less exposure and support. But my father Ganesh Das Gauhar was very fond of harmonium and singing. He used to play the harmonium like the piano—with both hands! Every Sunday, in our ancestral home in Jangpura Extension in Delhi, our family would hold a *mehfil*.

### How have classical dance performances evolved across the country, now that more commercial forms such as jazz and salsa are fast gaining popularity?

There is no comparison. To be an artist you have to be blessed. And one life is not enough. For me, Odissi is the path to *moksha*.

### ROLE MODEL

Gracefully silvering Neetu Singh has been discerning in her choice of roles in today's unpredictable Hindi cinema. Soon it will be another rare role. As constable Bulbul Chautala in the upcoming *Besharam*, she will use the gun as effortlessly as a kitchen rolling pin. Incidentally, sharing screen space in the film are husband Rishi Kapoor and son Ranbir.

# Glaze of GLORY

Suparna-Saraswati Puri meets Himachal Pradesh's illustrious potter couple Mini and Mary Singh who have been breathing life into the ancient village craft

For over three decades, Mansimran 'Mini' Singh, 75, has relentlessly worked towards the revival of village pottery. In the process, he has brought back the respect the *kumhaar* (potters) of the village deserve. His fellow crusader is Mary Singh, 75, an accomplished British ceramic artist trained under Mansimran and also his wife. In their efforts to keep the tradition alive, the endearing couple run Andretta Pottery and Craft Society that churns out their signature line of glazed earthenware and offers summer school training in ceramics.

Born in Lahore, Mini grew up in an environment of studio pottery. He learnt ceramics from his father Sardar Gurcharan Singh, who was the founder of Delhi Blue Art Pottery and



was responsible for introducing the craft and ceramic movement in India. "I was enthusiastic about joining the Navy, but colour blindness compelled me to opt for pottery," recollects Mini. "I learnt as Mini's student at Delhi Blue Art Pottery studio," reminisces Mary. "At the time Sardar Gurcharan Singh built it, there was complete wilderness in the area." Over the years, the centre—renamed Delhi Blue Pottery Trust—has grown exponentially.

In 1960, Mini was sent to Leach Pottery at St Ives in Cornwall, England, set up by Bernard Leach, to add to his education in pottery, during which he also had the opportunity to work as an apprentice with another renowned studio potter, Geoffrey Whiting. Subsequently, in 1962, he was invited to the Berlin Arts Festival and the same year saw his first solo exhibition in Jaipur, followed by a joint show with his father in Delhi and Mumbai.

Mini began teaching at Delhi Blue Art Pottery in 1962 and became managing trustee in 1995. Annual shows since 1964, workshops with potters,

and exhibitions at home and abroad kept him connected with the craft as well as enabled him and Mary to voice serious concerns about the almost extinct village potter and his craft. "Two things remain cardinal for a potter," avers Mini. "First, he has to slog it out. Second, the emphasis should be on good functional pottery and strict standards must be adhered to, as the effort that goes into making a pot is tremendous. It may seem easy taking a lump of clay and moulding it, but when you get down to doing it, you understand the challenge and pleasure, all at the same time."

For Mary, pottery has been a passion because of its multidimensional aspects. As she explains, "It's practical and you enjoy using it; it is decorative and unlimited in its range of shapes. It is three-dimensional—pottery can be used like sculpture, but you can make it flat and build on it and thereafter paint it as well."

While Mini's introduction to pottery was partially genetic, Mary's was perhaps a *karmic* accident. It was in the late 1970s that she came to India with





her first husband who was with the British High Commission. “Besides the fact that I trained under Mini, another connect that brought us closer was our failed marriages,” she says.

In 1983, Mini and Mary Singh moved from Delhi to Andretta in Himachal Pradesh, and the Andretta Pottery and Craft Society was born in 1985. “In the 1960s, local fairs across Himachal Pradesh had 90 per cent pottery; however, in the 1970s, 60 per cent of the potters had noticeably disappeared,” rues Mini. “Over the past 20-25 years, there has been a sliding change in Himachal; one can’t find a potter younger than 60-65 years of age as none of the youngsters have taken to their tradition. With the disappearance of common land coupled with a ban on cutting trees used for kilns, potters are facing unbelievable hardship.”

Andretta Pottery started with a grant of ₹ 135,000 after the couple approached the handicraft board and the state government seeking assistance for salvaging the dying craft. “When my father started pottery in 1952, there were no studio potters. When he had the first National Studio Potters Exhibition in the 1960s, there were only 16; now there are over 500 studio potters we know of. Today, in any *mela* being held around Andretta and elsewhere in the state, one rarely gets to see village potters! We hope to encourage the potters to start glazing their work and reviving their talent but it’s still a journey with several hurdles,” says Mini.



Arjun Sen

Because of the couple’s endeavours and perseverance, Andretta has come to be known as a significant and popular centre for learning pottery as well as a place that churns out a signature line of utilitarian ceramics unique in its motifs and attractive in appearance. “A very talented potter and our manager Jugal Kishore, 45, is an expert at *rangoli*—a local tradition of folk motifs—and we began incorporating that in our pottery,” says Mary. “Today, it is viewed by ceramic collectors and users of pottery as a signature trademark of our work and highlights the region of Andretta across terrains and turf. No two pieces are the same and people seem to like to collect them. Andretta pottery does not have to be fired at such high temperature as stoneware. For clay, well, we simply dig it.” That’s another USP—as the clay in the Kangra valley is extremely plastic, the pots produced in this area are extremely light.

## BATTLE OF THE TITANS

An all-new *Mahabharata* for the small screen has been making news for a while. Costume design by veteran Bhanu Athaiya, acting workshops for the cast by Rajit Kapur, splendid sets and everything that would make the tele-epic grander than before... and now Salim Khan as consultant for the series. The legendary writer says he has read the *Mahabharata* and its interpretations four to five times. When approached by producer Kumar Tewary, Khan says he refused to take on the whole writing project but agreed to help on a continual agreement. The project began four years ago and Khan has since then given his inputs and guided the team with interpretations. The pen behind many a Hindi blockbuster, Khan says he has never come across a grander screenplay. What’s more, he says the same-sided coin for Amitabh Bachchan in *Sholay* and the *billa* (badge) in *Deewar* were inspired by the epic.

## TO FATHER, WITH LOVE

ACTOR-TURNED-FILMMAKER RAKESH ROSHAN RECENTLY TURNED 64 AND RECEIVED AS GIFTS FROM DAUGHTER SUNAINA AND SON HRITHIK ROSHAN A GRAND BIRTHDAY PARTY AND A BIOGRAPHY ON HIM BY SUNAINA. SHE WORKED ON THE BOOK FOR MONTHS WITHOUT ANYONE GETTING TO KNOW ABOUT IT, EXCEPT BROTHER HRITHIK AND MOTHER PINKY. TITLED *TO FATHER WITH LOVE*, THE BOOK PORTRAYS RAKESH ROSHAN’S ARDUOUS JOURNEY TO MAKE IT BIG IN BOLLYWOOD. A TEARFUL EXCHANGE OF EMOTIONS WAS FOLLOWED BY DETAILS OF THE MAKING OF THE BOOK. THE BOOK IS NOT AVAILABLE TO GENERAL READERS RIGHT NOW, BUT WILL BE PUBLICLY RELEASED IN NOVEMBER.

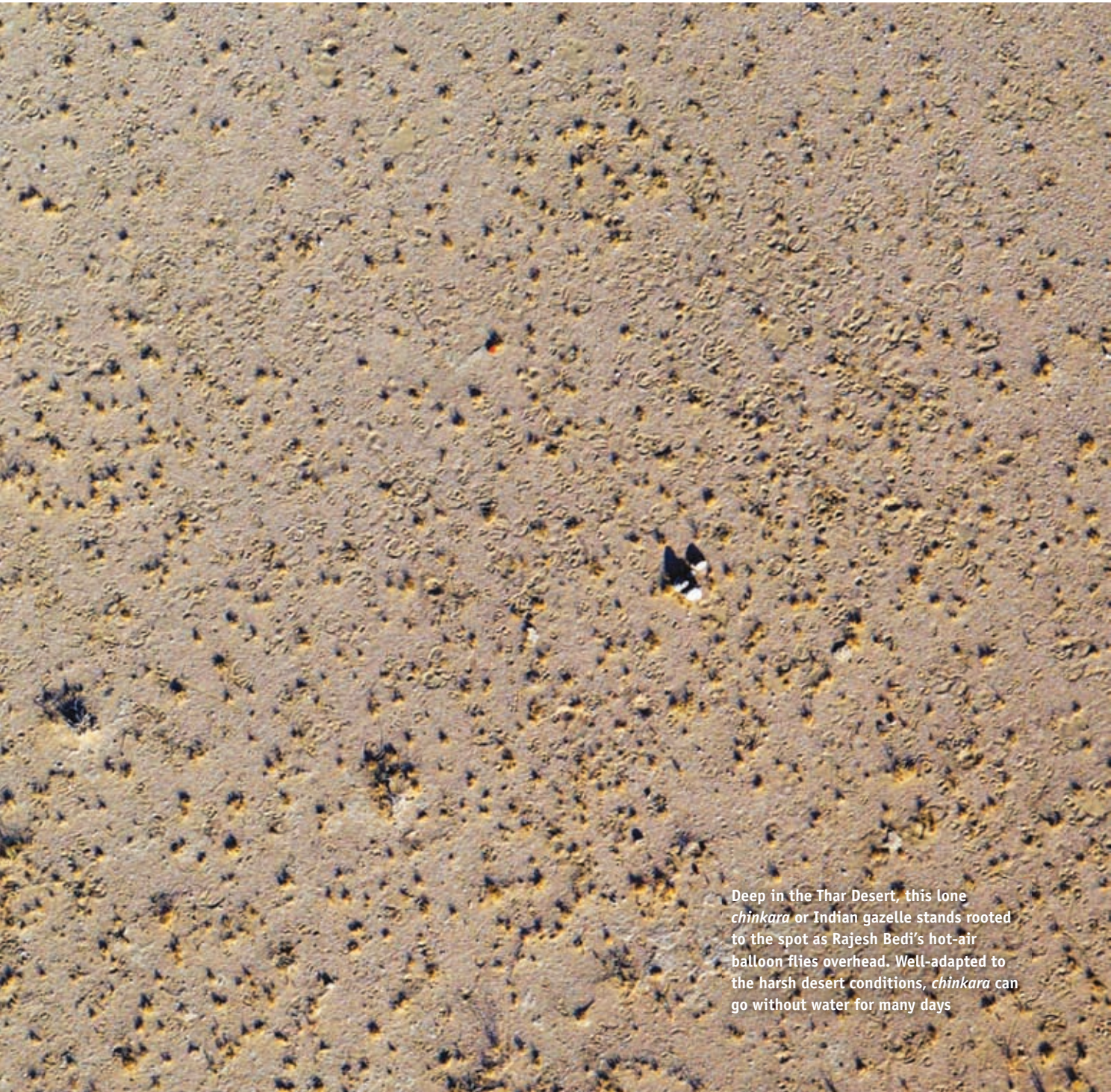


# DESERT SAFARI





History and culture course through the landscape of Rajasthan. Rajesh Bedi's *Rajasthan under the Desert Sky* (Roli Books; ₹ 3,995; 208 pages) examines the relationship between the land and its people while mapping the culture of change sweeping the furthest reaches of the desert. Shot extensively from hot-air balloons and with cameras mounted on high-flying kites, the pictures also record traditions that have outlived changing times and sneak into little-known primitive trade routes lurking along the India-Pakistan border



Deep in the Thar Desert, this lone *chinkara* or Indian gazelle stands rooted to the spot as Rajesh Bedi's hot-air balloon flies overhead. Well-adapted to the harsh desert conditions, *chinkara* can go without water for many days





Early morning light reveals the beauty and simplicity of the architecture of villages in the Thar. It also reveals how traditional mud-baked, thatched buildings are giving way to houses of stone



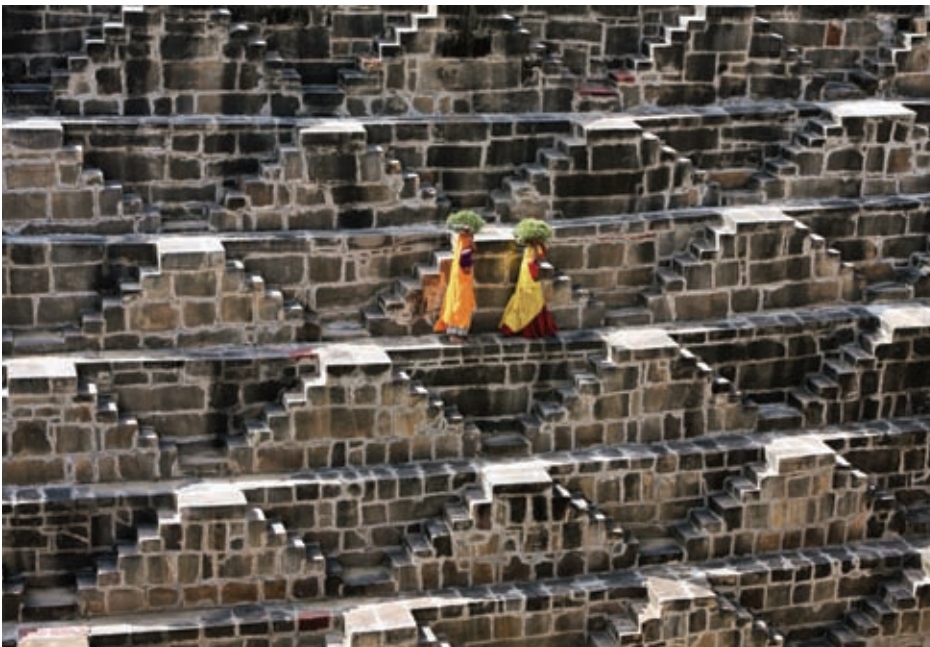
Certain things never change. A very rare sight in this mechanical age: camels being used to thresh the millet crop in a village between Jodhpur and Jaisalmer







One of the oldest of the Bhils greets the photographer in front of her house in the village of Sher Gaon in Mount Abu. The Bhils earn a livelihood by selling milk and ghee from their cattle



Women labourers carry weeds they have cleared from the Chand Baori or step well, whose 3,500 steps are arranged in a mesmerising geometrical pattern, offering a visual rhythm in lines and shapes. Chand Baori, dating back to 9<sup>th</sup> century CE, is at Abhaneri, near Jaipur. The enormous effort put into building the well reflects the crucial role of water in keeping a civilisation going





Lying in a cloth cradle, this *chinkara* fawn is treated with the same care as a human child. Herds of *chinkara* and blackbuck congregate near Bishnoi villages, where they seem to know they will be safe. Known for their kindness to animals and protection of plants, the Bishnois follow the example set by their founder Guru Jambheshwar



Ahhichatragarh, the 12<sup>th</sup> century 'Fort of the Hooded Cobra', guarded ancient trade routes across the Thar Desert. Beautifully restored, it stands surrounded by the town of Nagaur, 135 km from Jodhpur







The landscape of Ranthambore, where an area once inhabited by a thriving human population has been returned to wildlife. On the edge of extinction, and yet surviving here, roams the animal that captures human imagination like no other: the tiger



Not a drop of water can be wasted in the desert. A shepherd takes a mouthful of water and carefully transfers it into the mouth of each of his lambs in turn



# Canine capers

Banking on his therapeutic experience with Bambi, Chops and Wag, **Ranjit Lal** makes a strong case for falling in love with dogs and taking them home

They must be the only therapists in the world at whom you can yell, “Get off the couch, this minute, you rascal!” and be met with a martyred look, a huge sigh and a sheepish wag of the tail, all of which clearly say, “Please can I stay here for just a little longer?”

But dogs play their role as therapists for us perfectly—and oh no the service is not provided free of charge. A human therapist may be quite happy making your wallet lighter, but a dog... it'll want the wallet itself in its mouth. And boy, do they have a handle on human psychology!

Witness what happens when you go to see a puppy prospect. You will steel yourself to resist the fat pups tumbling about on the floor and if they happen to be pedigree, will be checking their parents' papers—all very formal and businesslike. Then you look down and discover that one fat pup has decided to curl up between your feet and gone to sleep. What choice do you have after this? Chops, my second boxer, tried a different stunt: he waddled up and squinted at me with his *sharabi* (drunken) red eyes, clearly indicating that I'd better pick him up and take him home ASAP.

Once ensconced in your home, it will proceed to turn it upside down in no time at all, ensuring that the entire family is at its beck and call. Certain bad habits that you might have enjoyed so far will be straightened out very quickly indeed. You cannot leave stuff—clothes, books, food of any kind, knick-knacks, cell phones and footwear—lying all over the floor or on tables; the little hoodlum will ensure you tidy up and put them out of

sight. Or else, they'll be pulped. You have to leave your kitchen spick and span and the fridge door closed properly at all times.

The pup will then teach you the meaning of time. You may be lackadaisical about meal times, not the pup. It will vociferously demand its meals at proper times (a little earlier would be welcome too), no excuses. Bambi, our first pup, used to reel around the bedroom at the crack of dawn, whining like the world was about to end if she was not taken out and fed right away. As for taking it out on time, if you don't, well then you have no option but to clean up!

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Whether you're alone or living with your family, your dog will teach you to be less selfish, simply by its presence in your life; it will repay you amply with a big grin, wagging tail, wet lick and happy bark

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Pets work wonders for your social life too. Take a sweet cuddly pup out to the park for a game and watch it turn complete strangers (and pretty girls) to mush. Before you even realise it, you'll have made friends with everyone from stiff, ruddy brigadiers and generals to squealing Miss Worlds. Very few can resist the sight of a fat, tiny pup galloping after a ball, its ears flapping valiantly. Wag, the mental Labrador I had, made friends with

late Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, who called him 'a lovely dog', while I prayed that Wag wouldn't take the general's fingers off!

After having set you straight in many areas—you are now a neat, tidy person with a good sense of time and discipline and plenty of pretty/handsome girlfriends or boyfriends—the pup will now embark on a character-building exercise, part of its 'therapy' to make you a completely rounded personality. As it grows, it will begin to challenge your authority. To ensure that you remain the 'boss' of the pack, you have to assert yourself in no uncertain way. Thus, for example, soft-spoken people who have never raised their voices in their lives will learn how to shout. Two golden rules I made to so assert myself (after paying the price for not having done so) were no feeding at the table, and no getting onto beds and chairs. Of course, there are those who love passing titbits to the dog at the dining table and cuddling with them on the bed, (a form of therapy too, they might argue), but this is not quite what it seems. As happens all too often, the dog then rules the roost and will decide when you are allowed into the bedroom, forget about sleeping on the bed. So, a no is no and being firm about this is good for you.

We fed Bambi at the table, and boy, did we pay for it: she begged from family, from guests and when titbits didn't come her way, would lay her head on your lap and put down a huge swathe of silvery drool. With Wag, I had a huge battle before the little Hitler realised that beds and sofas were out of bounds.



Then, of course, there is the matter of exercise. Dogs ensure you get your quota of exercise and will make your life miserable if you don't take them for walks every single day, come rain, come shine. We have, of course, found a slimy way out of this by making our servants take the dog out, but there's nothing a dog likes better than going out for a walk or run with its master or mistress. Bambi, for instance, would refuse to go out with the servant, sitting down firmly on her bottom and not budging, with the result that I had to embark on underhand methods—taking her leash, leading her to the door and handing her over to the fellow. All she ever gave me were reproachful looks and sighs, which, of course, made me feel like a complete heel for the rest of the day.

Whether you're alone or living with your family, your dog will teach you to be less selfish, simply by its presence in your life. It needs to be fed and walked and exercised and played with; it needs to be talked to and petted; it needs to be comforted at Diwali (and allowed to put its head on your shoulder and start to snore, which is what Chops loved doing); it needs to be taken to the vet from time to time; it needs to meet its friends in the park; and it needs you to be less selfish and self-obsessed and it will repay you amply with a big grin, wagging tail, wet lick and happy bark—preferably while sitting in your lap.

But where dogs (and most animals) score the highest as providers of therapy is in the almost irrational, unconditional love they provide. You may leave your dog all alone in the car or in your home for hours, when you return it will still wag its tail crazily and jump up and lick your face. (Some

will, of course, scold you by barking, or turn away and sulk and sigh, but it's all forgiven and forgotten in minutes—especially with the help of a couple of biscuits.) Try doing this to a spouse or child and see what happens!

You may swindle millions, you may rob babies and you may butcher half the neighbourhood but, if you've treated it well, your foolish pooch will still think you are the most wonderful person in the world. And dogs are completely, and idiotically, non-judgemental. You treat them right and no matter what you do in your



non-doggie life they will still love you. As confessionals, they're perfect! You can share your darkest, dirtiest fears and secrets with them, and you can be sure that they'll remain secrets forever.

Most dogs will provide this kind of therapy without asking—it sort of comes with the territory—but there are those who have been specially trained to go beyond. They've been trained to give 'therapy' to autistic children (who often open up to them), to look after and keep company with the elderly, to help the blind

and those prone to seizures. Several sensible hospitals allow dogs to 'visit' patients (especially children) to cheer them up and take their minds off their afflictions. Just watching puppies rough and tumble in a pen is therapy enough to bring on smiles on the most bitter of faces.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are strays who live rough on the streets and who often are adopted by—or adopt—vagabonds and homeless people who have lost everything, giving them succour and comfort and something to live for; which really the State ought to have provided.

One such vagabond on the Ridge, where I walked my dog, would waddle up every evening, calling out to the numerous strays that lived there, which would come galloping from all over the park. He had trained them to the extent that each one would come to him when he called it by name.

From a ragged sack he would give them whatever titbits he had managed to gather that day, and smile toothily as they gobbled them, scolding the bullies for being greedy and letting the smaller ones get their fair share. They were probably the only thing that kept him going—and he stridently and cheerily greeted other walkers with the same bonhomie. Without those dogs he would have been just another hopeless case, probably stoned and drunk and miserable, being driven away from wherever he sought shelter and cursed by all.

There are unfortunately those who don't like dogs (or cats or animals generally) and who are in need of therapy the most. For them, radical therapy is necessary. Lock them up in a room with a litter of roly-poly bulldog pups for a couple of days and see what happens!

**Lal is a Delhi-based writer. His latest book *Bambi, Chops and Wag* (Lotus Roli; ₹ 195; 192 pages) celebrates his love for dogs**

# Double impact

When he is not inking mind-boggling business deals in Hollywood, he plays tennis with Pierce Brosnan and savours home-cooked chicken *tikka* with Dustin Hoffman. **Ashok Amritraj**, who along with brothers Vijay and Anand, formed a trinity that ruled over Indian tennis in the 1970s and 1980s, played at the US Open and Wimbledon before falling for the lure of cinema. Though his Hollywood journey was far from a smooth ride, Amritraj finally tasted success with *Double Impact*, *Bringing Down the House*, *Premonition* and *Walking Tall*.

His autobiography, *Advantage Hollywood* (HarperCollins; ₹ 499; 208 pages), which chronicles his journey from tennis star to successful Hollywood producer, was recently launched in India by his long-time friend, Hollywood action star Jean-Claude Van Damme.

Amritraj, CEO and chairman of Hyde Park Entertainment, tells **Srirekha Pillai** about the impact Hollywood and tennis have had on his life.

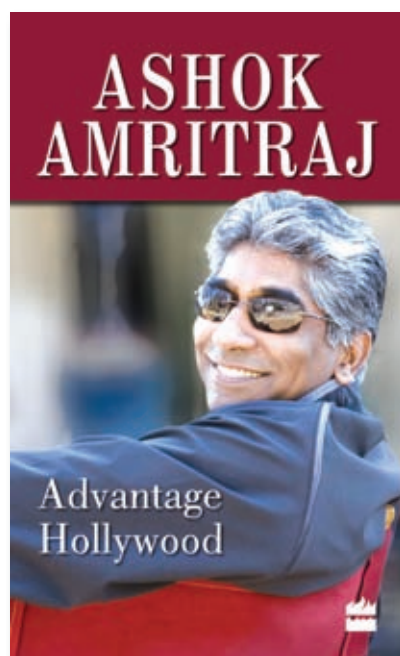
**You're just 57. Isn't it too early to write an autobiography?**

I am glad you think so. I have also heard that the 50s are the new 30s. A few years ago, when HarperCollins approached me, I certainly didn't think it was the right time. Three years ago, when my dad started having a little trouble with his memory when he developed Alzheimer's, I started tape-recording my parents' reminiscences about their life together and our childhood in Madras. In the process, so many of my own childhood memories came rushing back. It just felt like the right time to write them down.

**Writing is a comparatively new experience for you. How has the journey been?**

Writing this book has been a rather emotional and cathartic journey for me. We have always valued writers in my company, Hyde Park Entertainment, as any film starts with a script. With this exercise, my admiration

## AUTHORSPEAK



and respect for writers has grown manifold. Though it has been a great experience, I don't think I'm going to write anything else anytime soon.

**Talking about books, which ones have left a mark on you?**

Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* are works I have enjoyed. My friend Sidney Poitier's autobiography *The Measure of a Man* and the biography of Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson have inspired me greatly.

**Tell us about the pivotal role your mother, Maggie Dhairyam, has played in shaping the Amritraj brothers into tennis champs.**

My mom has not just put the first tennis racquet in each of our hands but been the driving force in our family. In the 1940s, she used to play tennis wearing *churidar kurta*. For her times, she was rather progressive. She was the chairperson of the college union at Presidency College in Madras. It was her father's dream to see somebody in the family play at Wimbledon. And it so happened that in the history of Wimbledon, we became the first brothers to play together.

**Can you take us through the insecurities you refer to in your autobiography?**

As a child, I used to be short and fat. And to top it all, I had very bad vision, almost -10 in both the eyes, necessitating the use of thick glasses. It wasn't easy playing tennis in glasses as they kept falling down. To top it all, my brothers were strikingly tall, dark and handsome. During my first visit to London, I switched to contact lenses. Once I grew to be 6 ft, everything else turned out to be alright.

**In the book, you've talked about your dark skin being an added attraction for female tennis fans in the West and how your brother Anand hogged all the adulation.**

In the early 1970s, dark skin that was neither black nor white was unusual and held some attraction for the fairer sex. Anand used to be very popular with the young ladies; Vijay and I used to hang out at the movies all the time. Those were wonderfully uncomplicated times; children didn't have their heads stuck in computers, iPhones and iPads all the time.





Ashok Amritraj and Jean-Claude Van Damme in a playful mood; the Amritraj brothers Ashok, Anand and Vijay

Even travelling abroad was much more simpler.

#### Was it easy trading the tennis court for a film studio?

When I made the transition in the early 1980s, there wasn't anybody in Hollywood with brown skin. At that time, it was quite insular in California. Nobody even knew where Madras was. Once I was asked whether Singapore was part of India. Years later, when I was working with Sylvester Stallone, I told him, "Sly, your *Rocky* movies played an important role in keeping my head above water in those dark days." It took five years and a lot of bad tennis games before I could make my first independent movie. Though I got my first movie *Nine Deaths of the Ninja* made in 1985, it was in 1990-91 that things finally started looking up. One day, Jean-Claude Van Damme, who saw me at the lobby of a hotel, came running and said, "Remember, you were the only one who gave me work 16 years back when I sent my pictures." Van Damme was an established actor and I was an out-of-work producer. We collaborated on *Double Impact*, which was made at \$ 11 mil-

lion and grossed over \$ 100 million, and all the people who had thrown away my phone messages earlier suddenly started calling back!

#### Growing up in Chennai, you watched *The Sound of Music* 34 times. What was it about the movie that had you hooked?

It's not like Indian actors have made it big in Hollywood. There have been a few who have done a couple of roles. But I would love to see many more Indian actors do much more prominent roles in global cinema

I was probably eight years old then and had this incredible crush on the oldest daughter of the Von Trapp family. So, it was no big deal! [Laughs.] Later, when I was serving on the Board of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, I met

Robert Wise, who had directed *The Sound of Music*. I told him, "Bob, you are responsible for getting me into this business," and he chuckled, "Aha, you are the reason I got all that box office from India."

#### Which other films have had a similar impact on you?

*Ben Hur*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, *The Graduate*, *The Godfather* and *Rocky* are some of my all-time favourite films. I loved *Ben Hur* for its sheer epic scale. Decades later, when I was awarded a plaque at the Academy of Motion Picture Art and Sciences by none other than Charlton Heston, who starred in *Ben Hur*, it was incredible. With that, I closed a lot of circles in my life.

#### In your book, you talk of being inspired by the success stories of Sidney Poitier and Michael Jackson.

When people transcend the colour of their skin and geographical barriers with their talent and ability and have a substantial effect on the world, the way Sidney and Michael have had, it's a great feeling. Sidney, who is a very

dear friend, was the first black man to win an Oscar; the first black man to carry the kind of weight he did in Hollywood. Michael came a couple of decades later, but was an incredibly talented musician.

**Today, Hollywood is a viable option for Indian stars, from Amitabh Bachchan to Mallika Sherawat. What was the struggle you went through to establish yourself?**

When I started out in 1980, I had to carve my own path. It was also tough at that point of time because the world was a much larger place; communication was difficult. Today, the world is so well connected and, hence, much smaller; everybody is connected to everybody in so many different ways. It's not like Indian actors have made it in Hollywood. There have been a few who have done a couple of roles. But I would love to see many more Indian actors do larger roles and play a much more prominent role in global cinema.

**What is Hollywood's perception about Indian cinema?**

I dislike the Indian cliché in Hollywood. It's heartening that Indian cinema is having a good time with different kinds of movies being made at this point in time. My film *Life of Crime* closed the Toronto Festival, so unfortunately I couldn't be there at the screening of *The Lunchbox*. But I heard that it is a pretty good movie. I would like to see Indian cinema do much better in the West. I am hopeful that the next decade will be a good one for Indian cinema in terms of quality movies and Indian actors doing substantial roles internationally.

**Who are the Indian actors that excite you the most, and with whom you would like to work?**

That's a tough question. I have too many friends and I would hate to mention names. I am going to stay

away from that one and just tell you that Indian actors are extremely talented. I have done a couple of films with Indian actors and would like to do one or two films with them next year. Recently, I was with my friend Van Damme in Delhi and we were talking about doing an adventure film with a group of international actors, from China, South Korea and India, besides Van Damme himself.

**You have worked with the who's who of Hollywood from Bruce Willis and Sylvester Stallone to Angelina Jolie, Cate Blanchett, Dustin Hoffman and Antonio Banderas. Can you tell us about the journey?**

Over the past 20 years, Saturday morning tennis games at my house have become a tradition. Dustin Hoffman, Pierce Brosnan, Bruce Willis and Van Damme have all come over for tennis, followed by Indian lunch cooked by my wife Chitra

In one word, fantastic. The reality of my life today has far exceeded my dreams of going to Hollywood. When I began my career there, I just wanted to make a couple of movies and be a part of Hollywood. I have ended up making 100 films. I have had the pleasure of working with some of the most beautiful women in the world—Angie [Angelina Jolie] is special, so are Sandy [Sandra Bullock] and Jen [Jennifer Aniston]. I have worked with some great guys too: Steve Martin, Dustin Hoffman, Bruce Willis, Sly [Stallone] and Van Damme. I see them off and on. Over the past 20 years, Saturday morning tennis games at my house have become a tradition. Dustin, Pierce Brosnan, Bruce Willis and Van Damme, they have all

come over for tennis, followed by Indian lunch cooked by my wife Chitra.

**Who among them is good at tennis?**

Dustin Hoffman plays very good tennis. He is extremely focused and practices every day. His love for the game is unbelievable. Michael Lynton, the chairman of Sony Pictures, also plays amazing tennis.

**What do your kids Priya and Milan prefer: tennis or movies?**

It has to be the movies. While they both play tennis for their college and school respectively, they are much more creatively inclined. Priya is taking a film class in Pomona, where she goes to college. My son is learning photography. As a family, we love going to the movies together.

**Does the family watch Indian movies as well?**

Once in a while, though my wife watches so many of them at home. Sometimes, when I come back home, I get to see some of my Indian friends on screen. Rajni, with whom I did a movie, *Bloodstone*, 25 years back, is a friend. So are Shah Rukh and Aamir Khan.

**What's the latest from Hyde Park Entertainment?**

My film *Life of Crime* starring Jennifer Aniston and Tim Robbins just closed the Toronto Film Festival. We are also busy with the movie version of the 1980s TV series *The Fall Guy*, starring Dwayne 'Rock' Johnson. Further, I have worked very closely with the UN on a variety of issues. I am hosting an upcoming show, *Chance of a Lifetime*, for which I have brought together a group of documentary filmmakers from India, China and the United Arab Emirates. They will tell stories that revolve around the millennium development goals of the United Nations. The series will air on National Geographic later this year.



# The Mahatma's dream

We pay tribute to the Father of the Nation with an extract from *Delhi Diary*, a compilation of Mahatma Gandhi's prayer speeches, published soon after his assassination in 1948

18 January 1948

I embarked on the fast in the name of Truth whose familiar name is God. Without living Truth, God is nowhere. In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people, without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. We have indulged in abductions, forcible conversions and we have done all this shamelessly. I am not aware if anybody has done these things in the name of Truth. With that same name on my lips I have broken the fast. The agony of our people was unbearable. Rashtrapati Dr Rajendrababu brought over a hundred people representing the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and representatives of refugees from the Punjab, the Frontier Province and Sind. In this very representative company were present Zahid Hussainsaheb, the High Commissioner for Pakistan, the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and the Deputy Commissioner, General Shah Nawaz Khan, representing the Azad Hind Fauj (INA). Pandit Nehru, sitting like a statue, was of course there, as also Maulanasaheb. Dr Rajendrababu read a document in Hindustani signed by these representatives, asking me not to put any further strain on them and end the agony by breaking the fast. Telegrams after telegrams have come from Pakistan and the Indian Union, urging me to do the same. I could not resist the counsel of all these friends. I could not disbelieve their pledge that come what may, there would be complete friendship between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Jews, a friendship not to be broken. To break that friendship would be to break the nation.

As I write, comforting telegrams are deluging me. How I wish that God will keep me fit and sane enough to render service to humanity. If the solemn pledge made today is fulfilled, I assure you that it will revive with redoubled force my intense wish and prayer before God that I should be enabled to live the full span of life doing service to humanity till the last moment. That span according to learned



opinion is at least 125 years, some say 133. The letter of my vow has been fulfilled early, beyond expectation, through the great goodwill of all the citizens of Delhi, including the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The result could not be otherwise when

I find that thousands of refugees and others have been fasting since yesterday. Signed assurances of friendship have been pouring in from thousands. Telegraphic blessings have come from all over the world. Can there be a better sign of God's hand in this act of mine? But beyond the letter of fulfillment of my solemn vow lies its spirit without which the letter killeth. The spirit of the vow is sincere friendship between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Union and a similar friendship in Pakistan. If the first is assured, the second must follow, as sure as the day follows the night. If there is darkness in the Union, it would be folly to expect light in Pakistan. But if the night in the Union is dispelled beyond the shadow

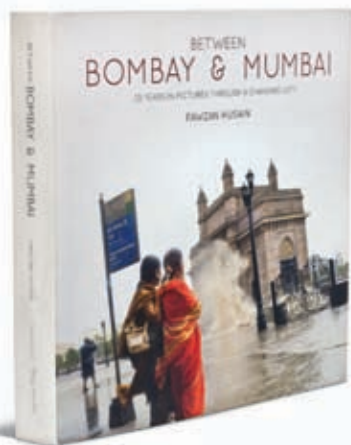
of a doubt, it cannot be otherwise in Pakistan, nor are signs wanting in that direction. Numerous messages have come from Pakistan, not one of dissent. May God, who is Truth, guide us as He has visibly guided us during all these six days.

26 January 1948

We have handled Independence and we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not... In a well-ordered democratic society there is no room, no occasion for lawlessness or strikes. In such a society there are ample lawful means for vindicating justice. Violence, veiled or unveiled, must be taboo.

I wonder if we can remain free from the fever of power politics or the bid for power which afflicts the political world, the East and the West. Before leaving this topic of the day, let us permit ourselves to hope that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world.

# BETWEEN THE LINES



An interesting visual tribute to the city of Mumbai, **Fawzan Husain's BETWEEN BOMBAY & MUMBAI** (self-published; ₹ 4,000; 300 pages) captures the transformation of the bustling megapolis from the 1980s to the new millennium. Iconic images that define Mumbai—the *dabbawala*, Bollywood, Bombay Stock Exchange, Ganesh *utsav*, peak hour local train rides—all make the grade, but not necessarily in a clichéd manner. The changing façade of the city is detailed through the twin towers, the metro and the skyscrapers dotting the Mumbai skyline. It's not just the hus-

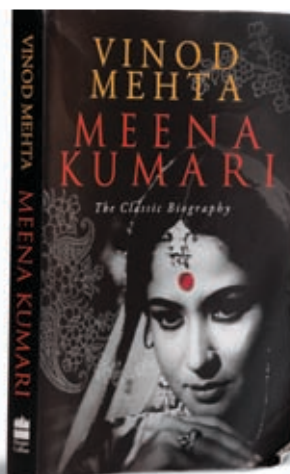
tle and bustle and chaos and glamour of the city that catch Husain's lens; the passionate observer he is, he is able to capture Mumbai's soul and quirkiness as well. Here's a city that can run temporary schools for street children at BEST bus stops, and knows the basics of the *dhanda* well enough to set up makeshift bazaars atop the bonnet of parked cars in Zaveri Bazaar. While celebrating the city, Husain gives its ugly underbelly a clean boot. Hence, no druggies, dons or dirt. Though it's a documentation over a 25-year period, we don't have the 1993 bomb blasts or the 26/11 terror attacks. On the other hand, you have a fresh-



faced Aishwarya Rai modelling at the Derby a few years before she won the Miss World Crown in 1994, and trade union leader Datta Samant campaigning in the early 1990s. Viva Mumbai!




Intriguing and dramatic, Meena Kumari's life was the stuff movies are made of. **Vinod Mehta's riveting MEENA KUMARI: The Classic Biography** (HarperCollins; ₹ 350; 227 pages) begins with her death, weeks after the release of her swan song, *Pakeezah*. Mehta goes back in time to Meetawala Chawl in Dadar East, where four year-old Mahajabeen bribes a hefty Pathan guarding the gates of Rooptara Studio with *pakora* to watch movie making. Having never met the star whom he fondly calls 'my heroine', Mehta talks to those who were close to her, including her much-maligned husband Kamal Amrohi, her sisters and colleagues, and relies on painstaking research to create a complex portrait of a woman who



carefully cultivated the image of someone 'unfairly exploited and betrayed' by those close to her. We are treated to the tragic story of a star who was unlucky in life and love, and left almost in penury in her final days by those she chose to love. A picture that appears to blend seamlessly with her on-screen persona as Hindi cinema's greatest tragedienne. The book also covers lesser known facets of her life, including her fairytale courtship with Kamal Amrohi, the slew of failed relationships and her descent into alcoholism. This revised edition, which comes four decades after the first one, is an attempt to introduce the legendary star to a new generation.



A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair playing in a pond. The man is in the water, wearing a dark shirt, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The water is dark blue and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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# Enrich yourself

The meaning of life can be understood only in living, says Jiddu Krishnamurti

**Question:** We live but we do not know why. To so many of us, life seems to have no meaning. Can you tell us the meaning and purpose of our living?

**Krishnamurti:** Now why do you ask this question? Why are you asking me to tell you the meaning of life, the purpose of life? What do we mean by life? Does life have a meaning, a purpose? Is not living in itself its own purpose, its own meaning? Why do we want more? Because we are so dissatisfied with our life, our life is so empty, so tawdry, so monotonous, doing the same thing over and over again, we want something more, something beyond that which we are doing. Since our everyday life is so empty, so dull, so meaningless, so boring, so intolerably stupid, we say life must have a fuller meaning and that is why you ask this question. Surely a man who is living richly, a man who sees things as they are and is content with what he has, is not confused; he is clear, therefore he does not ask what is the purpose of life. For him the very living is the beginning and the end. Our difficulty is that, since our life is empty, we want to find a purpose to life and strive for it. Such a purpose of life can only be mere intellection, without any reality; when the purpose of life is pursued by a stupid, dull mind, by an empty heart, that purpose will also be empty. Therefore our purpose is how to make our life rich, not with money and all the rest of it but inwardly rich—which is not something cryptic. When you say that the purpose of life is to be happy, the purpose of life is to find God, surely that desire to find God is an escape from life and your God is merely a thing that is known. You can only make your way towards an object which you know; if you build a staircase to the thing that you call God, surely that is not God. Reality can be understood only in living, not in escape. When you seek a purpose of life, you are really escaping and not understanding what life is. Life is relationship, life is action in relationship; when I do not understand relationship, or when relationship is confused, then I seek a fuller meaning. Why are our lives so empty? Why are we so lonely, frustrated? Because we have never looked into ourselves and understood ourselves. We never admit to ourselves that this life is all we know and that it should therefore be understood fully and completely. We prefer to run away from ourselves and that is why we seek the purpose of life away from relationship. If we begin to understand action, which is our relationship with people, with property, with beliefs and ideas, then we will find that



relationship itself brings its own reward. You do not have to seek. It is like seeking love. Can you find love by seeking it? Love cannot be cultivated. You will find love only in relationship, not outside relationship, and it is because we have no love that we want a purpose of life. When there is love, which is its own eternity, then there is no search for God, because love is God.

It is because our minds are full of technicalities and superstitious mutterings that our lives are so empty and that is why we seek a purpose beyond ourselves. To find life's purpose we must go through the door of ourselves; consciously or unconsciously we avoid facing things as they are in themselves and so we want God to open for us a door which is beyond. This question about the purpose of life is put only by those who do not love. Love can be found only in action, which is relationship.

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*Excerpted from The First and Last Freedom by J Krishnamurti (Random House India; ₹ 250; 328 pages). Krishnamurti was an Indian philosopher, orator and author*



# Plastic money

It's a ubiquitous thin strip of plastic that has revolutionised the way we live, buy and play. Swiped to make payments in shops, restaurants, theatres, on the Internet and to withdraw cash from ATM machines and book travel tickets, credit cards have gained currency around the world as the most convenient form of transacting business.

In 1963, American Express, one of the world's largest banking houses, introduced credit cards in Britain for the first time. However, the rudimentary form of credit cards took shape in the United States in the 1920s, when individual firms such as oil companies and hotel chains began issuing them to customers. Credit cards were first used by travelling salesmen for use on the road. In the 1960s, many companies offered credit cards, promoting them as a time-saving device rather than a form of credit. American Express and MasterCard became huge successes overnight. When it was launched in Britain, American Express card

holders were allowed to use the card at nearly 3,000 hotels, restaurants, shops and car-hire agencies in the UK and at some establishments abroad. The convenience the card offered prompted many to lap it up. It took three more years for Barclays to come up with Barclaycard, UK's first credit card, in 1966.

The forerunners of plastic cards were far from the sophisticated cards in use now. Made from celluloid, metal, fibre and paper, they nonetheless laid the foundation for the plastic mode of payment, which today consists of a plastic strip holding details unique to the holder, including a special card number, signature, personal PIN number and other embedded data, which ensures it can only be used by the designated holder. From the barter system, which enabled people to exchange resources for mutual benefit, to travelling light with just a piece of plastic to transact business, we have indeed come a long way.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: OCTOBER 1963

- On 1 October, Nigeria became a republic within the Commonwealth with Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, popularly known as Zik, as the president.
- On 12 October, Khwaja Shams-ud-Din became the 'prime minister' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- On 15 October, the term Beatlemania was coined by *The Daily Mirror* after the performance of The Beatles at the London Palladium.
- On 30 October, Italian luxury and sports car manufacturing firm Lamborghini was established.



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

***BUTTERFLIES** never retire*

**The first click of the mouse.**

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# Digital hangover

*n.* Feelings of shame and regret caused by social network photos and other online evidence of one's embarrassing behaviour.

**Example.** The drinkers admitted waking up to find friends had uploaded videos and pictures of their drunken behaviour. And 16 per cent recalled asking friends to take down the offending material—for fear their families or employers might see. The phenomenon—dubbed a **digital hangover**—has increased thanks to the popularity of Facebook, Twitter and the spread of camera phones.

—Mark Duell, *"Staggering over the road, crashing down steps and falling flat on their faces: Sensible drinking video reveals antics of drunks who shame Britain"*, Mail Online, 15 July 2013

“Inflation is when you pay \$ 15 for the \$ 10 haircut you used to get for \$ 5 when you had hair.

—American athlete Sam Ewing

# Apostrofly

*n.* An errant or misplaced apostrophe, particularly one that seems to have been added randomly to the text.

**Example.** Guerrilla proofreading does seem to be a popular hobby for some people. They can get quite agitated about **apostroflies**, invisible hyphens, and other such entities.

—Stan Carey, *"Grammar to go"* (comment), Sentence First, 26 March 2012

# INTEREST GRAPH

*n.* The set of ideas, topics, and things in which a person is interested, particularly a digital or online representation of this set.

**Example.** Twitter possesses a different kind of advantage, and it's known as the **interest graph**. Whether it is your favourite brand, your favourite team or your favourite celebrity, Twitter allows you to keep up with what you find most interesting.

—Adam Wexler, *"Why Twitter and LinkedIn will outlast Facebook"*, The Huffington Post, 14 August 2013

# Nudgenik

*n.* A person who believes in using indirect suggestions, positive reinforcement, and other aspects of behavioural science to encourage people to make better choices in their lives.

**Example.** But don't worry. The **nudgeniks** intend to save us from ourselves. By enlisting the theories of behavioural economics, they say they can get us to act in our own best interest.

—Konrad Yakabuski, *"The nudgeniks can't save us from ourselves"*, The Globe and Mail, 24 August 2013

# DIWORSIFY

*v.* To make something worse by diversifying.

**Example.** Foreign content: For 10 years, a way to **diworsify** your booming Canada-focused portfolio; now, a refuge while Canada gets its stock market comeuppance.

—Rob Carrick, *"The complete cynic's guide to investing"*, The Globe and Mail, 15 August 2012

# Socialbot

*n.* An automated software program designed to mimic a real person on a social networking site.

**Example.** Now a group of freelance Web researchers has created more sophisticated Twitter bots, dubbed **socialbots**, that can not only fool people into thinking they are real people, but also serve as virtual social connectors, speeding up the natural rate of human-to-human communication.

—Mike Orcutt, *"Twitter bots create surprising new social connections"*, Technology Review, 23 January, 2012



“ You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that make you want to live to be a hundred.

—American filmmaker and actor Woody Allen

## Personality spam

*n.* Incessant online posts and messages relating to one's personal life and interests.

**Example.** Where is the line, exactly, between an unsolicited email or a spam blog comment and 'clickbait,' those seductive *Huffington Post*-esque headlines that suck up your attention but don't deliver what they promise?.... Or, for that matter, the people the writer Merlin Mann calls **personality spammers**, endlessly polluting your Facebook feed with their frenzied need for self-expression?

—Oliver Burkeman, "Why the spammers are winning",  
The Guardian, 9 August 2013

## Shampaign

*n.* A fake, insincere, or misleading campaign, particularly for political office.

**Example.** A fair number of these campaigns were never real to begin with. They're shams—or **shampaigns**, if you will—designed to snag some free press during the slow months and elevate the would-be candidate's profile.

—Ryan Teague Beckwith, "Time to pop the 'sham-paign' bubble",  
Lowell Sun, 20 August 2013

## Sax appeal

For all those diehard jazz fans who have always wanted to whip out the sax and play a tune or two, enrol at the Saraswati Music College in Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi, for classes on playing the saxophone. The classes offer a combination of basic technique, such as holding the instrument right or the right way to play it, and theoretical study of the notations and tunes. And you won't just learn western classical music—the twist is that you will also be taught how to play ragas, experimenting and fusing two utterly different musical styles. The music college, one of India's oldest that's been around for almost 90 years, also has on offer other instrument classes, from mouth organ to piano, drums and guitars in the western department to tabla, flute and harmonium in the Indian classical department. The classes are held twice a week; you pay ₹ 2,800 a month. For more details, call 011-2616-7911 or go to [www.saraswaticollege.org](http://www.saraswaticollege.org)

BUZZ



## “It’s heart-warming to see girls taking their studies seriously; some even cycle to the nearby town to attend schools”

*Rukmani Devi Sharma, 71, Rajasthan, spreads literacy among young women*



A quiet revolution is sweeping the by-lanes of Birmi village in Jhunjhunu district in Rajasthan. Armed with slates and chalk, young girls and married women set off for their daily class with 71 year-old **Rukmani Devi Sharma**, while others cycle to their schools in the nearby town. *Mahila panch* of the *gram samiti*, Sharma, who is fondly addressed as *gram kaki* (village elder), is single-handedly responsible for encouraging girls to enrol in schools. Besides going from door-to-door canvassing for the girl child’s right to education, she has been at the forefront of a larger movement to empower women by keeping a vigil on cases of female infanticide and child marriages. The unopposed chairperson of the village’s *sahkari samiti* for the past 15 years, she is also steering an agitation against the archaic tradition of *ghoonghat* (veil). Sharma, who has studied till the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, has set a worthy example by ensuring that her own six daughters have completed their post-graduation. She admits, though, that convincing

others to send their daughters to school has been an uphill task. “It’s not easy changing old mindsets,” she says. “I have to indulge in a lot of coaxing before they agree.” For the majority of womenfolk in the village, whose husbands work in the Gulf countries, her work has been a godsend; if not for their *gram kaki*, they would have been unable to correspond with their husbands by mail. For Sharma, who lost her own husband Ramlal Sharma nearly 25 years ago, her literacy work is nothing short of a passion. But she has sowed more than just the seeds of literacy. Along with several others, Sharma has planted saplings in a large expanse of uncultivable land near her village, turning it into a lush green field. She credits her father, Chimanramji Baid, a staunch follower of the Arya Samaj movement, with teaching her to put society above self. Her dream: a tailoring school in the village so every woman can earn a living. After all, education and empowerment walk hand in hand.

—Abha Sharma



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