

September 2004 Rs 20

# harmony

celebrate age



## My OTHER FAMILY

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# Time for action

**THIS IS THE FOURTH ISSUE OF *Harmony*, and the journey to establish ourselves as a definitive platform for the Indian silver citizen is well underway.**

Where do we go from here?

The first few issues of any magazine always generate a great deal of interest. Newness has a way of doing that. But to sustain itself, and become a viable force, the magazine has to offer readers more than eye candy. Having forged its identity, it needs to establish its credibility by offering value in real terms, information that can make a difference to the reader's life. That is what we hope to achieve over the coming months, with your input and guidance.

The magazine, of course, is the most tangible part of the *Harmony* initiative. However, the centre and the website are equally significant. The first *Harmony* Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, has gone through its share of teething problems. But it's not only up and running—it's buzzing. Members are getting

proactive and strident in their views and demands. Their response and ideas will pave the way for other such centres, initially in Mumbai, then in other parts of the country. We are already on the lookout for sites to house more centres.

We also have big plans for our website, [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org). From next month, you will be able to subscribe to the magazine online. The site will also carry highlights from previous issues, and a sneak peek into the latest one. For those of you wary of the computer, ask your children and grandchildren to help you log on. That way, you get to spend quality time with us and your family at the same time! We've received many letters from younger people, indeed, who have gifted *Harmony* subscriptions to their parents and grandparents. One letter got right to the point: "The *Harmony* initiative fills a need."

This need has never been more apparent. I have been inundated by letters and phone calls from NGOs, community groups, like-minded institutions, and people



RITU NANDA

who care, wanting to join hands with us. Then, there are those who have expressed their surprise that I would choose to work with the elderly. "It can't be easy working with older people" was one comment.

That's not true. Working with silvers has come naturally to me, bringing with it deep satisfaction. The hard part, though, is the responsibility it brings. Gradually, *Harmony* is being perceived as a voice for Generation A. To live up to this tag is the real test. In my former career as actor, there was always the luxury of a second, third, fourth take. No longer. Now it's time for real action.

*Tina Ambani*  
Tina Ambani

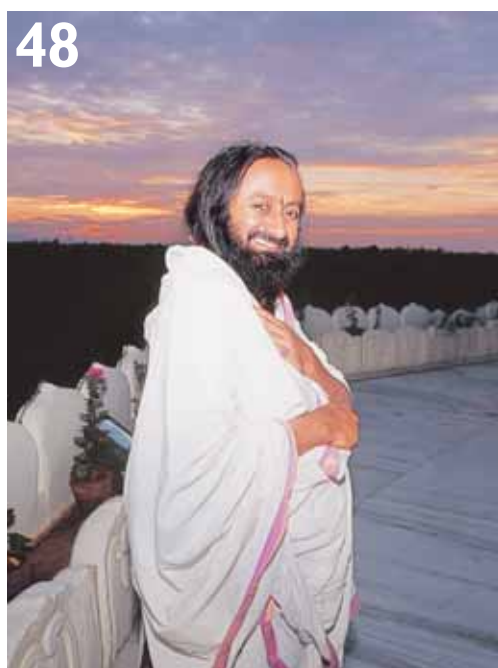
Managing Trustee of the Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust: **Tina Ambani**

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## from the desk

There has never been such a major shift in attitude towards silvers as now. Every week, there is a new article in the newspaper about this age group. People over 55 are no longer being ignored, but courted. We are proud that *Harmony* has helped broaden the horizons.

This month, the spotlight is on our heroes on wheels. Who said you need to put on the brakes when you are a little way up the road from 80? Ask Lieutenant General (retd) H C Rai, Macky P Mody, or Rana Kultar Chand. Driving down memory lane in "Autogenarians", their vehicles may gasp for breath, never them. Even Bachan Singh, living in abject poverty and exasperation, has his car as sanctuary.

We serve up more than speed this issue. One of the biggest dilemmas faced on reaching what is, or used to be, the retirement age is what to do with life. One solution, as our cover story, "My Other Family", points out is to join a senior citizens' association, one that is not a roar of empty promises.

Meanwhile, in our continued endeavour to bring you a really good magazine every month, we have redesigned it. We have tried to make it easier to navigate, and spruced up the look. We hope you like it.

—Meeta Bhatti

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I have been following the journey of *Harmony* over the past three months and have seen tentative steps turn into bold strides. The magazine delivers what it promises: inspiration and motivation to celebrate life and age, peppered with judicious doses of help, advice and guidance. *Harmony* is a high-quality product, yet avoids the traps of a 'glossy'. Simply put, it's for real people.

I feel your magazine has generated an interesting side effect. While the emphasis is on empowering elders, it simultaneously moulds attitudes among younger people and builds sensitivity. The quality of life of our silvers will undergo a significant change when younger people become aware of their needs and concerns. This, I feel, would be *Harmony's* greatest achievement.

**S MENON**

Mumbai

I enjoyed *Harmony* very much. The magazine would be even more interesting if you covered Bollywood and also pilgrimage destinations like Amarnath, Haridwar and Rameswaram.

**K GOPALA KRISHNA**

Berhampur, Orissa

I am a silver citizen and was thrilled to see your magazine. I read it from cover to cover and found it informative and caring. I thought Tina Ambani's write-up, "A Common Voice", was well written and focused. As for her comment, "It's time for Indian silver citizens to get proactive about their rights," I have a feeling that we still need



such as H D Shourie, Zohra Sehgal and Captain C P Krishnan Nair in the first two issues. As a doting grandparent, I enjoyed the delightful article on grandparenting. Your "Body & Soul" section is worthy of special mention, while in "First Aid", investment advice for retired persons in a regime of declining interest rates is very useful. And "Bookshelf" deserves to be promoted to a full-fledged review section.

Striking a personal note, I won first prize in an all-India essay competition conducted by the Indian Association of Retired Persons for the topic: "Am I a Successful Senior Citizen?" I feel reading *Harmony* will make me a more successful senior citizen! The magazine is undoubtedly an intellectual walking stick for silvers.

**P P RAMACHANDRAN**, Mumbai

*The letter of the month wins a gift from Vimal*

powerful and influential people to champion our cause.

**JOHN ALEXANDER**

Nagpur

The article in your July issue on chyawanprash, "Black Magic", was definitely very informative and interesting. However, since doctors call it a 'no-no' for diabetics and many silver citizens would fall into that category, perhaps you could have discussed healthy Ayurvedic alternatives instead.

**S N BHAT**

Mumbai

Please accept my warm congratulations on your magazine for the elderly, who are unfortunately ignored by our generation. I was fortunate enough to read the first issue and

The word 'Harmony' connotes a pleasing combination of elements forming a whole. This is exactly what your monthly has achieved. The two words that sprung to my mind are 'inspiring' and 'invigorating' as I read about the achievements of silver citizens



enjoyed it thoroughly. It made me feel proud that despite my busy schedule of home, office and kids, I am able to spend time with my aged father-in-law and parents during the week.

**ALPA MALVEA**

Jaipur

Considering the Rs 20 price tag of *Harmony*, the end product is absolutely top class. The magazine gives a new lease of life to 'silvers', helping them lead a more meaningful and purposeful existence. My congratulations to the entire team.

**RAMESH KAPADIA**

Ahmedabad

I am writing this letter on behalf of my mother, Maneel, who is 50 years old. These

thoughts are hers; only the words are mine. She wants you to know how thankful she is for a fabulous magazine that celebrates age. The word 'old' gives the impression of being stale and rusty; your careful avoidance of this word shows your genuine concern for seniors and also makes ageing a phase to look forward to, rather than feel apprehensive about. English poet Robert Browning wrote: "Grow old with me, the best is yet to be." I am sure your magazine will create positive and harmonious vibes and provide a platform for seniors to voice their views. Keep up the great work.

**SUMIT PAUL**

New Delhi

I read the second edition of *Harmony* and was most impressed with the product. I enjoyed the wide variety of articles. I especially liked the piece, "The Purohits Get a PC"; it looks like it will be a hit series. I have now decided to subscribe to the magazine for my in-laws.

**SEEMA CHOWDHRY**

Mumbai

It's great that a magazine like *Harmony* has been launched keeping in mind the needs of seniors. Till now, magazines have basically focused on youngsters. This magazine fills the gap.

**ARUN KUMAR BANSAL**

Delhi

After reading *Harmony*, I am very impressed that there are people out there who are doing so much for the cause of the elderly, and doing it so beautifully. Indeed, you have inspired the aged to live longer and more productive lives. Hope many people read this magazine and realise that seniors are in no hurry to go to their graves!

**PHILOMENA FRANCO**

New Delhi

When you call us silvers, you make us feel better about ourselves. And the magazine, *Harmony*, offers prescriptions to make us feel better about our lives. Thank you for letting us know the opportunities in store for us.

**RANJEET SINH**

Jaipur

## contributors

Referred to fondly as 'The First Lady of Indian Media',

**Amita Malik** began her career as a student announcer in All India Radio,

and went on to become a leading columnist on cinema and the electronic media, even serving on the critics' juries at international film festivals in Cannes, Berlin, Moscow, Montreal, Locarno, Crakow and Delhi. Malik loves being in the driver's seat—read her essay on the ups and downs of hill driving this issue.



**Prashant**

**Panjiar**, a photojournalist from New Delhi, trains his lens on silvers

for "You Are Not Alone", our story on depression. Panjiar's portfolio ranges from a book on survivors in Vietnam and Cambodia to the Gulf War. Closer home, his camera has travelled from Ayodhya to Punjab and Kashmir. His personal Kodak moment? Being on the jury of the World Press Photo 2002 in Amsterdam.

"Consummate automobilist and enthusiast on all things that move" is how **Adil Jal Darukhanawala**, editor-in-chief

of *Overdrive* magazine, describes himself. He profiles Macky Mody and his Lambretta for *Harmony*. Apart from his 1949 Fiat Topolino

and many motorcycles, he also "probably" has the largest model car and bike collection in India.

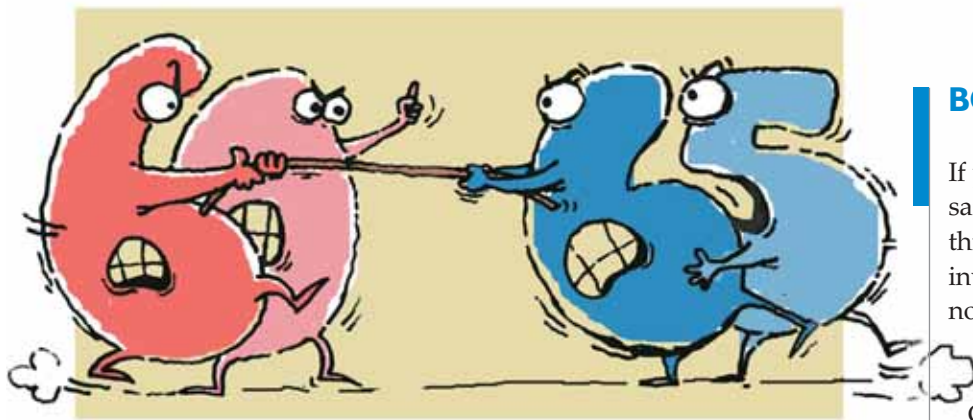


### AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

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

Mail us at 4th Floor, Maker Chambers IV, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)



FARZANA COOPER

## SILVER LINE

The question of how old is old enough to be a senior citizen may soon be resolved. For now, it's between 55 years and 65 years for various concessions—60 for railway fares, 63 for air fares, 55 years for LIC's Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana, which has now been scrapped, and 58 for retirement in many workplaces. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is trying to settle the tug of war between various ministries by prescribing 60 as the age limit. While the Ministry of Civil Aviation wants to decide its own limit, the Finance Ministry feels that bringing down the limit will require a policy decision under the Income Tax Act. The decision is eagerly awaited.

## TRENDSETTER

Maharashtra is one state that is recognising silvers as a segment that needs additional benefits. After separate seats in buses, and 35 per cent concession on annual rental of MTNL bills, the state government has announced free medical services in government hospitals. You can now show your senior citizen's identity card and get treatment without paying the admission fee (Rs 5 to Rs 25) and doctor's consultation fee. However, you need to pay for the subsidised costs of pathological tests and medicines. If you don't have a senior citizen's identity card yet, visit your local senior citizens' association and get one for Rs 30. It could well be the beginning of a trend.

## BOND WITH THE BEST

If you felt at sea when it came to safe investment opportunities, think again. The 9 per cent investment tool is here. We are not talking about the Dada Dadi bonds, which may not see the light of day, but the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme. Proposed in the 2004-2005 Budget and launched on August 2, it promises to help interest-dependent silvers tide over post-retirement hardship. To be sold through post offices, investors will be allowed to make only a single deposit ranging from Rs 2.67 lakh to Rs 15 lakh. A clause will prevent silvers from withdrawing the money before five years; it can be extended by three years. Paid every quarter, the taxability of the returns is a downside. While the beneficiaries of the offer will be people over 60 years of age, 55-year-olds who have just applied for a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) can also invest. Those who sought VRS before they turned 55 are, unfortunately, not in the loop. *Harmony* promises to take it up with the Finance Minister. Your concern is our cause.

## IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Admitting a petition seeking the implementation of the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP), the Supreme Court has issued notices to the Centre and the governments of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The petition, pointing to retirement blues and poor geriatric infrastructure, was filed by Brigadier (retired) J S Bawa, who runs a news magazine, *Age Speak*, in New Delhi. In fact, *Harmony* pointed out the NPOP slack in its July issue. While these governments need to

submit a time-bound action plan to implement the recommendations suggested by NPOP, there's no guarantee that they will initiate grievance cells as sought by the petition. Bawa's other demands include insurance cover and schemes ensuring medical services round the clock at affordable rates. The matter will come up for hearing soon, but what's not been achieved in four years—NPOP was instituted in 1999—is not likely to happen too soon. ■



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Dove is the mildest of all!

## News and views from around the world

### HER DADDY'S PET

New parents in Japan have no problem with bedwetting but wet lampposts in the neighbourhood might soon become an issue. As Japan ages, it is becoming a nation of pet lovers with the tendency to get a pet going up sharply after 45. And no expenses are spared on these new members of the family who enjoy lifestyles that include weekend spa visits, pasta lunches at open-air cafes and designer clothing. According to pet industry figures, there are over 19 million pet dogs and cats in Japan now, exceeding the number of Japanese children under 15, which just hit a new low of 17.8 million. Puppy love rules.

Illustrations: FARZANA COOPER



### SILVER SLEUTHS

Age is no longer a bar to being a super spy. In the American state of Illinois, the government is developing a program called Senior Sleuths to prevent seniors from becoming victims of consumer fraud. Of the 24,000 calls received annually by the state police on such frauds, a majority is from elders. They are more susceptible to cons because they tend to be more trusting and are often talked into making quick decisions.

The programme will teach seniors to monitor telemarketers and door-to-door sales and how to file complaints with the attorney general's office. Participants will also learn how to investigate crimes against others and report abuse against seniors—setting up a force of senior Bonds to look after their own kind. A government spokesman was quoted as saying that seniors are perfect for the job, "They have time, they have energy and they have a lot of stick-to-itiveness."

### AGELESS WORKFORCE

Australia, whose population at over 19 million is less than that of Delhi and Mumbai combined, is already thinking about how to deal with an ageing workforce. Last month, 500 top companies received a letter from their government urging them to review policies about hiring and firing senior workers. Kevin Andrews, Federal Workplace Relations Minister, suggested an audit of the age profile of their workforce and the changes expected over the next five to 10 years, besides a new attitude. "Workers should be judged according to their ability, not their age," he said in a report.



## SAFE AGEING, UNSAFE ECONOMY

Though China is lionised as an economic miracle, observers are warning that falling fertility and rising longevity will eventually slow down its growth because risk-taking abilities and entrepreneurial zest go down with age. Phillip Longman, author of *The Empty Cradle*, said in a report that the world's most entrepreneurial countries are the still-youthful India and China, for now. But Japan and France, with their high percentage of elderly, are risk-averse, since near-retirees are reluctant to risk careers and nest eggs. The reason why China needs to worry about this immediately is its zealous one-child policy, which is resulting in the 4-2-1 problem, in which a single child will one day support two aged parents and four grandparents. Not the most friendly situation for new businesses.



## OLD THREADS

In England, architects redesigning the Derby City General Hospital are dressing up to understand how to make the building more senior-friendly. A suit that mimics all the physical signs of old age is giving them insight into how an old patient would experience the hospital. Called the Third Age Suit, it was first designed by scientists at Loughborough University in conjunction with Ford to make cars safer for elders. Its features include splints and restrictors to limit movement of joints caused by ageing and arthritis; yellow goggles that increase sensitivity to glare and reduce sensitivity to blue light, again experienced in old age; and surgical style gloves that reduce tactile sensitivity.

The results? The architects have identified getting through doors, accessing wardrobes and reaching for towels as problems and have already made changes in their designs. Now if only somebody would invent a suit that makes you feel young.

## RIGHT ACT

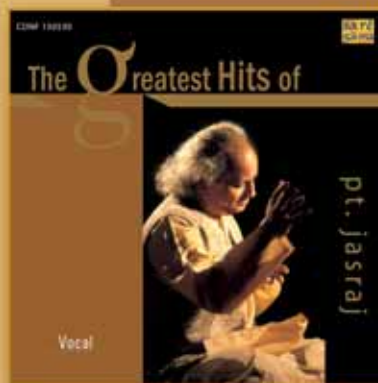
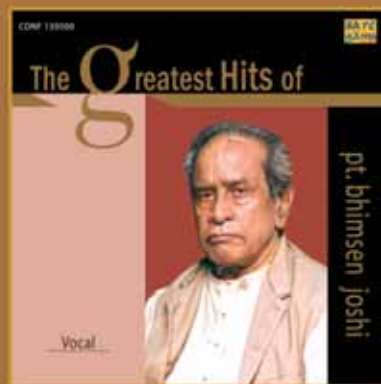
An amazing movement is spreading all across America – that of exclusive senior citizen's theatre groups. In 1999, there were only 79 such performing companies. Today there are over 530, according to [www.seniorthatre.com](http://www.seniorthatre.com). A wide variety of groups, with different performance styles, have come up to suit silvers. One of the most popular forms is readers' theatre where actors perform with script in hand in case they find it too hard to memorise dialogues. This

less threatening technique helps them get on stage with confidence. New York's Dorot University organises another unique programme. Each week, a group of seniors gather around their phones for a conference call to read plays. The organisers believe this experience will help participants form supportive and lasting friendships. 📞

Compiled by Anuradha Kumar

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# greatest Works Of Great Artistes



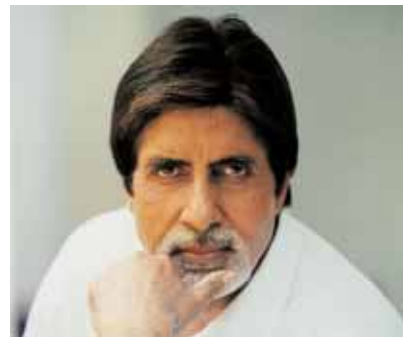
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# Lessons for life



DABOO RATNANI

**THE LESSONS WE LEARN AS** children last us a lifetime. And I believe that these often provide the best solutions for troubles that come later in life. All the problems of adulthood are, in a way, incarnations of what we go through as children. They only look more frightening and have fancier names. But if we apply the simplicity and honesty that we are taught as children, things immediately become clearer. At least, that has been my experience. Even at the age of 62, I find that all that I learnt early in life comes together as a bedrock of strength during a crisis.

In 1952, when I was 10, my father left for England for four years to do his PhD. Before leaving, he told me: "You are the man of the house now, and you have to take care of your mother and brother." When I heard that, I felt like superman. I took his words very seriously.

During that time, my mother fell ill one evening and collapsed in the bathroom. I heard her scream and ran to her. There was no telephone then, and the nearest doctor was a couple of miles away. I had two options and had to decide between them: To leave my mother and run to the doctor, or to send our only servant. Finally, I wrote, as best as a 10-year-old could, a letter

describing my mother's condition and dispatched it. I was awake the whole night by her bedside. As the head of the family, I felt it was my duty to do so. That feeling stayed with me for the rest of my life—whenever my parents were ill, whenever they needed me.

I also entered the boxing ring for the first time when I was 10. Boxing was mandatory in school. You would get hit, hurt, pasted. But I have always found a lot of philosophy in the boxing ring.

**If we apply the simplicity we are taught as children to our problems, things become clearer**

It's guarded from all four sides from any kind of intrusion. It is just you, and your opponent. And your opponent is not your competitor—I have always looked upon it as life. You fight it alone with your bare hands.

Later, in boarding school, the only recognition I got in sports was, ironically, in boxing where I was sent up to a higher and heavier weight category because of my height. There were stronger boys there but I just stuck in, and managed to reach the finals. My opponent was a

really tough guy and everyone was sure I was going to get killed. The night before the big fight, my principal came to my dorm and said: "We fear you may get damaged pretty heavily. My advice is to withdraw." Then, later, my PT instructor woke me up. He said, "I have faith in you and want you to fight irrespective of what happens." I went in there, remembered those words, and kept fighting. I lost. But I almost won. Because of my effort, they gave me an award for the pluckiest loser.

It was a great lesson for me, one I have remembered whenever I have stepped out—whether for my movies, politics, the Bofors allegations or handling ABCL's bankruptcy. The same old philosophy has helped me throughout my life. As we grow up, we tend to tackle complicated issues in a complicated manner, but I believe that winning or losing is not important. It is more important to give whatever you do your best shot, 100 per cent—no matter how old or young you are. And that always works. ■

*Amitabh Bachchan, 62, is an actor and goodwill ambassador for UNICEF*

Newspapers quote him, theatre lovers throng his plays, and readers swear by his Tamil weekly. **Snigdha Somarouthu** finds out what's so special about Cho Ramaswamy

**Q** Don't you think it's high time all those corrupt Indian politicians are jailed in Tihar?

A. They would take over the place and make that the base of their operations. Put them in different places. That would also lessen the chances of atmospheric pollution.  
—Cho Ramaswamy in a 1997 Internet chat session

In these past seven years, Cho Ramaswamy's bark has kept pace with his bite. Walk into his sprawling office in Chennai's swank R A Puram area and you find Cho behind his neatly arranged desk: glistening pate, a slash of *vibhuti* (sacred ash) across his forehead, bright eyes that don't miss a trick watching everything through oversize glasses, and a multicoloured 'anti-slip' Nokia phone in his hand. The room overflows with idols and pictures spanning the Hindu pantheon. While Lord Ganesha smiles down at you, Cho delivers his opening statement: "Ask me, and I'll tell you what you want. I have repeated my story so many times; it's quite boring to hear."

Boring? Not quite. His 50-year career spans law, theatre, journalism, politics, TV and cinema. He makes the business called government amusing. No political discussion on TV in Tamil Nadu is complete without Cho's witty repartee. Newspapers quote him liberally; theatre lovers throng his plays, and readers swear by every word printed in *Thuglak*, his Tamil weekly. He has even been nominated once to the Rajya Sabha in 1997. It's the Rajya Sabha records, in fact, that reveal that Cho is 70 years old. Quirkily, he refuses to tell anyone his age. His brother Rajagopal says he has been instructed by Cho not to reveal his own age for fear that it would help someone calculate Cho's.

Cho's first hunting ground was the law. Born in a Brahmin family



KRISHNAN

# The Sultan



of lawyers, he began assisting his father and grandfather and soon built up a busy practice in the Madras High Court. In 1964, he moved on to become the legal advisor at the T T Krishnamachari Group of Companies in Chennai; he was there for 15 years.

His true passion, though, was always theatre. While the law reigned during the day, theatre was his mistress in the evenings. What emerged from the affair were political parodies aimed at influencing public opinion.

"Theatre helped me overcome stage fright, sharpened my writing skills and gave me friends who are still with me," he says. Cho wrote his first play, *Gorakkolai (Horrible Death)*, in 1954, a collection of

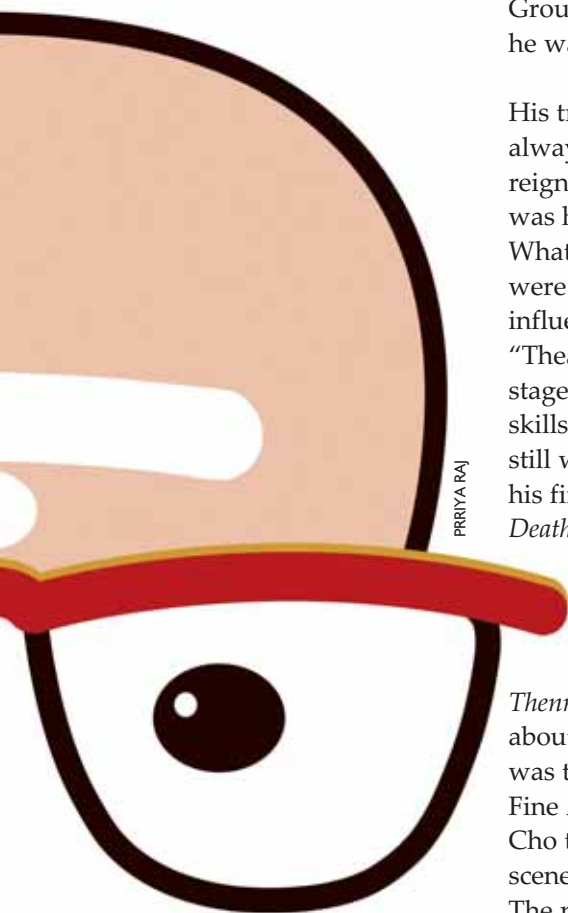
comic performances. He also wanted to act. In 1957, when Tamil playwright

Koothabiran wrote his play, *Thenmozhaal (Honeyed Words)*, about the zamindari system, which was to be staged under the Viveka Fine Arts Club (VFAC) banner, Cho threatened to walk into every scene unless he was given a role. The playwright capitulated. One problem: he couldn't think of a name for the character. "Never mind, I can go with my own name," Cho famously said. Soon, he became an integral part of VFAC. By 1979, he had quit his day job completely.

All of Cho's plays satirise political and social situations. "The most tragic figures in our society are politicians. So his plays tend to focus on them," says Rajagopal. In *Sambhavaami Yuge Yuge* (1964), Lord Krishna comes to Earth to end corruption but finds politicians bribing him instead. The Tamil Nadu police banned it, calling for the removal of certain offending lines. Cho refused and filed a petition. Two months later, the play ran to packed houses.

A political satire disguised as a parody, *Mohammed bin Thuglak* is one of Cho's seminal works; first staged in 1968, it was modelled on the 'autocratic ways' of former prime minister Indira Gandhi. It highlights the emperor's intention of cleansing the political system changing to hunger for power. Staged 2,000 times, Cho believes it is still relevant. "For this, I have to thank the politicians for keeping the same issues alive," he says, after attending a phone call from a VFAC member.

The VFAC celebrated its golden jubilee recently, hosting a retrospective of Cho's plays, with not a single change or adaptation to his scripts. Even his critics concede his impact on Tamil theatre. "Cho's work is loud and naïve, but a historical necessity," feels Sahitya Akademi award-



PRIYA RAJ

# of Satire



**Thuglak, Cho's mouthpiece**

winning Tamil novelist Indra Parthasarthy. Theatre director Jnani Sankaran adds: "He is partly responsible for making Tamil theatre into a talkie. He is the pseudo-conscience of the urban middle-class."

Parthasarthy adds that Cho's *Mohammad bin Thuglak* reached the people like Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* (a mythological play) could never do.

The play even inspired the name of his Tamil weekly, *Thuglak*. Launched in 1970, the magazine still carries no advertisements, and yet retains a circulation of 92,000. Its loyal readers range from students to senior citizens, who fork out Rs 6 every week for 39 pages of social and political debates. Cho remains an active editor, but refuses to go near a computer, preferring to write in long hand. The highlight of *Thuglak* is Cho's column, where he answers questions on subjects ranging from the US elections and the war in Iraq to support for the LTTE. A recent issue had a reader asking him why he lets politicians sit on his head. Cho, at his satirical best,

replied that would be impossible; he's bald and everyone would slip off—he even drew a cartoon to that effect.

For believers, Cho's word is the law, which explains his political clout. In 1984, when N T Rama Rao, chief minister of Andhra Pradesh at the time, was in the US undergoing heart surgery, Indira Gandhi appointed NTR's deputy as chief minister. Cho came to the rescue, lobbying for support from the Telugu Desam Party. NTR soon returned to power. In July 2002, MDMK chief V Gopalasamy, popularly known as Vaiko, was arrested under POTA for making pro-LTTE

minister because he has integrity and simplicity, a quality that is rare these days." In fact, his "friend", actor-politician Rajnikanth consults him often.

Rajagopal says Cho is like a twig. "He moves one way today and another the next day," he says. "He supports whatever, and whoever, he thinks is right in a particular situation. He does not care whether it's acceptable." Thanks to this notoriety, Cho is always surrounded by a posse of security guards. Cho's guiding principle, according to Rajagopal, is that human beings are not uniformly correct in their actions—they err and get it right sometimes. "His role is to

## Cho pokes fun at all politicians, even the ones he likes, yet he has a following

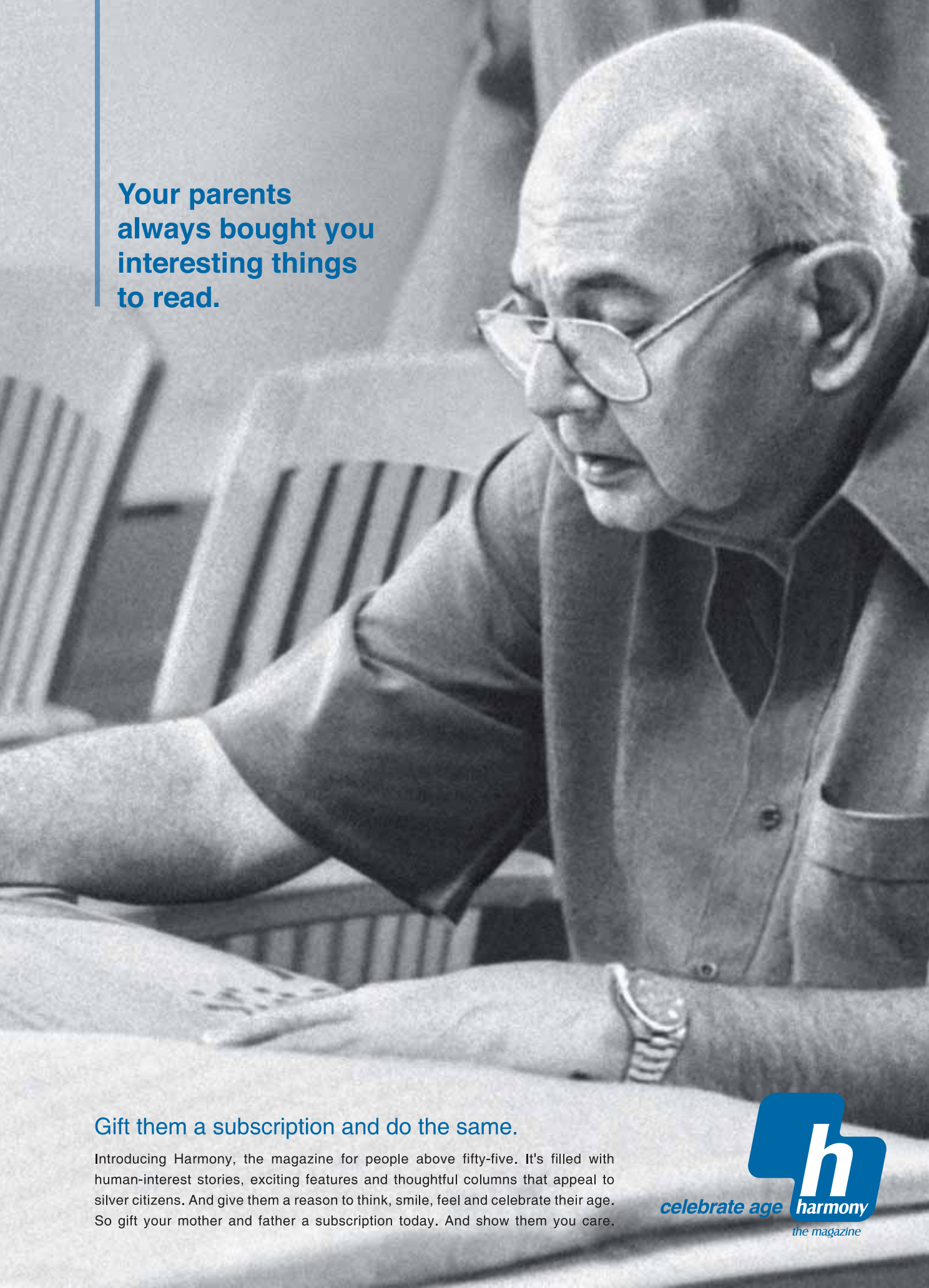
comments. Everyone was surprised with Cho's support for J Jayalalithaa. "When the government can arrest militants in Kashmir, why not Vaiko, who was making anti-nationalist comments?" he asked.

Yet, when defamation cases were filed against *The Hindu* newspaper and its journalists last year, Cho didn't hesitate to lash out at Jayalalithaa. She even issued a statement in newspapers accusing him of hurting her politically and stating that he was no friend of hers. Cho's characteristic reply: "I am relieved." Perhaps the rift has its roots in one of Cho's interviews a couple of years ago in which he said, "Rajnikanth is best suited to be the chief

applaud and point out mistakes," says his brother, adding, "He pokes fun at all politicians, even the ones he likes, yet he has a following."

It's a different story at home. Cho's wife of 38 years, Soundara, doesn't share his interests in politics and theatre; neither does son Sriram, who is a computer engineer and consultant in a power project. "He thinks what I do is a waste of time and energy," says Cho. His granddaughter Saki—his daughter Sindhuja's child—is the exception. "She's my biggest fan," he says, softening visibly. "She watches all my plays and applauds me." Then, Cho is back. "Of course, she is only five years old and quite ignorant." ■





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# You are not alone

Depression among the elderly, though common, often goes unaddressed and unrecorded. Read the warning signs and reach out for help, says

**Nilanjana Sengupta**



**W**hen A B Chopra, 64, retired as an officer from a bank two years ago, he was faced with a sudden vacuum in his life. With his only child, a daughter, married and settled outside Mumbai, and his wife busy with her social commitments, Chopra has gradually taken to alcohol. His friends worry. They have noticed him slipping into a state of depression, and fear he may become an alcoholic. As advised by a counsellor, they are trying to convince him to seek help, but haven't been successful yet. His wife didn't notice any change in him at first. Now, she acknowledges it may be a problem, but she still doesn't think it's serious enough to require medical intervention.

Chopra's friends, however, are not giving up—and with good reason. Depression among the elderly is a common and often chronic condition because it usually goes unaddressed and, therefore, unrecorded.



"Depression appears as the single most common disorder [both mental and physical] in the higher age group," says Dr Indira Jayprakash, gerontologist and professor of psychology, Bangalore University. "And the prevalent rates of depression among the geriatric population quoted in some Indian studies may not even be accurate. Sometimes, depression may masquerade as physical illness or is mistaken for dementia. Often, it is even considered a 'normal' part of old age."

#### **WATCH OUT**

Mumbai-based consulting psychiatrist Dr R N Jerajani, who has been observing seniors with psychiatric problems for over 20 years, says depression originates from anger growing within. Reaction to financial insecurities, an increasing apprehension

about the future and fear related to illness and death can also give rise to the condition. The 'empty nest syndrome'—the feeling that everyone has gone away—is also on the rise in urban India, where grown-up children leave the house, either after marriage or to pursue a career.

The feeling of hopelessness is higher among women than men, reveals the research of S Siva Raju, professor at the Unit for Urban Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. He attributes this to widowhood and, consequently, a higher sense of financial dependency on the family after the death of the husband.

Himanshu Rath, convenor of the Delhi-based NGO Agewell Foundation, feels abuse is also a major cause of depression among the elderly. Abuse, he says, can range from the emotional to the financial and physical, but largely remains hidden from public view in India. Most people





suffering from depression talk less, show dwindling awareness of their surroundings, and lose interest in news and happenings. And they don't always reach out for help on time. Experts say the elderly generally sense a helping hand as prying. "They prefer living a solitary existence than discussing their loneliness with anyone," explains Professor Vidya Rao, head of the department of Social Welfare Administration, TISS, Mumbai. "They don't want anyone to infringe upon their independence, however limited that may be."

### READING THE SIGNS

Depression, however, is not so difficult to detect. Even the family physician can pick up the signs. "Brooding and feeling worthless or hopeless should not

be neglected or dismissed as a part of ageing because if it persists it may lead to passive suicidal thoughts," says Dr Nilesh Shah, professor of psychiatry at Lokmanya Tilak Municipal Medical College and General Hospital, Mumbai.

Earlier this year, 78-year-old Coreen Cherrian visited her family physician in Hyderabad, complaining of headaches, body aches and episodes of inexplicable weeping. Her husband had passed away four years ago, and her two daughters were settled abroad, visiting her once a year. When her younger daughter could not make it last year, she had started taking anti-depressants. The physician referred her to a psychiatrist. "What she needed was someone to speak to her,

someone to actually listen to her," analyses Dr Jerajani.

Cherrian sought help in time; others are not so fortunate. The US-based Alliance for Aging Research (AAR) confirms that depression among the elderly, if neglected, could even lead to suicide. An AAR study reveals that 18 per cent of suicide cases in 2000 were in the 65-and-over age group. The shocker: over the years, several American studies have revealed that up to 75 per cent of older adults who commit suicide visited a primary care physician just a month before. "In India, the incidence of seniors requiring help is eight times higher than the US," says Shah. The social order also doesn't allow many of them to reach out. Hence, the chances of coming to any statistical conclusions are rare.

Dr Shah points out here that the opportunity to get help is easier in countries like the US because the physician to patient ratio is more favourable. After attending to the elderly for 15 years, he can't say the same about India. One recourse, he says, is the help line. "Besides counselling, it facilitates a link between the caller and community-based care." Dr Jerajani agrees. "If the family has no time or is not around to take care of its elder members, one-button help line services can come in handy," he says.

### DIAL FOR ASSISTANCE

In Chennai, 82-year-old Viji Hariharan remembers how loneliness drove her to dial the number of a senior citizens' help line a few months ago. The

counsellor suggested she see a psychiatrist. She even attended a therapy session sometime ago. Though widowed and childless, she refused to move in with her only nephew's family abroad. Now, instead of lamenting that decision, she uses her time well. Hariharan teaches her domestic help's children how to write Tamil, potters around her kitchen garden and goes for walks every morning and evening. She rarely finds the time to even sit down and have a cup of tea with her neighbours.

One phone call can make a world of difference. The Elders' Helpline, set up recently in Chennai's police headquarters, receives close to 150 calls every week. Problems range from abandonment to depression. Rehabilitation comprises accommodation of destitutes in old-age homes and referral of the depressed to psychologists.

In Bangalore, Nightingales Home Health Services teamed up with the city police to launch a counselling line in 2002 for elders in Bangalore and Mangalore. Calls are received from neglected, abused and lonely senior citizens. The Aadhar helpline, operated by Agewell in Delhi, receives about 150 calls every day. At its Ahmedabad centre, 40 calls are received everyday.

Karthika Anthony, a psychologist working with Mumbai-based Dignity Foundation, receives about 30 calls everyday; at least 15 are related to depression. "For those who seem to suffer from melancholia, we prescribe therapy sessions, or send volunteers to

talk to them, depending on the severity of the problem," she says. HelpAge India, an NGO working for senior citizens, also sends in volunteers. "We also suggest they join a senior citizens' association in their locality," says John Thattil, director, HelpAge India (western region). However, as Rath of Agewell points out, in many cases, volunteers are regarded as threats by the person's immediate family, who

are worried that a personal attachment would lead to a property claim.

Professor Vidya Rao of TISS feels the answer rests with the community. "Communities have not done enough," she says. "Housing societies and townships can play a supportive role to keep the elderly engaged. They must create recreational areas and provide space to the



#### **Ahmedabad**

NGO Agewell Foundation's help line

**Call: 079-26620606**

#### **Bangalore, Mangalore**

Nightingale's Medical Trust Elders' help line

**Call: 1090**

#### **Chennai**

HelpAge India senior citizens' help line

**Call: 1253**

#### **Kolkata**

Dignity Foundation's help line for senior citizens

**Call: 044-24741314**

#### **Mumbai**

Dignity Foundation's help line for senior citizens

**Call: 022-2389078**

#### **New Delhi**

Agewell Foundation's help line

**Call: 011-26836486, 26910484**

senior citizens living there to mingle with each other."

At home, the key may well lie in the hands of the younger members of the family. "They can help the elderly with love and by spending quality time with them," says Dr Rajeev Anand, a psychiatrist who runs the Rahat clinic in Andheri, Mumbai. Although the traditional Indian joint family has gradually fissured, 75 per cent of seniors still live with their families and "the totally isolated elderly person is still relatively rare", writes Yogini V Meisheri, Department of Medicine, Seth GS Medical College, Mumbai, in the *Journal of Postgraduate Medicine*. That's the silver lining. ■





# My “other



SHILBHADRA DATTA

In situations when families are often felt by their absences, silver citizens are bonding together. And these groups, gathering at parks and associations, often evolve into surrogate families that look after their own with zeal. **Meeta Bhatti** and **Arati Rajan Menon** take a look at this fast-growing trend

*The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life.*

— Richard Bach

In Pune, 84-year-old Col (retd) B K Tambay starts each morning with the *shirsasan*. He also gives his entire family yoga lessons. Right now, they are gathered at 90-year-old Major (retd) Jal Unwalla's house, for their monthly get-together. These are usually full of laughter, shared jokes and affection. But today the mood is sombre, for everybody present misses Coomi Vakharia, 95, who started this tradition of monthly meetings of senior citizens in the timeworn living room of her bungalow in 1999. Suddenly, things liven up with the entry of 82-year-old Kusum Gokarn. She brightly announces that she has just delivered a home-baked birthday cake to a 75-year-old Catholic lady in the neighbourhood who lives alone with her dog.

The 60 members, all on the right side of 80, of the Senior Citizens' Welfare Association of Mira Society, Salisbury Park, have made these gestures a part of their new family's tradition, with Col Tambay being the most dedicated—he even made time for yoga classes when his wife was in the hospital a few years ago. "It was a commitment; it had to be done. This comes from being part of the group. In fact, I am a changed person since I joined the group."

# family”



*The times, they are a changing* went a popular song in the 1960s. And so are today's silvers. Look around. They are increasingly refusing to be marginalised in society. With life spans getting longer and joint-family systems crumbling, they are devising new networks and turning to alternate support systems. They are eschewing retirement and continuing to stay engaged by maintaining social connections and contributing to the larger community. And they are beginning to realise that a family, by its real-time definition, has little to do with DNA and much more about being there when the going gets tough. "Allegiance to small groups of their own tribe," as psychologist Indira Jaiprakash of Bangalore University describes it, "is an expression of the backlash against their perceived social discrimination and low status in society."

Clubs like the Senior Citizens' Association of Mira Society afford silvers a much-needed sense of purpose, belonging and orientation. Col Tambay relies on his friends for emotional support after his wife passed away last year. He now lives with the youngest of his three daughters. Major Unwalla never misses a session along with his wife Nargis, who is also a member. Gokarn, secretary of the association, is the in-house Nightingale. The association, a close-knit unit, prides itself on taking care of its own. It's a bond forged by empathy, a shared understanding of life.

Many of the events that accompany ageing—retirement, widowhood—can lead to a sense of isolation. Contributing to this isolation is the empty nest, the newest trend in professional migratory patterns that picked up speed in the early 1990s with children relocating either to Indian metros or abroad. Research over the years has established that an active social network can help the elderly combat loneliness.

others—both friends and family members—if they want to maintain their ability to communicate. The study targeted people aged 85 and above, and concluded that a lifestyle with organised activities seems to provide the best social opportunities for the elderly.

Closer home, a survey conducted by HelpAge India reveals that 66 per cent of senior citizens in the country feel an

SHILBHADRA DATTA



**An active social network can help the elderly combat loneliness**

A recent study of older adults in the *British Medical Journal* shows that seniors who spend quality time among friends live longer, happier lives than their non-social peers. Activities such as volunteering, dining with friends or just socialising with others reduces stress, enhances well being and creates a sense of personal worth and belonging, says the study. A University of Michigan study released last month also shows that seniors living alone, and independently, should often interact with

active circle of friends helps in warding off loneliness. Conducted in 37 cities two years ago telephonically and through a newsletter, the study also revealed that almost a quarter of the seniors believe they can plan their lives better by joining clubs or community-based groups. Add to this the day care centres mushrooming across the country—250 aided by the government and 134 corporate initiatives. Memberships to these clubs, centres and community-based associations are not just an





**Parents of NRIs come together in Pune and discover new avenues of support and affection**

members of the Pune NRIPA then travelled to Vadodara to help begin a new chapter.

“When you have a friend in your neighbourhood, there is no need to look elsewhere especially

## NON-RESIDENT INDIAN PARENTS' ASSOCIATION, Pune

IT'S THE STARK REALITY OF time marching on. As one by one their children moved out, the bustle of teenage parties and loud music was replaced by an eerie quiet. “Change is never easy, but sometimes change gives us the opportunity to spread our wings and fly,” says Justice N L Abhyankar, 97, who started the Non-Resident Indian Parents' Association (NRIPA) a decade ago.

NRIPA's agenda is to help parents of NRIs cope with loss of purpose and depression. Pune's NRIPA has 35 units in the city and follows a “one-by-two” policy, under which two families keep a watch over one single parent, helping them with their daily chores. Help is extended to all, even if they are not parents of NRIs.

NRIPA is also unique in having a ripple effect. The organisation now has branches in Bangalore and Vadodara too. “This period can be one of increased satisfaction and improved relationships,” says Ambuja Narayan, who heads the

Bangalore branch. Narayan came up with the idea independently while visiting her son in the US six years ago. Awestruck by the support systems for seniors abroad, she inserted an advertisement for like-minded people in *The Times of India*. She then discovered NRIPA in Pune and decided to structure her organisation on the same lines.

In its sixth year, the members of the Bangalore chapter actively contribute to their monthly newsletter, *Newscape*, meet

“Change gives us the opportunity to spread our wings and fly”

whenever it's convenient for everyone, and go on holiday once a year. In Vadodara, when Madhusudan Mehta heard of NRIPA two years ago, he decided to visit Pune. The 69-year-old was so inspired that he initiated the process in his city. “After I sounded a local newspaper on the idea, it carried a story on seniors whose children were living abroad,” he recalls. “It evoked great response. I organised a meeting with those who wrote in.” Five

when she or he happens to face the same situation that you do,” says Abhyankar, recalling how a couple of years ago a single parent voiced her apprehensions of dying soon. It made the group sit up and think. “Everyone pooled in to ensure that her last rites were performed as per her wishes,” says 67-year-old Kumar Kiwalkar, secretary of the Pune chapter.

NRIPA in Pune has also set up a cell called ‘Will and After Assistance’ that encourages

members to make a will. The organisation takes care of the property till any claims on it are resolved.

“While families sustain us and remind us of our roots, we draw our true strength from NRIPA,” says Narayan. “It's a source of affection, trust, encouragement and support.”

—Mukta Hegde

To contact NRIPA, see page 95



## SALT LAKE SENIOR CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION, Kolkata

BIDHAN NAGAR, BETTER known as Salt Lake City, is a township on the outskirts of Kolkata. Home to new industries, IT campuses and toy parks in West Bengal, this is the state's renaissance spot. It's also where a large number of retired persons live—many of them alone—away from the excitement of the main city.

Every morning, the silvers in the area, collectively called the Salt Lake Senior Citizens' Association (SLSA), meet under the trees in a fenced section of BC Park. "In 1998, a few of us decided to get together and form an organisation that would help the elderly in the area," says 73-year-old Ajit Kumar Chatterjee, former president, and currently secretary of the association, who runs SLSA from his three-room residence. Its aim: enabling people over the age of 60, practically and emotionally. There are some young members too, in their 30s, who serve as 'errand men', to pay bills, deposit money, buy medicines and dispatch appeals to the officials concerned. The association charges Rs 100 as

membership fee and Rs 10 per month thereafter. Life members pay a one-time fee of Rs 600.

From a loose group of morning walkers to a registered senior citizens' organisation in Kolkata, it's been six years of kinship for these 30 silvers. The tangible results include getting local authorities to construct concrete benches in their park, and hedging off a part of the park to

*“Senior citizens need your recognition, not your compassion”*

serve as SLSA's official premises. It offers members a combination of companionship, medical assistance and legal aid. Whenever a member needs to visit a bank or a doctor, help is always at hand.

Eighty-four-year-old Nirmal Kumar Das, president of the association, lives with his wife and elder son, daughter-in-law and grandson. "There are enough people to look after me," he says. "But when my son or grandson is busy with work or studies, other members are only too glad to come with me to buy medicines or to the post office."

Such support is extended to everyone in need, even if the person is not a member. This generosity sometimes drives people to sign up as members.

Health, in fact, is a major concern for SLSA. The organisation approached the West Bengal government in November 2003 requesting an outpatient department and an intensive-care unit in the Bidhan

Nagar Sub Divisional Hospital. It also asked for separate queues and benches at the hospital for greater comfort. "We asked for priority, not reservation," says Chatterjee. That proposal was rejected, but SLSA managed to persuade the hospital to conduct free ECG, blood pressure and general health and psychological check-ups for senior citizens.

Last month, SLSA tied up with Safi Life Care, an NGO that provides basic healthcare facilities like tests and X-rays, emergency medical help, and arranges for monthly visits by medical practitioners. Safi now



**The SLSA has big plans to set up a day-care centre, a jogging track and, eventually, an old-age home**

offers SLSA members a 10 per cent discount on prescription bills in excess of Rs 500. Chatterjee and his wife Anima are among the 10 couples that have signed up for this service.

The association has more ambitious plans up its sleeve. "We want to set up a day-care centre, with a library, music system, TV and meditation area," explains Chatterjee, adding that SLSA wants to part-fund a jogging track in the park from its savings and get the government to fund the rest of it. It's also thinking of building an old-age home. "For this, government assistance in providing land is welcome."

While some correspondence is acknowledged, much of it is not. But that doesn't daunt group members. Their spirit is evident when they write appeals for funds for their causes: "Senior citizens need your recognition, not your compassion."

—Ian Zacharia

To contact SLSA, see page 95

escape route. Over time, they become an extended family, sometimes even the only one.

### EMPTY NEST

Finding that an increasing number of elders whose children had gone abroad were getting apprehensive about a life led alone, Justice N L Abhyankar, 97, established the Non-Resident

Vadodara. The groups socialise regularly, and follow a "one-by-two" policy, under which two families keep a watch over one single parent, helping them with their daily chores like shopping, banking and visits to the doctor.

Another similar group is Children Abroad Parents Alone in Chennai. Twelve couples,

SHILBHADRA DATTA



**Sometimes it's easier for silvers to share their concerns and worries with each other, rather than their children**

Indian Parents' Association (NRIPA) a decade ago in Pune (see box on page 23), a group of parents of NRIs. "To beat the blues and blahs" of not having their children around anymore, their weekly meetings supply silvers with support and encouragement while targeting areas of concern, such as depression and anxiety, stress management, dealing with grief, and navigating change.

The organisation now has 35 units all over the city, with branches in Bangalore and

friends even before their children left to work overseas, now share health and property issues, and travel together extensively, especially to holy places. "Our motto is to be happy and keep others happy," says N Sunderajan, a founder member in her 60s. "We fill a void for each other."

Distance, though, is not always geographical. Often, even if their children live in India, and nearby, silvers don't always share their concerns or worries with them for fear of alarming or



upsetting them. Jagdish Singh Ahluwalia is a sprightly and active 89-year-old who lives alone in his one-bedroom, moderately furnished flat in East of Kailash, an upper middle-class enclave in South Delhi. His Pune-based son and daughter-in-law have been asking him to move in with them ever since he lost his wife a few years ago. But he is adamant, refusing to leave behind his neighbours and friends. A regular at the evening baithaks at the local park, he says he cannot imagine life without them, although he maintains a loving relationship with his family.

long-time friend G M Chopra, who is secretary general of South Delhi's Greater Kailash Senior Citizens' Forum, not to inform his sons when he breathes his last. Tyagi has been a member of this group for almost a decade, often travelling by auto rickshaw to attend the association's meetings. Chopra has now requested his friend to move to Greater Kailash, so that the forum can look after his emergency requirements. In fact, Chopra is even thinking of hiring an apartment that could serve as a senior citizens' hostel for lonely seniors like Tyagi.

effective redress of public grievances for over 24 years now. Four million pensioners have benefited thanks to its initiative—two of Shourie's writ petitions fighting against a 1979 government ruling on slashing pensions were successful. One of Shourie's shelved dreams was to build old-age cottages for single and widowed seniors, to provide them with basic needs and companionship. This, he feels, can be achieved by forming groups.

Registered associations or just an informal circle of friends, these groups are always there, in good



SAMEER PATHAK

**Registered associations or just an informal circle of friends, these groups are always there, in good times and bad**

Others don't see eye to eye with their children any more. Dharam Singh Tyagi, 72, who lost his wife a couple of years ago, lives alone in Sarita Vihar, in Phase I of Okhla Industrial Estate in Delhi. He doesn't get along with his two sons, both of whom live in the same city. Now, Tyagi has requested his

Silvers are beginning to realise that in situations where they don't receive support from their own, they can create it—on their own. "Such groups are taking over the role of family and becoming inevitable," believes 92-year-old H D Shourie, founder of Common Cause, an organisation that has been working for the

times and bad. When Bipul Sengupta, a 61-year-old bachelor in Kolkata, had to go in for a bypass surgery last year, the 12 members of his *adda*, all over 60, who meet Thursday and Saturday evenings for stimulating discussions on art, literature and philosophy, were there for him every inch of the

Who decides  
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wonderful places that you have  
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## GHYAN GOSHTI MANDAL, Ahmedabad

Photos: SAMEER PATHAK

THE CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OF the Sarkhej-Gandhinagar Highway in Ahmedabad—dotted with multiplexes, resorts and restaurants—is offset by the quieter Satellite Road. Here, flanked by three ashrams and a school is Sadvichar Parivar, a building that is home to a senior citizens' forum called Ghyan Goshti Mandal.

The forum was set up 15 years ago by three friends aged over 65. They are over 80 now

but they still meet, for two hours every morning and an hour in the evening. The difference: now they have 32 other companions to discuss politics and Indian economy; not movies, food and entertainment—that territory is on the other side of the road and frequented by their grandchildren.

"We share our knowledge base, hence the title 'ghyan goshti'," says

Mahendra Shah, who has been a member since 1991. The *mandal* doesn't believe in formal registration or charging any membership fees but money is not a problem. Most members have led successful professional lives and have earned enough to donate to the group and its activities. These include helping the elderly, members or otherwise, hire orthopaedic walkers, wheelchairs and walking sticks at a nominal price, helping mentally challenged children, and even sponsoring the education of deserving students from lower-income groups through US-based Federation for Excellence.

Today is a relatively free day, and 69-year-old Shah is guiding the group, including his wife Indira, through *preksha dhyani*, a Jain form of meditation, that he has trained in for four years. "At this age, it is important for us to attain peace and tranquillity," he says. "We try to achieve it through meditation." Another member, 67-year-old K K Shukla, a retired psychology professor from Bhavan's College, Ahmedabad, says, "Engaged with our work for the better part of the day, I don't feel I ever retired." Shukla feels strongly against the concept of old-age homes. "Some silvers ask for references to sophisticated old-age homes. I think it should be the last resort. They are places where you can just stay, not live." Shukla and his wife Jyotsna, both members of the *mandal* since 1994, advise their peers to share problems with the group instead.

“Engaged with the *mandal's* work, I don't feel I ever retired”



And the group always comes through. Last year, the *mandal* helped a senior in the locality with money for his cataract operation. "He was a businessman who had been facing losses for a long time," recalls Shukla. "Even his son and daughter-in-law were not financially equipped to help him. He had no provident fund or gratuity to fall back on. We are glad to do for him what his family could not."

Apart from silvers, the *mandal* also has a few relatively younger members in their 40s. This, they say, helps them adjust to today's world. "We feel the interaction between the two generations, peppered with occasional arguments, is healthy," says Shah with a smile.

—Nilanjana Sengupta

To contact Ghyana Ghoshtri Mandal, see page 95

**Left and below, the members of the *mandal* help the elderly and mentally challenged children in their locality**



way. "They mentally prepared me for the surgery, took turns to be with me in hospital and gave me that extra zest for life," recalls Sengupta. He never married because his father died when he was young, and he had his three sisters and mother, ailing with cancer, to care for. Today, one sister is married and another passed away a few years ago; he lives with his youngest sister. The *adda* is his only other family. When a member of Sengupta's group was diagnosed

awareness and recreational programmes, special facilities and services, emerging as powerful self-help groups.

In Bangalore, K M George, a retired executive of the Military Engineering Services, started the Senior Citizens' Club in Bangalore in 1990 for officers retired from the central services, public sector units and the defence forces, inspired by the American Association of Retired Persons, a powerful vote-bank



SHILBHADRA DATTA

**Senior citizens' associations often pool in money for members' medical needs**

with cancer recently, everyone stood by him, even pooling in Rs 5,000 each for his treatment. Unfortunately, he succumbed to the disease. His friends mourned him—as they would a member of the family.

### THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION

Don't be surprised if Sengupta's *adda* soon becomes a structured group. For, more and more casual clubs are evolving into registered associations, and are reaching out through various

in the US. With a lower age limit of 60 years, this club enjoys the patronage of several dignitaries including Dr P C Alexander, former governor of Maharashtra. Calling the club "a life enrichment centre", George tells you that monthly programmes are conducted to help members cope with "the loss of status and power".

Such associations do not fail to salute their own, leading to an even greater feeling of empowerment. Last month, a



For the members of the bridge club, the addiction to the game has gradually given birth to a feeling of camaraderie and a deep bond

## BRIDGE CLUB, Mumbai

BAJIRAO PAWAR

HMM...3 HEARTS OR 4, NO trump? Discussing specific rules, sharpening their bidding skills and game strategies while playing all four hands are C K Gupta and eight of his friends. It is 6.00 pm and Gupta's cell phone has not stopped ringing since the morning. For a Sunday, it's been rather busy. A Mumbai-based public sector executive, the 57-year-old has spent the day coordinating the time for this weekend's bridge session, a regular affair for the past eight years. The venue: the Andheri residence of one of the members of this informal bridge club, Satish Dua.

Dua is in his 60s. In 2000, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and has been bedridden since. Since then, the bridge session, which used to rotate between the members' homes, has found its permanent venue at Dua's flat. His friends come over for tea, snacks, torrid

debates and, of course, bridge. And no one asks him how he's feeling. "We know when he is with us he will be in high spirits," says Gupta.

When the sessions began eight years ago, all four members were staying in South Mumbai.

*"The joy of being in each other's company sees us through the week"*

After working in the public and private sector as high-ranking officials, they are now retired and scattered across the city. Yet, the drill on Sunday hasn't changed. The addiction to the game has slowly and steadily given birth to a feeling of camaraderie and a bond that runs deep. Testing Dua's bid, Gupta remarks, "What had begun as a game played by four friends, has now grown into a regular buzz session, where anyone who loves the game can drop in. Well, you have to know how to play, though." Spouses are always welcome.

Friend and bridge partner Amit Deb, 59, says an unspoken bond exists among them, much like a family. "Support for each other is a wholehearted emotion here," he says, adding, "The joy of being in each other's company sees us through the week." Even a posting in Roha, Raigad district, 200 km south of Mumbai, in 2002, didn't deter De from making his Sunday appointment. "The ties of this bridge family became stronger when all our lives were going through transformations with our children packing their bags for hostels or other cities," adds Deb. His friends have been his bedrock—especially four years

ago, when his wife was away in the US studying, his son was studying in Kolkata and his daughter was busy with college life in Mumbai.

"I feel these friends are like my backbone," says Gupta. "They will always support me when I need them the most." For Gupta, with one daughter married and settled in the US, and the other working in Mumbai, the time with his bridge partners is not just a stopgap arrangement to combat boredom. It's his life.

—Nilanjana Sengupta



reader wrote in to *Harmony* telling us about 80-year-old Gordhanbhai Thakkar, an active member of the Sion Senior Citizens' Association in Mumbai. A year ago, Thakkar withdrew some cash from the bank and was walking back home when two youngsters accosted him, trying to snatch away his money. Standing his ground, Thakkar held them off until help came his way. The police eventually apprehended the two boys. For its part, the association felicitated Thakkar with a special 'bravery award'.

These groups are now getting increasingly proactive, extending their reach to the community at large. They help maintain neighbourhood parks, like the East of Kailash Senior Citizens' Association in New Delhi, which transformed a cattle grazing ground into a park 10 years ago. They raise funds for a noble cause, like the 15-year-old

Five Gardens Senior Citizens' Club in Dadar, Mumbai which organises fund-raisers for physically challenged children. They even send petitions to the Government to review its programmes or policies from time to time, like the

Association for Pensioners and Retired Persons, in Janakpuri, New Delhi.

However, as Ajit Kumar Chatterjee, the 73-year-old secretary of the Salt Lake Senior Citizens' Association in Kolkata,

SHILBHADRA DATTA



These groups are now getting increasingly proactive, extending their reach to the community at large



SAMEER PATHAK

points out, there is still a long way to go. "Unlike the US, where senior citizens' organisations play a vital role and are given due importance, Indian senior citizens have no real clout," he says. Not if crusaders like Satish Khanna, H D Shourie and Justice Abhyankar, and the many silvers who swear by their associations, have anything to say about it. The times are changing—for the better. ■

—with Aparna Pednekar in Pune, Nilanjana Sengupta in Mumbai, Mukta Hegde in Chennai and Bangalore, Dr Shubha Raina and Rupam Khera in Delhi



# It's

a sunlit afternoon at the Willingdon Club in Mumbai and Laila Tyabji is elegantly swishing away a stray fly with her grey embroidered sling bag. Someone's told me that her accessories are usually handmade —by herself. I ask her about it, and she purrs, "Yes, I made the bag. I'm happy you've done your homework on me. Most people just call me up for a quote and have no idea about the real me."

The real Tyabji. Well, she's 56, a freelance designer specialising in embroidery and appliqué, writer, and founder member and chairperson of Dastkar, a society for crafts and craftspeople based

The experience has added more texture to Tyabji's life. "I defy all stereotypes," she says a little presumptuously. From a line of four generations of educated Muslim women, her life has been anything but cloistered. Her father Badruddin Tyabji was a diplomat and secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, and her youth was a whirl of travel and discovery. "I was given freedom without pressure and was able to shape my own professional life."

She studied art in Baroda and then Japan, which was an eye-opening experience for her. "In India, artists think they are a special breed; in Japan, there is no divide between fine art and commercial art." This pragmatic

Textiles remain her passion and the renewed interest in Indian handlooms thrills her. "The colours suit us and the sheer choice is exciting. You can be yourself, wear what you like." She's worn everything "from bikinis to Bermudas" but it's the sari that holds Tyabji in thrall. "It's fascinating, this strip of cloth that becomes the person who wears it." She shies away from designer labels, believing "Indian designers by and large create costumes, not clothes." Her latest project: working with Kashmiri women to develop new types of embroidery and high-fashion garments.

Her work keeps Tyabji "charged" and she loves living in the 'now'. But there's

Articulate, elegant and always irreverent, Laila Tyabji's rich life resounds with texture and colour, says **Arati Rajan Menon**

in New Delhi. With her sharply coiffed, short salt-and-pepper hair and impeccable ethnic wardrobe, she's the perfect brand ambassador for her craft. And she doesn't mince her words.

"I love being a single woman," she proclaims, adding with a wink, "It's single, not celibate." Central to her world are her three brothers—retired IAS officer Hindal, book editor Adil and actor Khalid—and a goddaughter, who just popped into her life recently. "A few years ago, this girl in her 30s just wrote to me and said she wanted to be part of my life. We met many times and she decided to adopt me! Now, I have a chance to explore motherhood."

approach made the shift from art to design seamless for Tyabji.

Back to India in the 1970s, she learnt every kind of Indian embroidery at the feet of local artisans and then worked with them to develop products with contemporary appeal. Dastkar, which she founded in 1981 with five others, was a natural progression of her work. "I just taught the artisans a few tricks!" she chuckles. The Ministry of Textiles and National Institute of Fashion Technology Lifetime Achievement Award for work in craft and design in 1999 and the New York-based Aid to Artisans' Preservation of Craft Award in 2003 are among a few of the accolades that have come her way over the years.

# Oh

wistfulness too. "When I was growing up, secularism wasn't a funny word. Now, people ask me why I celebrate Diwali; it shocks me." It shocks her too that she's now thought of "as old". "Though people say I'm crustier, I haven't felt myself age at all." But she tells you wickedly that being 56 opens up many doors. "I can use age as an excuse. When I see a man peeing against a wall, I can stop my car and blow my horn at him. I love that." Oh, Laila. ■



**Laila!**

# Auto

Some people will never take the backseat. It's too comfortable and too far from the action. At 80 and some, when most people are joyously giving up their material possessions, we have found a few who will never surrender their driver's license. They are not driven. They drive. And one even lives in his car.

**L**ike medieval knights who will live on in memory fully adorned on their steeds, a meaningful profile of these octogenarians and nonagenarians cannot separate them from their best machines. All these people share a rare relationship with their vehicles—whether it is a scooter or a car, one or many. Their love for their vehicles underscores a fierce need to be independent.

"Driving my own car brings me a lot of freedom," says advocate Rana Kultar Chand of Shimla. "Perhaps once I retire I will get a driver. But not now." He is 82. Pratapsinh Jhala, scion of the Wankaner royal family, agrees. For him having a chauffeur is like hiring someone else to sneeze for you. Though two years ago, when he turned 95, he was forced to do just that by his doctor. But he remains adamant. "I want to die at the wheel," he says.

For these people, handing over the ignition keys is akin to handing over a bit of their freedom. Macky Mody in Pune, whose trusted black Lambretta is exactly half his age at 41 years, says he will ride as long as the flesh is willing. "I already have the spirit." So does Mohan Jhangiani, a stunning Mahatma Gandhi look-alike, for whom driving also works as a morning cup of confidence. The Mumbai-based 80-year-old is so sure of himself that he leaves his license at home for safekeeping, carrying a photocopy instead. "I am a good driver. I have never had even a minor scrap. Not one."

For General H C Rai, in Delhi, who retired after a lifetime spent in the mountains as an army man, the car is now his medium. He says,

"I love driving in the hills, it's so beautiful. I am happiest when I am driving by myself in the mountains, in conformity with nature." And finally, a car is also a symbol of hope—you start with zero but you always get somewhere. Ask Bachan Singh in Chandigarh, who began as a tea-stall owner but made it in life with a fleet of taxis. But circumstances turned once more, and now the 90-year-old's last remaining car is also the only roof over his head. Without his car, he would be nowhere.

—ANURADHA KUMAR

**Macky Mody runs Mody's Motor Mart in Pune, India's oldest motorcycle dealership, but prefers to ride his 41-year-old Lambretta**

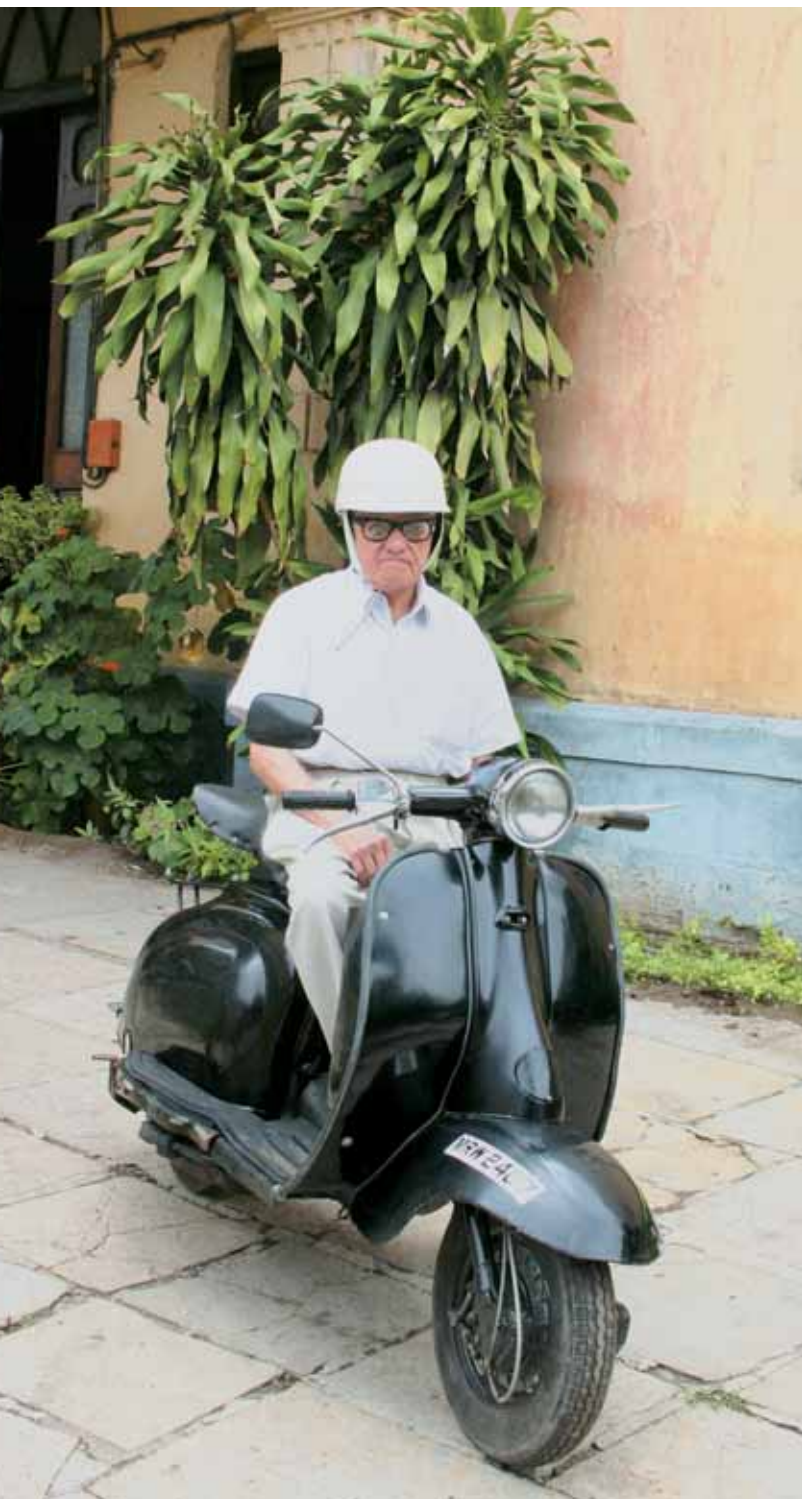


# genarrians



“It has always been the best of times for me on this Lambretta”

– Macky P Mody, Pune



# The

A certain section of Pune’s East Street runs parallel to the very ‘happening’ M G Road, yet contains numerous vistas of old world charm, and one oddity. For, among its quaint buildings and timeless ambience lives Macky P Mody—a dapper Parsi gentleman who runs India’s oldest motorcycle dealership but chooses to drive a Lambretta scooter himself.

All of 81 years young and still sharp enough to shame a teenager with his logic and perception, Macky Mody is an enthusiast of all things on two wheels. Maybe it’s his DNA. His grandfather Ratan Mody Sr. brought into India the country’s very first motorcycle in 1903—a Singer. He had set up Mody’s Motor Mart in 1895 to sell Singer sewing machines and safety bicycles, and when the British firm moved into bikes, he was the first to import them. The biking bug bit both Macky and his elder brother Ratan, who immediately took to racing—bicycles first, then motorcycles.

Later, when they grew up, Ratan, the more flamboyant one, took over the family-owned motorcycle dealership, while Macky went on to work at Pune’s famous Israelite Press for over

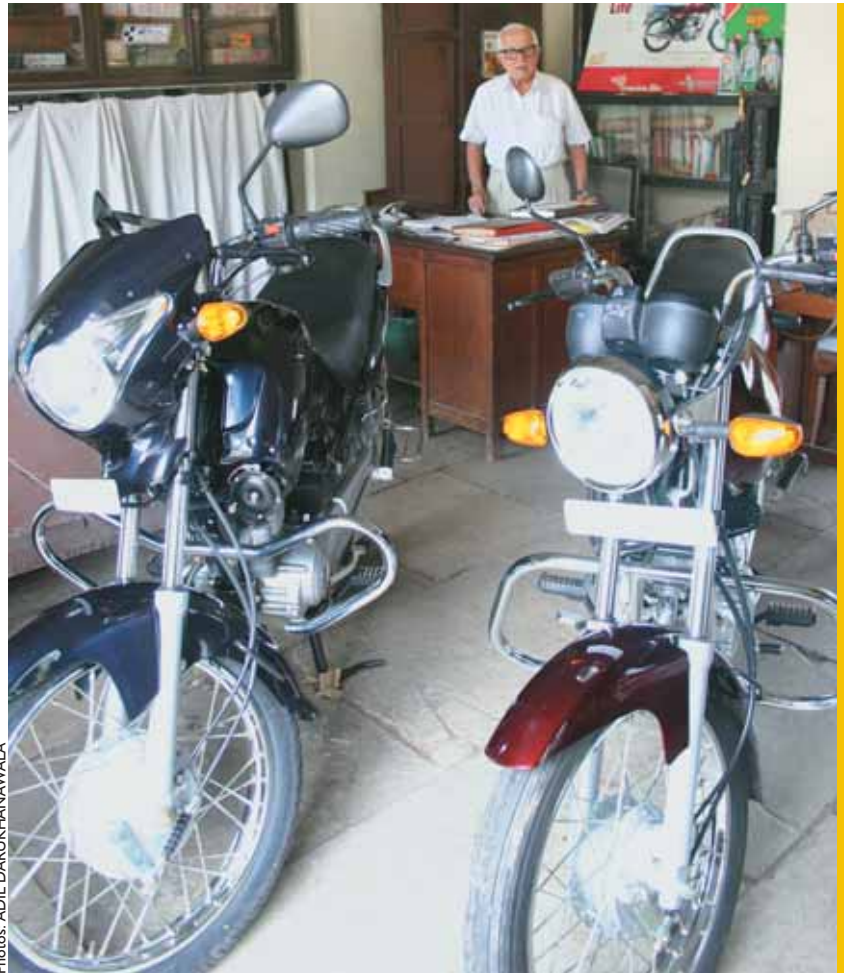


# black beast

23 years where he came to be known for his prowess in all matters related to printing. But one of the most fruitful relationships of his life developed when he took up a job with CTR Electronics in 1965. He was given a brand new Lambretta for work. And the man who could have had the choice of any of the top motorcycles, has stuck by his "Lamby" ever since. "You choose your weapon depending on the type of warfare you want to indulge in. A motorcycle is like a racehorse but what I needed was a beast of burden," he says practically. And so Macky Mody, on the black painted Lambretta, became such a familiar sight that when he retired in 1983, the scooter was gifted to him.

Just a few months before his retirement from CTR though, elder brother Ratan suffered a paralytic stroke and Macky had to take charge of Mody's Motor Mart in December 1982. He single-handedly took care of his brother until his demise in 1997, all the while doing the rounds of hospitals, the marketplace, the grocers', the Kayani bakery, the Sir JJ Agiary and the artisans who support various functions of his bike dealership on his Lamby.

Today, the Lambretta is exactly half Macky's age. The duo have



Photos: ADIL DARUKHANAWALA

clocked over 400,000 km together and even though the engine has been rebuilt twice, it seems to fire first time out whenever Macky wants to head out for an errand. Two years ago, Macky, still a bachelor, suffered a heart attack and everyone thought his two-wheeler days were over. But he still takes the Lambretta everywhere, saying: "It has never let me down. It has always been the best of times for me on this Lambretta." A dedicated biker, he keeps abreast of the latest news in the world of international bike sport, relating the exploits of champions Valentino Rossi or Max Biaggi with the vigour of enthusiasts one-fourth his age. The automotive world has a cliché: 'They don't make them like this any more.' This definitely applies to Macky Mody, all of 81 years old, riding a 41-year-old Lambretta while running a 109-year-old family business. This will take some beating.

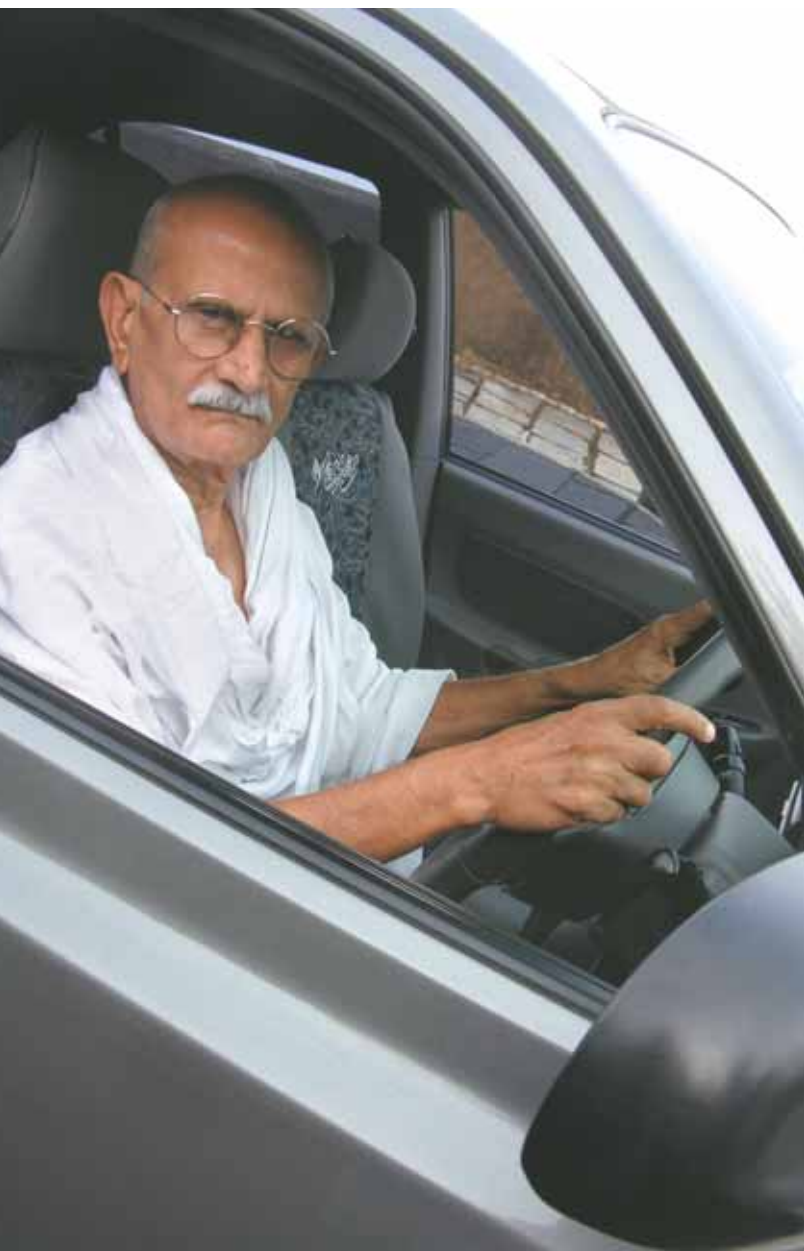
— Adil Jal Darukhanawala



# Freedom of

“I was back on the road in a month after my bypass surgery”

– Mohan Jhangiani, Mumbai



**H**is diary is probably as full as Mahatma Gandhi's was, except that he drives himself to his appointments.

Mohan Jhangiani, 80, Mumbai's very own Gandhi look-alike, is a very busy man. A resident of Colaba in South Mumbai, he works weekdays at his electronics distribution and investments business near Victoria Terminus, close to home. He also helps Ranjvir, the eldest of his three sons, with his real-estate business at Andheri, considerably further away in the suburbs. And in his spare time, he travels all over the city, using his looks—you can't help gawk at the resemblance—to support several causes, from AIDS and drug awareness to leprosy camps and thalassaemia. Wherever he goes, Jhangiani drives. “Even after my bypass surgery three years ago, I was back on the road in a month,” he says with pride. “Driving gives me a sense of independence.

He learnt to drive when he was 25. “I bought my first car in 1956, a Landmaster, after borrowing Rs 10,000 from a friend,” he recalls with nostalgia. “It had such a good body with a thick gauge.” After he sold the Landmaster 12 years later, he

# movement

bought an Ambassador and a Fiat in quick succession, only to settle down with a Maruti 800, which he's been driving for the past 20 years, despite the other three cars in the family—a Ford Ikon, an Esteem and a Hyundai Accent. The Maruti, he says, is convenient but he takes the Hyundai to the places where “one needs to show a big car”, he says with a smile.

Jhangiani is a careful driver these days, specially since his grandchildren, 9-year-old Reesha and 6-year-old Veer hop in for a spin sometimes with *Dada*.

“When I was newly married, I used to drive at high speeds...80, 85, even 100 kmph on a clear road,” he says with a sigh. “We used to drive to Pune and Mahabaleshwar on the highway. If I ran a signal then, it just cost me Rs 2 or Rs 5. Today, my speeds are closer to 40-45 kmph.”

Now, when Jhangiani revs up, his wife Krishna is the first to tell him to slow down, scared that he'll have an accident. She needn't worry. Her husband has never bumped the car, even though he tells you with a grin: “When someone tells you to drive slowly, you want to show off and speed up.” So confident is he with his “No. 1 track record” that he keeps his



license with his son in Andheri, only carrying a photocopy in the glove compartment.

Jhangiani still laughs when he tells you about his one run-in with the cops. Once in the early 1990s, he was driving to Andheri, in his loincloth, shawl and *danda*, from a cancelled appearance at a Lions' Club function. At a check-post en route he was stopped by a posse of policemen, who were worried about his *danda*. A round of questioning and explanations later, they let him go. “Of course, since then, I have driven a few times dressed like that. People say, ‘Look, Look, Gandhiji is driving!’ I’m used to it.”

—Roshni Bajaj

# Rana of the road



RAAJA BHASIN

**A**round lunchtime, should you happen go to the bar-room of Shimla's high court, you will find Rana Kultar Chand either discussing a fine point of law, reeling off an anecdote or reciting Urdu poetry. He certainly has enough to talk about.

In 1970, the chief minister of the fledgling state of Himachal Pradesh, Y S Parmar, appointed Rana Kultar Chand as the chairman of the state's newly

provided that the traditional boss-subordinate equation did not enter into the picture. Rana Sahib responded, "You will be my guru and I your *chela*."

Soon enough, on another one of the long drives, Totu Ram stepped out for his puff near Ambala. When he got back in, he asked Rana Sahib to take the wheel. The ice, as it were, was broken and Rana Sahib has been driving ever since.

A couple of years past the first gratings of the gears, Rana Sahib found himself in the thick of Himachal's politics. In 1972, he was elected as a MLA and was appointed speaker of the State Assembly. By then, he was driving regularly and in 1973, he finally decided to buy a car. He applied for a loan and bought his first car, a Fiat, for Rs 22,400. That vehicle remained with him for 25 years. In 1998, he finally gave the faithful old car, which remains his favourite, a thank-you pat and bought the real king of today's road, a deep-green Maruti 800.

Today, at the age of 82, Rana Sahib still continues to drive, though he gave up long-distance driving three years ago. His green Maruti buzzing around Shimla is a familiar sight. In the mornings, it is parked by the High Court where Rana Sahib, a senior advocate, still practices law, and later in the

## "Driving brings me freedom" – Rana Kultar Chand, Shimla

formed School Education Board. Along with the responsibilities came an official car and a driver named Totu Ram. No state capital has been able to do without the whips and stirrups controlled by New Delhi, and 'Rana Sahib'—as he is popularly known—found himself on the road to Delhi fairly often. On the long drive, every once in while, the driver, a middle-aged ex-army man, would halt on some pretext or the other, and quickly grab a smoke.

At that point of time, Rana Sahib had driven nothing save a scooter. One day, the driver's intake of nicotine loosened his tongue a little more and he offered to teach Rana Sahib how to drive a car—

day, near the ADC club for his bridge. His is a full day that starts with a morning walk. His two daughters, both of whom live outside Shimla, keep telling him to come and stay with them. But he likes his life here. "Shimla has been my home since I was first elected to the Vidhan Sabha," he says. "I know everyone and everyone knows me." He is respected as a man who has lived life largely on his own terms—a life still being lived to the hilt. Rana Sahib says he plans to keep driving until he retires. And when will that be? "Haven't you heard? Lawyers never retire."

—Raja Bhasin



# Hard drive

**A**mong the many myths that surround Army officers, at least a few have basis in fact—like neatly-trimmed-but-nevertheless-intimidating moustaches, erect military bearing, smiles for pretty young women and the fact that they are sticklers for punctuality. Lieutenant General (retd) H C Rai fits at least these myths with satisfying snugness. There are some others, which the 83-year-old retired army officer could well be the subject of on his own. He still drives to his native place in Yol in the Kangra Valley every year from Delhi, a distance of 500 km, in his Matiz. “I used to do it in one go. But now I prefer to stop for the night at Chandigarh.”

And companions on the way? Besides his life long co-driver, wife Kamal, the General takes along Bhimsen Joshi and Kishori Amonkar. “None of this English thump-thump music for me,” he says in his clipped army accent.

His driving days though began very differently. General Rai learnt how to drive a 1,500 weight army truck from a one-eyed British officer of the erstwhile India army. “Major Holder had lost his eye in the Middle East and he was subsequently very edgy,” Rai recounts. “As a result, whatever little patience he had left was soon exhausted when he taught us 19-year-old cadets to drive,



maintains that Indian roads are the toughest. “If you can drive in India, you can drive anywhere, including outer space.”

He proceeds to recount some of his most interesting memories. Like the time a brand new car that landed up on his doorstep one fine morning in Paris in 1961, where he was posted as military attaché, to take him to Athens for a military ceremony. “The 21 day-trip was one of the most beautiful drives of my life.” He also acquired his “favourite car, a Mercedes 190 C” in Paris. With a diplomatic discount, it cost him just Rs 13,000. He had it for 25 precious years.

## “Driving at this age is a way of keeping fit” – H C Rai, Delhi

back in 1941 in the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun. More often than not, he would make me get out and run alongside the truck all the way to the Academy. I think I ran more than I drove in those years.”

General Rai acquired his first car in 1952—“a second-hand Vauxhall, which my brother-in-law had sent over from Calcutta”—when he was a lieutenant colonel, for the princely sum of Rs 10,000. He proceeded to set the roads of three continents, if not quite afire, then close to it. After years of driving in Asia, Europe and the US, he

But after retirement, in 1978, the car proved too expensive to maintain. So he switched to? “A Maruti 800”. Ouch. “I used to ask myself, ‘What the hell am I doing in this matchbox?’ But I drove that car too for 15 years. And now I have a Matiz. I always grow to love my cars.” Even now, he has no plans of hiring a driver. “Driving at this age is also a way of keeping fit. And the truth is, I feel safer driving myself. If I sit next to the driver, I find my feet working all the time. I am always sure that I can drive better than the other chap.”

—Richa Dubey

# A car reborn



Courtesy: PRATAPSIKH JHALA

“I want to die at the wheel” – [Pratapsinh Jhala](#), Wankaner



**P**laces and curios go together and the Ranjitsinh Palace of Wankaner, a dignified jumble of architectural influences, is no exception. But the biggest curiosity here is its king—a man who loves cars so much that on empty days he ponders whether he was a motorcar in his previous birth. “And so, God gave me the opportunity this time to experience how it feels to ride one. It feels great,” he says with a smile that always appears when cars are mentioned.

Pratapsinh Jhala, once the crowned king of Wankaner, a tiny kingdom in Gujarat whose name means ‘bend in the river’, is 97 and seems to be making up for his doctor’s ban on driving by walking at great speed. He is taking us around his palace, showing us lovely framed photographs of



vintage cars. He stops suddenly in front of an old black-and-white picture and says wistfully, "That's a Mercury 1941 model. I am at the wheel."

He learnt how to drive at the age of 14 from the head driver of the palace. "My first car was the Ford Model T and it was thrilling to drive it," he remembers with more than a touch of nostalgia. Two years ago, at the age of 95, his doctor finally persuaded him to stop driving. At that point, he told his doctor adamantly: "I want to die at the wheel."

But even today, he continues to go out in his cars in an odd ritual that takes place every Sunday when Pratapsinh descends to the palace porch in his top hat and black coat. Each one of his seven swanky vintage cars pulls up and he rides around the huge palace grounds in them, turn by turn. The rest of the week, they are kept and tended to in a mini-mansion of a garage. "I have a 1941 Mercury, 1945 Ford Custom, a 1947 Ford Super, a couple of World War II Jeeps, a 1921 Rolls Royce and a 1921 Buick." He personally supervises their upkeep and says he is a bit doubtful about the "character" of modern cars. "See, I don't approve of the idea of the floor gear, which all these new cars have. It's an obstacle to your leg, which keeps hitting it. Then, the headlights of the older cars are better and the seating is also more spacious. Above all, modern cars don't seem sporting enough to me. The old cars had a character and a spirit to them. But that's my opinion."

His house, or rather palace, is also full of car memorabilia. Pistons and odd bits of car spares have been used for interior decoration here and

there. He also has a huge collection of car books, "and he is unable to throw out even a single one", says his son, Dr Ranjit Sinh, a retired IAS officer. "In fact, a few years ago, father stopped accepting gifts of any sort and it became difficult for all of us until we started giving him gifts that had cars in some form or other, maybe a decorative plate with a car painted on it and so on. He accepts them all now. He cannot say no to anything to do with cars."

But now, with his driving days behind him, what Pratapsinh really wants is a car right next to him, all the time. "I wish I could keep one of them in my room so that I can see it everyday and sit in it once in a while. And I would have, but my family and friends believe it doesn't look good to have a car in the house."

—Smruti Gupta



Photos: SAMEER PATHAK



# A streetcar



# called home

“I have no anxiety. I await His orders”— **Bachan Singh**, Chandigarh

**M**ost of us have heard the fairytale about the old lady who lives in a shoe. But have you heard of an old man who lives in a car? This one is for real. Bachan Singh, a 90-year-old former taxi driver, lives in a white Ambassador car that has been parked in Chandigarh's Sector 27 for the past four-and-a-half years. It is his home.

It is an ironic fate for a man who once owned a fleet of taxis, running a thriving business. But circumstances and four indifferent sons have forced him to make a home out of the last car left. Today, his home is rusted throughout, has broken windows and sits on flat tyres. The back seat is his bedroom, while the front seat holds his quilt, blankets and other meagre possessions. The rear shelf has a couple of mugs, glasses, no food. A broken chair, a folding bed and a shabby table sit outside the car. The Ambassador is parked opposite the Jain Mandir, which gives him food twice a day. He also uses the bathrooms there to wash and bathe.

“A lot of people help me,” says Singh. “Some give me clothes, blankets and food. They are kinder to me than my own family. I wake up at four each morning to say my prayers, the Sukhmani Sahib. In the evenings too I say my prayers. It gives great solace to the soul. In spite of everything, I am at peace with myself. I have no anxiety. I await His orders.”

Singh looks back on his life without an ounce of regret, or self-pity. When he was 18, he ran away to Calcutta to escape the wrath of his father whom he remembers as a bad-tempered man, employed in the British Army. For a few years, Singh made a living running a teashop. The 1946-47 communal riots were a turning point in his life. “A Muslim mob attacked our mohalla which was all Hindu,” he recalls. “The Bengalis looked to me for help and I stood my ground, kirpan in hand. The crowd backed off, and I was an instant hero.” The residents were so grateful that they piled with him gifts, and collected enough money so that he could buy a taxi.

Driving a taxi was a good business then and life began to look up. “Soon, I had a fleet of taxis. And my best taxi was the Plymouth,” he

reminisces. Financially secure, he also got married and had four sons. Singh drove a taxi for 30 years in Calcutta. When his wife died in 1975, he moved to Chandigarh as it was closer to his village, Jallianwala, in Ropar district. “I drove a taxi here for another 10 years.” He finally had to stop because his eyes failed him. “My sons have all gone their separate ways and have no use for me,” says Singh. “My eldest son died just a week ago,” he adds without emotion.

Today, good memories and dignity hold him together and he comes alive when he tells you about his “role” in the film, *Do Bigha Zamin*. “In one scene, Balraj Sahni stood in the middle of Howrah Bridge while I came along driving a taxi. I blew my horn, braked to a standstill, stuck my head out of the window and said to him, ‘What are you doing here? This is not a garden. *Hat, pagal kahin ka!*’ Director Bimal Roy even remembered this episode when I met him many years later.” Bachan Singh relives the moment with a twinkle in his eye.

—H Kishie Singh

# My days of

Courtesy: AMITA MALIK



Columnist and film critic [Amita Malik](#) on good cars, bad drivers and ugly roads

**M**y father, the late Prof P C Roy, was a well-known Shakespearean scholar and sportsman. But he was even more famously known as the first owner-driver of a car in Assam. The *burra sahibs* had chauffeurs. While Father taught at the famous Cotton College in Guwahati, Mother stayed bravely in Shillong, the lovely hill station now the capital of Meghalaya, so that we children could go to good schools there—the boys to St Edmund's and the girls to Loreto Convent. But it was only 63 miles from Guwahati to Shillong, and Father used to commute for long weekends, the Puja and summer holidays, while we from Shillong used to drive down to Guwahati for the winter holidays.

It was inevitably that Father, who was very emancipated before his time, insisted that his daughters learn driving as well. I got a driving license rather illegally at 16, because Father partnered Dilys, the lovely wife of the Superintendent of Police, at mixed doubles at tennis. So the SP himself gave me a driving test and a license with the sound advice: "Drive carefully girl." Equally inevitably, a day came when Father asked me to drive, with him sitting beside me, on a hilly road from Guwahati to Shillong. After three or four test runs, he asked me to drive solo. "Don't worry. I'll follow in the second car." And I did the trip regularly. Fifteen years later, when I bought my first car, a second-hand Ford Prefect in Delhi, I found to my joy I had not forgotten my driving and I passed my test quite easily.

When I got a visiting fellowship at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Shimla in 1975, housed in the beautiful Viceregal Lodge gifted to the institute by President S Radhakrishnan, I did my first solo drive from Delhi. With some sandwiches and a flask of coffee, I drove up quite easily. There were only two gender-related problems. After I overtook lorries and their drivers realised I was a woman driving, they

felt insulted and started a race, but they never caught up. Also, while I can change a tyre, I hate doing so. The first time, the lorry drivers changed my tyre while looking disapprovingly at my jeans, as if I were Sashikala in a film. But when I wore a sari, it was all Indian chivalry: "*Tussi baitho bahenji, hum tyre badal denge.*" I continued these solo trips regularly until militancy broke out in Punjab, when I kept someone else, my secretary, sister or friend, with me. But not someone who could drive, so that I kept my solo driving record.

Once, when I drove my mother up to Shimla to bring back nostalgic memories of Shillong, I hired a driver. Mother, my bull terrier and I sat demurely at the back while the driver from the Automobile Association sat at the wheel. Near Chandigarh, with the road at its hottest, suddenly the car started crawling. "What's the matter?" I asked. "*Gadi garam ho gaya*", he said. "Nonsense", I said, "Look at the temperature gauge." We arrived at a better speed at Kalka, where the hill section starts. "What was all that about engine *garam*?" I asked. The driver gave a cunning grin. "*Tab overtime milega.*" "Ok," I said, "You sit at the back with the dog, Mother will sit in front with me." "And who will drive?" he asked. "I will," I replied and did some model hill driving up to Solan,



# hill driving

“After militancy broke out in Punjab, I kept someone with me.

But not someone who could drive, so that I kept my solo record”

the halfway halt. “You drive very well, Madam,” conceded the driver. “When does your overtime start?” I asked grimly. “In half an hour,” he grinned. “Very well, here is your money for dinner and your bus fare back to Delhi.” “And who will drive?” he asked. “I will, you just said I drive very well.” And I drove off in style.

Coming back was more difficult. Mother had a chest problem and the doctor had ordered that I bring her back to the plains if she started coughing. We started off in the morning. Thirty miles outside Shimla, I found a landslide had sent half the road down the gorge below. And there was heavy mud on the other half. I decided to reverse and go back to Shimla. Just as I started, a heavy boulder rolled down and blocked the road at the back. There was nothing to do but go ahead and hope for the best. I put the car in first gear, hoping there was enough clearance below the car, and slowly made it to the safety zone. Then I was ready to throw up. “Ma, can I have your 4711 eau de cologne?” I gasped, as I took several whiffs to get back my breath. “Did you see that?” I asked Ma, sitting there as calm as

ever. “Weren’t you scared?” I asked. “No,” she replied, “because I believe in God. Besides, Daddy taught you driving.”

As we stopped at the first coffee bar, the man looked at us as if he had seen ghosts. “Where have you come from? The road has been closed for three days because of landslides.” There had been not one notice on the road or on the radio. After all, this is India.

Cut to 2002. I am now 80 and my friends say, “Amita, no more nonsense about hill driving.” And they hired me a driver as I sat demurely at the back. But as we started from Kalka, it was clear this city driver did not have a clue about hill driving, about camber, about giving way to upgoing traffic, or changing down gear when going downhill. As I did not want to get killed, after two kilometres, when he was sleepily slumping over the steering wheel, I said, “Go and sit at the back.” “And who will drive?” he asked. “I will,” I replied, and did some modish hill driving as I put on Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony* on the music system.

As I smartly parked my Zen at Bishop Cotton School, where I had to judge an all-India public school debate as I had done for four years, the headmaster and teachers surrounded my car. “Were you driving it?” they asked in astonishment. “Of course,” I replied in a throwaway manner. “Nothing to it, after all, Daddy taught me hill driving.”

This year, I didn’t go to Shimla as I came to Kolkata instead. About next year, who knows?



FARZANA COOPER

# Guru cool

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the inspirational leader of the Art of Living movement, tells **Arundhathi Subramaniam** that joy is our nature



Courtesy: THE ART OF LIVING, MUMBAI

**Clockwise from top: Shakti Kutir, Sri Sri's home in the Bangalore ashram; the guru; Vishalakshmi Mantap in the ashram**

**W**hen Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was recently asked—for the nth time no doubt—about the double 'Sri' before his name, he chuckled and said, "Because I thought three would be too many!" But he was quick to toss off a pithy aside: "There is only one; it manifests as two."

Much has been written about Sri Sri's rise to fame. Born on May 13, 1956, in Tamil Nadu to an Iyer Brahmin family, it's said that he could recite the *Bhagavad Gita* by the age of four, and was

well versed with the *Rig Veda* by nine. He joined Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1975 but in March 1982, he went on a 10-day silent retreat in Shimoga and emerged with the Sudarshan Kriya technique—an arabesque of breathing patterns—that he proceeded to impart to people.

It marked the beginning of the Art of Living (AoL) movement; the AoL Course is taught in over 140 countries today. The foremost factor behind its success is probably the technique

itself. Refusing to discriminate between the devoted and the doubter, Sudarshan Kriya, drawn from ancient knowledge, is said to restore an individual's inner harmony by eliminating toxins (*see box on page 50*). "We need to cleanse ourselves," says Sri Sri. "In sleep, we get rid of fatigue, but the deeper stresses remain in our body."

Another reason for the movement's success could well be the accessibility of Sri Sri's teaching. He conforms to the



*Excerpts from an interview with Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at his ashram on the outskirts of Bangalore:*

**Did you ever see yourself as a spiritual seeker?**

Never. I've always been just the way I am now.

**There was no sense of fevered quest? No dark night of the soul?**

(Laughs) No.

**What happened in those 10 days in Shimoga?**

I just wanted to be in silence. There was an urge to do, to give something to the people. After 10 days, it happened.

**Was there a breakthrough, an actual experience of enlightenment?**

No, no. When you're quiet and you start writing a poem, that's how I started teaching. Then it spread by word of mouth.

template of the Modern Guru who tells you it's alright to be involved with the mind and the marketplace, with breath and business. "So what if spirituality takes a commercial spin? Commerce is not a bad word." His biography mentions an embarrassed devotee who admitted that he was in the liquor trade but intended to stop it, to which the guru of cool replied, "Oh! You are in the business of intoxicating people. So am I, but I don't intend to stop it."





**And what is enlightenment?**

To be in oneself; not hiding in oneself.

**To what would you attribute the amazing growth of the AoL movement?**

To the fact that we're not feverish to grow. (Laughs) One, it's because it's an ancient truth we're imparting. Two, there's the need of the people. Three, the authenticity of the teachers.

**Is it also because an emphasis on joy has been part of AoL?**

Yes, joy is our nature. There's also the *seva* part of it. We've made it mandatory for all our *sevaks* to do *sadhana*, and vice versa.

**Have religious traditions laid undue emphasis on the role of****suffering in spiritual growth?**

People often derive some sort of joy or pride in suffering. This is a wrong concept. And it's not Indian. Suffering is necessary, in a sense, if it makes life deeper and richer. But if you start enjoying it, it will become masochism.

**What about the challenges of ageing?**

A sense of satisfaction — *tripti* — should come with age. If the feverishness, the ambition, doesn't go down, ageing becomes a problem. Before the body starts giving way, realise that you are not the body. For people who are in spirituality and service, their lives become more fulfilling as they grow older. Devoid of spirituality, life becomes miserable.

**What of the sense of loneliness, of abandonment that many experience as they age?**

That's because they have not belonged to the entire society, the whole world. Their sense of belonging was limited to their own blood relations. According to a Sanskrit saying, only that which is great and grand will give you joy.

**What about the universal fear of death?**

If you know meditation, there will be no fear of death.

**These are times of unimaginable violence and conflict, and also growing spiritual quest.**

Yes. People often ask why India, despite all the spiritual teachings, has so much violence. With so

## The effects of Sudarshan Kriya

Breathing technique Sudarshan Kriya is the foundation of the Art of Living movement. AoL followers claim it helps rid the system of accumulated stress and toxins, releases negative emotions and rejuvenates the body. There is serious scientific research backing these claims. According to a study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore, Sudarshan Kriya Yoga (SKY) can be a potential alternative to drugs to treat people suffering from depression.

"SKY works for depressive disorder patients," says Dr B N Gangadhar, professor and head of the department of psychiatry NIMHANS, and a member of the team that conducted the study. "It can cause stimulation of the hypothalamus [the part of the brain that controls autonomic functions, emotions, endocrine and motor functions and regulates food and water intake and the sleep cycle]." Defining SKY as "a procedure that involves essentially rhythmic hyperventilation at different rates of breathing", the study, released



Courtesy: THE ART OF LIVING, MUMBAI



Courtesy: THE ART OF LIVING, MUMBAI



much struggle, and if there was no spirituality at all, you can't imagine where we'd be.

**Do you think it's important for spiritual masters to involve themselves in the political scene?**

Often, spiritual people take responsibility only for their community. But I would say every spiritual leader belongs to humanity. If there is injustice done to anybody, they have to raise their voice. There is a moral

responsibility, not just for spiritual leaders but for all people. And political people must have a moral and spiritual component in their lives. Otherwise, corruption will continue to torment society.

**You've said that children learn best what's extracurricular. How does one approach life as extracurricular activity?**

(Laughs) By not taking it too seriously. ■

in 2000, compared its relative antidepressant efficacy in melancholia with two of the current standard treatments, electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and imipramine (IMN). While IMN is an established anti-depressant drug, ECT, used for severely depressed patients, involves the administration of an electric shock to cause a seizure (a short period of irregular brain activity). This releases many chemicals in the brain, called neurotransmitters, which improve the working of the brain cells.

Consenting, untreated melancholic depressives were hospitalised and randomised equally into three groups—one treated with ECT, the second with IMN and the third with SKY—and assessed at admission and weekly thereafter for four weeks. The results revealed significant reductions in the total scores on the Beck Depression Inventory and Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression—internationally accepted testing parameters—on successive occasions in all three groups.

Could Sudarshan Kriya be a long-term cure for depression? "This is speculative," says Dr Gangadhar. "Eleven out of 15 patients had positive results in the SKY group and 12 of 15 in the drug group, which is about the same." However, the study concluded that SKY could be a potential alternative to drugs in melancholia as "first-line treatment".

"The Sudarshan Kriya breathing technique cleanses the system from the inside," says Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. "The breath has a great secret to offer." The secret's out.

*The introductory AoL course is a 24-hour course spread over six days; the first five days have sessions of three hours each, while the last day is longer. The course comprises SKY meditation and interactive sessions with the instructor and within the group. You are also taught a shorter home version of the Kriya—a half-hour daily routine. Since SKY is essentially a guided meditation, you can do the complete version only in follow-up group sessions. To know more, and to find an AoL centre near you, see page 95. ■*



# Type A

For Ved Kumar, who brings out his senior citizens' association's 100-page souvenir single-handedly each year, Parkinson's is a just minor footnote of life, says **Vatsala Kaul**

**V**ed Kumar suffers from Parkinson's, Koch's lesion (a non-malignant fibroid tumour) damaged some of his back muscles 15 years ago, and cataract is fast setting in his eyes. But the 73-year-old has no time to worry about these "small, debilitating details". A member of the Senior Citizens' Welfare Association (SCWA) in Saket, New Delhi, Kumar has been its general secretary since 2002, the year he single-handedly started the association's 100-page annual souvenir.

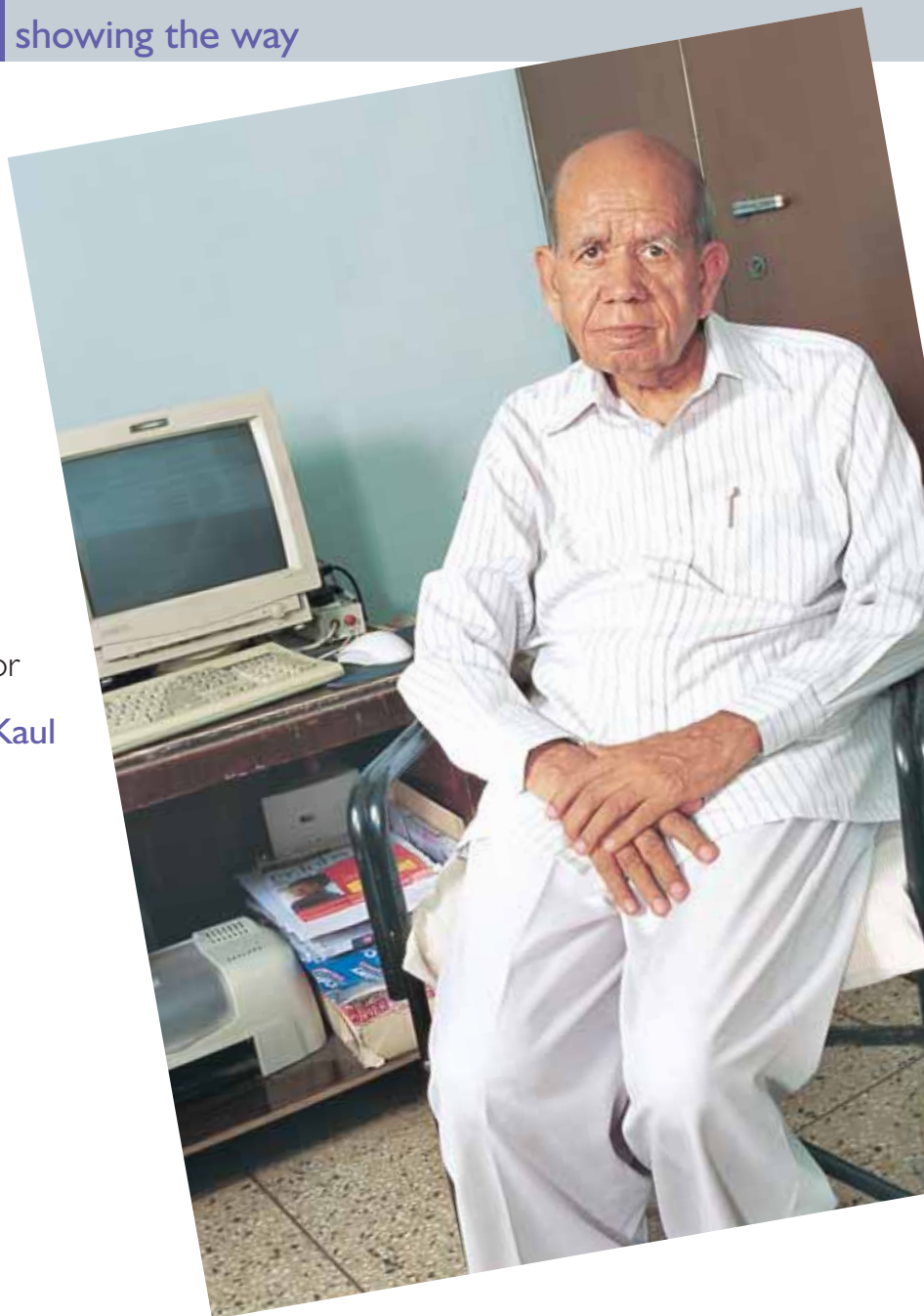
Kumar retired from Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd as the deputy chief of vigilance 15 years ago. When he joined SCWA in 1995, the association wanted to bring out a periodic newsletter. The person concerned, however, asked for five assistants and it never took off. Next came the idea of an annual souvenir, with

advertisements to bring in some money. In 2002, Kumar took over the souvenir—and it took him over.

Initially, he sent some publishing material to the press. A fast learner, he soon learnt how to operate a computer with help from his son and daughter-in-law. Today, Kumar is editor, correspondent, columnist, typist, proofreader, sales executive and office-boy rolled into one. The souvenir has extracts from HelpAge India's promotional

material, articles on income tax, banking, civic rights and consumer protection, and prayers and jokes.

It opens with the national anthem, each year in a different language, typed by Kumar. In 2002, it was in Hindi, followed by Bangla and Punjabi; he plans to type it in Tamil in 2005. Kumar personally dispatches the final draft to the press and the printed copies to association members, all over 60 years of age.





Then, there is the association's correspondence. Stored in pink and orange files, you find copies of letters written from the heart and peppered with wit that can turn the most tedious grievances into matters that command attention. In this pile is a letter to a police officer with an analogy to the autocratic and whimsical Mohammad Bin Tughlaq and yet another to "Max Perimenting" Maxwell Pereira (retired police officer). There are hundreds of these missives, meticulously filed, and clearly marked as 'missions accomplished' or 'still in the process'. Every evening, the courier comes to collect the

refuse to think about it. I believe you should always have work before you, and forget your personal problems." Waking up at 5:30—sometimes even earlier—to fill up water for his extended family of nine in tap-dry South Delhi, he switches off the half-mast light near the house, and goes to fetch milk. It takes him half an hour to shave because of his trembling hand. He manages all the plumbing and electrical errands at home, and attends to a slew of guests and visitors—police officers, fellow residents and media people. He also manages the association's accounts.

## PARKINSON'S, AN OVERVIEW

Parkinson's most often develops after the age of 50 and is the most common neurological disorder in the elderly. Clinically, loss of cells that produce dopamine neurons (responsible for attention, memory and functions like eating and drinking) leads to Parkinson's. Currently, there is no way to stop the loss of nerve cells or restore what the brain has already lost. It may also result from toxins, head traumas or strokes. Some researchers believe that Parkinson's may have a genetic link. Diagnosis is based on medical history and examination of spinal fluid.

## SYMPTOMS

- **Tremors:** Involuntary shaking of arm, leg, or facial muscles. The tremor is worst at rest and gets better when the organ is moved; it often disappears during sleep. In the hand, the thumb may move back and forth against the other fingers—Parkinson called this 'pill rolling'
- **Bradykinesia:** Slowness of movement; difficulty in initiating movements and changing position
- **Awkward gait and stooping**
- **Unblinking, mask-like face**
- **Muscular stiffness or rigidity**

## LEADING HOSPITALS FOR TREATMENT

- **Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals**, New Delhi
- **VIMHANS**, New Delhi
- **Apollo Hospitals**, Chennai
- **NIMHANS**, Bangalore

See page 95 for addresses



Photos: POOJA MEHRA

Kumar with his wife and grandchildren

day's letters, which often add up to as many as 25. Kumar can't sign any of them because of Parkinson's; he simply types his name.

Kumar doesn't remember when Parkinson's set in, and he doesn't really care. "My doctor says there's no cure for it, so I

The association meets every third Sunday of the month, discussing everything from traffic chaos to ageing. Between all this, Kumar only has time for news on *Aaj Tak*, flipping through a magazine, maybe catching a thrilling finish to a cricket match—and, yes, a shut-eye whenever he gets a chance. ■

# Sweet



Courtesy: THE ITC GRAND MARATHA, MUMBAI

Chukunder ki lauz



# Nothings

This festival season, say no to refined sugar. *Harmony* shows you how

**F**rench epicure Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin once wrote: “A dinner without dessert is like a woman with only one eye.” He wasn’t exaggerating. The truth is, in their love for sweet things, even the most measured humans have demonstrated madness. Writer Jonathan Swift, ordinarily a temperate man, often surprised his companions by rounding off his dinner with four large berry pies. Oscar Wilde, rarely dispassionate in anything at all, enjoyed demonstrating his love of excess by consuming enormous quantities of cream puffs. Queen Elizabeth I was known for her love of cookies and candies; she had especially large pockets sewn into all her dresses so that she could fill them with goodies to munch on during the day.

*Sugar Blues*, actress Gloria Swanson’s husband William Duffy’s best-selling expose, is not so sweet in unmasking the greatest medical killer of our times—sugar. Swanson was insane about the use of sugar, even going ballistic if someone used it around her; the result was Duffy’s book, with insightful confrontations with sugar. Arguing that sugar is as addictive as nicotine and responsible for a number of maladies, he crusades on behalf of a revitalising, sugar-free diet, which not just changes one’s life but quite possibly saves it. While diabetics would easily understand the nuances, for others a recent study conducted in New York University is quite a revelation. It links fogged memory in old age with blood sugar.

True, sugar tastes good. But few realise that refined sugar is a pure chemical that contains no nutrition—no vitamins, no minerals, no enzymes or trace elements, no fat, no protein, or fibre, just calories. It causes dental problems, and plays a significant role in diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression. Your craving for ‘something sweet’ is actually your body’s signal demanding glucose, which is essential food for cells. We get this adequately from fruits, vegetables, starches, carbohydrates, even fats and proteins—because of their fibre and water content, they are absorbed better and provide a superior nutritional balance to sugar and refined carbohydrates.

Shedding your sweet tooth can be a great challenge, but you need not go cold turkey. Try grilled fruit. Slice apricots, figs, pears, apple

and pineapple; rub a little olive oil on the grill to prevent burning; and grill for five to 10 minutes. The dry heat will caramelise the natural sugars. A banana cooked slowly in its peel tastes like custard, with fibre and nutrients. Or use fruits to sweeten your desserts instead.

Traditionally, even a chunk of jaggery is accepted as dessert in North India. In the West and East, palm jaggery, cane jaggery and even honey are used as sugar substitutes. Dark, unrefined palm jaggery is healthier, and used in Goan desserts like *dodol* (*halwa*), *Alle Belle* (a pancake), *Pinaca* (a sweet croquette), *Filhos* (banana fritters), and sweet *sanna* (*idli*-like steamed cakes that can be stuffed with palm jaggery and coconut). And all these are soft on your teeth. Cane jaggery is used in regions with high cane produce. And honey often replaces sugar in the sticky gingelly/sesame sweet in west and north India.

This month, we bring you four festive preparations from different parts of the country, made with sugar substitutes. Consult a physician before indulging, though.



## KOZHAKATTAI

A Ganesha festival special, this one is Tamil Nadu's improvisation on the Maharashtrian *modak*, with coconut filling

### INGREDIENTS

(For the filling)

White sesame seeds:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

Bengal gram:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

Cardamoms (skinned & pounded): 3

Powdered jaggery: 50 gm

Sweetex: few drops

(For outer casing)

Rice:  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups

Water:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

Salt: a pinch

Sesame oil:  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp

### METHOD

For the filling, wash the sesame seeds till the water becomes clear.

Soak for an hour. Drain and spread over a clean cloth. When nearly dry, pound to a coarse powder. While the sesame seeds are soaking, soak the Bengal gram for a half hour and pressure cook. Discard water and mash. Add the cardamom. Melt the jaggery, remove the scum, and cool. Add sesame seed powder and Bengal gram paste with the cardamom to the jaggery. Add two to three drops of Sweetex and knead.

For the outer casing, wash the rice and soak for three hours. Drain and spread out on a clean cloth to dry. When half damp, grind to a powder. Sift it through a fine sieve. Boil two cups of water with the pinch of salt and sesame oil. Gradually add the rice flour, and stir vigorously with a wooden spoon, ensuring that no lumps are formed, and the water is fully absorbed. Cover the mixture with a damp muslin cloth to avoid drying. When it cools, knead into a smooth dough. Grease a square of plastic, or banana leaf, or the palm of your hand, and press down a lime-sized ball of dough to make a thin circle, about four inches in diameter. Place a teaspoon of filling in the centre. Dampen one half of the edge, and bring the other over to seal it, pressing the edges down. Use a wheel cutter to trim the edges. Steam the *kozhakattai* for seven to 10 minutes in an *idli* stand. Serve when cool.



## PATISHAPTA

Delhi monsoon or Durga Puja in West Bengal, you don't need an excuse to relish these sweet stuffed pancakes

### INGREDIENTS

For stuffing

Coconut: 1, ground finely in a mixer

Cardamom seeds: ground

Sweetex pills: 3 to 4

Khoya (mawa):  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (optional)

For pancakes

Semolina powder: 2 tbsp

Milk or water:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

Maida (plain flour): 1 cup

Saunf (aniseed): a pinch

Soak the semolina in water or milk for one hour. Heat a *kadai*. Put all the ingredients for the stuffing inside, without any oil.

Stir and mix them till they stick to each other. Keep aside. Mix *maida* and semolina with water/milk; add a pinch of *saunf*. Add one or two Sweetex pills, if required. Mix till it attains the semi-solid consistency of a smooth batter. Dab the non-stick frying pan with oil. Pour the batter in the shape of an oval. When dry and a little fried, put one teaspoon of stuffing in the centre. Fold the pancake from both the sides to cover the stuffing. Tap till firm. Remove. Or put stuffing on one end of the pancake and roll it closed. Enjoy hot.



## PATTOLI

A seasonal Goan preparation, the aroma of the *haldi* leaves makes this dish special. Goan Hindus savour it during Nagpanchami (in the month of Shravan, wherein an offering of *pattoli* is made to the Nag devata) and also during Ganesh Chaturthi

### INGREDIENTS

Rice flour: 2 cups

Turmeric leaves (*haldi*)

Coconut: 1, freshly grated

Jaggery:  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

Cashew nuts: 10 to 12, cut to bits

Sesame seeds: 2 tsp

Cardamom powder

Salt according to taste

### METHOD

Wash, drain and dry the rice



Kozhakattai

SAMUEL RAJAKANI

and pound it to flour. Strain the rice flour. Add a little salt to the flour and bind it to firm dough with hot water. Mix jaggery with the coconut. On a slow fire, roast the sesame seeds and then add cashew nuts, cardamom powder and coconut mixture. Mix well and stir. After five minutes, remove from heat. This is the filling.

Wash the turmeric leaves and wipe dry. Thinly roll out a little dough on each leaf. Place the filling all along one side and fold the leaf over. Lay out the *pattoli* on a perforated tray. Put sufficient water in the pressure cooker. Keep a stand and then place the perforated tray on it. Steam without the whistle for about 15 minutes. Let cool and then remove to serve.

## ANJEER AUR CHUKUNDER KI LAUZ

Originally a Hyderabad speciality, North Indians have made it their own. They swear by it during the festive season.

### INGREDIENTS

*Medium size beetroot*  
(chukunder): 200 gm  
*Dried figs (anjeer):* 200 gm  
*Green cardamom powder:* 8 gm  
*Slivers of almonds:* 50 gm  
*Saffron:* 1/2 gm  
*Chironji (cudpahnut):* 20 gm  
*Raisins:* 20 gm  
*Silver/gold varq (leaf):* 5

### METHOD

Soak the dry figs overnight in hot water, just enough to

accommodate them. Peel and grate the beetroot. Puree the soaked figs into a rough paste. Soak the saffron in lukewarm water. Wash and pat dry the raisins. In a heavy pan, cook the beetroot over a medium flame. Let the watery residue dry.

Add the fig paste and continue cooking. Remove from the flame after 10 minutes and add the cardamom powder, saffron and raisins. Mix well. When still hot, spread the mixture in a shallow container and level out. Garnish with almond slivers, *chironji* and silver/gold *varq*. ■

*Meeta Bhatti, Sumitra Senapaty, Padma Mahale, Sabita Radhakrishna and Tapasi Sengupta have contributed to this article*

# A joint effort

Yoga can stop you feeling weak in the knees, says **Shameem Akthar**



**THE KNEE IS A DELICATE** contraption. It gives trouble to everybody, including the young. The reason is usually misuse. Sometimes, it is also disuse.

Unlike other body joints, the knee joint, bringing together the enormous thighbone and the elegant shinbone, is fixed in a fragile way—it is not supported by bones but strung together by thread-like ligaments that move with the muscles to create a to-and-fro movement. The thigh muscle covers the kneecap, or bone. Knee pain often flares up from the neglect of our leg muscles, leading to bad posture. Adding to the problem are excess weight, lack of exercise or abuse through wrong exercise.

Yoga first incorporates correction of posture through simple yet powerful poses like *tadasana* (tree). This redistributes body weight, relieving pressure on the spine, legs and knees resulting from bad posture. Each yogic leg-strengthening pose is designed keeping in mind the knee's structural delicacy. For example, in *trikonasana* (standing triangle), when the body twists to the right, the foot is also aligned to the right so that the knee is not subjected to an unnatural turn.

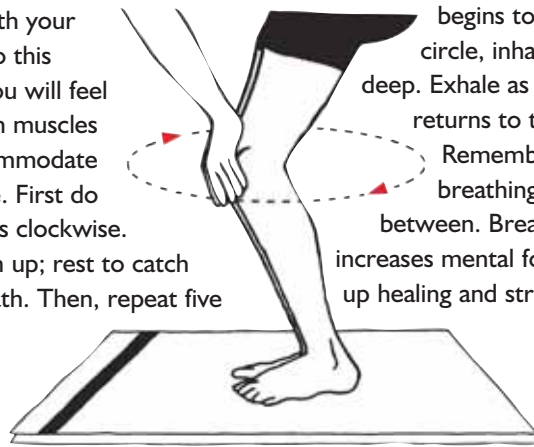
## REALIGN YOUR BODY

Yoga is designed with the body's wisdom in mind. If a severe

### Yogic moves

#### Strengthen your knees

Stand up straight, feet together. Lower yourself slightly at the waist, legs still together. From this bent position, where the knees remain touching, draw circles with your knees. Do this gently. You will feel your thigh muscles also accommodate this move. First do five circles clockwise. Straighten up; rest to catch your breath. Then, repeat five



times anti-clockwise. After a few weeks of practice, you may increase the number of circles to 10, even 15, according to individual capacity. Once you get used to the routine, you can incorporate a breathing sequence. As your body begins to draw the circle, inhale long and deep. Exhale as your body returns to the centre. Remember to keep breathing normally in between. Breath sequencing increases mental focus, speeding up healing and strengthening.

twist is assigned to the body, the entire mind-body complex will instinctively resist it. But when you align the foot, the body is reassured. So it accommodates and even enjoys your moves.

There are several knee-strengthening yogic poses: *navkasana* (boat), *janu sirsasana* (head-to-knee), *tadasana*, *trikonasana*, *adho mukha svanasana* (downward facing dog), *dandasana* (sitting rod), and *supta padangushtasana* (lying hand-to-foot). All these may be learnt

with props to accommodate injury or pain that can be gradually dispensed with once the knee gains strength.

Yoga's suggestions go beyond exercise. Proper footwear is crucial for the correct distribution of body weight and cushioning every impact, as is proper diet, since the right nutrients contribute towards healing chronic pain more than we realise. One such internal healer is Vitamin E, available in wheat germ, spinach and fruits. ■

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



बूंद बूंद में विश्वास



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## BOTOX FOR THE BLADDER

Botox (Botulinum-A Toxin), the much debated anti-wrinkle shot, just might have something to offer sufferers of urge incontinence, according to a Swiss team that presented its findings at a recent joint meeting of the American Urogynaecologic Society and the Society of Gynaecologic Surgeons. Urge incontinence is a disorder where there is a sudden need to void urgently, followed by a bladder contraction and expulsion of urine. Women and the elderly are more susceptible. It can be caused by neurological diseases, injuries, infections, bladder cancer, bladder stones, bladder inflammation or outlet obstruction. However, most cases are idiopathic—a specific cause cannot be pinpointed. Botox reduces muscle contractions and

significantly increases bladder capacity.

This novel therapy was part of a pilot study on a group of 26 people (average age 66) who haven't responded to standard therapy like medication, surgery, diet or exercise. The average number of bathroom visits reduced from 12 to 4 per day. Before the study, they rated their symptoms as 'very bothersome'. After the initial treatment, most respondents rated their symptoms as 'no bother at all'. And all were open to repeat injections.

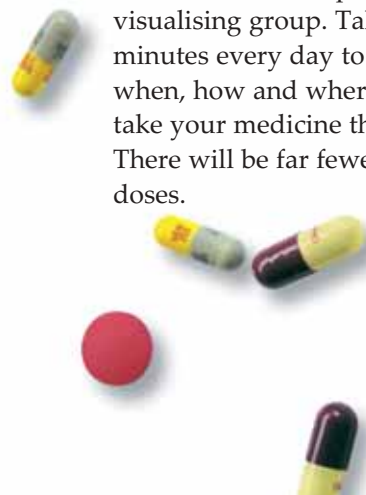
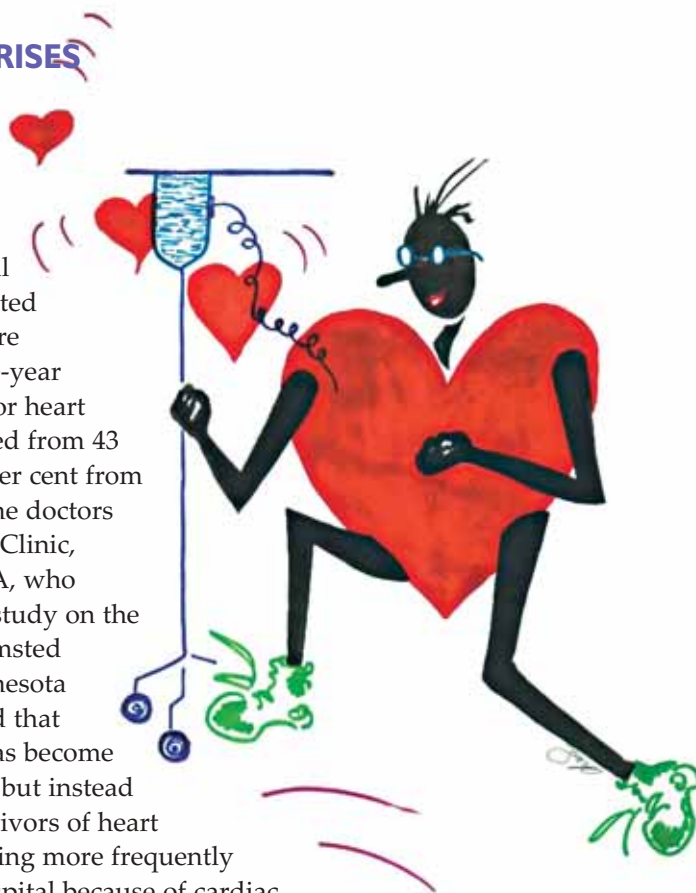


## PICTURE YOUR PILLS

Keep forgetting to take your medicines or perform daily medical tests? Use your imagination. A study to find the effects of visualisation on remembering daily tasks was conducted by The Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in June 2004. Thirty-one non-diabetic participants thought about, rehearsed and pictured performing home glucose monitoring tests, four times a day for three weeks. Findings proved that study subjects tested themselves 50 per cent more often than the comparative non-visualising group. Take three minutes every day to imagine when, how and where you will take your medicine the next day. There will be far fewer missed doses.

## CARDIAC CRISES

The growth rate of heart disease in the population is flat, but hospital admissions related to the disease are increasing. Five-year survival rates for heart disease increased from 43 per cent to 50 per cent from 1980 to 2000. The doctors from the Mayo Clinic, Minnesota, USA, who conducted the study on the residents of Olmsted County in Minnesota expected to find that heart disease has become more common, but instead found that survivors of heart disease are getting more frequently admitted to hospital because of cardiac complications such as breathlessness. Cardiac-related hospital admissions increased by 155 per cent in the study period. The study concluded that symptoms needed to be treated more effectively on an outpatient basis so that admissions decrease and patients can continue to stay at home instead of undergoing emotionally draining hospital visits.



## HOT POTATO

If your diabetologist or dietician has cordoned off potatoes because of their sugar content, you can indulge in *tava aloo tikkis* again. Indian sugar-free potatoes are here already, according to a branch of the Central Potato Research Institute in Kolkata. Not because of genetically modified biotech hybrids, but simply because these tubers are stored at regulated temperatures causing a steep drop in their sugar content. It was found that potatoes stored at the normal warehouse temperatures of 36° Celsius get infected by bafilomycin, a toxin found in the streptomyces bacteria that pushes up the sugar content in vegetables such as potatoes, turnips, beets and radishes. If potatoes are stored at 50-52° Celsius, the sugar levels drop, making them much easier on diabetics. Special warehouses are being built in West Bengal to supply these potatoes to Tamil Nadu and the eastern states to begin with. Despite the high costs of storage in specially built warehouses, these potatoes will come at a marginally higher Rs 10 per kg.



## DIABE-TEA?

Even if you have your tea or coffee sugar-free you could get a diabetic sugar spike. Scientists at Duke University Medical Centre in North Carolina, USA, have found that the caffeine from a cup of coffee makes the body's cells ignore insulin, pushing up blood sugar—typical of Type 2 diabetes. Avoiding the caffeine cup has a similar effect as taking medication. Fourteen diabetics were given three pills containing 125 mg of caffeine, roughly the same as a cup of coffee, before a standard breakfast. On another day, placebos were given in the same manner. Blood tests revealed 21 per cent less glucose than the previous time and blood insulin concentrations were 48 per cent lower as well.

## “There’s a lot of vitality around me”

Part of the medal-winning Indian hockey team in the 1972 Munich Olympics, today **Dr Vece Paes** motivates the younger generation to be better sportsmen. The 59-year-old, better known as Leander Paes' dad, is a sports medicine consultant at The Asian Cricket Council, which keeps him travelling for over 120 days every year, visiting 16 Asian countries. He's also a consultant at the new Sahara sports training facility at Amby Valley in Maharashtra.

**Exercise:** Dr Paes spends his day knee-deep in sports, motivating national squads often made up of people one-fourth his age. “I used to play cricket till I was about 35, and I still play a few



friendly matches every year. There's a lot of fitness and vitality around me, and that helps me keep a youthful attitude—emotionally and mentally.” He's started a new fitness programme to balance the effects of his travelling lifestyle: his strength-training workout starts at 6 am, followed by an Ayurvedic foot massage to battle a recent injury. He swims for half an hour every evening after an aerobic workout.

**Diet:** “If you saw me right now, you'd say I'm overweight! As we get older, we burn fewer

calories and this travelling and socialising involves more dinners out and thus more calories. So I have recently cut down my intake by half. As a sports consultant, I realise one has an image to maintain.” Breakfast is juice, fruit and toast. Meals are mostly rice, curry, some vegetables and dessert. But he loves dessert. “I really enjoy bread pudding, custard, ice-cream and Bengali sweets.”

**Spirit:** Contentment comes easily to Dr Paes. “As doctors, we're givers rather than takers. Also in sports, you're always part of a team. So it is my basic nature to be happy, to have team spirit.”



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# Uneasy money



Automated Teller Machines, or ATMs, are increasingly replacing human tellers, but can you bank on them? **Aarti Dua** has the answer

**T**here's a joke that's doing the rounds on the Internet: A moron is drawing money from the ATM. Another moron standing in the queue behind him says, "Ha! Ha! Ha! I've seen your password. It's four asterisks (\*\*\*\*). The first moron replies, "Ha! Ha! Ha! You are wrong. It's 1258."

You may well laugh it off but inadvertent or casual disclosure of the PIN or personal

identification number—a password that allows the user to carry out transactions—is one of the main causes of ATM misuse or fraud in India. Unlike the West, where sophisticated ATM frauds like skimming—where a card-reading device is used to capture confidential data on the ATM card to make counterfeit cards—abound, here the incidence of such hi-tech frauds is still relatively low.

## FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

Even then, first-time users of ATMs, especially silvers who are not comfortable with technology, are nervous about using them. Sumita Pandey, a 58-year-old Delhi housewife, says her head was full of questions and doubts when she first went to use the ATM: "What if I pressed the wrong buttons? What if the machine swallowed my card? How will I know what to do then since

there is nobody around to tell me?"

Pandey took her daughter along as a guide. And out of nervousness, for the next few visits, carried a chit of paper with step-by-step instructions on how to withdraw cash. Today, she really appreciates the time the ATM saves her. "Though banks are more polite nowadays, queues can still be very long," she says.

Banks have a technical expression for Pandey's early apprehension. "It's called risk of failure," says Ajay Swaroop, general manager, ATM operations, State Bank of India, "where the user fears if he will get his money, or if he will be able to follow the instructions or if the amount will be correct. But

we have seen that with a bit of handholding in the first couple of transactions, people take to ATMs in a big way rather easily, irrespective of their age."

But Pandey still can't bring herself to use an ATM to deposit cash or cheques. "With a teller it is more final. I know that the money has reached the bank," she says. Her daughter, Smriti, says that her first question about this particular aspect was, "What if the machine swallows my money?"

Again, this is a phenomenon that banks and ATM manufacturers are familiar with. Rajiv Singh, managing director, Diebold Systems Pvt Ltd, the Mumbai-based subsidiary of the Diebold Inc, USA, one of the world's

largest manufacturer of ATMs, says: "The typical fears of first-time users are largely based on perceptions that are unfounded." These include the perceived lack of security or lack of confidence in such transactions. But once you know how an ATM works, it is one of the simplest technologies around. Think of it this way: an ATM's pad has less buttons than a TV remote.

### SMOOTH TRANSACTION

Today, ATMs are the smoothest way of conducting regular banking functions such as cash withdrawal, cash or cheque deposits, balance enquiry, furnishing statements, fund transfers between accounts, and requests for a new cheque book. And they are also coming up at practically every corner. SBI

## WORKING OF AN ATM

All ATMs are linked to the bank's central data centre via a computer. Once the user inserts the card into the slot in the machine and enters the confidential personal identity number or PIN, and if the information is correct, the bank authorises the customer to proceed. Machines may vary in design.

**MONITOR:** Simple instruction and icons appearing on the screen guide the user through various transactions. These are designed so that anybody standing even a foot away from the user is unable to see the information on the screen

**KEYPAD:** A mini typing machine. You type in your PIN and other transaction details here



HARESH PATEL

**DEPOSITOR UNIT:** Accepts cheques and cash from the customer

**CONSUMER PRINTER UNIT:** Gives a print-out of the transaction conducted at the ATM. It is advised to keep this as a record

**CARD READER SLOT:** The user must insert the ATM card into this slot

**DISPENSER UNIT:** Cash comes out from this slot



even set up an ATM in Leh in February 2003—one of the highest altitude locations for the machine. In the past two years, the bank has also set up ATMs in 145 rural areas (towns with a population of less than 50,000); many of these are at factory sites. “People are lapping it up the ATM,” says O P Srivastava, general manager, retail infrastructure group, ICICI. According to Diebold Systems, there are over 13,000 ATMs in India today and they project an increase of 5,000 machines each year. Mobile ATMs too are becoming a common sight in metros. ICICI Bank, for instance, had a mobile ATM at the World Social Forum held in Mumbai earlier this year to cater to the large crowds.

Such proliferation is not surprising. ATMs, which came up in the West in the 1970s, cut down long queues and save banks the cost of hiring and training tellers. And they do all that a human teller does, but faster and with a lower margin for error (*see diagram: Working of an ATM*). An ATM is linked through a computer processor to the bank’s central data centre—where all account information is finally stored. Once the user inserts the ATM card into the slot and enters the PIN, the machine’s card reader processes the information and corroborates it with the bank. If found correct, the customer is authorised to proceed. Transactions conducted are stored in the bank’s data centre. So there is little chance Mrs Pandey’s—or anyone else’s—money will disappear en route from the ATM to the bank.

## Dos and don'ts

- Sign on the signature panel as soon as you receive a new card
- Avoid the obvious when selecting a PIN—name, telephone number, date of birth, vehicle number
- Never write down the PIN number—memorise it. If you enter the wrong number more than three times, the ATM swallows the card anticipating misuse. Then, you will have to notify the bank for a fresh PIN. Banks also ‘hot-list’ stolen or misplaced cards; when such a card is inserted into a machine, it is swallowed
- Always change the PIN as soon as you receive it. Preferably, change it every quarter
- Never disclose your PIN to anyone, including the bank
- Store the ATM-cum-debit card carefully so that the magnetic stripe does not get damaged
- Be alert. If you find signs of any external fittings or loose wiring, report to the bank and use another ATM
- If the machine is poorly lit or is in a hidden area, use another ATM
- Have your card ready—avoid having to go through your purse or bag to find it
- Make sure that anyone waiting to use the ATM after you cannot see the PIN or the transaction amount you are entering
- Don't count your cash at the ATM—put your cash, card and receipt away immediately
- If you are using an indoor ATM that requires your card to open the door, avoid letting any stranger come in with you
- If you find a person loitering suspiciously at the ATM, use another one and inform the security guard
- After completing an ATM or debit card transaction, remember to take your card back. If possible, do not let the card out of your sight
- Do not leave your receipt behind at the ATM. Keep copies of your receipts and compare them with your monthly statement
- If your card is stuck inside an ATM, be suspicious of anyone offering help. Immediately report the incident to the bank

## ATM FRAUDS

But what about the ATM frauds one keeps reading about?

According to Swaroop of State Bank of India, the incidence of fraud is less than 0.1 per cent of its ATM transactions. Around 1.30 crore transactions are done through the bank's 4,100 ATMs every month. Moreover, of the reported incidents, he estimates that over 70 per cent are related to negligence with the PIN. Says Srivastava of ICICI, which has 1,900 ATMs in India with almost 1.6 crore transactions a month, "The number of frauds is not even one-twentieth of the frauds internationally. Even the word 'fraud' is wrong because generally in India, it is a relative



BAJIRAO PAWAR

## In India people share their PIN liberally with their family. This is negligence, not fraud

who has used the card without the knowledge of the holder. Here, people share their PIN with their family or write the PIN at the back of the card. This is negligence, not fraud." Since PIN is the responsibility of the cardholders, the liability also rests on the cardholders.

The other kind of fraud common in India is people lurking around the ATM, offering to help the customers. "These are called the 'good Samaritan' frauds where the fraudster will take advantage of a customer's lack of comfort," says Srivastava. Or there are cases of assault on the machine or the person who is withdrawing the cash. In such instances, too, the liability is on the customer though banks place security guards to minimise the risk.

There are very rare instances when the liability is on the bank. If the cardholder has immediately informed the bank in case of theft or loss of card and any fraud occurs after this, there is no liability.

Since many ATM cards double up as a debit card, users must also guard against fraud at the point of sale or online transactions. In the case of fraud at a merchant—an unscrupulous merchant may swipe the card more than once—the bank will conduct an investigation, which can be cumbersome, and the charge will only be reversed if the fraud is proven.

Most card users, points out Singh from Diebold, also make simple mistakes that facilitate

fraud. For instance, customers may leave the ATM card at the ATM premise or ask strangers for help to complete transactions, allow the caretaker to enter the premises and 'shoulder-surf'—where a person hangs behind the card user and sees the PIN being typed out—or even ask the caretaker how to enter the PIN, thereby disclosing it to him.

"Organised frauds on ATMs in India have been minimal though our assessment is that they may increase in future," says Swaroop. He believes that banks need to share data on fraud as soon as it occurs, but this is not happening at the moment since the incidence of such frauds is very low.

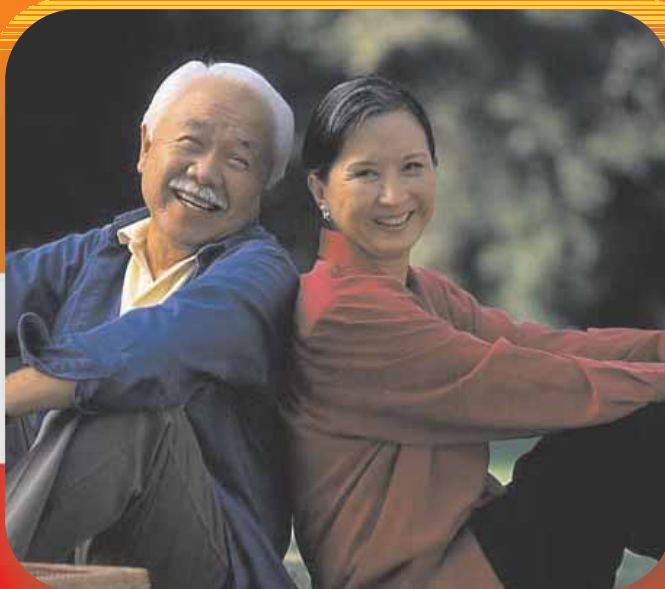
In terms of risk, then, using an ATM is probably safer than crossing the road. Just be informed before going forward. ■

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# Let's chat about email

The Purohits had promised to write letters to their children every day. Now,



FARZANA COOPER

thanks to the Internet, they can do that, and also talk online, says **Sachin Kalbag**

It was only a matter of time before the Purohits, getting computer savvy by the day, were talking of sending email to their son and daughter in the US. The couple had bought an Internet account that would connect them to the World Wide Web using a phone line. They knew that even though the phone line looked relatively thin, it could carry a lot of data. Good, because their letters were certainly not going to be small!

Once the connection was established, the Purohits asked me how to use the Internet. It was easy, I told them. Think of a bookstore.

"What do you do when you first enter a bookstore?"

"We browse the books."

"Good. Now think of the bookstore as the Internet. To find out all there is on the Internet, you need to browse. And for that, you will need a piece of software called the Browser. Don't worry, it's already installed on your machine."

The Purohits heaved a sigh of relief.

"The most common browser used is called Internet Explorer, made by the same company

your daughter works for, Microsoft." That made them happy. "Once you open the browser, you have to type what is called the Website Address or a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). But don't worry about these complicated names. All you need to remember is the website address."

Mr Purohit, as always, did not waste any time coming to the point. "But how do I send an email?"

That's easy, I told them. The company from whom they bought their Internet account had already given them a free

email ID to begin with, so they did not really have to create a new one on the Internet. But yes, there are other free options, thousands of them. The most widely used mail sites are Hotmail and Yahoo. "We want to create a Yahoo account," Mr Purohit said. "Shammi Kapoor's *Yahoo* was our favourite song in college," Mrs Purohit added a tad shyly. "That's great," I replied. "You will be able to send and store so many more mails. You get 100 Megabytes of space. Hotmail gives you 2 megabytes, while Rediff, an Indian site, gives you 1 Gigabyte of space."

"What are these megabytes and gigabytes?"

Mr Purohit and his questions! But I loved it. Here was a man after my own heart.

"Think of an email account like a house. Every house has a fixed boundary, and if you want to expand your house, you need to pay more money, or shift to a bigger house. Similarly, email accounts have megabytes (MB) and gigabytes as space given. Every email you receive occupies space in your account. The moment you exceed that limit, the email account stops receiving more mails. You then have to throw away—or delete—your old emails."

Mr Purohit kept at his questions. "But how do I create an email ID in the first place?"

"It's easy. You can use your Internet account as your ID if you go to the Web site of the company

you bought your account from. Even your password remains the same. But if you want to use the Yahoo ID, you will need to go to *yahoo.com*, and fill up a form on that site that will allow you to create an email ID. It's the same if you choose Hotmail (*hotmail.com*) or Rediff (*rediffmail.com*). Choose your name and password, and you'll have an email ID. Then, you can compose, receive and delete mails."

It took Mr Purohit not more than 15 minutes to create the email ID. He was on. It took him another two hours to type in his email to his son! It wasn't the best way to send an email, though. He could have written the letter on the computer

can add your son in your list of friends, and begin chatting. Once again, the most popular messengers are from Yahoo and Hotmail."

Mr Purohit did not look convinced. "But what if others want to talk to me too. What if they keep interrupting my conversation with my son or daughter?"

"Nobody will be able to talk to you unless you let them," I assured him. "Anybody will have to take your permission first. A chat messenger allows you to talk to your son or daughter indefinitely. You just need to type a little quicker!"

Think of an email account as a house, with a fixed boundary. If you want to expand, you pay or move



without being connected to the Internet, and then just copied and pasted it to the Web page he was using to compose the letter. Be that as it may, it was a learning experience.

Three hours later, he called me over again. His son had replied, and asked him for an online chat. Mr Purohit was worried again. "How do I do that?"

Once again, I had to calm him down. "You can save a software called Messenger on your computer from the Internet; it's called downloading. Then, you

It took him another 45 minutes to get used to the Yahoo messenger he had downloaded from the Internet. He and his wife were soon talking to their son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. "Tomorrow, it is my daughter's turn to be harassed by us," Mrs Purohit chuckled.

But Mr Purohit was nervous again. "I hope she won't be upset that we use the Yahoo messenger, and not the Microsoft one."

The Purohits, I tell you! ■

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

# Fast-track justice

Justice S M Daud (retd) answers your questions on speedy resolution of court cases

## What is fast-track justice?

As the expression suggests, fast-track justice is justice made available as speedily as possible. Aimed at bolstering public confidence in law, besides expediting justice, it calls for a fair hearing at a reasonable expense. A 1999 ruling by the Supreme Court laid down the guidelines for speedy disposal of cases involving senior citizens. Also, Article 226 and Article 41 of the constitution say special care has to be bestowed upon senior citizens.

## What did the 1999 ruling cover?

The ruling came up to facilitate pending criminal cases that involved people in custody for years. Though there are also directives for clearing old civil cases, they are not observed. The High Courts are to be blamed for this. Every High Court should issue individual directions, giving priority to all cases pertaining to senior citizens. The ruling also directs that fast-track courts be set up where the workload is more than what can be ordinarily handled—it has worked to a certain extent in Maharashtra. It also called for re-employing competent retired judges.

## How does the system work?

In each state, subordinate courts should report reasons for delay in clearing cases that are pending; for six months in case



of criminal matters and two years for civil matters. The reasons should be scrutinised by the High Court, which in turn should guide subordinate courts to carry out speedy disposal.

## How can senior citizens avail the facility?

If you are above 55, you can apply in the form of a letter to the titular head of the particular judiciary. It doesn't cost anything. If a case has been pending in the High Court, the chief justice's attention can be

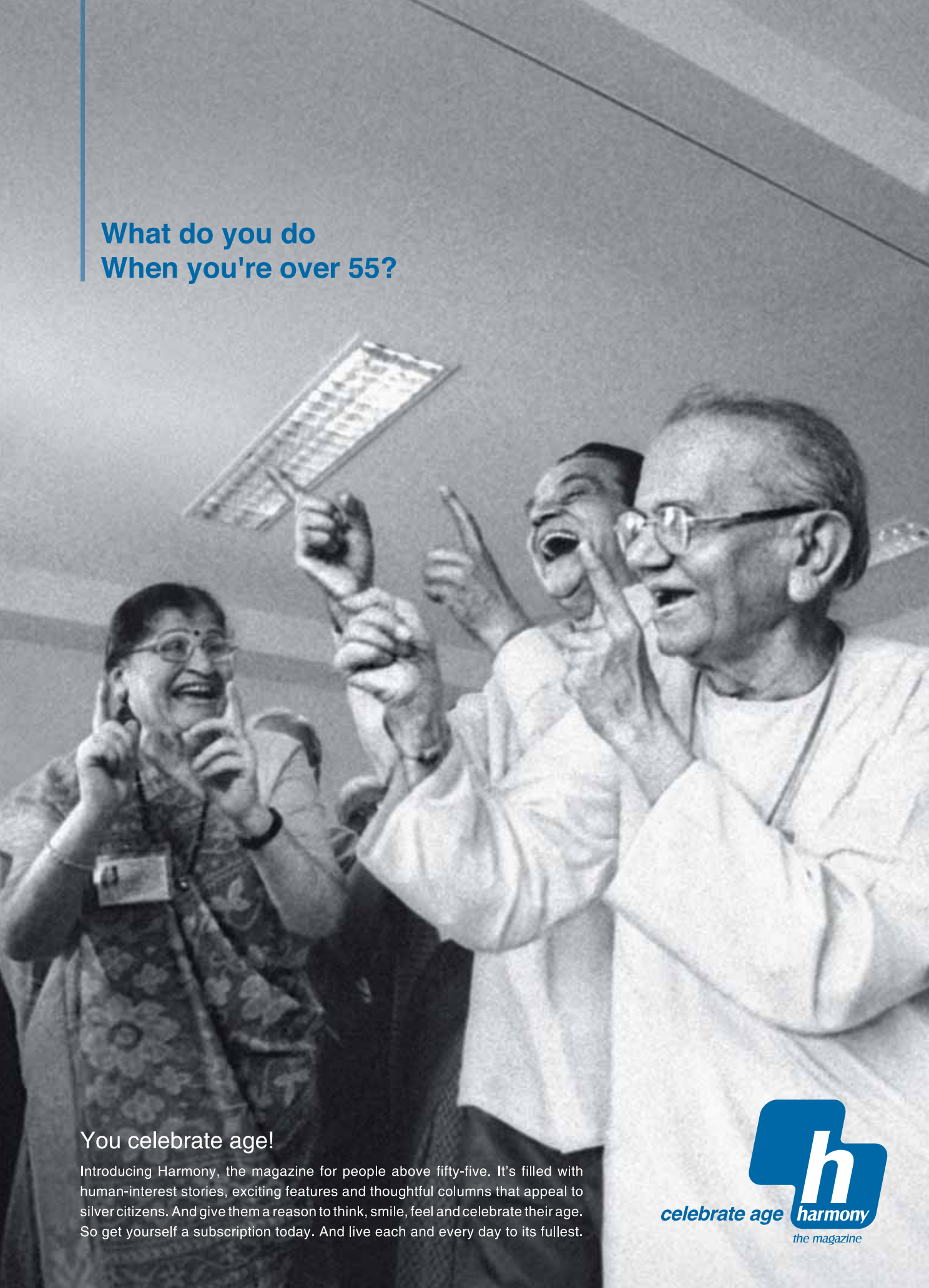
drawn to it. If it has been pending in a district court, the High Court can be moved. Administrative redressal can be sought under Article 235 (power of superintendence over all courts by the High Court). If that fails to elicit a response, one can file a petition and move the High Court judicially under Article 226 (power of High Courts to issue certain writs) and Article 227 (supplementary to article 226). Alternatively, public-spirited citizens can take up the cause as public-interest litigation.

## What are the expenses like?

Less expense is incurred when the courts are moved administratively. No court fee is required and no formalities need to be followed. It only requires a letter to be sent to the chief justice and judges of the High Court through the registrar general. One doesn't even need a lawyer; they only complicate matters. Senior citizens can also approach the judge directly and request him to take up their cases considering their age or physical limitations. In the case of judicial redressal, one has to follow the rules prescribed. Pay the required court fees, type the petition, have copies made, and appoint a lawyer. It involves expenditure of time and money. ■

*Justice S M Daud (Retd), MA, LLB, is Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India*





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# Group therapy

From yoga to spiritual discourses and picnics, silvers can't get enough of the activities at the Harmony Interactive Centre, writes

**Nilanjana Sengupta**

**S**milng faces and a twitter of laughter from the back acknowledge the light joke just shared by Brahmacharya Satvik Chaitanya of the Chinmaya Mission, Mumbai. Then he invites listeners to reveal their goals in life, and at first no hands go up. "Come on, this has to be a discussion between you and me," he implores. The 40-member audience doesn't need to be told twice; most of those present put forward their thoughts. The aim of the session, explains Satvik Chaitanya, is to help silver citizens enrich their lives, sort out conflicts, handle loneliness and fear and show them how to live an inspired life. He conducts the session in Hindi aided by a colourful power point presentation in English.

After this inaugural talk at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, last month, the audience can't wait for the next round of discourses in



Photos: HIREN MEHTA

**Members of the centre enjoy Brahmacharya Satvik Chaitanya's session**

September. "We need to hear these kind of thoughts every month," says 57-year-old Uma Patel. "I am looking forward to the next round." The Chinmaya Mission is slated to conduct sessions at the centre for a week every month till November. Satvik Chaitanya says: "As we progress ahead, I intend to combine meditation sittings with lectures, so that there is an amalgamation of practice and theory."

The one-and-a-half hour interactive discussion is one of the activities that commenced in August at the centre, which now has 232 members. The laughter club, first postponed due to inclement weather, also has a fair number of eager members waiting for it. Conducted by Kishore Kuvavala, president,

Laughter Club of Priyadarshini Park, Mumbai, it will take off later this month. "Laughter therapy is indeed the best medicine," declares Kuvavala, whose experience says life can change for the better even at 70. He has the perfect package ready for the centre's members. "It is a blend of laughter and exercise that enables physical and emotional well being," says the 57-year-old. "It relieves stress and generates positivity."

Prarthna Samaj resident Rohini Damani, 58, and her friends are raring to go. "We want to learn and then practice what is taught," says Damani. "I have heard that after joining a laughter club, dejected people also learn to look at life encouragingly." Unlike most members who are here



Yoga classes are held thrice a week

everyday, Damani comes to the centre only four times a week. The catering business she runs with the help of her two daughters-in-law keeps her on her toes.

Centre members also attended an informative talk by Criti Care Hospital cardiologist Dr Deepak Namjoshi on August 19 that dwelt on the process of ageing and cardiac problems. However, one of the most eagerly awaited activities is the computer class. "I expect to learn a lot from such a class," says 61-year-old Padmakar Moreshwar Achrekar. "Right now, I only play games on the computer at home." Achrekar hopes to share his learning with his electronic engineer son at home.

While the logistics for the computer class are being worked out, the yoga classes have proved to be a big hit. Held thrice a week by trained instructors from Kaivalyadham Institute for Yoga, Marine Drive, about 40 women and 25 men attend in separate batches. The men have even begun practicing on their own at the centre on the three days that the instructor does not take classes.

The centre's members have already enjoyed one outdoor activity when they went for a picnic to Mahim Nature Park in July. The wish list of members is increasing by the day. "The festival season is drawing near," says 64-year-old Rekha Pratap Shah eagerly. "It would be nice to have some cooking classes on sweets or sugar-free desserts, and classes on *rangoli* making." Others would like to learn creative skills like painting and flower making.

The requests are simple; what really counts is the opportunity to spend more time together with their friends.

"I had gone to my daughter's house in Nerul for four days to be with my granddaughter during her exams," smiles 66-year-old Suhasini Sawant as she takes her turn at the carom board. "I missed the centre, my friends and the staff so much, I told my daughter, 'I want to go back soon'." And here she is.

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

## THIS MONTH AT THE HARMONY CENTRE

### SPIRITUAL SERMON

September 20-24; 4 pm to 5.30 pm. The second round of discourses by Brahmacharya Satvik Chaitanya from the Chinmaya Mission will focus on meditation. The topics for the week are power of prayer, power of *japa*, power of meditation, *Gayatri Mantra* and *Mrityunjaya Mantra*

### LEGAL TALK

September second week. Representatives from Legalpundits will talk on legal matters. Contact the centre for details.

### FITNESS

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays; 10.30 am to 11.30 pm (men); 3 pm to 4 pm (women). Yoga classes conducted by instructors from Kaivalyadham Centre, Marine Drive

### MUSIC

Thursdays. *Bhajans* from 4 pm to 5 pm; *Marathi Sugam Sangeet* from 5 pm to 6 pm

### COMMON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

September 25

### MOVIE

September 28; 3 pm. *Padosan*

### HEALTH TALK

September 30; 3 pm. Dr Anil Boraskar, diabetes specialist, Raheja Hospital

*All programmes are subject to last minute changes*

# Make peace with tomorrow



Dr Anjali Chhabria on how to bridge the generational divide with emotional strength and tact

**Q. I am a 67-year-old man and I live alone. My wife died about five years ago and both my sons live away from home; my elder son is married. Just recently, I discovered that my younger son has been a drug addict for almost two to three years. I am devastated and angry, but I feel guilty too. Maybe this happened because I didn't spend enough time with my children. Now, I don't know what to do.**

**A.** It's tough to deal with something like this alone. However, you shouldn't blame yourself. Your other son is doing well. Various factors play a role as far as addiction is concerned. It is natural to have mixed feelings, but you need to help your son. Take him to a professional and find out what kind of intervention he needs. If he is alone, go live with him for a while. You can make up for lost time, and help him tide over this crisis. This is the time for action, not reaction.

**Q. I am a 70-year-old woman. My son and daughter-in-law are both doing very well professionally. Thus, I have to manage most of the household responsibilities and take care of the children. I also have a constant back problem and have**

**been feeling very tired lately. Should I tell them how I feel?**

**A.** You need to take care of your health. Talk to your son and daughter-in-law; tell them that you need them to share the load. Start a hobby or activity that gives you time off from the daily household routine. However, don't stop your daily chores altogether; if you have nothing to do, you may soon get bored. You need to keep a balance of both. Look at the positive side: they need you much more than you need them!

**Q. I am a 55-year-old woman. My husband died a year ago and my divorced daughter lives with me. My son lives separately with his girlfriend. Recently, he has asked me to invest money in his business; he claims that he will give me interest on it. He has taken money from me earlier, and not returned it. He insists that I should help him, just as I am helping his sister.**

**A.** It is funny how children remember their rights, but forget their duties. Considering your past experience with your son, it would be unwise to invest in his

business. You need to ensure your own financial security. However, if you still feel you want to help him out, find out all you can about the project and seek the advice of a financial expert before going ahead.

**Q. I am a 65-year-old man and still work in the family business. My elder brother used to take the major decisions and I never chose to become a partner. Now, he has retired and his son works with me. But I am not familiar with the new systems he has initiated. If something goes wrong, he screams and insults me. I have put in years of work in the company and don't want to quit. Is there any way out?**

**A.** Change is always hard. Also, age slows you down making things worse. Tell your nephew politely that his behaviour upsets you. Ask him if you could do something simpler or supervisory. If required, speak to your brother. Try and learn the new systems too. It's proven that any new activity learnt after the age of 60 prevents memory loss setting in—turn the situation to your advantage. ■

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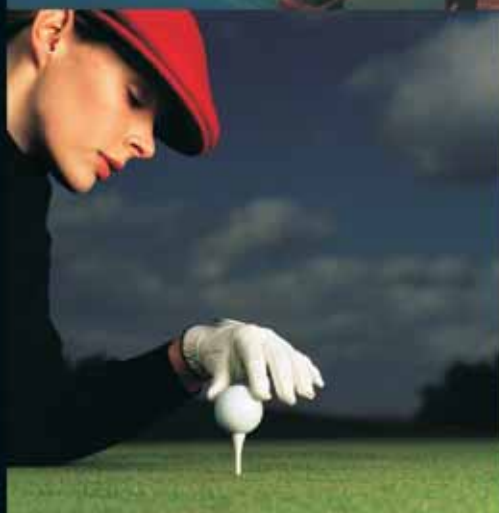
*Dr Anjali Chhabria is a Mumbai-based consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist. For advice, mail us or email at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) or fax at (022) 22852217*



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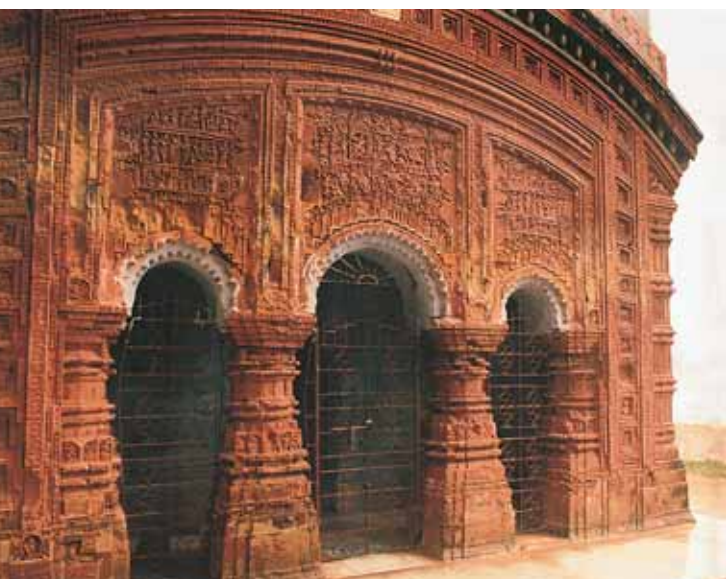
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# Abode of peace

Photos: SHILBHADRA DATTA





A throwback to gentler times and a haven for the arts,  
Santiniketan is a popular holiday with silver citizens,  
discovers **Anjana Basu**

**S**ilence. The sun sets like a great orange globe behind the palm trees at the edge of the paddy fields. The light glints off the little mirror squares of the water. Bees spin dizzy circles over the bushes that fringe the edge of the road. One of them drones louder and louder into a high whine, until I realise that it is a truck approaching from Panagarh. Strange, I think, as the truck flashes past, even the trucks sound like bees.

This is a road journey to Santiniketan in the rain, not the usual way to go, which is by train. Two hundred and thirty-one kilometres of truck road from Kolkata in various stages of development that takes four hours to navigate, oddly enough roughly the same time that the Santiniketan Express. Of course, depending on the truck lines and the weigh bridges along the way, the four hours can stretch to five.

Truck after truck whizzes by, and then stops whizzing on a road with no space to overtake. We stand in queue and wait endlessly, and our railway beating time slows to a crawl.

**Opposite page, clockwise from top, Shurul Raja's palace in Sriniketan; cooperative crafts society Amar Kutir; Shurul Raja's terracotta Shiv Mandir; mural on the exterior wall of Kala Bhavan**

When we finally drive into Santiniketan, it is 6.45 in the evening and the narrow lanes are shrouded in darkness. Except that people are busily walking about despite the lack of light. An elderly gentleman in pristine white walks by with a twist of jasmine round his wrist and his shopping bag in the other hand. "Very Santiniketan," murmurs Shilbhadra, the photographer with me.

Flowers and nature have been a part of the Santiniketan lifestyle ever since Rabindranath Tagore found inspiration in its wide horizons. The university town grew out of the red earth and green fields founded on a dream of lyricism. 'Santiniketani style' is a byword in West Bengal. The curve of a petal, the contrasting earth tones of batik, the riot of gaiety and colour that splashes Holi on the Viswa Bharati campus. A cycle rickshaw-*wallah* whiles away his passenger-less moments playing the flute or singing a *baul* song as he wheels past.

Early in the morning, the small gardens are filled with retired people, admiring the dewdrop beauty of lotus flowers. Perhaps because Tagore's father Maharishi Devendranath Tagore christened it Santiniketan, or 'Abode of Peace', many seniors have chosen to make it their home.



## GETTING THERE

**RAIL:** The nearest railhead is Bolpur, 2 km away. Trains connecting Bolpur with Howrah/Sealdah (Kolkata) are Howrah-Bolpur Santiniketan Exp, Sealdah-Mughalsarai Exp, Howrah-Jamalpur Exp, Kanchenjunga Exp, Vishwabharati Fast Pgr., Santiniketan Exp. Danapur Fast Pgr. and Tarapith Passenger

**ROAD:** Good motorable roads connect Santiniketan with Kolkata 213 km, Durgapur 56 km, Sarnath 197 km

**WHEN TO GO:** Santiniketan can be visited in spring, autumn and winter. July and August see heavy rainfall. Santiniketan's Dol Jatra, or Holi, is very atmospheric. The entire campus is decorated with *alpana* and people sing Holi songs based on Rabindrasangeet, throwing dry colours. The Poush Mela (December) is also famous, as is the Basanta Utsab (March). Other festivals include Magh Utsab (February), Varsha Mangal (July-August), and Sharodutsab (Oct-Nov). The place is ideal for a four-day getaway



## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Santiniketan is a University town and a centre of learning, art and culture. The places of interest are mainly on campus

**CHINA BHAVAN:** The Chinese Faculty

**CHHATIMTALA:** Maharishi Devendranath Tagore, Rabindranath's father, used to meditate here. Prayers are held usually at convocation time

**KALA BHAVAN:** The College of Fine Arts & Crafts has a museum exhibiting works by artists like Ramkinkar and Nandalal Bose. Following the theft of Tagore's Nobel Prize medal, the museum is currently closed to the public

**PATHA BHAVAN:** A secondary school, and as an example of the traditional Brahmacharya ashram

**PRAYER HALL:** Founded by the poet's father in 1863. Prayers are held on Wednesdays

**BICHITRA:** Also called Rabindra Bhavan, a research centre and

museum where the poet's belongings, paintings and works are exhibited

**SANGEET BHAVAN:** College of dance and music, replete with works on the arts and humanities. The Bichitra (or Rabindra Bhavan) has been designed by the poet's son Rathindranath Tagore

**UTTARAYAN COMPLEX:** The poet lived and worked in the northern complex consisting of several buildings such as Udayana, Konarka, Shyamali, Punascha and Udichi

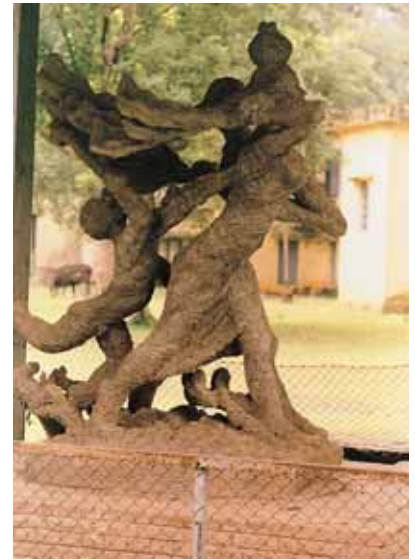


Interior designer Bibi Ray, in her early 70s, decided to retire to Santiniketan from Kolkata last December. "It's the peace," she says, "and the fact that my mother had a house there that made up my mind. In any case, you get most of the facilities that you do in Kolkata. Even medical facilities are improving." Apart from residents, Santiniketan's calm also attracts elders looking for a weekend getaway like a magnet. No, in this atmosphere a magnet is too energetic, perhaps the way a flower draws a bee by doing nothing at all by being there.

Santiniketan does nothing, but is. It lies there waiting to be admired and enjoyed. In the rains it offers the soft shadows of grey and black thunderclouds thrown against many splendoured shades of green. Life moves at the pace of a cycle rickshaw through the twisting green lanes.

At 6.30 am the next day, a middle-aged man with a white shirt and white *dhoti* carrying an





umbrella makes his way through the silver eucalyptus trees, a scene out of a Rabindranath novel, or a Satyajit Ray film. We follow him until he vanishes beyond the strange stones on brick plinths that dot the uneven landscape. Each stone is labelled with a plaque that says simply 'bird' owing to some strange whim of the state government. The *khowai*, as they call the undulating red earth, dips and pits and suddenly plummets down to the brown Kopai River swollen by the rains.



Bonpukur, the *adivasi* village, lies behind the surrealistic trees. We walk through the beehive huts, some with thatched roofs and some with corrugated tin ones. Murals of plants and lions cover the walls. Almost as an extension of the village lies Bonpukur artists' colony. Jogen Chowdhury, famous artist and sculptor, has his studio there and so do many others, all of whom have built *adivasi*-style houses, though in their case, the mud walls are lightly covered with concrete.

Tagore started the trend with his own series of houses on the Viswa Bharati campus, where he married *adivasi* architecture with Indonesian to create a uniquely different kind of building, low over the ground, with many levels and windows to let in the leaves and the birdsong.

The campus, which lies in the heart of town, is a lovely place to walk through though no distinct boundary separates the two. This has led to some protests

**Clockwise from top left, a guest house near Bonpukur; leather craftspeople at work in Amar Kutir, a sculpture by Ramkinkar in Kala Bhavan; a tree-lined avenue on the Viswa Bharati campus**

about encroachments on the university area. You'll find students and visitors walking leisurely through the rooms and out through the campus. Among the students is one in a red and black Punjabi suit with the elaborate *kantha* stitch that is the trademark of the place.



## NEAR SANTINIKETAN

**KANKALITALA** (9 km): One of the 21 sacred *satipithas* (centres of pilgrimage), on the banks of the river Kopai

**NONOOR** (18 km): Birth place of Chandidas, famous for his Vaishnava *padavalis*, a form of folk theatre

There is a temple dedicated to Devi Basuli at **BAKRESHWAR** (58 km)

**TARAPITH** (88 km): The Tara Devi temple is a major attraction

**LAVPUR-FULLARA** (30 km): Another *satipitha*

**SAINTHA-NANDESAWARI** (44 km): This is also a *satipitha*

**NALHATI** (100 km): A *satipitha*, and the tomb of Ana Pir Sahib, a Muslim saint

**MASSANJORE** (75 km): Located in Dumka, Bihar, this is the site of a dam on river Mayurakshi amidst hilly landscape



Under every grove of trees is an open classroom or a bound concrete dais for dance performances. Chhatimtala, a place shaded by spreading leaves, is where important speeches are made and where a verse salutes the one God who is everywhere. Tagore's study with its dark mahogany furniture and yellow upholstery is there to be seen on the campus, as are black-and-white photographs charting the growth of Santiniketan. First there was an ashram, then a university

and finally, around the university, the small town gradually evolved. Nothing is too far in Santiniketan. It can either be walked or cycle-rickshawed to.

Rabindranath's father leased land from the Raja of Sirul and built an ashram in 1863, which he called Santiniketan. His son grew up there, and ran away from school to write his poetry at the age of 12. Sirul village, 2 km from Santiniketan, still houses the Raja's descendants and Durga Puja is held in the courtyard temple of the big house, while a terracotta Shiv *mandir* is in everyday use.

Not far from Sirul is Sriniketan where Amar Kutir, a cooperative crafts society sells batik, *kantha* and *dokra* pieces. A large statue of Tagore, who believed in encouraging local handicrafts,

**Clockwise from top, the Kanch Mandir; a mural on the wall of Kala Bhavan; the exterior of Sangeet Bhavan**







## WHERE TO STAY

### **Santiniketan Tourist Lodge:**

Rs 300 to Rs 1,150 per night

### **Chutti Holiday Resort:**

Rs 700 to Rs 1,200

### **Hotel Camellia:**

Rs 950 to Rs 2,500

**Bolpur Lodge:** Rs 150 to Rs 300

### **Marks & Meadows:**

Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000

**Ranga Mati:** Rs 310 to Rs 750

(All rates are for one night)

For contact details, see page 95

dominates the place, garlanded with marigolds on his birthday and the day of his death. Tagore's death anniversary falls on the 22nd of Sravan each year—Baishey Sravan. That day, a tree is planted in his memory at both Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

Afternoon, time for a leisurely stroll to a friend's house for lunch, followed by a long siesta to be woken up by a cup of tea. Then, perhaps, a cycle-rickshaw ride to the deer park on the edge of town, to see whether the evening sun might tempt any of the deer into view. Or an evening show at the new Gitanjali film complex, where you can catch a Hindi blockbuster or a Bangla tearjerker. To be followed by dinner at another friend's house over a heated *adda* about Nandalal Bose's headmastership or the latest 'mer-buffalo' fountain outside Kala Bhavan, the art college, where three buffaloes with fishtails ring the water spout.

If you don't know anyone in Santiniketan, you can walk down the lanes early in the morning and see who you can spy relaxing in the gardens of the shady bungalows on either side. People walk or cycle in, say hello, share a cup of tea and a biscuit, and move on again. The Albola Club, a gathering of senior citizens, in fact makes it a point to meet once a week in a different home to hold an *adda* on artistic or relevant subjects. On Wednesday at 6.30 in the morning, people trail to the Kanch Mandir, a white filigree and coloured glass building in the campus that houses Brahmo Samaj prayer sessions.

The peace of the original ashram still lingers about the place, tinged with the poetry and art that Rabindranath brought to it. There are still people there who remember him from the 1940s. There are Tagore relatives who still have their homes there. Amartya Sen's ailing mother lives there,

down the road from the Santiniketan Nursery. One has an idyllic vision of Santiniketan drawing rooms, decorated with watercolours by the likes of Ramkinkar or musical instruments, the *ektara*, *dotara*, or the *veena*. Ladies in their mellow twilight years practice gentle arts like crafting jewellery from flowers, sitting in the garden and painting, or stitching. Their husbands gently strum the instruments in the drawing rooms.

Winter brings musicians and dancers in droves to perform under the trees and in the gardens, or filmmakers who come to shoot the *adivasis* in the forest. Ministers come to plant trees in honour of Rabindranath or inaugurate a new complex. People who have their weekend homes come down to hold a *jalsa* or a house party. All these are transient. What remains is the music of the birds, the rustle of the wind in the leaves, and the plaintive sound of a flute heard at sunset. 🌅

**FICTION: THE HUNGRY TIDE**

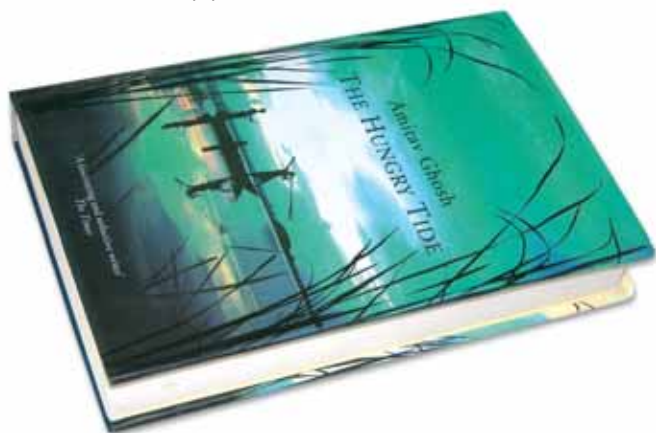
by Amitav Ghosh; Ravi Dayal; Rs 350; 400 pages

In this tale set in the archipelago of the Sunderbans, poetic description melds with page-turning narrative. Kanai is the Delhi businessman and translator. Piyali, an Indian cetologist (a zoologist studying aquatic mammals) raised in Seattle, comes to explore the muddy mangrove swamps for a species of dolphin. Fokir, the local fisherman, is her guide through the tide country. Amitav Ghosh tells their complex, tangled story in simple words, using circumstance to add richness and detail. The presence of Scotsman Daniel Hamilton, who set up a dream-perfect community of fishermen in the 1800s, and Kanai's uncle Nirmal who escaped it all to further Hamilton's lifework of building a Utopian settlement in the destitution of the tide country, pervades the pages.

Ghosh's opus is sprinkled generously with Rilke's words. Believable love stories soften the landscape. Yet, speaking during a book tour at Oxford Bookstore in Mumbai last month, Ghosh admitted that this was one of his most demanding efforts. The writer lived in the unforgiving Sunderbans, infested with crocodiles and tigers to research this book "which is essentially about the relationship between human beings and the natural world".

A strong sense of belief and argument pervades the novel, picking threads from family legacy, the region's history, scientific knowledge, spirituality and a crusade for the people of the Sunderbans. The richly detailed characters, their thoughts and identities, are the medium of the tale. By the last pages, you have travelled their adventures and learned something from each of them.

—Roshni Bajaj

**BRIEFLY**

**A**ndrew Eames sets out to travel from London to Baghdad by train, following the tracks of the old Orient Express, in **THE 8.55 TO BAGHDAD** (Bantam; Rs 850; 401 pages). Interwoven through his journey is an identical one made by Agatha Christie in 1928, en route to the deserts of Syria and Iraq and a meeting with her future husband, archaeologist Max Mallowan. Passing through Croatia, Serbia and Syria on the way to Iraq, Eames arrives at the border just before the invasion by the coalition. Standing where Christie and Mallowan first met at the ancient ruins of Ur, he can hear the air-raid sirens. The book is a revelation about Christie's colourful life, the true character of the Middle East and its people, and the brutal conclusions of modern history.

**L**ove and hate collide in **Amitava Kumar's HUSBAND OF A FANATIC** (Penguin; Rs 295; 328 pages). In the summer of 1999, during the Kargil War, Kumar married a Pakistani Muslim. Startled at the reaction this provoked, he set out to examine the relationship between India and Pakistan, and Hindus and Muslims within India,



traversing Ahmedabad, Patna, Wagah, Karachi, Kashmir, Bhagalpur and even Johannesburg, to probe deeper into “the idea of the enemy”. This is no polemic, just tragedy at its most ordinary repeating itself page after page, a skein of hatred. From Kumar’s own ‘conversion’ to Islam to the rape victims at the Shah-e-Alam relief camp in Gujarat, the fallout of faith takes many forms. This book shoves every one of them into your face.

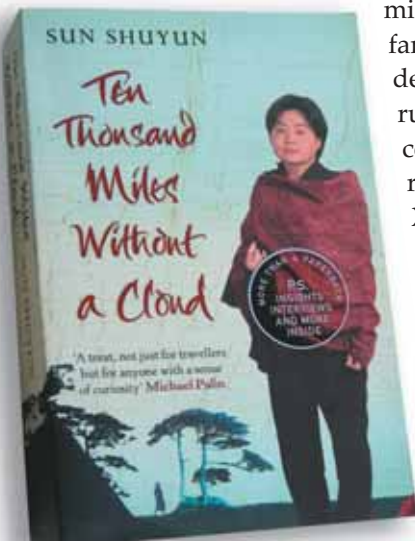
**T**wo plays by Girish Karnad, **THE DREAMS OF TIPU SULTAN** and **BALI: THE SACRIFICE**

(Oxford University Press; Rs 195; 125 pages) now come to you in a single volume. Karnad’s Tipu is a complex character, a fierce warrior yet ardent dreamer, and the play blurs the lines of reality and fantasy, telling the tale of this visionary’s inner and outer worlds. In *Bali*, drawn from an ancient Jain myth, a Jain king is forced to sacrifice a cockerel in order to avert the consequences of his queen’s infidelity with an elephant keeper. Non-violence being his creed, he substitutes a bird made of dough, with unexpected results. Both plays will have you reading them in one sitting, and thinking about them for weeks. A double whammy.

**S**piritual search, travelogue, biography and Chinese political history all merge seamlessly in Sun Shuyun’s **TEN THOUSAND MILES WITHOUT A CLOUD** (Harper Perennial; Rs 439; 464 pages). The author retraces the steps of Chinese monk Xuanzang—better known in India as Hiuen Tsang—who travelled to India in search of true

Buddhism. Sun’s mission: to restore his fame, eradicated by decades of Communist rule in China. In 8th century AD, the roundtrip led Xuanzang across 118 kingdoms and took him 18 years. It took Sun just one, and the evocative writing compels you to live every minute of it.

—Books courtesy  
Oxford Bookstore



**NON-FICTION: CHRONICLE OF AN IMPOSSIBLE ELECTION**

by James Michael Lyngdoh; Viking; Rs 350; 254 pages

**T**o some, James Michael Lyngdoh was a name to be drawn out full in front of screaming crowds—of “suspect” religion and therefore, of suspect national fibre—a man who would deny Gujarat its future. To others, he tried to right Gujarat’s wrong, fearlessly cutting political toadies at the knees, ensuring many riot-hit were traced for inclusion in electoral rolls. The chief election commissioner, wearing a bush shirt and a frown, was a mix of democracy’s poster-boy and the insufferable *babu* who didn’t know his place.

By the Jammu & Kashmir elections in late 2002, JML had come to signify ‘Justice Means Lyngdoh’, architect of the most widely lauded electoral exercise in the recent memory of that fractured state. Even the RSS was converted into praising him as a “patriot” for his statement telling the world the “white man” was not required to observe elections.

Now in low-key retirement in Hyderabad, with wife, dogs and modest house, Lyngdoh has written a mini-bible of democratic due process, an emphatically told tale of elections riding on charged politics. There is much focus on J&K, a display of the will to ballot even at the risk of a bullet. But he skirts an issue his detractors recount: if volatile J&K was decreed safe for elections, how could he pronounce Gujarat unfit, and therefore, delay elections there? The simple truth is, Lyngdoh did what he thought was right. That’s rare. And that makes this self-assured book worthwhile. ■

—Sudeep Chakravarti



# New Words

Indian writers in full bloom

**B**angalored. Even before the term was coined to describe outsourcing, Arjun Mehta, a character from **Hari Kunzru's TRANSMISSION** lived it in Silicon Valley. Plotted around Mehta, Bollywood siren Leela Zahir, English entrepreneur Guy Swift, and a computer virus, this racy book is about star-daughters, American daydreams and cyber terrorism. Half-Indian Kunzru thrives on his notion of identity, and the cultural legacy of Britain, where he has spent most of his days. The central character in his books is usually a cipher, an empty space trying to fill himself up with what's around him; so is Mehta, whose fantasies about life in the US are shaken after he gets a job there. Present-day confusions and maladies feed Kunzru's pen. **Penguin; Rs 440; 281 pages**

Adaptation, acceptance and food run through **ONE HUNDRED SHADES OF WHITE** by **Preethi Nair**. Nalini is transplanted from Kerala by her husband Raul, first to Maharashtra, and then England, with her children in tow, only to be abandoned. The recipes she learnt from her mother—shades of *Like Water for Chocolate* and *The Mistress of Spices* here—come to Nalini's rescue, helping her establish a roaring business as pickle queen and landing her a new husband. But all this happiness is based on the lie that her husband is dead, and the past catches up. Love, inevitably, saves the day. Sigh. **HarperCollins; Rs 295; 294 pages**

Getting into the Indian Institute of Technology is easy; surviving there is the killer. That's what Hari, Ryan and Alok discover in **Chetan Bhagat's FIVE POINT SOMEONE**. At the bottom of the class with their five-point-something grade point average, they battle nutty professors, quickie quizzes, oral exams where "sweat beads cover you brow to groin", and each other, while Pink Floyd, vodka, grass and love with the professor's daughter form the backdrop. An IIT graduate himself, Bhagat explores the burden of expectation with humour. The greatest strength of this story is the writing: so real it gets you in the gut. Wait for the movie. **Rupa; Rs 95; 270 pages**

**BOMBAY TO ETERNITY - MEMOIRS OF A LAID-BACK REBEL** is a look over teacher-journalist-self-seeker **Uma Ranganathan's** shoulder as she tells her story. Here's a peek into the angst-ridden existence that a thinking Bombayite subjects herself to. Ranganathan navel gazes through her experiments in psychoanalysis, travelling, teaching and taking mind-altering substances, much to the voyeuristic

pleasure of the reader. This is a languorous read, a few pages at a time. Read it to look back and search for the extraordinary bits in all our lives.

**Penguin; Rs 295; 289 pages**

**THE BUS STOPPED** works on many layers. **Tabish Khair** speaks in simple yet poetic language about a fictional bus ride from Gaya to Phansa, a town in Bihar. On this ride, you travel through a slice of India, her people and their minds. The cast is familiar—the frustrated bus driver, nonchalant conductor and bustling housewife—so you listen with a comfort that lets you scratch below the surface. Like in every journey, the luxury of time, movement and distance lends a perspective that cannot come from stasis. New relationships, old grudges, fleeting thoughts—they all travel through the pages and alight satiated. **Picador; Rs 495; 199 pages**

—Books courtesy Crossword



# Did I know Dadiba?



Adi Pocha remembers the man who came on Saturdays to meet his grandparents

**HE WAS PERHAPS 60 YEARS** old when I knew him. And he visited my grandparents every Saturday. Considering the number of Saturdays that I spent around him, I knew very little about him.

I knew that he rolled his own cigarettes. And though his tobacco container also had a gadget that automatically rolled cigarettes, he preferred to hand-roll the ones he smoked. First, he would unpeel a paper from his packet of Rizlas. Then, carefully pinch out the correct amount of tobacco. Shuffle it around till the tobacco was evenly spread, lick one edge of the paper, then roll the sheet over and pinch the ends. In later years, I saw kids in my college canteen roll similar looking cigarettes, except—as I learnt later—the contents were quite different.

I knew that he was a bachelor, had jet-black hair, always wore neat white shirts and neat black trousers and walked with a ramrod-straight back. I also knew that he had some kind of business only because the word came up in the extremely sparse conversations my grandfather had with him.

“So how’s business, Dadiba?” my grandfather would unfailingly ask. “Not good,” would be the inevitable reply. Then, my grandfather would continue with

his work while Dadiba Uncle sat quietly on the corner sofa, nursing his rum and water with a small smile on his face.

I also knew that at one point in his life he played the drums. Whenever my family got into a musical mood—usually when more than two of the clan gathered—someone would say: “Come on, Dadiba! Play the drums!” At which, Dadiba Uncle would smile ever so slightly and softly drum his gnarled fingers on a nearby side table. I cannot honestly say that I ever heard his

We all considered Dadiba Uncle a dear friend, and I can say that I knew him for years. But for all the Saturdays he spent at my grandfather’s house, there was so much I never knew about him.

I never knew his house. I never knew his work. I never knew his family, or indeed if he had one. And there was another thing that I never knew. Why did he come to my grandparents’ house? Was it just the place that he went to on Saturdays? Was it just some reassurance to himself that he had friends? Or did he actually

## I never knew his house or his work. I never knew his family. And I never knew why he came to my grandparents’ house

drumming above the din my family made, so I cannot recall if he had any talent as a drummer.

Oh yes, I also know he used to be a boxer. I know I never fully believed this, but on the rare occasion when, perhaps, he felt the need to be a little more active, he would take it upon himself to teach me how to punch. “Come on Adi! Let me show you how to box.” These lessons consisted of holding up his palm and getting me to punch at it.

enjoy himself? Sitting alone on the corner sofa with his rum in one hand and his small smile as he watched our family perform their ritual weekend mayhem.

Many years ago, after my grandfather had passed away, Dadiba Uncle died. My uncle, I think, went for the funeral. We didn’t even know he had been ill. He had died as I think he lived. On his own. Maybe that’s why he came to our house. Maybe we were his family. ■

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



## SAFETY SCREEN

Staying home just got safer. The high-tech security solution provided by Ahmedabad-based Intellicon allows you to screen visitors. It also lets you open the door at the switch of a remote, and maintains a record of visitors. The kit comes with an attractive access control phone with electronic lock. The phone can be installed at the door or gate, or even at the entrance of your bedroom. The frills, at extra cost, include choice of desktop terminals, PC connectivity and digital telephone lines for Internet access, STD/ISD lock, voice mailing, caller ID, and more. The price depends on the configuration. For instance, four telephone lines, eight extensions and one access control phone would set you back about Rs 30,000. Key phones are available at Rs 6,000 each, while the cost of installation is Rs 2,500. Email [corporate@intelliconltd.com](mailto:corporate@intelliconltd.com), and within 48 hours, a representative promises to visit you in Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Cochin, Baroda, Surat and Kolkata.

## KILL PILL WORRIES

Do you forget to take your medication when you should? Relax, here's a handy little gadget that will remind you, right on time. Keep this battery-operated, hi-tech pillbox timer at a convenient place, like your bedside table. Place the tablets in the slot and set the timer, and it will beep loudly for over a minute at the preset time. Made in Taiwan, the unit carries a one-year warranty against manufacturing defects. Priced at Rs 450, it's available at Tech Zone in Spencer's Plaza, Chennai. Tel: 044-28490808, 52155832, Email: [texonic@vsnl.net](mailto:texonic@vsnl.net) Other outlets:

Landmark, Chennai: 044-28495767, 28221000

Lifestyle, Chennai: 044-24980008

Lifestyle, Gurgaon: 0124-5044111

Lifestyle, Hyderabad: 040-23407235, 23407239

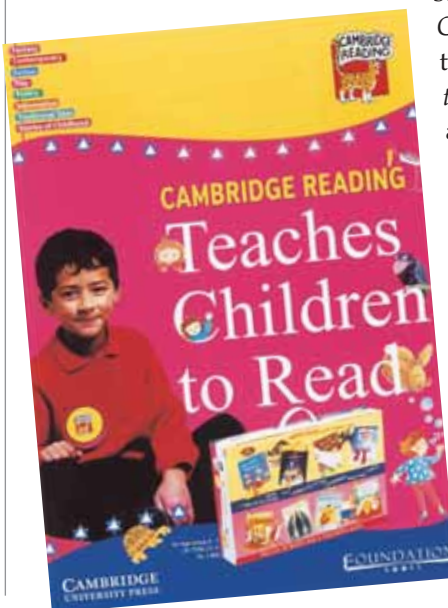
Landmark, Kolkata: 033-22822617/18/19

Lifestyle, Mumbai: 022-56669200/01, 25935900, 56754276



## GRANDCHILDREN'S HOUR

What better gift to pass on to your grandchildren than knowledge? Especially when it comes in the form of colourful books complete with bright illustrations, vivid sketches and interesting pictures. The Cambridge Reading kit for children between ages 4 and 7, comprising 40 books, brought out by Cambridge University Press, may well be the ideal gift for your grandchildren. Separated into five levels, the books include contributions from children's authors plus a selection of Cambridge titles like *Coyote Girl* and *Dinosaur* and traditional tales like *The Lion and the Mouse*. Information books on animals and concise plays and poetry round off the package. A teacher's guide helps you understand the ability of the child, with tips to make learning fun. Priced at Rs 1,800 and marketed by Foundation Books in Navi Mumbai, it's available at leading bookstores across India. The kit can also be ordered over the phone (011-23277332, 23285851). The ISBN number 817596121X can help you locate it easily.





## FIR FORCE

Of the three categories of infrared red rays emitted from sunlight—near infrared, mid infrared and far infrared (FIR)—the third has been found to help body growth, and was also easily absorbed by the body. FIR ionises and activates water molecules in our cells, which in turn increases blood circulation, reduces toxins and acidity and increases metabolism. Now, scientists have discovered that 26 ceramics and various mineral oxides, when mixed and shaped into bio-ceramic products, emanate FIR. These products are now available from Conybio, a Malaysia-based company.



Starting from Rs 250 for a 100 gm dental paste with antibacterial and healing properties, the products are stocked by authorised dealers around the country. The T-shirt (Rs 1,290) and socks (Rs 540) are recommended for tackling blood pressure and diabetes, while people with rheumatism can use the knee brace (Rs 1,050). When Dr Ali Irani, head of the physiotherapy department at Mumbai's Nanavati Hospital, recommended the socks to some

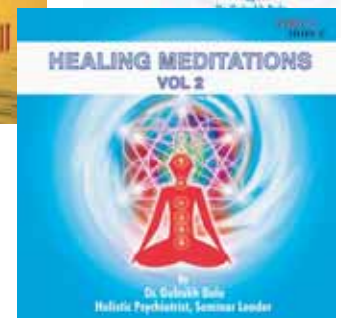
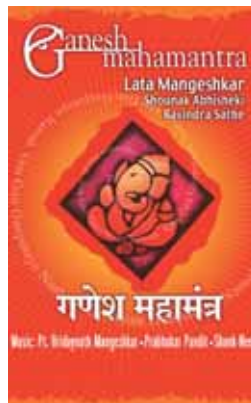


of his patients, they reported they felt warmer, and were happy the socks did not smell despite gentle washing. But Dr Irani is quick to add that in the absence of a research-based study on the benefits of FIR products in Indian conditions, their effects remain debatable. To know more, contact: Chennai 044-22320066; Kolkata 033-32068552; Mumbai 022-34282314, 9820001497; and New Delhi (0) 9868314567. Or email [customercare@conybio.com](mailto:customercare@conybio.com)


## TUNE THERAPY

In India, there is no dearth of chants and mantras that heal the body and soul. Of late, the genre of spiritual music has evolved phenomenally, such that music companies now have special divisions devoted to it. "Healing music slows down the electro waves in our brains, soothing it," explains Dr Yusuf Matcheswala, consulting psychiatrist at Mesina Hospital, Byculla, Mumbai. "The result is akin to deep sleep and the repetitive chants sometimes create a hypnotic and calming effect." Our pick of the choicest healing music this season:

- *Ganesh Maha Mantra* (Sony Music): cassettes Rs 50, CDs Rs 125
- *Gayatri Mantra* (Sony Music): cassettes Rs 50, CDs Rs 125
- *Healing Meditations Vol 1 and 2* (Times Music): cassettes Rs 65, CDs Rs 295 per volume



- *Mahamantras* (Times Music): cassettes Rs 65, CD Rs 281
- *Om Jaap* (Sony Music): cassettes Rs 50, CDs Rs 125
- *Vedic Chants for a Healthy Heart* (Music Today): cassettes Rs 75, CDs Rs 295
- *Vedic Chants to Improve Memory and Intellect* (Music Today): cassettes Rs 75, CDs Rs 295
- *Worry to Wisdom - Vol I, II & III* (Times Music): cassettes Rs 65, CDs Rs 281

Available across the country at a music store near you. 



## VILLAIN NO. 1



The mark of a successful villain is how much terror his name evokes. Pran, the legendary baddie of movies like *Kashmir ki Kali* and *Ram aur Shyam* was so blood-curlingly good, that his name almost fell out of use. Now, on the eve of his biography's release, titled *...And Pran*—since that's how his credit appeared in most movies—a unique publicity campaign is on: a hunt for men called Pran. The search is in two categories—Prans born before 1960, and after. Pran says the book was son Arvind's idea: "My children Arvind, Sunil and Pinky Bhalla have been working very hard on the book. They started planning it last year without informing me. I only found out about it a few months later. They wanted to put me back on the map after my retirement from the industry." The book, written by Bollywood biographer Bunny Reubens, will be released in Mumbai on October 1 by Amitabh Bachchan in the presence of the real Pran, now 84, and his namesakes. Letters 'To Pran ... From Pran' have already started pouring in from around the country.

Courtesy: PINKY BHALLA

## I N P A S S I N G

## PHOTO FINISH

French photographer **Henri Cartier-Bresson**, who defined his style as "capturing the decisive moment", passed away in Provence, France, at the age of 95. He travelled the world with his 35 mm Leica to capture these moments; among them a Spanish children's band, the building of the Berlin Wall, his own shadow reflected on a sheet of water as well as India's partition. He was with Mahatma Gandhi 15 minutes before his death. Cartier-Bresson shot for magazines like *Life*, *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, but was not particularly fond of having his own picture taken. In 2003, he set up Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson with his wife and daughter "to preserve and share the legacy of his work".



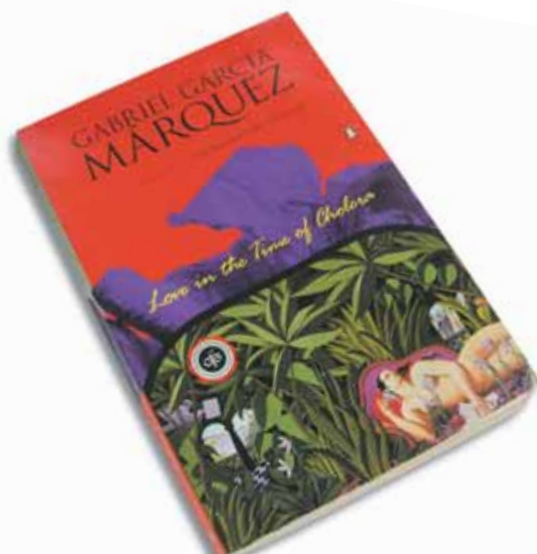
## KONG'S QUEEN

**Fay Wray**, King Kong's beloved blonde bombshell, passed away peacefully in Manhattan on August 8. She was 96. In 1933, she was offered a role opposite "the tallest, darkest leading man in Hollywood"—she thought it was Clarke Gable. The beauty, who climbed to the top of the Empire State Building cupped in the palm of the hairy, 60-foot gorilla, became an instant pop icon of the era. New York City dimmed the lights on the Empire State Building for 15 minutes in a tribute to its scream queen.



## HOLLYWOOD CALLING

**Gabriel Garcia Marquez** had once celebrated his visa ban from the US with a fireworks party. Today, he has signed a US \$4.3 million dollar deal with a Hollywood studio to produce a movie based on his book, *Love in the Time of Cholera*, based on his parents' love story. The 76-year-old Nobel winner is fighting lymphatic cancer and has given in to the "Yankee dollar" to ensure a family pension for his childhood love and wife, Mercedes, and their sons, Gonzalo and Rodrigo.





Courtesy: THE INDIAN EXPRESS



## GOLD RUSH

Here's a true winner. **Umesh Shenoy**, a 60-year-old assistant general manager with New India Assurance, represented India in Athens, Greece, at Olympilex 2004, held from August 12 to 22, as part of the Olympic Games. This is an exhibition of Olympic memorabilia—coins and stamps—held during the Games. Shenoy started collecting when he was 12 and today his collection is worth Rs 15 lakh. The big impetus for Shenoy came with the bronze medal in Atlanta 1996. By the time Sydney 2000 rolled around, he had a book ready—*Olympics, A Philatelic Journey Through the Eras*. That year won him two silvers in the literature and exhibition categories. "India has eight Olympic gold medals in hockey, yet the Dominican Republic issued a stamp that featured a Sardar playing hockey with the tricolour in the background. Amazing, isn't it?" he says.

## FAVOURITE SON

The village of Gah in Pakistan's Punjab province now has a school named after India's 71-year-old prime minister—**Manmohan Singh** Government Boys Primary School. The senior villagers of Gah, proud of their native son, decided to honour him with this gesture. Will Delhi, where Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf was born, follow suit?

## BIO BUCKS

**Kiran Mazumdar Shaw** wanted to be India's first female brewer but fate had other plans. Recently the 50-year-old was declared India's richest woman. Her biotech company, Biocon, has been valued at Rs 4,843 crore and her personal fortune at Rs 1,900 crore. She started 25 years ago from a rented garage shop with Rs 10,000, and a background in microbiology. She credits this success to "ordinary people who thought they could do great things".



## THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

**Om Puri** got a happy letter from the British High Commissioner in July, informing him that he had been awarded the Order of the British Empire 'in recognition of his outstanding services to the British film industry'. The award is the equivalent of India's Padmashri. Saeed Jaffrey is the other Indian actor to receive it, but only after he got himself a British passport. Puri's reaction: "One must take it in the right spirit and enjoy the glory. It's like a fine whiskey. You enjoy it, but soon the effect fades out and then you carry on." His first British film was *Jewel in the Crown* (1981). In the years since, the 53-year-old has excelled in *East is East*, *The Ghost and the Darkness* and *My Son, the Fanatic*. Puri's next release, based in London, is *The King of Bollywood*, about a fading actor refusing to accept his waning popularity.



Courtesy: THE INDIAN EXPRESS



# Brain gym

For the 700 nuns of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Nunnery, Manikota in Minnesota, USA, idleness is a sin. At the nunnery, the average age is 85; 150 of them have seen their 90th birthday already. All the nuns engage in mental calisthenics, vocabulary and card games as part of their daily routine. And all of them have donated their brains to medical science to study the effect of ageing on the brain. Taking their example, we are starting three pages of mind food that'll keep the grey cells sharper – lateral thinking and crossword puzzles, a dose of humour and a poem to memorise

## THINK LATERAL

'Lateral Thinking' is a term coined by thought guru Edward de Bono. By definition, lateral thinking puzzles are easiest solved when you question your assumptions and think laterally.

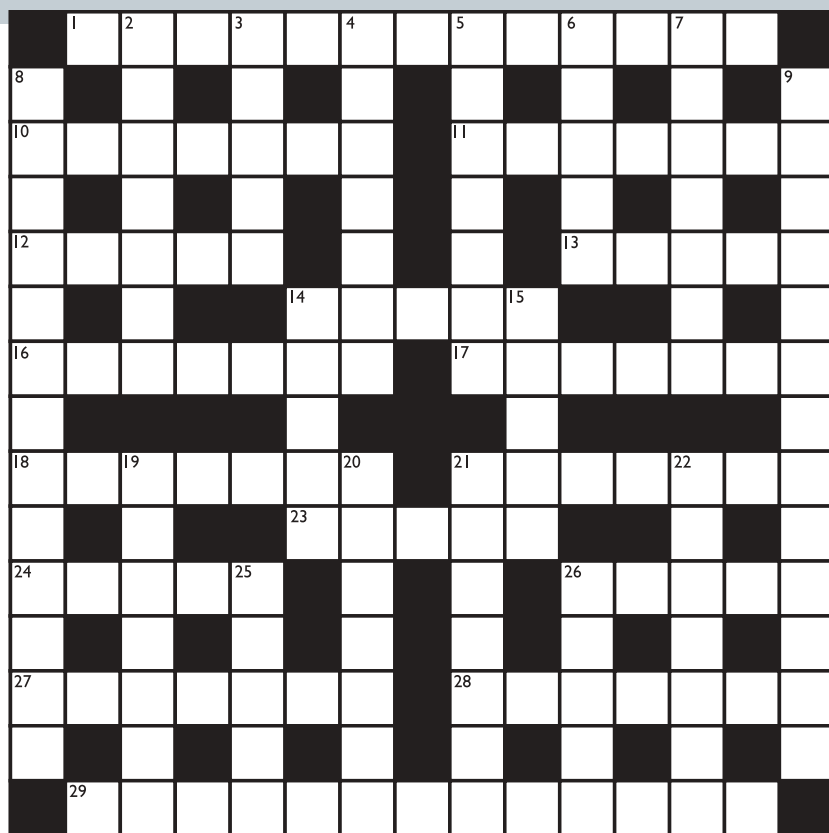
- 1 A man is lying dead in a field. Next to him there is an unopened package. There is no other creature in the field. How did he die?
- 2 A woman had two sons who were born on the same hour of the same day of the same year. But they were not twins. How could this be?
- 3 The day before yesterday, Nita was 17 years old. Next year, she'll be 20 years old. How is this possible?
- 4 A man walked into a restaurant and asked the waiter for a glass of water. They had never met before. The waiter pulled a gun from under the counter and pointed it at the man. The man said "Thank you" and walked out. How come?
- 5 A man is lying awake in bed. He makes a phone call, says nothing, and goes to sleep. Why?

For answers, see page 94

## REMEMBER 'JABBERWOCKY'?

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.  
"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"  
He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought —  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.  
And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!  
One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.  
"And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy.  
'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.  
—Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (1872)

This fun poem, written in Anglo-Saxon style, is a study on using context to make sense from nonsense. The Jabberwock is a dragon-like creature found in heroic ballads. The first paragraph translated in plain English: "It was evening, and the smooth active badgers were scratching and boring holes into the hillside; all unhappy were the parrots; and the grave (as in solemn) turtles squeaked out."



### EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD

#### ACROSS

- 1** The Upper House that never was under benign BJP rule (3, 5, 5)  
**10** Romance in Sonia's Italy (7)  
**11** Stick to keep in position those under Diana's command? (7)  
**12** A hold symbolising millions (5)  
**13** Ask Dev Anand to, on the sets, and at gunfire speed come his lines! (5)  
**14** Lucky as editor for a German song? (1, 4)  
**16** Shakespearean character withdrawing as siren (7)  
**17** So committed to Kapil as to create the golfing 'opening' for him to tee? (7)  
**18** 'Take away' they just refuse to do, such ardent followers! (7)

- 21** Like the racehorse that 'dwelt', loser in a game of musical chairs (4, 3)  
**23** Jockey's support having the 1982 Asian Games mascot doubting own identity? (5)  
**24** 'A pair of specs' he flaunted, until Azhar 'Lord's-tossed' 333 to his bat (5)  
**26** Palindrome not too far from Belgaum (5)  
**27** What Antony came up to put against Brutus's name (3, 4)  
**28** After P T Usha who? (7)  
**29** The ageing well-fed heroine did, feeling in no way vindicated, turning to view the sari-fall in her studio mirror! (3, 3, 3, 4)

#### DOWN

- 2** Something Manmohan Singh certainly comes through as in an edit? (1, 6)  
**3** Uplifting a poor notorious dacoit (5)  
**4** 'Prakash procession' mayhem into which Laloo turned the *Gangaajal* maker's idea of contesting from Bihar (7)  
**5** Who says our Champion of Champions hasn't accounted for the prize car he won? (7)  
**6** Point on orbit of planet from which to view Andhra Pradesh nurse (5)  
**7** Third-Eye sound as if the batsman got a touch, listen intently (4, 3)  
**8** Who shall say her nights are numbered! (1, 8, 4)  
**9** Ben Kingsley as *Gandhi* in the eyes of those born long after 1947 (1, 6, 6)  
**14** Hardly what Imran Khan is looking for if choosing to marry again (1, 4)  
**15** Aside, ideas, aides, Sadie—what's in a name? (5)  
**19** Feeling giving way to 'Live and let live' with 15 August past? (2, 2, 3)  
**20** The last word in parliamentary democracy (7)  
**21** *Nawabi* looking gambler's spot demand? (7)  
**22** *You are my theme for a dream* is and yet isn't (3, 4)  
**25** Eat into Her Highness, Ted (5)  
**26** A call to surround Brian Lara on his touching 10,000 Test runs? (2, 3)

For answers, see page 94

**Raju Bharatan**, the creator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' for *The Times Of India*, creates an exclusive crossword for *Harmony* readers. Bharatan uses the *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* but says that any other standard dictionary is as good to get going

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

## MR BAKSHI'S VIEW



### SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD

**ACROSS:** 1 Ram Rajya Sabha; 10 Cremona (this is an anagram — the 7 letters of *romance* rearrange as CREMONA); 11 Distaff (splitting as *Di staff*); 12 Lodha (anagram — *a hold* is the 5 letters of LODHA rearranged); 13 Shoot; 14 A lied (meaning *a German song*, splits as *Ali ed*), the *Ali* reference being to Lucky Ali); 16 Nerissa (withdrawing, or going back, reads as *siren*); 17 Devotee (splitting as DEV/O/TEE, O standing for 'opening'); 18 Addicts (*Add* part of it suggesting a reversal of *take away*); 21 Last off; 23 Appui (splitting as *Appu I*); 24 Gooch ('a pair of specs' [oo] he flaunts); 26 Gadag (reads the same when viewed from reverse, *palindrome*

is 'a word that reads alike backward and forward'); 27 Red Mark (a reference to Mark Antony); 28 Nambiar; 29 Get her own back

**DOWN:** 2 A leader; 3 Roopa (*uplifting*, or when raised, this notorious dacoit reads *a poor*); 4 Jhamela (splitting as *Jha Mela*, *jhamela* meaning *mayhem*); 5 Audited (*Audi* part of it being Ravi Shastri's prize car); 5 Apsis (splitting as *AP sis* — *Andhra Pradesh nurse*); 7 Hear out; 8 A Calendar Girl; 9 A Father figure; 14 A Sita; 15 Desai (*Aside, ideas, aides, Sadie* are anagrams of *Desai*); 19 Do or die; 20 Speaker; 21 Lucknow (splitting as *Luck now*); 22 Old disc; 25 Heath (*eat* into *HH* — *Her Highness*); 26 Go mob

### SOLUTIONS TO 'THINK LATERAL

**1** The man had jumped from a plane but his parachute had failed to open.

**2** They were two of a set of triplets.

**3** Today is January 1st. Her 18th birthday was yesterday on December 31st. This year she will be 19 and next year she will be 20.

**4** The man wanted water to cure his hiccups.

**5** He is in a hotel and can't sleep because the man in the adjacent room is snoring. He calls the snorer up. The snorer wakes up and answers. The first man hangs up without saying anything and goes to sleep before the snorer starts snoring again.



**THE OTHER FAMILY****PAGE 20****GHYAN GOSHTI MANDAL:**

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**TYPE A****PAGE 52**

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**ABODE OF PEACE****PAGE 78**

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**HOTEL CAMELLIA:** Santiniketan, Prantik, Bolpur. Tel: 03463-262043.

**MARKS & MEADOWS:** Sriniketan Road, Bolpur. Tel: 03463-264870.

**RANGA MATI:** Tourist Lodge Road, Bolpur. Tel: 03463-252305.

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Avinash S Ghatge, 75, a retired mechanical engineer, runs a lending library and maintains newspaper and magazine cuttings on topics ranging from World War II to modern living and liberalisation. Having lived for over five years in the UK, he loves using British expressions like 'blighter', 'good heavens' and 'absolutely delighted' liberally. For the past 17 years, he has written one English quotation a day on a black cloth board outside his home in Matunga, Mumbai; the road leads to two colleges—Ruia College and Poddar College—and King George Secondary School.



"I love watching the expressions on students' faces when they read the quotations I put up. My favourite quotation is by Winston Churchill talking about the Royal Air Force: 'Never in the history of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few.' Now and then, I also put up humorous sayings, because it is important for them to have a smile on their faces when they start their day."

— Avinash Ghatge



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